

The goal of our preaching– Sunday March 3rd 2013.

“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, saying, ² “Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the Lord’s house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!’ ³ Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.””

(Jeremiah 26:1-3)

Beloved in the Lord,

The goal of our preaching is not to condemn people but to bring them to repentance. Every single person that is not saved by the blood of Jesus Christ is on the road to eternal damnation. Our God given commission is to preach the Gospel with the hope that every lost person will find salvation in Jesus, will come to a point of repentance and put their faith in Jesus and spend eternity in Heaven.

This has always been, and always will be the goal of true preaching. Man’s natural tendency is rebellion against Almighty God. We are born in a state of sin, and so from birth are separated from God. The state of sin is inherited from Adam. We are born with a need to be reconciled with God. We can only be reconciled with God through the blood of Jesus. That is why we preach Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone!

Last Sunday we considered the fact that one of man’s greatest problems is a lack of Godly fear. People do not take the Word of God seriously. They do not believe in hell, the judgement, and the infallibility of the Bible.

Think about it for a moment:

If there is no judgement and no hell, why did Jesus come into the world in human form, suffer, shed His innocent blood, and die a sacrificial death, and rise again on Easter morning? If there is no hell, no eternal punishment, and somehow all will be well after we die, then Jesus was a fraud and He died in vain.

The truth is that Jesus is the Truth. He did not suffer and die in vain. Judgement is real, hell is real, the wages of sin is death and the only way to be saved is by the blood of Jesus Christ. Only His blood can wash away our sins and save us from eternal death.

We read in Acts 4:12:

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

This message has never been and never will be popular. God's truth is rarely popular because it cuts deep into our hearts. Jeremiah the prophet is a good example of the unpopularity of the truth. Our text today is God's command to Jeremiah to speak the truth. God gives him clear instructions to speak all the words that He has given him. If we read a little further in the chapter we find that the people tried to kill Jeremiah because they did not like his message!

A quick read of the New Testament book of Acts will show us that it was the same in the early Church. Most of Jesus disciples were martyred. Everywhere Paul went there was an ensuing riot, but also there was revival. Hearts were softened and people turned to Christ and were saved.

For the sake of those who do turn to Christ, it is worth suffering the abuse, and the persecution and even death if required because every soul is precious and we do not want any to be lost.

God's Word is powerful. We read in Hebrews 4:12-13

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

These verses give us the very reason so many people reject God's Word. They do not like it's sharpness, they do not like it's penetration, they do not like the fact that it exposes their sin and they certainly do not like being accountable to it.

This is why Satan is working so hard to shut up the prophets, the teachers of truth. Those that he cannot stop, he tries to persuade (and often succeeds) to water down the message, soften it, make it politically correct and palatable to the sinful mind. Satan does not want people to be saved.

The goal of our preaching is to bring people back to God. That is why we must never twist the message; we must never water it down. We must preach it in its entirety, we must live by it day by day. Our lives should reflect God's Word in word and deed and character.

We are living in the time of Grace. How much longer only God knows, but the day is coming when the door will be shut forever and then it will be too late!

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ

reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor.5:17-21)

Paul is clearly emphasising the need for reconciliation. Every single person needs to be reconciled to God. Paul also stresses that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. That is what we preach, and that is our mission. Everything that we do as a Church, as a congregation should be in fulfilment of the great commission given to us by Jesus Himself:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

You see our commission is from Jesus Himself. Not only he commissions us, He promises His own presence to lead, guide and empower us! Hallelujah. He promises to be with us always, and through the Holy Spirit He is!

If we faithfully cling to Him, and His Word, if we obey Him, then He will bless our work and people will be reconciled to Him.

I feel that God has laid it on my heart to emphasise Jesus words: ***“teaching them to observe all that I commanded you!”***

All, not part, not just this and that; but ALL. Not just the non-controversial parts; but all! Jesus tells us to TEACH ALL THAT HE HAS COMMANDED US! This means to take the whole Bible; the whole counsel of God and to faithfully teach it and preach it and live it.

Martin Luther, the father of our church understood this. The basis of his preaching was Law and Gospel. Luther rightly understood that you must first preach the Law so that the sinner can understand his lost state before Holy God; and then preach the Gospel stating that Jesus has taken the punishment; paid the sin debt in full because He loves us. If a person does not understand that he or she stands condemned before Almighty God; then the message of the Gospel is nonsense to them. A person must know that he needs a Saviour before accepting Him.

This type of preaching is sadly missing in most pulpits today, and that is why so few are truly born again; reconciled to God. As the late Keith Green said: “Going to Church does not make you a Christian anymore than going to MacDonald’s makes you a hamburger.”

The goal of our preaching is to bring people to repentance.

Let us pray that God helps us to be true to our calling. May He empower us to live the Gospel. Let us pray for courage, faith, love, and patience to always speak the truth in love.

I close with Paul's words to Timothy:

“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1.Tim.1:5)

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.