

First Presbyterian Church
Marianna, Florida
Easter Day, Sunday, April 8, 2007
Sermon by Huw Christopher, Pastor

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:1-11

Sermon Title: “Sharing the Victory of Jesus in Baptism”

Sermon Text: Romans 6:3-4: Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

“The Victory is Won!” Betty Blighton, our church secretary, and I did not try, but I somehow doubt that we would have had too much difficulty getting someone in this congregation to pay to have those words on the front of our bulletin this morning printed in the colors of the Florida Gators. One of the reasons we did not seek individual or corporate sponsorship for such a color imprint of the words “The Victory is Won!” on the front of our bulletin today was not to offend or upset any Ohio State Fans, or FSU or Alabama or Auburn or Georgia or Carolina or even Duke fans who may be sharing in our service today.

The other reason, and the main reason, was that the victory to which the words on our bulletin make reference is far different from that which appeared last Monday or Tuesday night. The headline in our local paper last Friday, “Donovan

staying, juniors leaving,” (Jackson County Floridan, Friday, April 6, 2007 page 1B) highlights the challenge which Billy Donovan will face next year to win his third National Championship in a row without at least four of his key players from the last two years. In the vicious atmosphere of College sports in this country most coaches know only too well their careers cannot be sustained by one or even two national championships. The fans and the Booster Club expect such success not just once or twice in a coach’s career, but every year. Today, though, we come to celebrate a victory that happened only once but the influence of which is still being felt. God’s victory over sin and evil and death as he raised Jesus from the dead is not something that has to be repeated in the midst of March madness or April showers each and every year. It is a once and for all victory which only has to be celebrated. It is victory that needs to be claimed not just once a year, but each and every day. It is a victory that happened long before anyone invented the game of basketball. I am sure it is also a victory that will be celebrated long after many have forgotten who won the 2007 NCAA National Basketball Championship last Monday night.

The other difference between the victory that we celebrate today from that which was celebrated last Monday night comes, of course, from the very nature of the victory itself. After all even for the most diehard Florida Gators fan what major changes in your ways of looking at life and of your ways of living did you experience on Tuesday of this week because of Monday night’s victory? Unless, of course, it was the difficulty of actually doing anything on Tuesday because you stayed up celebrating too much and too late on Monday night!

As Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, though, he reminds us that God’s victory over sin and evil and death is not something that just happened to Jesus. It is rather a victory in which all people are invited to share. Through our professions of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, affirmed before other people in our baptisms,

Paul says, we symbolically participate in that victory. As those who claim to be the followers of Jesus and the children of God we should live as victorious people who know that sin and evil and death do not have the final word in our lives, or in the life of this world.

Today, Erin Christopher, Emily Fuqua, Branham Skipper and Connor Ward come to make their Professions of Faith before us, and we will share in the Sacrament of Baptism for Branham. At the same time all of us will be invited to remember and to celebrate our own professions of faith and our own baptisms. On this Easter Day as these young people make their professions of faith they will be prompting all of us to think what it means to each one of us as the baptized children of God to say, “The Victory is Won.” As they claim the power of the Holy Spirit to live as the followers of Christ they will be prompting all of us to reflect on how, by the power of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives, other people can see that we are victorious people as we show forth that newness of life that God offers to us through the victory of Jesus. Let us remember again our own baptisms and what it means to us to be baptized in water as we sing the familiar hymn of baptism found at No. 492.

Hymn of Our Baptisms No. 492

Bunessan

“Baptized in Water”