

Session 03 – Biblical Foundations for Preaching

Review of Last Session

- The unique stakes of spirituality in ministry
 - Nurture: Your spiritual growth impacts your ability to grow others (Matthew 10:8).
 - Leadership: You can only lead in God's direction if God leads you (1 Kings 3:5-10).
 - Mentality: A strong bond with God creates the necessary peace and confidence (Galatians 1:10).
 - Salvation: Administering religion creates false spiritual security (1 Corinthians 9:27).
 - Forgiveness: To extend grace to others, you must first receive it (Matthew 18:32; 1 Peter 4:10; John 13:34-35).
- The three areas of spiritual focus
 - Communicating with God (praying, praising)
 - Thinking about God (studying, meditating)
 - Sharing about God (fellowshipping, witnessing)

The Mandate to Preach

- The biblical mandate
 - Preaching is a solemn responsibility and necessity (1 Corinthians 9:16).
 - Christ-like preaching delivers hope and healing (Luke 4:16-19).
 - Christian preaching centers on the good news of Christ (Mark 16:15-16).
 - The preacher must preach the truth regardless of its popularity (2 Timothy 4:1-4; Ezekiel 3:16-21).
 - It is clear that God has called some to unflinchingly preach his truth to a lost, misguided, and obstinate world. This preaching must be pumped with grace, muscled with boldness, and firmly planted on Scripture.
- The cultural mandate
 - A 2002 Duke University report by Becky R. McMillan, called "What Do Clergy Do All Week?" reports the following about protestant pastors:
 - Full time pastors spend 33% of their time preparing for preaching and worship.
 - Part time pastors spend 41% of their time preparing for preaching and worship.
 - A 2003 Duke University report by Adair T. Lummis, called "What do Lay People Want in Their Pastors?" reports that pastoral search committees rank preaching ability only after general competence and religious authenticity when choosing a pastor.
 - A 2007 U. S. Congregations report by Deborah Bruce, called "Key Findings: Worship in the U. S." shows that 62% of worshipers participate

only in the worship service, which makes preaching the pastor's best chance to influence them.

Content of the Message

- The Bible as license to preach
 - It is clear that there is great demand for preaching, but what is preaching and what should it accomplish? Our mandate comes from Scripture.
 - To avoid shame, we must carefully study the message before we dare to preach it in God's name (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - Preaching and God's word are inextricably fused (2 Timothy 3:14 to 4:4).
 - We must never speak for God unless we speak a message from him (Ezekiel 13:1-8).
 - In short, careful Bible study is your license to preach. Without it, you and I have no right to preach. Preaching is not an opportunity to share your own opinion but the divine word of God. We must hear from God before the people hear from us.
- The Bible as the source of sermon ideas
 - Although these sobering texts should be enough to demand that we draw our sermons directly from Scripture, there is another good reason to do so: the Bible is a never-ending source of sermon ideas.
 - Very soon after they start preaching, a preacher falls into one of two traps:
 - They run out of good sermon ideas and stop preaching.
 - They run out of good sermon ideas and keep preaching, repetitively.
 - The way to avoid these traps and keep from ending your preaching career short is to learn the right habit now:
 - Build the habit of letting your study guide your ideas instead of letting your ideas guide your study.
 - You don't "come up with" a sermon idea but you discover it in the text. This is how we apply the principle that we must hear from God before the people hear from us.

Comparative Bible study methods

- Principles for evaluating Bible study methods
 - How can we be sure to let the study guide our ideas? Though it may seem like everyone knows how to study the Bible, that's not true. Everyone knows how to exploit the Bible but few know how to study it. We need to think through and establish some safeguarding principles.
 - Principles to evaluate Bible study methods:
 - Does it let the text set the agenda?
 - If we understand Scripture to be God speaking to us, we need to let him say what he wants to say in the way he wants to say it.

