

Introduction

The Importance of this Series

Pastor Russ Kennedy

Note to the reader: this is not a manuscript in the way I normally write. This largely an outline to speak from with at times, more script and other points, more topic sentences. It is best to listen to the sermon with this in hand to get the full sense of what the sermon was aiming at.

Where are we?

Over the last two years, we, as a church, have been challenged and blessed.

Challenges

COVID related discussions, division, and dissent...

Concerns that developed into complaining...

Families leaving because of job moves and for ministry or church related reasons...

Transitions in ministry and in Eldership...

Blessings

Good Annual Elder's Retreat...

- Reflect and review past year...
- Address elder's concerns in ministries...
- Discussion of concerns brought to individual elders...
- Discussion over people leaving the Chapel for other churches...

Ministries restart after COVID period...

New families partnering with the Chapel..

Joining in membership: Sherry Filbrun, Emma Hartz, James Lee and Joyce Barrier.

Many of you are attending regularly – please consider partnering with us in ministry through membership.

Giving and ministry involvement continuing to grow...

Deeper relationships being built through hard times...

Why this series?

Sometimes we do not communicate why we do what we do in ministry. We think that because you are involved in it, that you understand the thinking behind this. This has proven over time to not be true. So, we are going to take the time this fall to talk about core doctrines, values, principles, and practices that distinguish us as a church. We have done this several times over the years, but not in the way we are this time.

Need Discerned by the Elders

Elder's discussions and development of ministries...

- Elder's retreats have wrestled with philosophy, problems, issues, concerns, and complaints...
- Changes in elder oversight leading to some changes in the execution of ministries...
- Consideration of concerns and counsel...

Need Arising in the Congregation

Many new families attending the Chapel. This series is designed to help you understand more of what makes us distinct.

Much surprising misunderstanding about Chapel Ministry from people who have been here. Not understanding leads wrong expectations leads to frustrations and, occasionally, anger...

Need for Clarification

The role of wisdom in ministry decisions where we have to choose what is best aligned with what we believe, the purposes, aims and goals from the New Testament and how we implement them in day-to-day ministry.

The rejection of the world's wisdom (and thus much of what goes on in modern churches) so we do not rely on commonly accepted means and methods.

How ministries function at the Chapel based on precepts, principles, purposes from the Scripture shaped and structured by Ministry Organizing Documents.

Core ministries will be presenting their ministry philosophies and practices.

Why Care about this Series?

I know many of you will not be interested in this series. But it is important for you to listen and understand...

Established Members

Even if you have been at the Chapel a long time, you should pay close attention to this series:

So that you will have an accurate understanding of how ministries function here. Many of you, though you have been here for years, still do not understand some basic functions of how we do things.

For example, how many of you know that my international travel is under Chapel Ministries International working with the Chapel Mission's Team and is almost entirely funded by donations? The church has CMI and GMD in the budget, but mostly it is sustained financially by the giving of people.

So that you will know what to appreciate and what to expect. Our ministry is different from many churches. But it is not unique. There are many churches with very similar philosophies and practices, not only here in the US but across the world. Everything we do is on purpose. We think through it. And yes, many people want

something different. But part of this series is to be sure that you accept, appreciate, and expect what Chapel ministries believe and do.

So that you can correctly and clearly explain our ministries to others. Think about this question: "What do we do here that I do not understand the reasons for it?" I am not asking what you disagree with. That is a different question. Even when you disagree with something, do you do so *because* you don't know the philosophy behind it?

New Attenders and Members

Your first resources are:

Book of Faith and Order – read it carefully.

Truths We Teach – We are a historic evangelical church that believes and teaches the sovereignty of God in salvation and in all of life. We also are not Reformed, in the historic sense; we are New Covenant. The Truths We Teach as well as the ABE course and the AM Series by Dale and I on New Covenant Theology are at Sermon Audio.

For particular ministries, ask the Elder or Diaconal Tema Leader for **The Ministry Organizing Document**. Most are available on the Chapel Website under the respective ministry.

It is very important that:

Please don't make assumptions about who and what we are from the surface of things. We may look familiar to you in many ways. That does not mean that the why we do what may be familiar to you is the same.

