

“The Primacy of Preaching”
1 Timothy 4:13
(Preached at Trinity, July 4, 2021)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we continue now with **Verse 13** we find two elements put before us.
 - A. The first is pretty straight forward. We are reminded again of Paul’s plan to make a personal visit in the near future. He had sent Timothy to begin setting things in order with the hope of being able to make a personal visit. Paul also expressed this intention **Chapter 3:**
1 Timothy 3:14-15 NAU - "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."
1 Timothy 4:12 NAU - "In speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."
1 Timothy 4:16-5:1 NAU - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. "
 - B. Paul is reminding Timothy of his chief labor as he awaits Paul’s return.
 - (1) Previously, Paul has stressed the importance of Timothy’s personal holiness. He needed to maintain a life of discipline, a life of excellence to God’s glory. Timothy’s good example was essential.
1 Timothy 4:12 NAU - "In speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."
1 Timothy 4:16-5:1 NAU - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. "
 - (2) But now here in **Verse 13** Paul reminds Timothy of the priority he must maintain in his work.
He was to give himself to the ministry of the Word—public reading, exhortation, and teaching. These are the elements of preaching.
Paul is describing the primacy of preaching in the pastoral ministry.
2. Timothy was to give careful attention to the preaching of the Word of God.
“give attention” – The ESV translates it “devote yourself.”
Interestingly, Paul used the same word in chapter three, except in a negative sense.
A pastor must not be “addicted” to wine.
In other words, the pastor is to devote himself to the ministry of the Word as if addicted to it. Timothy was to make it a high priority.
Paul uses three words to describe the essence of preaching:
3. “To reading”
 - a. The definite article in the Greek literally reads “the reading.” It implies a public reading.
 - b. Part of every synagogue service involved the reading of a passage from the Old Testament Scriptures. This was carried over into the Christian worship. But the church also began reading from the Epistles that were already being accepted as Scripture.

4. “To exhortation” – the Greek word is παράκλησις - it carries the idea of a strong address designed to exhort.
Paul is telling Timothy to read and then deliver a discourse on the passage.
The word was used in Acts 13 to describe the method of Paul’s preaching:
Acts 13:14-15 NAU - "But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."
5. “To teaching” – This refers to biblical doctrine.
The Pastor must preach the systematic truths of the Word of God.
6. All of this points to one thing. The Excellent Pastor must maintain the primacy of preaching in his ministry. This was always the consistent pattern. The pastor would read a passage and then exhort and indoctrinate from the passage.
Paul repeats the pattern in his second epistle to Timothy -
2 Timothy 4:2 NAU - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."
7. I want to direct our attention this morning to the subject of preaching. The Pastor’s primary duties are prayer and preaching. You may be saying, “So what! I’m not a preacher.” The answer is simple. This is one of the most important elements of your Christian journey. Few comprehend this. The right exposition of God’s Word is the most important element of your Christian journey, followed closely by prayer. Prayer and preaching! But you say, I can study the Word of God on my own. Yes, you can, and you must—but preaching cannot be underestimated.
What is the hope for the future? It’s not politics or the media or anything else.
It is the quality of the pulpit that God is providing. When the sheep are left without shepherds it is truly a dreadful condition.
8. Before we begin, we need to give the definition of preaching. What is preaching?
- A. Many find this to be a difficult question. What is the difference between preaching and teaching? Can you explain the difference?
Few today can, even among those who preach.
- B. Defining preaching becomes much easier if you understand the nature of the pastoral office. The pastor has been given an official mandate. The reason we have difficulty with the definition of preaching is because we have difficulty defining who is called to preach. The pastor has been given a Divine mandate.
- (1) There are two primary New Testament words translated “preach” or “preaching.”
Εὐαγγελίζω literally means “to bring good news.” This word is applied to all of the saints going about proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. It is the activity of every believer.
κηρύσσω – This word refers to the official work of the pastor. It means to herald the message. It is likened to the work of a herald sent as an official of the king to make proclamations from the throne – “Hear ye, hear he. . .”
This word is always used in an official sense, and it carries the authority of the King.
- (2) The reason we have difficulty defining preaching is we fail to see the official nature of preaching. We presume every man has the right to do it, and we allow many to fill the pulpit who are not called to the pastoral office.

9. Preaching demands a particular calling.
- A. Preaching is the activity of the one called to be God's herald. It is the word Paul used in **2 Timothy 4:2** - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Is this charge being given to all men, or to Timothy as a pastor?
- B. Preaching is the proclamation of God's Word as God's herald – this results in passion and authority as one sent forth by God. The man called of God to preach never gets over it.
Martyn Lloyd-Jones – "What is preaching? Logic on fire! Eloquent reason! . . . It is theology on fire. And a theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire."¹
10. There's more than fire, however. The content is essential. Paul says it involves the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching. It involves taking God's Word, giving the meaning, and applying it to God's people with careful application. This implies expository preaching—taking the text, giving its meaning in its original context, and then applying it to God's people today. Kent Hughes writes, "It was taken for granted from the beginning that Christian preaching would be expository preaching, that is, that all Christian instruction and exhortation would be drawn out of the passage which had been read. Biblical exposition was the apostolic norm. Therefore, any preaching that does not guide the listener through the Scriptures is an aberration from the apostolic practice."²

Let us consider some additional points on the subject of preaching this morning.

