

Sermon - Purpose of Preaching

Please open your copies of the Word to the Gospel of Matthew and join me in reading Matthew 4, verses 12-17.

Matthew 4:12-17

Jesus Begins to Preach

12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. **13** Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— **14** to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

15

“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

16

the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Preaching. This week, we have been blessed to hear some truly exceptional preaching by H.B. Charles, Jr. He was prepared, but not to the extent the Spirit was excluded. He was passionate, but not to the extent that emotionalism distracted from depth. He was a powerful communicator, but it was not his words we focused on, but the Word of God. He quoted verse after verse, with the words of God flowing from him in a natural and beautiful way. I began to notice the number of times that the Scripture speaks about the preaching of the Word and how Jesus spoke the Word with power. He did not speak with notes, but from the clarity and passion of knowing the Word in both his head and heart.

I want to admit something to you that I have admitted to my community at the Well on occasion. In moments of mostly self-pity and weakness, I have said that I do not know why I preach. It seems to make so little real difference. I know that this is mostly just whining on my part. However, I have no doubt that many who are speaking to congregations across our world this weekend feel the same thing. There are probably valid reasons for feeling this way, but none so valid as to undermine the requirement to do so!

1 Corinthians 9:16

16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

Rick Warren notes that every weekend, 55 million people listen to 1 billion words of sermons. Some of you may think your pastor speaks all of those words personally some Sundays... This practice, a powerful gift of God we might take for granted as we have such easy access to it, is at the heart of the work of the Church in our world. It is arguably the most powerful tool of the pastor. Speaking from a position of recognized power and authority, those who stand and deliver each week have an enormous opportunity and obligation to get it right.

As I was wondering what God would have me share with you this morning, we were immersed in Scripture this week and the number of times that it spoke of the preaching of the Word began to come into sharp view for me.

My first encouragement to you is that preaching, which may or may not be public rhetoric, is the responsibility of all believers.

We are compelled, as Paul, to speak the Gospel, the Good News, which is the entirety of the Word, in all ways possible, to as many as possible, as well as possible, and as long as we possibly can.

Purposes of preaching

Instruction

Paul writes to his young charge Timothy and encourages him to continue in the Word. He tells him to remain in the Word, trusting in the wisdom which comes from knowing the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: **2** Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. **3** For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. **4** They will turn their ears away from the truth and

turn aside to myths. **5** But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

While we know that the lecture has some limited use as a pedagogical tool in the classroom, a powerful message delivered from the heart of God, grounded in Scripture and received by willing and listening ears will cause the hearer to move! We are designed to be moved and motivated by language. We are created to learn and digest critical ideas, concepts and information through the transmission of words from the teacher to the pupil. This has not changed for thousands of years. Preaching is a powerful tool for our growth.

Proverbs 28:9

9

If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction,
even their prayers are detestable.

We, then, should listen to our Teacher and read His Text.

Illumination

Charles Swindoll, "When there's a mist in the pulpit, there's a fog in the pews."

Biblical preaching will bring truth and clarity. Not confusion. It must be delivered from the source of our faith, the Word. As noted in both the Isaiah 9 and Matthew 4 passages, the message of the Gospel is a brilliant and hopeful light in a world lost in darkness.

Because of this clarity, the preaching of the Word will bring great perspective to our lives as lived in counterpoint to the World. We will have an answer to whatever is posed. The Word is not limited in its application! This clarity and confidence will allow us to walk with gentle strength. Preaching which is founded in the truth makes sense, quite simply. The confusing darkness will recede and His people will operate in His world in ways that work!

Broken hearts, blind eyes, wandering souls. All comforted when the light of the Gospel is presented. Whole families, communities and even nations will turn when the Kingdom of God is presented.

Isaiah 9:2 2

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

What a comfort it must have been, and is for us today in fact, to never have to wonder about the accuracy and truth of what Jesus spoke! His source material was always the God-breathed Scripture. His intent was always the pure motivation of the Spirit. His preparation, delivery and application were flawless.

Admonition

Operating on one of our most fundamental human levels, Biblical teaching and preaching encourages. It meets us where our heart and head join. It provides an external motivation and power which give us more energy just when we need it. It speaks truth into doubt. It gives us the assistance we must have in our moment of weakness. It is the time where we realize we cannot do it under our own power.

God's entire purpose for us is to be like Jesus. Very simply. He makes us like Jesus in perfection through the work of Salvation. He moves us to be like Jesus through the life-time work of Sanctification. In this, He desires that we:

Think like Jesus

Philippians 2:5 N

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Feel like Jesus

Colossians 3:15-17

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Act like Jesus

1 John 2:6

6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Condemnation

Quite simply, preaching calls out and condemns sin. Anything that is in opposition to the Truth which is the heart and entirety of our God must be confronted.

Matthew 23:13-15

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

13 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. **[14]** **[a]**

15 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

Consider the Woe’s of Jesus as he called out the religious leaders of His day. He never shirked His responsibility to call into account those who would lead His sheep astray. He never sugar-coated his message to those who would mislead or deceive. He also clearly condemned sin even while accepting the most vile sinner.

Our teaching and preaching must do the same.

Affirmation

Our Word is full of affirmation for the child of God. Hundreds of passages encourage, energize and inspire. Our teaching and preaching is to parallel this too, of course! We are in desperate need of genuine, perspective-making, pats on the back. We are His kids! We are royalty. Called to be victorious in life and to an eternity in paradise. We can’t help but be encouraged by the Word if we read it as those who have been redeemed!

1 Peter 2:9

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Invitation/Application

On the final evening of Falls Creek, an evening typically reserved for the Gospel and a message of repentance and salvation, our pastor spoke from Psalms 119. He emphasized the importance of the Word. Simple and strait-forward teaching. Not overly emotional, not coercive, at least not in the human sense. Not weak or thin. Simply that we bear down into the Word.

Hundreds responded. Hearts were open and tender. The Word did not fall on deaf ears. Our preaching will result in people confronting the

Preaching is not ultimately to simply inform, but to transform. To transform us into active followers of Jesus. The power of the Gospel, as lived, written, read and preached is to affirm that we are new creations, with a new future in Him.

What of you? Are you a living sermon of the change Jesus has made in your life? Are you eager today to know Him?

When truth is preached, we must confront anything in our lives which does not align with this truth. The invitation today, then, is to salvation and a life transformed by Him. It is for us to apply all that we know in the work of our lives, which is to bring glory to the One who has saved us, Jesus, the Christ!