

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

Ecclesiastes 5 v 1, 2 Timothy 4 v 1 – 5. To understand the full importance of preaching we need to understand the basic nature of corporate worship (not personal worship, which is a separate area of teaching). We can identify seven different eras of collective gathering for worship:

- i) Mount Sinai - Deuteronomy 5 v 22. The first recorded collective gathering around God since the Fall. The people encircled the mountain of God.
- ii) The Tabernacle. Placed in the middle of the camp of God's people with God's presence on the Ark in the Holy of Holies.
- iii) The Temple. The House of God was seen as the centre of national life, with the whole nation "going up" to Jerusalem.
- iv) Jesus in person. Immanuel, God with us. He was always the centre of attention, even occupying the middle cross. Matthew 18 v 20 AV.
- v) The Spirit and Word. The Church era foretold by Jesus in John 4 v 24 (spirit and truth). Thus, the anointed teaching of the Word is the principal means whereby God reveals Himself in this era. Prayer, praise, and Communion do not represent God's presence; they constitute our response. This is why after the Reformation, the non-conformist churches did away with the altar, putting the pulpit in the centre, where the preaching of the Bible represents the presence of the living Word.
- vi) The Millennial Temple - Isaiah 2 v 2 – 3, Zechariah 14 v 9. Jesus reigns over His Kingdom on earth from Jerusalem.
- vii) The New Jerusalem - Revelation 21 v 3 & 22 – 23. God will be forever with His people, in the midst of them.

In each of these eras of corporate worship the essential feature is that God is in the midst of His people. In the Church era, v) above, God makes His central presence felt and heard through the anointed preaching of His Word. This principle also applies to preaching at any level, even one-to-one - "gossiping the Gospel".

1. What preaching really is

Four passages of scripture progressively make the idea plain:

- a) Isaiah 55 v 10 – 11. The unseen, immortal God wishes His Word to reach the hearts and lives of ordinary people in the same way as rain reaches the ground. Like rain, He wants His Word to produce fruit in human lives according to His purposes.
- b) Matthew 11 v 27. Jesus makes the astounding claim that the revelation of God's Word will only come about through Him.
- c) John 1 v 1, 14, 18. John backs this up by describing Jesus as the Word, that is, the total and inseparable revelation of the heart, mind and will of God. Indeed, it is only through the Word that any understanding of the one true God has been revealed, starting with His will to bring about creation in the first place (John 1 v 3, Colossians 1 v 16, Hebrews 11 v 3, Genesis 1 repeatedly "And God said...").

- d) 2 Corinthians 5 v 18 – 20. If Jesus is the Word, the only One who can truly reveal the one true God, now that He has returned to Heaven how does God reveal Himself to each generation? The answer is that He has delegated this responsibility to those who have the Holy Spirit, i.e., each true believer. We have the ministry of reconciliation; we are ambassadors for Christ. So, at whatever level we are preaching the word, we do so on His behalf, equipped with the Holy Spirit. Preaching is standing in the Lord's place, in His name, filled with His Spirit, declaring His Word – important indeed!

2. The heart of true preaching

1 Corinthians 1 v 20 – 25. The apostle pronounces preaching to be the declaration of the wisdom of God, whatever the world may think and believe. Even if the world's wisdom reckons our preaching to be foolish, we can be assured that it is God's wisdom that matters, and God's wisdom will prove correct every time. Paul added (Romans 1 v 16 - 17) that so powerful is this revelation of God's wisdom in Christ, with power, that it achieves a degree of transformation of human life that no other religion or philosophy can begin to approach. Thus, at the heart of true preaching is the declaration, with authority, "Thus says the Lord!" This is why the greatest turning points in human history have been when God has declared His Word - by prophets in the Old Testament and Christians in the New. Especially since the Reformation we have seen enormous revivals and social changes occurring through anointed preachers in the street, in the churches, in Parliament, and elsewhere. Preachers are to have no compromise with prevailing ideas and attitudes that are not rooted in the authority of the Word of God, whatever the prevailing wisdom.

3. Features of true biblical preaching

- a) A sense of urgency - Luke 4 v 16 – 21. Although the full outworking of this prophecy had not been complete when Jesus spoke at Nazareth, this would be the only opportunity for the people there to take note. They hated His words so much they wanted to kill Him and, as far as we know, they never heard Him preach again. Each meeting, service, and opportunity to witness is unique – a never-to-be-repeated occasion.
- b) A clear anointing - Romans 10 v 13 – 15. While the truth is clearly that anyone calling on the Lord will be saved, Paul argues that people will not call on Him if they do not believe, and they will not believe if they never hear, and they will never hear if they do not have a preacher, and no one will ever preach if no one is anointed (sent). The anointing, with a sense of being commissioned, is the first essential feature.
- c) An inner compulsion - 1 Corinthians 9 v 16. Preaching the Word is not an academic exercise, a hobby, or a pastime. Once called to share the Word by the Holy Spirit there is a driving force within that Christian.
- d) A deep understanding - Ephesians 3 v 8 – 9. Paul had been placed on one side for some years before he was ready to undertake the first missionary journey. During this time the Lord revealed the truth of the Gospel to him in the new era of grace that had just dawned. While preaching is for anyone who is called by the Holy Spirit, the true preacher will earnestly seek understanding and discernment of God's heart and mind (2 Timothy 2 v 15).
- e) A discharge of responsibility - Ezekiel 33 v 1 – 9. We are watchmen, and God will hold us accountable for missed opportunities.

2. The duties of all Christians toward preachers

- a) To pray for preachers - Ephesians 6 v 19 – 20. The church in Britain today (as elsewhere) desperately needs to hear what God has to say for this age.
- b) To support and encourage preachers. 1 Timothy 5 v 17 – 18. Even if we do not like their style, we need to uphold those who are truly called to the service of the Master.

3. Absence of true preaching is a sign of God's displeasure

1 Samuel 3 v 1 – "In those days the Word of the Lord was rare." This is an indication that when God's people are not listening to Him, He sometimes turns away and has very little to say to them. Is that the case today? May it never be true of our society as it was then with Israel.