

Preaching *God's* word

Steve Thomas, Salt & Light International

Introduction

"If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God." 1 Peter 4.11

Preaching is far more than the **communication of information**, and far more than **teaching**.

Preaching is

- The communication of faith – to fuel life
- The communication of encouragement – to lift the spirit
- The communication of conviction – to strengthen belief
- The communication of passion – to stir commitment

Preaching operates on many fronts at the same time. We need to think about content, illustration, exegesis and application, in order to rightly reflect the genre of the part of scripture we are looking at, and also about tone, spirit, voice and atmosphere. Preaching is *impartation and transmission*, as much as *information and revelation*.

NT Greek words for preaching

1. *euaggelizo* – preach/tell/shout the good news
2. *katangelo* – tell thoroughly
3. *kerusso* – proclaim like a herald, trumpet out
4. *laleo* – talk, discourse, go on talking / explaining
5. *prographo* – set forth as a public notice / publicly placard/display

Note: four out of the five words are pretty dynamic!

So what is the preacher of *God's* word doing?

The preacher is a kerux, or herald. And preaching is kerygma, which is both the act of heralding, and the content of what is heralded

Preaching is more than speaking, it is a "doing" thing

- God's word "creates". The word becomes "flesh"
- *Dabar* in Hebrew is translated both "word" and "thing". Cf Isaiah 55.10-12: when God speaks (through his servants) the word is active, and something happens!

The preacher believes: "What I've got to say is true, and it's going to get you."

Making the word of God central

We are heralds and stewards of something that does not belong to us. So we have a responsibility to be faithful in what we say.

- It is a high calling to preach and teach God's word: 1 Tim 5.17
- The scripture is the "expiration of God". 2 Tim 3.16 God has breathed his breath into the text – this is what is meant by "the inspiration of scripture". It is sacred, creative and powerful. SO 2 Tim 4, preach the word...
- God's words give life. Your ideas or the world's may entertain and be somewhat apposite, but they do not inspire life quite life God's word does!

1. You've been given a passage to preach on: do your exegesis

If you are given a passage to preach on, find out what it says properly – what it originally meant – this is **exegesis**. (A good book is *How to read the Bible for all its worth* by Stuart and Fee).

- First principle: it can't mean now what it didn't mean then.
- Read it several times, in different translations: reference to original languages may help, but often doesn't
- Work carefully to understand it yourself
- Read the text carefully, and note the main points
- Establish the context of the passage
- Follow the Ezekiel 3 principle: "eat the scroll, and sit with the people". This can't be rushed!

2. You've been given a theme: pick the right passage

- If you are given a theme to speak on, choose the right passage to illuminate the theme, not an abstruse one!
- Then go through the same disciplines outlined in point 1.

3. Hermeneutics: ask what does it mean today

- Once you have established what the passage meant originally, ask what it means to us today? This is called hermeneutics.
- It is God's eternal word now, but there may be language distance, geography distance, culture distance and history distance, all of which have to be understood and explained.

4. Two key questions

- How does this passage relate to the "big picture" themes of scripture? Everything needs to relate to the overall Bible story and salvation-history. Your text and preaching should complement or expand on this.
- Does the passage I am expounding apply primarily to individuals, or to communities/groups of God's people. Beware of domesticating God's word, when it is talking of big/kingdom/global issues.

5. Shape up your talk

You then need to go through some of the processes that will be outlined by others today – deciding how to package the word, how to illustrate it, and how to make it relevant to your audience. I will not stray on to other people's territory today.

Preaching God's word with passion

By passion, I mean, with "feeling"! Passion is more than just getting excited, waving your arms around, or trying to whip up response. Emotion simply arouses emotion, and in the UK at least, may simply turn people off, since we don't normally welcome great displays of emotion.

Passion is linked to conviction, which is related to authority, faith and confidence.

1. Authority

You can't preach with conviction, if it's not in the Bible, what the Bible says, and what the Bible means. So:

- We make sure we expound scripture properly, and we quote it abundantly, to add weight to what we are saying. God is behind this!
- What is our authority when we stand up?
NOT "I believe..."
BUT "It is written..."

2. Faith

You can't preach with conviction:

- What you don't believe – faith communicates faith
- What is just theory, but isn't being translated into practice in your own life. This is just a resounding gong or clashing cymbal
- What you don't understand, and haven't got on top of. That shows double quick to everyone!
- What you haven't "seen" with your own eye of faith. People "hear" when you haven't really got revelation, if it's not the "real thing". People aren't stupid!!! They know a fraud when they see one.

3. Confidence

You can only preach with conviction, if you have a deep underlying confidence that:

- This word is going to change lives
- The word of God brings faith and conviction
- The Holy Spirit is at work as we preach

You can't preach with conviction, if you don't really think it will do anything. "Hoping for the best" is not a good platform for preaching.

Conclusion

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Workshop

In pairs, read Galatians 2:20

Discuss what points you would make if preaching from this verse.

After 15 minutes we will come back together to hear very brief feedback from each group.