

The Matter of Preaching

Church Matters

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Take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to 2 Timothy 3. 2 Timothy 3. We're continuing today in our series on "Church Matters," and today we're going to consider the matter of expository preaching, the nature of preaching.

Maybe you have never actually stopped and asked questions about church. Why do we do this or why do we do that? Why the order of service that we have? Is it intentional? It is what we've always done? Why do we baptize the way we baptize? Why do we take the Lord's Supper? Why do we read Scripture in church, if you do that? Why pray so many times? Why do we have messages in the form that we have them? And I want to encourage you not to be a skeptic, but I do want to encourage you to be a thinker because there's something about asking the right questions and getting the right answers that brings us intentionality in what we do, and I think all too often we do too much that is a part of our faith and they are right things and maybe we actually do them for right reasons, but we don't do them with enough purpose. So I want to encourage you to think through church. Why do we do church? What is church? Where did it come from? And what are the elements that make church church from God's perspective? And really in this "Church Matters" series, that's really what we're endeavoring to do, is to think through church, and to take some of the things that we think God has pointed out as being important and essential to church and visiting them from the text of Scripture so that we really understand why we do what we do.

I'm gonna ask you to think about something this morning that I hope will frame your thinking about your general walk with God. Do you really believe that what you believe is really real? Do you really believe that what you believe is really real? "Okay, let me think through that. It's kind of early." Do you really believe that what you believe is really real? It's a question I think we all ought to ask and that we ought to answer by the evidence of our lives because if I really believe that what I believe is really real, I will really live it.

So I want to encourage you not to be a skeptic but to ask the right questions for the purpose of getting right answers so that you live with commitment, and I say that to you to say this morning, this series is not designed so that we will encourage you at some point to attend church a little more. That is not my purpose. The purpose is actually that

you will come to a place of convincing so that you will be committed to church, not just to attend a little more but to understand what commitment to a local body of believers actually looks like, and I hope that you understand that that means a whole lot more than just attending.

Preaching. Why do we preach? There was time that I was preaching and one of my children was sitting out in the congregation, I'd like to think taking really copious notes on what I was preaching but based upon her age, she was actually probably more drawing pictures of what I was preaching. She had her head down. She was fully engaged but listening and I, at times, as you probably understand, get quite energized when I'm speaking and I had gotten quite energized and my daughter almost just in clear tones, she wasn't real loud but she said while she was drawing, "Why does he always have to yell?" And of course, that caused rumblings and laughter all around her. And it would be easy to say, "Because that's what preaching is," but that is not what preaching is. It's not just slick oratory. It's not the ability to tell a great story. It's not the ability to captivate an audience so that they hang on every word, though I would say more preachers need to work more diligently on the trade of actually presenting the truth, but preaching is actually presenting the truth.

Why do we do it? It actually rests in where we were at the beginning of this series, and that is in the authority of Scripture. To set the context, just listen to a few phrases. I'm just gonna start and move quickly through some of 2 Timothy to get to our text, but listen to some of the things that Paul writes to Timothy. He says, chapter 1, verse 6, "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." Verse 8, "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Verse 9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." He says in verse 11, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher." Verse 13, "Hold fast the form of sound words." Chapter 2, he says, "but the word of God is not bound," in verse 9. Verse 14, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them." Verse 15 you know well, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," listen, "rightly dividing the word of truth." He says in verse 25, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." He comes to chapter 3 and he says, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine." Verse 15, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures." Do you hear falling from chapter 1 all the way to our text that Paul is writing to Timothy about the importance of the word and its presentation in his ministry, and thus we come to chapter 3 and verse 16 and he writes these all-familiar words,

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
[listen] 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not

endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Preaching. I want us to see quickly four things about preaching. 1. I want us to see the demand for expository preaching. The demand for expository preaching. You see the phrase in chapter 4 where Paul gives a charge to Timothy and that charge is preach the word, and it's based on the fact that he says, "therefore." I believe textually that "therefore" is actually referring back to verse 17 of chapter 3 and we'll see a second part of the charge that comes down at the end of this passage. So I want us to contemplate verse 17 because it's there that we see the intended purpose of God in his word in its impact on man. God has given us the word and it has four facets to it which we've explored before, we won't today, but there's four applications of the word of God to our life and those applications accomplish a purpose and that purpose is that the man of God would be fully equipped, completely outfitted, to fit in a sufficient or complete way. One lexicon translates it "able to meet all demands." In other words, he says the full counsel of God's word enables the man of God to meet all the demands which life may require of him. The demand for preaching is this: that people in order to live rightly for God need to rightly understand and apply God's truth to their lives. That's why preaching is demanded, because people need to know and understand the word of God so that they might rightly apply it to their lives because it will outfit them to successfully live for God. That's why preaching.

