



The Pulpit Ministry of

# LONDONDERRY FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Sermon Series:

## THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

### #2: What It Is To Preach Christ

A vast volume of preaching is delivered in pulpits dotted across the world, excellent in its own way, that just **cannot** be said to be “preaching Christ.”

It is *about* Him ... but it falls down at this hurdle that it does not actually *preach Him*.

The difference between preaching about Christ and preaching Christ has been put well by an Indian preacher who noticed, and lamented, the lack of the faithful preaching of Christ in his day.

He said, “*If we knew that Christ were actually come into our village, we should stop talking about Him and bid*

*the hearers go at once to see and hear Him for themselves.”*

This is what preaching Christ really means. It is not only teaching about Him, but the presentation of Him before the hearers as One who is actually present and ready to receive and bless them.

The result of such preaching will be that those who listen will not only know about Him - an excellent virtue in itself - but will come to know Him, which is far, far better.

*What is it to Preach Christ?*

We preach Christ when:

**[1] WE REPRESENT HIM AS A LIVING PERSON AS DISTINCT FROM AN HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF WHOM WE READ IN THE BIBLE.**

Other religions reverence the memory, treasure and showcase the relics, and study the teachings of their long-since-dead founders.

For example:

- **Buddha's tooth** has a wonderful temple shrine;

### **The relic in India**

According to Sri Lankan legends, when the Buddha died, his body was cremated in a sandalwood pyre at Kusinara in India and his left canine tooth was retrieved from the funeral pyre by Arahat Khema. Khema then gave it to King Brahmadatte for veneration. It became a royal

possession in Brahmadatte's country and was kept in the city of Dantapuri (present day Puri in Orissa).

A belief grew that whoever possessed the Sacred Tooth Relic had a divine right to rule that land. Wars were fought to take possession of the relic. 800 years after the Buddha's death, in the 4th century CE, the tooth came into the possession of King Guhaseeva of Kalinga, which roughly corresponds to the present day state of Orissa.

Kalinga became a Buddhist and began to worship the Sacred Tooth relic. This caused discontent among some of the citizens, who went to King Paandu and said that King Guhaseeva had stopped believing in god and that he had started to worship a tooth.

King Paandu decided to destroy the relic, and ordered to it brought to the city. It is said that, as the tooth arrived at the city, a miracle occurred, and King Paandu converted to Buddhism.

This prompted an attack by another king - and, when he was defeated - further attacks by his sons. However, the relic was secretly carried out of the city by princess Hemamala, who, according to legend, hid the relic in her hair ornament and the royal couple disguised themselves as Brahmins in order to avoid discovery.

They set sail from Tamralipti, a port at the mouth of the river Ganges, and landed in Sri Lanka. It is said that Sri Lanka was chosen as the new home for the tooth relic because the Lord Buddha had declared that his religion would be safe in Sri Lanka for 2,500 years.

## **The relic in Sri Lanka**

At the time of Hemamala's arrival on the island, King Kithsirimevan ruled Sri Lanka. The King was overjoyed when he heard the news and warmly welcomed the royal couple and received the Sacred Tooth Relic with great veneration. He built a beautiful palace within the Royal Palace Complex itself and enshrined the Relic in it. Thereafter, he ordered that an annual *perahera* be held in honour of the Sacred Relic.

Upon each change of capital, a new palace was built to enshrine the Relic. Finally, it was brought to Kandy where it is at present, in the 'Temple of the Tooth.'

The Sacred Tooth Relic came to be regarded as a symbolic representation of the living Buddha and it is on this basis that there grew up a series of offerings, rituals, and ceremonies. A hierarchy of officials and temple functionaries are in position to perform the services and rituals.

## **Other tooth relics**

Aside from this specific tooth relic, another relic of the tooth of the Buddha is currently in a temple in China, a monastery in Taiwan, the reliquary hall in Japan, and the Buddha Relic Tooth Temple in Chinatown, Singapore - are all also reputed to each contain a tooth of the Buddha.

- **Mohammed's bones** rest in a stone coffin at Medina, Saudi Arabia, the second holiest city in Islam;

Like Mecca, the city of Medina only permits Muslims to enter. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims come to Medina annually to visit the *Tomb of Prophet* and to

worship at mosques in a unified celebration. Muslims believe that praying once in the *Mosque of the Prophet* is equal to praying 1000 times in an ordinary mosque.

The followers of this prophet proclaim his past virtues and repeat his sayings, and cover their shrines with holy carpets.

