

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER – 19MAR25

How are you today? I am thankful for the ongoing faithfulness of our God and his sustenance for faith and living in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, we are continuing with reflections on the Congregation Snapshot with our encouragement on Preaching before moving on to church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: What We Are Doing Well – Preaching

We are considering our Congregation Snapshot over the next number of weeks looking at what we value, what we are doing well and what we need to work on. Today we talk about Preaching as something the Snapshot said we are doing well.

Why is preaching important? Looking at our worship services we clearly see the sermon as important. The reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word together take up about 50% of a worship service. It is important to understand what preaching is and its significance for the life of the church.

When thinking about a sermon on Sunday morning it is important to know first what it is not. It is not a lecture – an interesting talk about a topic or subject, giving some historical details or statistical data and doing little more than impart information. It is not a pep talk – words that get you revved up and excited, that gets you motivated and emotionally geared up. It is not a self-help talk – giving you tips for good living, life hacks that make life easier, a list of “how-tos” to accomplish a certain task.

So what then is it to preach? I will focus on three things.

1. Preaching is the Word of God spoken.

Paul charges Timothy:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

2 Timothy 4:2

Preaching is the declaration of the Word of God as we find it in Scripture. It is God's word spoken in the moment to be pressed against the lives of the

listeners by correcting, rebuking and encouraging. A sermon must speak the Scriptures and not go beyond what God has given.

Murray Capill writes:

In expository preaching, the message of the Biblical text is spoken afresh to God's people today by the preacher in such a way that those who hear the message sense that God himself is speaking to them and is dealing with their lives. From beginning to end, the congregation hears a message that is both from him and for them.

Murray Capill

“The Heart is the Target” p16-17

2. Preaching is Christ Proclaimed.

Paul writes to the Colossians:

We proclaim him [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Colossians 1:28

Preaching presents Christ to its listeners. All Paul's preaching is about Christ, pointing to who Jesus is and his life, death and resurrection and his ongoing intercession for the saints until he returns in glory. All preaching must be about Jesus. All the Scriptures are about Jesus and lead us to Jesus. It was Jesus himself who opened the Scriptures with his disciples and showed them that it is all about him and so they are to preach his death and resurrection and forgiveness in his name to all the nations (Luke 24:44-45). Preaching that fails to preach Christ, fails to preach.

But we also must be clear what it means to preach Christ. It presents Jesus as the only solution to our sin and brokenness, the only solution for a fractured world, the only solution for mending our relationship with God. It is Christ who gains our forgiveness. It is Christ who sends his Spirit to enable us to live the gospel. It is Christ who will bring us home. Preaching that only presents Jesus as a good example to follow is not enough. Preaching must proclaim Christ as the solution that deals with the sin in us that makes it impossible for us to follow in the first place.

3. Preaching is the Gospel Applied

Paul instructs Titus:

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed

hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:11-14

It is the gospel applied to our lives that brings change. Paul writes that it is the gospel that teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and to live godly lives. It is God’s grace and salvation in Christ that yields Christlikeness in its hearers. Preaching seeks to see the gospel lived out by those who hear it. It is important to understand what this means.

Often I have heard the application of a sermon be something like: “Be good.” “Love others.” “Follow Jesus.” “Worship God only.” These are not gospel applications. Do not get me wrong. They are good. We want to do these things. But these applications on their own are moralism – following certain dos and don’ts. What these applications fail to do is take into account the presence of sin in our lives that thwarts our attempts to live for God. It is only possible for us to live for God because of what he has done in Christ.

Notice in Paul’s instruction to Titus he says it is Christ “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” The very reason we belong to God is because of Christ’s death to forgive us and make us his. The very reason we can live for God is because of Christ at work in us to purify us of sin in the ongoing application of his death to our lives.

It is only because Christ is at work in us that we can “Be good”, “Love others”, “Follow Jesus” and “Worship God”. And when we fail, we depend on his forgiveness. We are saved by faith, and we continue to live by faith, trusting in God’s work in us to transform our lives and enable our increasing obedience. Failing to see how good works flow out of God’s grace, strips the gospel of its power. Preaching must show how grace empowers gospel living.

Preaching is the Word of God spoken, Christ proclaimed and the Gospel applied. It is vital to who we are together as God’s people as together we hear and respond in faith, as we take hold of his grace held out to us in the gospel. It is the gospel that enables our own service to God as he works among us. Do you come to church on a Sunday prepared to hear from God, meet with Christ and live the gospel by his grace?

COMMUNITY PANTRY

Thank you for the donations for your donations. Donations we need at the moment are:

- Full cream long life milk
- Toilet paper
- Lentils in can
- Fruit in can
- Sweet biscuits

WANT TO JOIN A BIBLE STUDY

If you are wanting a Bible Study that meets earlier in the evening, from 5.30-7.30pm on a Wednesday. there are some members looking for interested people. Let me know if you would like more information.

FINAL COMMENTS

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

As always, love and prayers,
Steve