An example? Expository preaching. We believe and the elders here do expository preaching. But we do not do verse by verse in the classical sense. We preach more paragraph by paragraph, following the main message or theme of the text. We do not explain everything. We also make the applications to us that are directly from the text or texts being preached. The result is that we tend to go through books more quickly. In 27 years of preaching here, we have preached most of the New Testament and about 2/3 of the Old Testament. That includes a cycle of repetition through Genesis, Exodus, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews. We will be in Philippians beginning in January, 2023 and will be in Proverbs in the PM Gathering at least through April, 2023.

Please ask questions when you don't understand. One of the surprises for many people is that I, Pastor Russ, am not lead pastor or senior pastor. We do not believe in having one pastor over all. We do not function that way. I serve in the roles the Elders as a body give me to serve in. We will talk more about this in a later sermon. But it is easy to assume we are like most churches in this and not ask questions that would help you understand how we function.

Please come to the leaders of ministries if you have a concern. It is best to talk to the elder of the ministry you have a concern about.

The Commitment to Expository Preaching

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Having introduced the series, let's pick up our first distinctive, our commitment to expository preaching. We will ground our study in 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

My Purpose:

Originally, I planned to speak today on the subject of the Sufficiency of Scriptures. After thought and reflection, I thought, given our series, that understanding our commitment to expository preaching and teaching would be more in-line with serving the series well.

My aim, then is to present a biblical, wise rationale for why we believe in expository preaching and use different forms of it.

Troubling trends:

In many churches and many pulpits, there are some troubling trends that are the outworking of what our text today addresses.

There is functional distrust in the Scriptures.

While they confess to believe in the Bible, they actually don't believe and trust that the Scriptures are truly sufficient for and sovereign over the church. Therefore, practically and functionally the churches are not submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Where the sufficiency of Scripture is denied, either formally or functionally, the centrality and sufficiency of Jesus is also being denied.

Motivational preaching not grounded in the text dominates pulpits.

Pulpits are filled with sermons that make people feel good, help them with their daily problems, do little real Bible teaching, and therefore are not doing what proclaiming, what preaching is supposed to do.

Preaching is no longer central to the gathering of the church.

This has always been a battle in the church. Preaching and teaching in the church are how everything (do not diminish that) that God intends to do in the world is started and sustained. The spoken Word of God created the world. The Word bearing the Spirit creates Christians. The Word preached and taught feeds, corrects, sustains, encourages, admonishes, soothes, penetrates, transforms, matures

Preaching is dominated by the world.

This functions two ways:

1. It is so infused with the world's psychology, agendas, politics, current issues, self-help, self-affirmation that it is simply, in the truest sense, worldly. It is preaching shaped almost entirely by the culture's values, purposes, and concerns. It is given a thin veneer
2. It is so against the world that it becomes the caricature of the world and spouts a negative, "anti-rhetoric" and legalism. It sees Biblical law and legislation as the way to holiness. Therefore, it is not relying on principle and power of grace to produce maturity in people.

Needed Clarification

Constricting Views of Exposition

Our commitment to expositional preaching does require some clarifying as to what we mean by exposition. Definitions of exposition that are too constricting:

Exposition is only when you do "sequential, verse-by-verse, teaching through a book of the Bible..." This may be a kind of exposition, but it is too narrowly defined.

Exposition that really is simply exegesis in the pulpit. It is explaining the original languages, parsing all the grammar and possibly, but rarely, showing the structure of the text without showing the flow of the text. This kind of "exposition" often has little application of the text. "That is the Holy Spirit's job," is the explanation.

Exposition as a railway for doctrinal freight. Words, phrases, and allusions are used to teach the doctrinal truth that is connected to it. This is called doctrinal exposition. The problem is that it often loses the flow of the text since the text is really being used as a springboard to a related doctrine.

Our Working Definition:

Expository preaching is when the chosen text or texts are opened up in a language natural way through (dramatic) reading of the text, connecting the text to its context, explaining the message(s) of the text and applying the text in a Biblical way. Regardless of how a particular text is chosen for the sermon, it will always be expounded on.

Its Biblical Call (v.1–5)

Turn your attention then, to 2 Timothy 4.

The Divine Setting (v.1)

4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

We preach before the face of God...

We preach as people who are accountable...

We preach with future judgment of the lost in mind...

We preach until the consummation...

The Powerful Imperative (v.2a)

² preach the word...;

The Centrality of Preaching...

One way, authoritative, proclamation through gifted men...

This is an imperative for the church. Preaching is not an option. Churches that do not proclaim on a regular basis are disobeying God.

The Centrality of the Bible...