And while Roman Catholicism is not even a degree removed from these false practices, true Bible Christianity is far removed from them.

**Jesus lives!**  
**No longer thy portals are cheerless,**  
**Jesus lives!**  
**The mighty and strong to save!**

We have a glorified and glorious Saviour. Therefore our preaching must, of necessity, be something quite different!

Take this illustration.

A child who longed to know how to be saved saw a sermon by Mr Moody on a table in her own home. The sermon was lying face downwards so that the last page was uppermost. The child's eyes fell on the closing words of the message.

They were: *"If anyone wants to come to Jesus, He's here now - tell Him so."*

It brought light, salvation and joy to the child; she came to Him in the way recommended by Moody.

Mr Moody knew how to “preach Christ”!

We preach Christ when:

**[2] WE REMIND THE HEARERS THAT HE IS  
PRESENT IN THE GATHERING.**

This is expressed nowhere better than in Joseph D. Smith’s hymn:

**Jesus Christ is passing by,  
Sinner, lift to Him thine eye;  
As the precious moments flee,  
Cry, ‘Be merciful to me.’**

**Lo, He stands and calls to thee,  
“What wilt thou then have of Me?”  
Rise, and tell Him all thy need;  
Rise, He calleth thee indeed.**

Our Lord’s promise is plain in respect of this; **Matthew 28:20**: *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

He is present when the Word is preached, to work with us and confirm the word with signs following.

Faith does not hang around to feel or even realise this fact; faith simply believes it and acts on the assurance that it is true.

Therefore the man who preaches Christ calls the attention of those who hear him to the fact that they are in the presence of the Lord.

Faith has been described as “making allowance for a thing.” If the preacher really believes His Lord is present, he will make allowance for it and act accordingly.

Evidently, this is how the apostle Paul presented Christ when he was in Galatia.

He reminds the churches in this region of this fact in **Galatians 3:1**: *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”*

- In his preaching in Galatia, as elsewhere, Paul had resolved to *“know nothing but Christ and Him crucified”* (**1 Corinthians 2:2**).

- His gospel, his message was *“the preaching of the cross ... the power of God”* (**1 Corinthians 1:18**).

- In Galatia, Christ had been preached with such plainness and power that Paul was able to say of them, *“... before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you”!*

It is an interesting way to put it ... . What he means is, *“What we did, Paul and my friend Barnabas, when we were among you in Galatia, we could not have done any more than we did in presenting Jesus to you in the clearest possible terms. We left no doubt.”*

*“We opened our Bibles. We walked you through line by line. We proved our points. We demonstrated our positions. We couldn’t have been more thorough. And, most importantly, we brought Christ so close by means of our passionate preaching that it seemed as if the crucifixion was being enacted in front of your very eyes!”*

I remember listening to (more than one message) by Dr Alan Cairns in which he made mention of the days he had spent under the ministry of Dr. S. B. Cooke in Mount Merrion FPC. He said that, under the preaching of Dr. Cooke, the atmosphere was “electric”!

To present a living present Saviour with conviction is truly preaching Christ.

We preach Christ when:

**[3] WE REPRESENT OURSELVES AS HIS  
AMBASSADORS BRINGING A MESSAGE FROM HIM.**

It is a weighty responsibility to be faithful to so solemn a commission – as Christians, we “represent” Christ.

To talk lightly after such an announcement would be like taking the name of the Lord in vain.

What a grand and dignified business - an ambassador is a man called to a high position and rank, employed by the nation to represent the dignity and power of the nation.

Our mission?



To represent Christ and His kingdom. We have words to say, but not our own; our message is Christ's.

This word-picture has the backing of Scripture; **2 Corinthians 5:20**: *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”*

The term used for “ambassador” is “presbeia,” from the same word-family of presbyteros, elder. Therefore Paul does not restrict the ambassadorship to the number of the apostles, but extends it implicitly to the eldership.

It is an awesome task to speak, not on your own initiative, but to speak the mind of the Christ, even as He gave us the Father’s words.

So the pastor is commissioned by a higher authority. It is the Lord of heaven and earth who places his hand upon him and tells him to go. He is conscious of his weakness, he is simply an earthen vessel. In this way God is glorified.

Going in the world, he is entrusted with “the ministry of reconciliation.” More than anything else, and with a sense of urgency, the world needs to hear a clear message how it may be reconciled to God. The pastor makes his appeal, *“Be ye reconciled to God,”* and he shows how, *“For he who knew no sin God made him to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”* It is reconciliation by substitutionary atonement.

