

Biblical Preaching For Times Like These

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“We can neither understand nor preach the gospel tangibly enough. A truly evangelical sermon must be like offering a child a beautiful red apple or holding out a glass of water to a thirsty man and asking: Wouldn't you like it?”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Preaching For Times
Like These:

Bear Witness

Bearing Witness

- Preachers bear witness to what we have seen and heard (Luke 7:18 – 24).
- As members of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” – we “proclaim the mighty acts of God who” has called us “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2.9).

Bearing Witness

- We do not go to Scripture primarily to glean facts about God.
- The preacher becomes a witness to what is seen and heard through the biblical text.
- The preacher is not a neutral observer.

Long, *The Witness of Preaching*

Bearing Witness

- We go to the Word to be encountered by God in the midst of our life circumstances.
- “What we need is not primarily informational, telling us things about God and ourselves, but formational, shaping us into our true being” Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 24

Bearing Witness

- John 20
 - Mary Magdalene: “I have seen the Lord” (18)
 - The other Disciples: “We have seen the Lord” (25).
 - Thomas: “My Lord and my God” (28)
 - Jesus: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (29)

Bearing Witness

“Proclamation is description. It is like painting a picture. The proclaimer describes the world as it is under Jesus as Lord and then always invites the person into it . . . Proclamation tells the story, describes the alternative account of reality it offers, and then asks, ‘Can you see it? Can you receive the news? Do you want to enter in?’”

Fitch, Faithful Presence, 98

Preaching For Times
Like These:

Tell the Whole Story

Hidden Figures



The Hidden Gospel

- Preach the entire biblical narrative:
 - Genesis to Revelation
 - Creation to a New Heaven & New Earth
- Within sermons make connections:
 - Within the book from which you are preaching.
 - Between books.
 - Between Old and New Covenants.

The Misshapen Gospel

- Starting with Genesis 3:
 - Miss the glory and goodness of creation.
 - People are essentially “bad”.
- Focusing tightly on individual salvation:
 - Reinforces cultural individualism.
 - Undercuts the covenantal and corporate nature of the Kingdom of God.
 - Goal is heaven, not a grand anticipation of resurrection and a final triumph over evil in God’s New Heaven and Earth.

Preaching for Times Like These:

Devote Yourself to the Study
of Scripture ~
Feed Your Flock

Nurtured by the Word

- Biblical preaching is *normative* for Christian worship.
 - The usual and most common practice.
 - Significant engagement with the biblical text is the standard over against which all other types of preaching are measured.
 - Because the church has found that through such preaching the church is formed according to the pattern of Christ.

Long, *The Witness of Preaching*

Prepare the Meal

- Go to the Word on behalf of the people
- Ask: What is the message
 - From this text
 - For this congregation
 - On this day
- Go to the text with anticipation
 - That your eyes and heart will be opened in new ways.

The “Meat” of the Gospel

- Who is God in this passage?
- What is God doing in this passage?
- How does the activity of God in this passage reflect what He has done through the whole Canon?
- Given the nature, character and of activity of God how does he relate to us today?
- How might we respond in the power of His Spirit as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ?

“Fast Food” Preaching

“I want to place personal experience under the authority of the Bible and not over it. I want to set the Bible before us as the text by which we live our lives, this text that stands in such sturdy contrast to the potpourri of religious psychology, self-development, mystical experimentation, and devotional dilettantism that has come to characterize so much of what takes cover under the umbrella of ‘spirituality’”

Eat This Book, Peterson, 17

“Fast Food” Preaching

- We can turn to Scripture to make our lives “better” and in the process miss God (seeking to make the Word “relevant”).
- Rather than the story of God, we find ingenious ways to turn Scripture upside down and make it be about us for personal benefit
- Starting with God will not disappoint and provide sustenance for the entire “Life of the World”.

Jesus is the Host

- We, as preachers of the Gospel, are servants of the Word.
- We've prayed, listened to the Spirit, and prepared the sermon.
- Our Living Lord Jesus is the Host who, through the Spirit, meets and feeds hungry souls – some who are desperately famished and seeking bread, some who are parched and have no idea why their tongue cleaves to the roof of their mouths.

Preaching For Times
Like These:

Regain Confidence in
Preaching the Word as a
Means of Grace

Good News!

- God's desire is to draw people, congregations & cultures in to relationship with himself that they may be formed in the image of Christ.
- Only God through His Spirit can accomplish this end.
- We stand, we preach as faithful witnesses to the purpose of God.

“The proclamation of the Word is a sacramental act par excellence because it is a transforming act . . . [It] is the eternal coming to us of the Risen Lord.”

Alexander Schmemmann,
For the Life of the World, 33

Messengers of Grace

- Through a faithful witness to the good news of God's love and purposes for all of creation as announced in the preaching event, the Holy Spirit is present and extends grace to those who hear and receive the message.

A Glad Release

- Through preaching the Holy Spirit draws people into a relationship with the Father through the Son, convicts of sin, offers justification and the New Birth, offers an assurance of salvation, deepens love for God and neighbor, purifies hearts, characters and motives.

Preaching For Times
Like These:

Live in Patient Love

Church Growth before 312 AD

- Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, 2016.
- How is it that Christianity grew when the churches did not use their worship services to attract new people?
- Churches were expanding without any probable prerequisites to church growth.

Patient Ferment

- Christians “lived lives marked by the habitus of patience – trusting God, living without being able to control the outcome, living unhurriedly, living unconventionally, loving their enemies (68).
- Preaching moves with the lives of Christians into every realm of their daily lives into a society who has no content for understanding the love of Christ.

Matthew 22:37 - 39

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as your self.’”

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