- If you go to the Bible seeking to support ideas you already have, you won't learn what God wants you to learn and you will never discover your blind spots.
 - This means approaching God's word with an openness to what he wants to teach you, letting him set the topic of study.
 - Does it let the Bible interpret itself?
 - If we understand Scripture to be God speaking to us, we need to let him define his own terms and put each piece of the puzzle where it belongs.
 - The larger flow of the biblical book you find your text in offers the closest guard against distortion.
 - Understanding the persistent themes of Scripture helps you know if you have understood correctly.
- Evaluating common Bible study methods
 - Applying these principles of evaluation reveals a need for more caution than is widely practiced.
 - Proof-texting
 - Proof-texting is collecting and presenting a series of texts to demonstrate a predetermined point.
 - It is a presentation method, but very limited as a discovery method. As a method of Bible study, the great danger is that you will convince yourself that your ideas are biblical when they are not.
 - Example: Jewelry and nudity (1 Peter 3:3).
 - Allegorizing
 - Allegorizing is interpreting every detail of a biblical story as symbolic.
 - Although the Bible does use allegory occasionally, interpreting texts allegorically when they are not intended so leaves no safeguard against wrong ideas.
 - Example: The midnight cry and the shut door (Matthew 25:6-10).
 - Springboarding
 - Springboarding is using a text to legitimize an idea while not drawing the point from the text.
 - When Bible students engage in this approach, the Bible is no longer treated as the authority for truth.
 - Example: The seven year tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27).
 - Contextualizing
 - Contextualizing is studying the text within the broad framework of the biblical book or chapter it is in.
 - This approach is, by nature, the surest way to make sure what you preach is a truly biblical idea.
 - Example: Three angels' message in time (Revelation 14:14-15).
 - Your method of Bible study matters, not just the conclusion at hand, because wrong methods set you up to get it wrong and go astray. Worse, they may cause you to lead others astray.

Letting the Bible lead sermon development

- Principles for Bible study
 - There are many good guidebooks for Bible study:
 - *Biblical Interpretation Today* by Gerhard F. Hasel is an Adventist scholarly standard.
 - *Handbook for Bible Study* by Lee Gugliotto is a comprehensive approach to the subject.
 - *Wake Up Your Bible Study* by Richard W. Coffen is a relatively simple approach to the subject.
 - *The Deep Things of God* by Jon Paulien is especially directed toward the book of Revelation.
 - *Unlocking the Scriptures* by Hans Finzel is an excellent general approach to the subject.
 - Three principles emerge most prominently from these guidebooks. Two of them I have already mentioned.
 - Begin with prayer.
 - Let the Bible set the agenda.
 - Let the Bible interpret itself.
- Process for Bible study (adapted from *Unlocking the Scriptures* by Hans Finzel)
 - Observation—What are the facts?
 - Observe the whole (read broadly to get an overview).
 - Observe the details (note the major facts)
 - Observe the parts (outline the text).
 - Interpretation—What do the facts mean?
 - Interpret what the single, dominant message is.
 - Interpret what the message meant to the original hearers.
 - Interpret what the message means to the whole of Scripture.
 - Application—How should the facts change lives?
 - Apply the message to a specific human need.
 - Apply the message in terms of specific actions.
- Process for turning Bible study a sermon idea
 - Identify the subject of the text:
 - Ask, “What is it talking about?”
 - Be specific (e.g. Don't say “the subject is God” but say “the subject is God's attitude toward sinners”).
 - Identify the complement of the text:
 - Ask, “What is it saying about what it's talking about?”
 - Be aware that there could be more than one complement and include all that appear.
 - Formulate a simple summary sentence.
 - Combine the subject and complement.
 - Craft it in memorable, easy language.
 - This is the message of your sermon that you want people to walk away with.

- “Because each paragraph, section, or subsection of Scripture contains an idea, we do not understand a passage until we can state its subject and complement exactly.” Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching, 2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 42.

Applying the process

- The temptations of Christ (Matthew 4:1-11) in group study
- Anchor text assignments
- Assignment: Find the text outline, subject, complement, and summary sentence for your anchor text.