The command is not just an act of preaching; it is commanding what to preach.

We are to preach the Word itself;

Not just from it...

Not just about it...

Not just using it...

We are to preach the message of the Bible.

The Varied Forms (v.2b)

We are to be prepared with all different aspects of preaching...

...be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

We are to be prepared for all opportunities...

We are to be engaged with Biblical means...

We are to be committed to teaching patiently...

The Surprising Problem (v.3-4)

We can and do expect to be preaching where Christians are as described in verses 3-4.

³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Rejecting sound teaching...

"not endure..." sitting under sound teaching is not supposed to be easy!!! It is another symptom of our worldliness that we want our sermons to be easy, comfortable, without too much thought and without too much pondering.

Accumulating acceptable teachers...

Teachers who scratch where they itch - their ears...

Teachers who support the desires and passions of the people...

Wandering from truth to myths...

When people leave truth, they must embrace myths and lies. There is no neutral ground.

The Personal Responsibilities (v.5)

⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

These are specific instructions for Timothy but helpful for us in our situations. Those who preach and teach in the church ought:

To be serious minded about life...

Preaching must rise from a kind of seriousness about who God is and what He is doing and our place in His purposes...

To be expecting and enduring hardship...

Ministry and preaching, serving as elders and teachers is hard and full of hardship. That is simply the fact of it. It will take time, effort, and sacrifice.

To be evangelizing when and where possible...

Timothy did not, nor do I, have the gift of evangelism. But in our preaching, we can do the work of gospelizing in our preaching when the text opens the door for it. The curious thing about this, is that Paul understands and expects that among church attending, faith professing people will be those who are not genuine Christians.

Do and finish the work...

There is a constant temptation to not finish what is started. The shiny ministry of preaching and teaching becomes the hard work of prayer, reading, study, and preaching when people often really don't want to hear what the Bible is saying. There are times when a preacher/teacher needs to step aside for good reasons. But just to quit because it is hard, wearying, risky, demanding and often criticized is to fail.

So how do we live this out in our context?

Its Wisdom Understanding

There are some important principles that guide our exposition

The Perfection of the Word

We preach the Word because it is inspired, inerrant, infallible and sufficient...

The Purpose of the Word

We preach the Word because it is how God transmits His grace to sinners and saints...

The Power of the Word

We preach the Word because it is the powerfully penetrating tool to transform hearts...

The Place of the Word

We preach the Word because God has made it central to everything...

The Preparation for the Word

We preach the Word because we are deeply committed to study, writing, and delivering the Word. We will get it right.

The Preaching of the Word

We preach the Word because to not do so is disobedience, dangerous, and deadly.

Its Practical Application

How does exposition work at the Chapel? How do the preachers and teachers here work through the text from getting it right to getting it across...

In the Selection of Texts:

We preach through books of the Bible.

We preach through topics using texts in the Bible.

We preach through doctrinal and Biblical themes using texts in the Bible.

In the Handling of Texts:

We seek to understand the text itself.

We want to understand what was the message to the original audience?

We try to determine if and how this text takes us to Christ and the New Covenant?

We develop what is New Covenant application of this text?

In the Application of the Texts:

How does the New Testament use the Old Testament text?

What wisdom can be applied from Old Testament commands?

What was the application to the original recipient and how does that application relate to us?

Reflect and Respond

As Pastor for Preaching, here are our commitments, not just for this year but for the pulpit ministry:

In the preaching of the Word:

We may choose texts by:

Next one in a book of the Bible taking larger sections of the book. We tend to do paragraph by paragraph exposition.

Text or texts on a topic but each one will be expounded and the application will be true to the text(s)...

Text or texts on a canonical (Biblical) theme but each one will be expounded and connected to the theme...

But we will always expound the texts we are preaching no matter how they were chosen.

In the engagement with our people:

We will reject the plea for ease, fads and scratching itching ears...

We will listen to counsel and to needs...

We will connect truth to life Biblically...

We will:

At Paul's solemn urging to us in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: we will preach the word of God. We will be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. We will seek to patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage our people with good teaching.

We know that the time is coming and is already here when people will no longer listen to sound and Biblical teaching. Even Christians will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. We see all around us that people will reject the truth and chase after myths.

But we will strive to keep a clear mind and a serious attitude in every situation. We will not be afraid of suffering for the Lord. We will, regardless of our gifts, work at telling others the Good News. We seek God's grace to fully carry out the ministry God has given us.