I do not often quote from Charles Finney, but on this occasion his comment is worth repeating. Finney stated:

*“Our Saviour speaks of ambassadors being sent, but it was only to “offer conditions of peace.” In this sense, God sends His ambassadors to guilty men.*

*The church, and especially her gospel ministers represent Christ on earth, and are engaged to do His work. The world being in revolt against its own Maker, Ruler and Father, He sends His ministers as ambassadors to plead with men to be reconciled to God.*

*Ministers are divinely appointed and commissioned for this express purpose. Holding their credentials from the Lord Jesus Christ, they are authorised to offer men free pardon on condition of unqualified submission to God’s will and acceptance of pardon in the name of Jesus only.”*

The pastor must be jealous to guard the gospel, the sacred deposit of the faith, and not dilute it, or change it in any shape or form. It must be left intact. With love and compassion he addresses the lost, speaking out “*the very oracles of God.*” That is why in his capacity as pastor he must above all things be biblical.

We preach Christ when:

#### **[4] WE PRESS HIS CLAIM UPON OUR HEARERS.**

We may deliver an excellent address on Christ as the Lamb of God, comparing Him in many points to the Paschal Lamb in Egypt (cf. **Exodus 12-13**). As far as a study of Scripture is concerned, it may be very accurate,

interesting and useful, but we must go further. We must cry, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*"

As Charles Wesley put it so well in his famous hymn:

**O that my Jesu's heavenly charms  
Might every bosom move!  
Fly, sinners, fly into those arms  
Of everlasting love.**

**Thee I shall constantly proclaim,  
Though earth and hell oppose;  
Bold to confess Thy glorious Name  
Before a world of foes.**

**His only righteousness I show,  
His saving grace proclaim;  
'Tis all my business here below  
To cry "Behold the Lamb!"**

**Happy, if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp His Name,  
Preach Him to all and cry in death,  
"Behold, behold the Lamb!"**

Perhaps the youngest "preacher" who ever made use of these words tenderly and effectively in their dying hour is a little girl of only seven years of age.

Through a terrible accident, she was severely burned and had to be taken to a hospital in London. At a Methodist Sunday school she had learned to love and to sing the hymn beginning, "*Jesus, the name high over all.*"

On the last night of her life all the patients were quiet in the ward where she lay, and nothing was heard but the tick and strike of the clock, when suddenly the little sufferer broke the silence by sweetly singing ... from her favourite hymn ... .

Then silence reigned again in the room, and for some time, as before, only the ticking of the clock was heard when the melodious voice of the little sufferer again broke the silence and many other sufferers in the room heard her singing softly: *“Happy, if with my latest breath I may but gasp his name ... .”*

And with that the little preacher’s voice was hushed in death, but not until many had heard, in the words of this tender song as she so sweetly sang it, a gospel message never to be forgotten.

Dr. John Kerr, a famous Scottish preacher, said, *“To point to Christ as He walks and say, ‘Behold the Lamb of God,’ is an appeal which reaches men without argument.”*

We preach Christ when:

**[5] WE TELL OF THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST AND TESTIFY THAT HIS BLOOD CLEANSSES FROM ALL SIN.**

Not merely as a doctrine, or theory, but as a blessed truth of which the person who hears can there and then avail himself ... that the Lord, on the ground of the splendid sacrifice for sins, says to the sinner who is willing to hear and believe, *“Thy sins be forgiven thee”!*

It is one thing to repeat the lines of a creed that states, “*I believe in the forgiveness of sins*” - but quite another thing to personally rejoice in the grand assurance that my sins, even mine, are actually and truly and completely remitted! And it is this that we insist upon when we preach Christ.

**My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!**

This hymn was written after two major traumas in Horatio Spafford’s life.

The first was the great Chicago Fire of October 1871, which ruined him financially (he had been a wealthy businessman).

Shortly after, while crossing the Atlantic, all four of Spafford’s daughters died in a collision with another ship. Spafford’s wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, “*Saved alone.*”

Several weeks later, as Spafford’s own ship passed near the spot where his daughters died, the Holy Spirit inspired these words, ‘It is well, it is well, with my soul.’

They speak to the eternal hope that all believers have, no matter what pain and grief falls upon them on earth.

