

“Christ-Centered Preaching” (Part 1)

I’ve never been much into the “art” or the “science” of crafting sermons. (I wouldn’t know a hermeneutic from a homiletic if one jumped up and bit me!) I’m sure there are some skills any of us can learn to make us better preachers or teachers – if that’s your goal. Sermons and Bible study lessons are rather easy. Getting a word from God can be another story!

Since Christ is the Word of God from God He has to be at the center of every word from God. There is no way to God except through Jesus Christ (Jo 14:6). There is no word from God that does not have Him as its primary point of reference. The two most often used references to being Christian or living Christianly are:

- 1) “in Christ” – He is the context for all things Christian.
- 2) “Christ in us/you” – He is the contents for all things Christian.

Any sermon or teaching that disregards or ignores that central truth is hard pressed to call itself “Christian”.

It follows, then, that if Christ is the context for all things Christian, and, the Bible is the primary text for Christian truth, then the context (Christ) must give the text (Bible) its proper meaning. Without maintaining the proper context, the text – its history, its disclosure, its interpretations could be easily misunderstood and misapplied! All Christian teaching or preaching of the Bible must be Christ-focused, Christ-centered.

This is most clearly seen, perhaps, in the Emmaus road encounter between Jesus and two very dejected disciples. (See Luke 24:1-49) In this exchange Jesus is claiming to be the main point and the meaning of all the Scriptures. You might think of it as the very first “Sunday School” class! In this initial post-resurrection Bible study, the Word of God Himself is both the Teacher and the Subject. He is claiming to be the Lord of every passage, in the Pentateuch, in the Prophets, in the Psalms. “All of these”, He states clearly, “were written about Me”. (Lk 24:44) From the beginning, He was showing them how to read, how to teach, how to interpret all the Scriptures – with Him as the focus, the meaning, the center of it all!

Christ-focused teaching and preaching will never have mere historical facts... impersonal principles... the law... the devil... faith... man and his needs... as the center. Any proclamation without Jesus Christ the Lord at the front and center, is mostly humanism (Christo-centrism and human-ism are deadly enemies – they cannot be mixed.) Any “meal” served at church without Christ as the main dish, the main course, is mostly junk-food (it may taste good going down – short-term gains – but will be quite toxic in the end – long-term losses).

We must, as speakers and listeners, test everything by Jesus – He is our one and only standard for all valuation and interpretation. What cannot be oriented to Him will have a dis-orienting affect on the Church. Whatever cannot be integrated into Him will have a dis-integrative effect on our lives. He is our inerrant, infallible Word. He is the One Who exegetes God in full for us (Jo 1:18; 14:9).



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Greetings

Twenty-one years ago this month I was writing to you about the crisis that both our culture and our churches were in. Sad to say, not much has changed (for the better). We still face a crisis of orientation as we seek fulfillment and meaningfulness outside of Christ. We compulsively pursue God-forsaken objectives and wonder why our culture and our churches end up so misshapen. God is still calling us away from organizing our lives around the things that are passing away in order to organize everything around Christ Who abides forever.

We remain in a crisis of freedom. To live freely God's children must experience the severing power of the cross and express the enabling power of the resurrection. This is the (only) antidote to the anti-Christ "non-gospels" of legalism and license. To refuse such freedom is the source of so much of our mediocrity and boredom in the church as well as the fear and chaos that characterizes the world.

This disorientation and bondage are the results of how we choose to handle the crisis of truth. Any time we claim, "I have a right to decide for myself what is good and bad for me, what is true and what is false - without any reference to the Truth Himself" - those are the consequences. Any operational oneness with God requires us to humbly consent to God's Truth and then to orient our lives accordingly. As we are willing for Him to be the Willer, every crisis works for us as His Truth is moved from the Unseen to the seen realm in which we reside.

Calendar


JULY

9 Alachua Bible Study
19-21 Waymart, PA (607-341-6062)
28 First Baptist Church Alachua


SEPT 22-28 Fraser, CO (Men's Advent. Week – full)


OCT 25-27 Louisville, KY (502-664-5622)

Praise & Prayer

 The Truth that sets us and keeps us free (Jo 8:31-36)

 Our imperishable inheritance in Christ (I Pet 1:3-5)

 Christ-centered preachers and teachers (Lk 24:27,44)

 To make proper use of our freedom to serve one another in love (Ga 5:13)