

CHRISTIAN PREACHING

Eric Costa | theokosmos.org

Preach to Glorify God

The ultimate goal of Christian preaching—as with all other things—is the glory of the Triune God [1 *Corinthians 10:31*]. When the minister proclaims God’s true and beautiful Word, he honors the Persons, attributes, and works of God. But the glory really radiates when the Spirit uses his Word to change lives. If someone is convicted, saved, comforted, inspired, *redeemed* by the preached Word, God was at work, showing himself to be good, sovereign, gracious, and altogether glorious.

Preach to Transform

In order to glorify God, preaching aims at complete redemption and renewal. The goal is to make the hearer better able to engage reality (God, self, others, world, culture, etc.) from a Biblical perspective. Every facet of every life is fair game—if a person thinks, feels, speaks or acts at all, then those ways of participating in God’s world ought to be made to serve God’s glory. Sometimes the transformation is dramatic, as when a person is convicted and converted. Sometimes the change is externally imperceptible, as when a person is reassured once again of God’s love. Always it should be so that the person loves God with his whole heart, soul, mind and strength better than he did when he first sat in the pew.

Preach against Unbelief

In order to transform people, preaching aims to increase their faith. The desired progression is from sin to holiness (sanctification), which requires faith [Galatians 3:1-3]. A person will only be changed through truly *believing* the Word of God. Whether Christian or not, *all of us have the same problem*: we do not believe the Word of God enough to let it shape our lives in every way [Romans 14:23]. Therefore the preacher must target the unbelief in the hearer, and proclaim the Word as beacon that draws forth true faith from those in whom the Spirit works.

Preach the Gospel

In order to inspire faith, preaching must convey the Gospel. The Good News is that God is *for us* in Jesus Christ [2 *Corinthians 5:21*]. Helping the hearer understand this goes well beyond a “simple” evangelistic message. The grace of God addresses us at every point in our lives: it establishes [1 *Thessalonians 3:2*] and strengthens [Romans 16:25] our faith (and, therefore, obedience). Certainly, preach the Law as well—bad news often precedes the Good News [Galatians 3:19-26]. But the majestic goodness of God, displayed in the Gospel, must characterize our preaching week in and week out. *This* wins our faith.

Preach Christ from All the Scriptures

The person and work of Jesus Christ is the substance of the Gospel. The beginning, middle, and end of the Christian life must be informed by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—all the Scriptures are helpful for this [2 *Timothy 3:14-17*]. Jesus himself made it very clear that he is the main subject of all the Scriptures [Luke 24:25-27, 44-47]. Paul set the tone for our preaching by saying, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” [1 *Corinthians 2:2*]. Friends, a sermon is not *Christian* unless it is *Christocentric*.

Preach with Unction

“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” [Acts 4:31]. The anointing of the Spirit is necessary for true boldness in preaching. Apart from the Spirit’s empowerment, a preacher might muster some fervor, but he will lack authority, and might not even possess the courage to maintain God’s truth before sinners [John 16:13; 1 John 5:6]. The right proclamation of the Word requires holy unction, which comes by the grace of God through prayer.

Preach with Clarity

God himself has condescended tremendously to help us understand his will [John 1:14]. Therefore, preachers have no right to dwell in theological obscurity in their pulpits, but are called to preach with clarity [Colossians 4:2-4]. If it is important that the Gospel be *understood* by all who hear [Acts 2:7-11], then preaching should be not only in the common language, but also concise, uncluttered, logical, and memorable. Preachers do well to improve upon these basics of clear communication as they seek to imitate the Fountainhead of all communication, the Word of God incarnate [Matthew 4:17; Colossians 1:16].

Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.