Along similar lines is the preaching of Christ:

## **[6] AS A PRESENT DELIVERER FROM THE POWER OF SIN.**

Still He declares to those bound by Satan, “*Thou art loosed*” (**Luke 13:12**); to those paralysed by transgression, “*Arise and walk*” (**Matthew 9:5**).

We insist that the Great Physician still is here - present to heal - and as many as touch Him are made perfectly whole. Our urgent appeal is:

**O touch the hem of His garment  
And thou too shalt be free.**

An evangelist once sat in a meeting listening to a tremendous preacher, an eloquent orator, who swayed the minds of his audience with the magic of his words.

It was all about Christ too, a complimentary testimony to Him - but the audience rose and left having enjoyed the usual weekly discourse, but with no sign that anything more had to be done.

The evangelist’s heart sank with heaviness as he watched them go and muttered to himself, “*Oh that after that eloquent eulogy to my Lord I might for five minutes preach Christ to them as present to save, and call on them to yield to Him now!*”

We preach Christ when:

## **[7] WE WARN SINNERS THAT TO REJECT HIM IS TO PERISH.**

People who place their hope in Jesus Christ do not perish. People who do not hope in Jesus Christ perish.

This is the plain teaching of Christ Himself! To Nicodemus He spoke those immortal words, **John 3:14-16**: “... even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

When Jesus spoke of perishing here, He was not talking about simply dying. He was talking about the judgment of God which follows death, the eternal punishment of hell. People who reject Christ will “*pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power*” (**2 Thessalonians 1:9**).

God has appointed the day in which He will judge the world by that Man whom He hath ordained. That day draws near, the time is short, the call is urgent.

This, then, should be the way in which we preach Christ, so that those who hear us confess, whether they obey the word or not, that they have been brought face to face with their Lord, they have had to do with Christ, He has been presented to them in very truth.

John M. Moore, a Baptist pastor and evangelist in Toronto, Canada, wrote the hymn, ‘Burdens Are Lifted At Calvary’ out of an experience he had while serving as the

assistant superintendent of the Seaman's chapel in Glasgow. He recalls:

*"I wrote 'Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary' after a most interesting experience. The company secretary of a large shipping firm telephoned the Seaman's Chapel and requested that I visit a young merchant seaman who was lying critically ill in a Glasgow hospital.*

*After getting permission from the nursing sister, I went in to visit the young sailor. I talked for a few moments and then put my hand in my case for a tract, not knowing which one I would pull out.*

*It happened to be a tract based on 'Pilgrim's Progress,' with a colour reproduction of Pilgrim coming to the cross with a great burden on his back. I showed the young seaman this picture and told him the story in brief, adding that Pilgrim's experience had been my experience too. I explained that when I came to the cross of Christ, my burden rolled away and my sense of sin and guilt before God was removed.*

*He nodded his head when I asked him, "Do you feel this burden on your back today?"*

*We prayed together, and never shall I forget the smile of peace and assurance that lit up his face when he said that his burden was lifted!*

*Later that night, sitting by the fireside with paper and pen, I could not get the thought out of my mind - his burden is lifted! I started writing, but never for a moment did I imagine that this little hymn would*



*become a favorite throughout the world. Since that time, I hear of people all over the world who are being blessed and saved through the singing of this hymn.”*

**Days are filled with sorrow and care,  
Heart are lonely and drear;  
Burdens are lifted at Calvary -  
Jesus is very near.**

**Cast your care on Jesus today,  
Leave your worry and fear;  
Burdens are lifted at Calvary -  
Jesus is very near.**

**Troubled soul, the Saviour can see  
Ev'ry heartache and tear;  
Burdens are lifted at Calvary--  
Jesus is very near.**

This, then, is what it means to Preach Christ!

We preach Him when:

1. WE REPRESENT HIM AS A LIVING PERSON AS DISTINCT FROM AN HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF WHOM WE READ IN THE BIBLE;
2. WE REMIND THE HEARERS THAT HE IS PRESENT IN THE GATHERING;
3. WE REPRESENT OURSELVES AS HIS AMBASSADORS BRINGING A MESSAGE FROM HIM;
4. WE PRESS HIS CLAIM UPON OUR HEARERS;

5. WE TELL OF THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST  
AND TESTIFY THAT HIS BLOOD CLEANSSES FROM  
ALL SIN;

6. WE LIFT HIM UP AS A PRESENT DELIVERER  
FROM THE POWER OF SIN;

7. WE WARN SINNERS THAT TO REJECT HIM IS TO  
PERISH.

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[ Message preached by: Ian Brown / January 2010 ]