- I. It is a serious and fearful responsibility
- A. Our generation has lost the sense of awe that surrounds preaching.
1. People not only think it is simple and easy but that anyone is entitled to do it. We have lay preachers – It's something they do on the side. Lay preaching is not the same thing as bi-vocational preaching.
 1. As we have become more educated and literate many feel that they are as capable as the preacher. They may be, just as able and more, but has God called them to preach?
- B. The preacher is one who has been called and sent forth as God's herald.
Romans 10:14-15 NAU - "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"
1. Who sends them? God calls them and this calling is affirmed by the church. Too many today are self-appointed
 2. Paul called it a grace that was given to him
Ephesians 3:8 NAS - "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,"

¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), Page 97.

² R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 116.

II. It is a Mystery

- A. Many have lost the sense of supernatural – it has become just a human effort
 - 1. Many have turned preaching into entertainment with an over-use of stories and illustrations.
 - 2. Preaching is too often done with an eye towards the clock. This doesn't mean we ignore the clock, but the sermon shouldn't end until the text has been dealt with.
 - 3. We don't pray because we don't feel the need for God - God is left out. And we don't expect God's mighty power. We don't expect God's supernatural work in our lives.
 - 4. We don't bring people to worship because we don't see preaching as a supernatural cure for sinners.
- B. Preaching is a supernatural work - We cannot predict what will happen
 - 1. The pastor cannot predict how his sermons will be heard. He cannot predict the working of the Spirit of God.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit makes the sermon effectual. It goes forth with almighty power and the lives of people are changed. It is a divine work.
- C. We are completely dependent upon the power of God.

*Brethren we have met to worship, And adore the Lord our God;
Will you pray with all your power, While we try to preach the Word?
All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One come down;
Brethren, pray, and holy manna Will be showered all around.*

 - 1. This is what defines preaching. This is what distinguishes it from lecturing. It is the power of God upon the one God has empowered to preach.
 - 2. It involves the holy unction from God whereby He makes His Word powerful in His humble servants.

III. It is a transaction

- A. There is a transaction going on between the Pastor and Congregation
 - 1. A unique time – cannot be duplicated in tapes or printed sermons.
 - 2. There is an interaction. Human beings are implored to look to Christ. This is not by mere invitation but by divine mandate.
Verse 11 – “These things, command and teach”
- B. The congregation plays an important role
 - 1. It is essential that you come prepared
 - 2. It is essential that you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus often used the expression, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Who enables ears to hear?

IV. It is the means of life – of Christian Conversion

1 Corinthians 1:21 NAU - "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."

Romans 10:17 - "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

- A. The primary duty of the church is to direct men to their chief need, the only cure.
1. It is the failure to recognize this that causes the church to diminish the importance of preaching
 2. Man's chief problem is sin
 - a. The world comes to wrong conclusions
They see sin as disease of which we are not to blame.
Addictions: Alcoholism, gambling, sex – all seen as impulses over which we have no control. It isn't our fault.
 - b. We need to preach truth –
Men are dead in trespasses and sins.
Men are guilty before God.
Men are justly condemned and heading to hell.
Jesus Christ is the only way of redemption.
 3. Only the church can deliver these truths –
 - a. The world can only deal with the symptoms
They fail to deal with the heart.
 - b. The church is the pillar and support of the truth - Preaching is the chief means to deliver these truths
- B. God uses this preaching to mysteriously and supernaturally change hearts
1. It is one of the few miracles today
 2. A miracle is that in which God moves directly beyond the natural realm.
We refer to salvation as being monergistic.
- C. The chief subject of preaching is Jesus Christ
- 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 NAU** - "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."
1. Timothy was to give himself to the public reading of Scripture. But it wasn't a mere expression of words. Timothy read the Scripture and then opened up the message of Christ.
 2. Jesus is the chief subject of Scripture. On the Road to Emmaus Jesus opened the Scriptures concerning Himself. This is preaching!
Preaching without Christ is not preaching.
 3. We hold Jesus forth as all glorious, altogether lovely, worthy of all praise and honor. Worthy of our lives.

Conclusion:

Do you believe in the supernatural nature of preaching?

1. Will you take every opportunity to attend.
2. Will you invite others to come and hear?
3. Will you pray for yourselves and for the preacher.

In the history of the church preaching has always been vital to its health

- a. During decadent periods preaching has declined.
- b. During every great revival there has been a renewed emphasis on preaching.