

John Calvin Presbytery  
February 25, 2023

The One Hundred Ninth Stated Meeting  
Gibson Chapel and  
Hillcrest Presbyterian Churches  
Springfield, Missouri  
In person meeting with livestreaming

In 1980, in Taiwan, I met a Presbyterian missionary who drank hot water for breakfast. I asked her why she did that. She said it was a spiritual discipline.

There, nearly in view of “all the tea in China,” and having accepted a call to live in a developing country, far from her family, this woman felt compelled to add one more discipline to her life. Presbyterians can be pretty disciplined people!

In Christian Philosophy class, we studied the writings of Immanuel Kant and his idea that we have a categorical imperative—my professor called it an “oughtness.” That sometimes, we do things because we ought to.

Many of us, our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family members were raised to believe that, to attain eternal life, we had to make the first step toward God. To be saved. To go to heaven. More importantly, so we didn’t go to hell. And it followed that a big part of the mission of the church was to help others be saved. So they could go to heaven also.

This orientation may insinuate itself into our daily lives.

We as Presbyterians have a Reformed theology. One person has summarized this as, “There is nothing you can do to make God love you more, and there is nothing you can do to make God love you less.” God acted first. God is omnipotent. We don’t have to go around “saving” people.

When I was becoming a Presbyterian, I wanted to know, more or less, “Where is the *oughtness*?” If it’s all up to God, then what is there for us to do?

The answer came that we are grateful for the salvation God has offered us. We are called to live our lives in gratitude. In view of that, there is plenty to do.

That was a wonderful discovery.

May this Lent lead you on a discovery of new ways to live your calling.  
Malinda