

AWAITING GOSPEL PREACHING: SHOULD CHURCH MEMBERS EXPECT THE GOSPEL IN EVERY SERMON

If you've been in ministry for any length of time, then you know there are some times that we just get it wrong. We exegete a text wrongly, use a joke that is not helpful or even distracts, or we jump on a "soap-box" and go in a direction that has nothing to do with the Scriptures we're preaching. However, there is one faithful act that preachers should be doing that I believe they'll never have to apologize for. That is preaching the Gospel in every sermon. On the day you stand before your King to give an account for how you shepherded His sheep, you most likely won't have to say, "Jesus, I am truly sorry. I know that I preached the Gospel too many times. I shouldn't have done that." As ministers of the Gospel, if there is something that we should strive to overdue, let it be preaching the Gospel.

The longer I follow Jesus, the more I realize I'll never mature past the Gospel. You see, you never grow past the Gospel, but hopefully you're constantly maturing in the Gospel. Our preaching should reflect this as well. As we grow and mature in faithfully delivering God's word to God's people, week in and week out, we should mature in how we weave the Gospel into every message.

In context, every Scripture expects to be preached in light of the Gospel. Every preacher should have expectations upon themselves to deliver the Gospel every week to church members that should expect to receive it, understand it, and live it out in their daily lives.

Here are at least four reasons why church members should expect the Gospel in every sermon:

1. Hopefully, there are non-Christians in the crowd

Sadly, through the years of ministry I've heard church members from all different kinds of churches say, "Our pastor is always asking us to invite lost people to come to church with us. However, when we do, he never shares the Gospel." As preachers, if we're expecting church members to bring lost people, they should expect us to clearly communicate how their lost guests can be found. If we take sharing the Gospel seriously every weekend, then our congregants will take seriously the task of inviting the lost to hear it.

2. You're training church members how to share the Gospel

As a pastor, I often did what any other pastor would do: I encouraged church members to regularly share their faith with their lost friends, neighbors, and co-workers. That is the mission of the church — to be making disciples that make disciples. The doorway into discipleship is believing the Gospel message and surrendering to Jesus. We expect our congregation to share their faith, but we never teach them how to do it. Obviously, this isn't the only evangelism training we should be doing, but one of the ways people can learn how to clearly explain the Gospel is by hearing their pastor do it every week at some point in the sermon. Each one of us can tend to

be parrots at times. Meaning, we repeat what we hear over and over. If you want your members to repeat the Gospel, then let them hear it from you over and over and over again.

3. What we celebrate is what we're communicating as most important

This is one of the simplest principles in any church, ministry, or even business. Whatever you celebrate is what you're telling people is most important to you. If your church mainly celebrates the budget and offering, then people will evaluate your success and failures based on the bottom dollar. As a leader, if you're mainly celebrating the worship attendance, then the congregation will be disciplined into believing that is the measure of success — numbers up means God is blessing, numbers down must mean that God is not pleased and it may be time for a new pastor. However, communicating the Gospel and celebrating the lives that are being transformed by it every week is telling your congregation that this is the most important thing we could be doing. Not the results of the Gospel. That is up to the Lord. Celebrate faithfulness and obedience in proclaiming the Gospel. As the church, this is why we exist.

4. Every command is now in response to the Gospel

As New Testament Christians, everything we're commanded to do in Scripture is in response to what Christ first did for us. For example, we forgive because He first forgave us, we love because He first loved us, and we lay down our anger because He absorbed the Father's wrath for us. It's the same with any sermon. Whatever the subject matter of the text is, it must be preached in the light of the Gospel. The text may call for a sermon on stewardship. Yet, we cannot truly

understand Biblical generosity unless we personally know the generous Savior. Proper exegesis may call for missions, however, biblical missions calls for us to know and point the world to the Son of God who first took a mission trip from heaven to earth to be a suffering Savior. Every sermon should point to the Savior! Simply put, preach every text with integrity and preach every text in the light of the Gospel.

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In the town where I live, there are many different churches and most are known for something. There's the inward-focused church, the “deep” church, the political church, the entertaining church, the hipster church, and so on. If by God's grace your church was known as the Gospel-proclaiming church, that wouldn't be so bad would it?

“Many pastors criticize me for taking the Gospel so seriously. But do they really think that on Judgment Day, Christ will chastise me, saying, ‘Leonard, you took Me too seriously’?”

– Leonard Revenhill 



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