

The Cruciality of Preaching

(PREACHING AS A MEANS OF GRACE)

Note hearing *versus* seeing as biblical metaphors for faith: hearing takes precedence over seeing.
p71. Moses, the judges and the prophets preached. Note context and content.

Jesus recapitulates prophetic preaching. Note the four features.

Note preaching as a sacrament. As in any dispute over sacraments (see the Reformation!) the crucial matter is, "How is the truth, reality and efficacy of *God* related to *creaturely* elements, in this case human speech?" The problem is how to articulate our understanding of Christ's presence and activity (through preaching) without suggesting magic or superstition. How is what is heard with the ear related to what can only be "heard" with the heart? While few would want to suggest a "transubstantiation of the sermon", no one wants to uphold "real absence."

Major preachers in the history of the church:

The Greek Church: Chrysostom (337-407)

The Latin Church: Augustine (354-430)

Note: Augustine's subordination of rhetoric to the wellbeing of hearers;
: the preacher must teach, delight, and influence (*docere, delectare, flectare*) as the preacher addresses the hearer's intellect, affect and will.

Note A's three styles of preaching: the restrained, the moderate, the grand.

Note A's grasp of biblical logic and the absence of moralistic distortion.

The Mediaeval Era: preaching declined as preachers tended to be poorly educated and the "visible" eclipsed the "audible."

The Reformation Era:

Luther: the gospel is the promise of God fulfilled in our midst. "The gospel is oral/aural."

: the centrality of Christology.

: the catechetical motif.

: his three-fold understanding of "Word of God."

Calvin: the gospel is the effectual presence of Jesus Christ (presence and power)

: not as popular as Luther, but a better exegete.

: massive doctrinal content.

: under him the sermon became the centre of Reformed worship in Geneva.

: with C there is always a strong cognitive content in preaching, yet he's not a rationalist: C is *the* "theologian of the Holy Spirit."

A Theology of Preaching:

Note the role of Scripture as prophetic/apostolic witness.

Note the dynamic of testimony *to* Jesus that becomes, by grace, the word *of* Jesus himself; i.e., as we preach, JC adopts it, owns it, and renders it the vehicle of his self-impartment; hearers now encounter him, not merely hear human speech about him.

p76. In the Reformation, preaching was the preacher's offering of the person of JC in the totality of *his* reality. In Prot. Scholasticism preaching became (a) defense of a theological position, (b) exposition of doctrine, (c) combining (a) and (b), a course in Systematic Theology.

Note how preaching differs from doctrine/theology. We need both in the church, but they are not the same.

Note how "conservative" and "liberal" churches today characteristically distort preaching.

p78. Schleiermacher, the father of liberal Protestantism, maintained that proclaiming God was the same as testifying to one's experience.

Note: [a] we are not to preach ourselves but JC

[b] at the same time, the preacher is not to be a "wind-up" voice machine.

As preachers we are witnesses to our Lord:

[a] *He* is the one we commend

[b] we are witness *to* him because first witnesses *of* him

[c] we have no control/power over the true effectiveness of our preaching.

p81. Note Bonhoeffer: "Nothing is more concrete than the real voice of Christ speaking in the sermon."

(PREACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD)

- [a] we must preach the whole counsel of God: judgement and grace, sin and salvation, etc.
 - [b] ""in the sense of preaching its constituent parts and preaching them in their interrelatedness.
 - [c] ""as gathered up and focused and understood in the light of the cross.
 - [d] we must always use our theology as a check on our preaching.
 - [e] while Bloesch is correct in saying we should preach on specific sins, we should also preach on our sinnership as the human condition lest we moralize both it and the gospel.
- In all of this we must
- [a] do our utmost to make the gospel understandable
 - [b] admit we can do nothing to make the gospel believable
 - [c] aspire after godliness ourselves. Preaching isn't "wordsmithing."

(REFORMED WORSHIP)

Scripture and preaching (and Holy Spirit) give rise to the congregation's ever-renewed acquaintance with Him who is *the* living Word.

S. and sermon are essential to public worship.

Both testaments should be read.

There *is* a place for topical preaching. (Advocates of expository preaching exclusively forget that Jesus was a topical preacher.)

The primacy of the Word governs our understanding of hymnody.

Note the nature of objective and subjective hymns.

Unless the Word is essential, worship degenerates from ascribing worthiness to God to worshipping ourselves.

There is a place for the visual -- but never as a replacement for the audible.

In all of this the Word (gospel/gospel preached) determines the parameters of "church", not denominational edicts!

p91. Shepherd disagrees with Bloesch about over-frequency of the sacrament and about the force of the sacrament compared to the force of preaching.

(BIBLICAL VERSUS CULTURAL PREACHING)

- [a] preaching isn't biblical just because it uses a biblical vocabulary. (Remember Arius.)
- [b] ""just because it uses biblical stories. (logic of S. *versus* illustrations from S.)
- [c] preaching is biblical when the logic of S. is the logic of the sermon.

p94.bottom 95. Tillich and Brunner on "correlation".

- [a] the gospel isn't simply heaven-sent answers to our questions.
- [b] at the same time, our questions have to be addressed.

p95. The "power of the keys": a huge Reformation dispute:

Rome: the church (defined by the Roman hierarchy) wields the power of the keys.

Reformation: the power of the keys is the efficacy of the gospel; but the gospel is the gospel only as the gospel is announced; therefore the preaching of the gospel is the power of the keys, and the gospel(preached) defines the church.

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