Thoroughly equipped means completely outfitted; having that which is necessary for every need. You see, the Scriptures are able, young people, to fully furnish you, to completely equip you, to thoroughly outfit you for the tasks of living a godly life. I would say it to you this way: if the word of God is absent from your life, you will not live successfully for God in this life. We need the word of God. We need not just to have it around, we don't need a book to be a form of idolatry that it sits on our shelf like an idol. We actually need the truth of the Scriptures so that we get into the word in such a way that the word gets into us so that we're thoroughly outfitted.

It's our resource when challenges come, and so therefore the demand for preaching the word actually has in the backdrop the need. How should I preach the word? Should I just preach about the word? Should I just find a neat phrase in the word and then from that, then give you my own thoughts and my own understanding and maybe my own application? Should I get your attention by just telling you stories? Understand that if it is the word itself that thoroughly equips, completely outfits and enables us to live successfully for God in this life, you don't need stories about the word, what you need is the word and thus the charge to preach the word.

It was the responsibility of Timothy. Paul actually understood it as his responsibility when in chapter 1 he referred to himself as a preacher. So what is preaching? We've seen the demand for preaching, now let's look at a definition of expository preaching. Here's how I captured, this is just Alan's definition: it is the proclamation of divine truth from human personality to human personality for the purpose of change to the glory of God.

The proclamation of divine truth from human personality to human personality for the purpose of change to the glory of God. And so there's a source, the proclamation of divine truth. There is a presentation, it's a proclamation, a declaration of truth, God's truth, God's word coming through human personality that God has equipped, that God has provided a life to so that that life can present the truth at any given setting; there is something to the actual nature and personality and giftedness of the preacher, therefore they don't all have to be the same; to human personality, there's an audience involved. God has a message for an audience and you individually as a part of that audience, God has a message for you. And so being mindful of who that audience is in the presentation of that truth, but it's proclaimed for the purpose of change. It's not just teaching for teaching's sake. It's not just presenting facts so that people can fill their head. It actually is a proclamation that's presented in such a way that it brings a call to change in response to that truth, and that all of that, both the proclamation, the use of the giftedness and the call to change, are all for the glory of God. This is preaching.

Understand that I'm not referring to expository preaching merely as a style or a technique as much as I am as an approach to the source material; that expository preaching really has in mind that the purpose of what I'm about to do is to expose what God has said; it is to take what is in the text and expose it in such a way that it can be seen. That is the idea of exposition. An expository sermon rises from the biblical text and from nowhere else. The information, explanation, application, and exhortation are all in clear fashion linked to the text, its message, its purpose and its significance.

I'm leery of people and I understand there are people that say expressions and don't really think a whole lot through it, but I'm leery of expressions like, "Can't wait to go preach. God has given me a message." No, God has given you a book and God has a message, and my job is merely to expose from God's text God's message because it is God through his word that will change lives. That must be the passion of preaching, that it approaches a God-given message with the heart being that I want merely for people to see, know and understand what God has said.

So exposing the meaning of the text, recognizing that the message is in the text, and that the power of change comes from the text. This is preaching. You'll understand it in its content; that content by and large of the message ought to be the truth of Scripture. It's interesting, this word "preach the word," when Paul calls himself a "preacher," he uses an interesting Greek word that isn't just found uniquely in Scripture, it was a word that was in use in the day. Paul in chapter 1:11 calls himself a preacher, and the word that he uses there is the idea of a herald; a town crier; a messenger who is vested with public authority who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons or demand and performed various other duties with the understanding that he in his person added not one single ounce of authority to the message that was declared. It wasn't his to translate, to interpret, to explain or even to apply. It was his merely to pronounce the message of his authority. A herald. This is a preacher and if he is to preach, he is to declare the message of the king.

Paul here in this passage of Scripture, then, gives us, thirdly, the demonstration of expository preaching. Notice what he says to Timothy about this preaching the word and he really says three things that he is to do. He reaches out to his heart with passion and he says to him that, "This thing that you're supposed to do, I want to encourage you to do it with all longsuffering and doctrine; that you do it with truth; and that you do it with passion that won't give in." In other words, "Keep on. Be passionate about preaching the word."

He reinforces this earlier in the text when he says to him, "Do it when it's convenient and do it when it's not, in season and out of season; that there will be times that you can't wait to get up and preach." Like today, I have been so eager to preach but there are times that due to the nature of the truth that you are proclaiming, or due to the needs that are so obvious to the people that you're preaching to, that it's not convenient, that the heart is heavy, that it's difficult, but in both of those occasions realize what God can and will do through preaching and preach the word. Be ready to preach when it's convenient and when it's not. And do it with longsuffering. Do it with a persistent perseverance to the task; that you will labor in the word, labor over the word, labor in presenting the word because it matters so much.

Young people, as you think about picking a church, don't pick a church where you go on a Sunday and you hear great stories. Go in with a heart and with a mind that asks the question: am I hearing the word of God? Does that mean the preacher is perfect? No. Does it mean that he at times won't make, ever make a mistake? That maybe he's off his game, if you will, and the presentation isn't as good as it could have been? That's not what I'm saying, but you need to approach a church and you need to approach it with this primary thought: am I hearing and understanding the word of God? Is it being preached to me in a way that is calling me to life-change so that I might live to the glory of God? If the word of God is intended to outfit to live successfully, am I hearing the word in such a way that it's challenging me in my thinking and it's encouraging me in my living so that I might better live for God? If you're attending a church and that is not true, friends, you need to go find a church where the word of God is preached.

Timothy is encouraged to preach the word and there's three dynamics to it: reprove, rebuke, exhort. And actually the words there are interesting. That first word, to reprove, actually has the idea of convincing; that I should present the word of God in such a fashion that it is bringing about an impact on the will that convinces me that what I am hearing is not just true but it's necessary. To rebuke means to confront. The idea of reproving or to censure, it's speaking seriously with a tone that warns about the cost of not heeding what I'm hearing; that I contemplate, in a sense, the dangers of not doing what the truth of God is calling me to do. And then thirdly, to exhort, the idea is to challenge, to urge, to encourage, to make life-change in light of life-changing truth. I'd say it is presented in such a way that it calls us to change. The word of God ought to impact the way we live.

I want to take you, then, to the fourth thing and I want to make some application for us in our setting. The decision of expository preaching. You note at the end of this section

there's an ominous warning, verse 3, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," and I really think the emphasis of the text there is upon the will; that there's a willful decision that I am not putting up with something. And sound doctrine here is actually describing the very nature of the truth that he's encouraged Timothy to preach. It's not that they won't put up with Timothy, it's that they won't put up with the truth that Timothy is being challenged to declare, "but after their own lusts," their own desires of their heart, what they want, they'll "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." In other words, "We'll tell you what we want and we expect you to listen and then tell us what we want." It's a warning. They'll "turn their ears away from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Friends, there's a decision when it comes to expository preaching. Have you ever heard the expression, "Familiarity breeds contempt"? That sometimes I'm so familiar with something that I don't appreciate it anymore? Do you know that's easy for us? It's easy for us with the amount of preaching we receive here at Bob Jones University? But you don't sit in contempt for the word of God, but there's a sense in which you're no longer giving it the audience that it demands.

You can tell I'm preaching from an iPad, that I'm a guy that's given to electronics. I love them and so preach from an iPad, I use my phone often for my Bible reading, but you know, I've done something different this year on purpose. Doing my Bible reading now, I've picked a plan, I'm reading four chapters in the mornings, I read in four different places in the Bible, and I decided this year that I was going to go back to reading from a book. Why? To engage my mind. I wanted it to be different and so I went really old school. I sit down to do my Bible reading in the morning, I open my Bible and I get out two things: I get a pencil and an old school ruler. I had to go find one. And as I read the Scriptures, I actually am looking for verses in every passage that I can underline, and do you know what I found just by doing something different like that? I am so engaged in my Bible reading. I'm looking for truth that I want to jump out at me. I'm looking for truth that I want to speak to me.

Young people, I want to give you an encouragement: the word of God demands your presence. What do I mean by that? I don't mean that you sit here. I mean that there's a decision of the will that says, "When the word of God is being presented in the way that God wants it presented, I will exercise my will to give it first place." Do you know what that means? It means that even now while I'm speaking, a bunch of you need to lift your heads and stop texting whoever you're texting right now. It means that some of you need to stop generating memes while the word of God is being preached. It means some of you right now need to stop scrolling through pictures that really will not matter in eternity.

You see, this was a willful decision for them. They made a willful decision that the word of God was not going to be primary and the end result of that was that they turned away from the truth, and so what this means for us, the decision of preaching is for me. When the word of God is being presented, I will make a willful decision to give it first place. That is not to give the preacher first place, it is to give the word of God first place. I want to challenge you for the rest of this semester, give the word of God in chapel first place in

chapel. Not where you're sitting. Not who you're seated by. Not who you're texting. Not how quickly you can get out and get to lunch. I know all of those things are important and I know life happens but, friends, this is God's word and it is God's given means for you to live successfully in a world that is increasingly difficult to live for God in, and you cannot do it without God instructing your heart and God will not instruct your heart unless you make the willful choice to say, "God, your word's being declared. I will give it my primary attention."

Find a church that makes much of the preaching of God's word.

Let's pray.

*Father, dismiss us with your blessing. Thank you for your word. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.*