

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Why Not Now?

The problem of procrastination is a flaw shared by many in the world today, and perhaps we are all guilty of it sometimes. Some people plan to obey the gospel and serve God someday, just not today. It reminds me of the time that Paul preached to Felix, reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment. Felix was moved by the preaching of Paul to the point where it caused him to tremble (Acts 24:25). Felix, however, did not obey the gospel on that occasion. Instead, he spoke these words to Paul: *"Go thy way for this time; when I have a CONVENIENT season, I will call for thee."* The indication of the text is that the convenient season never came for Felix.

Too many people procrastinate, waiting for a convenient season to obey the gospel. The fact is there is never a better time to begin serving God than right now. To procrastinate is to show a lack of faith in God and too much faith in the future. One may not have a future in which to begin serving God. James understood this when he wrote, *"...For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (James. 4:14). Time is certainly something that one should take seriously, for it runs out very quickly. This is why Paul said, *"...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2). God's grace now appears to all men (Titus 2:11), but the time for that grace being extended comes closer to an end every day. If one dies before he obeys the gospel, or if Christ returns first, it will be too late to take advantage of God's grace. Surely the time to obey the gospel is now!

It is not just those who have not obeyed the gospel who procrastinate. There are times when we have done it. This is something we need to watch in our own lives. Jesus once said, *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John. 9:4). This should be our attitude. There is much work to be done in the vineyard of our Lord. There are souls to save. When should we start sowing the incorruptible seed (the word of God) into the hearts of men? NOW! Every day precious souls are being lost. When should we start trying to restore those who have been overtaken by a fault? (Galatians 6:1). NOW! The longer we wait, the deeper into the grasp of Satan those souls get. When should we start using our talents in the kingdom of God in order to further the cause of Christ? NOW! It is never too early to be of service in the Lord's church. Serving God should be a delight and honor for each of us. We should look forward to times when we are blessed with the opportunity to serve God. If we have such an attitude, we will begin serving God now, and in doing so, we will gain favor in the sight of our Redeemer.

Don

Jesus the Preacher

(Wilson Adams)

Those who feel the need to preach the gospel should pattern their preaching after the examples of Jesus who preached with passion and compassion.

Jesus was first and foremost a preacher. In a day in which preaching has fallen into disrepute, it's easy to forget that. Preaching is the highest form of communication for preaching challenges man to respond favorably to the truths of God. The greatest preacher of all? Jesus Christ. "I must preach the kingdom of God...I was sent for this purpose" (Luke. 4:43).

Who would ever dispute that the great mountain discourse in Matthew 5,6,7 is the greatest sermon ever preached? Jesus preached in synagogues (Mark 1:39), on beach fronts (Matthew 13:1-3), and from one village to the next (Luke. 8:1). And wherever He preached, people gathered. "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks" (John 7:46). It was more than His words—it was the power of His person, the holiness of His character, and the love in His heart for people that caused the crowds to come. "The great crowd enjoyed listening to Him" (Mark. 12:37). There never has been a preacher like Jesus.

Those of us today, who feel the awesome responsibility to be a proclaimer of God's message, would do well to pattern our preaching after the Master. "Learn from Me" (Matt. 11:29) has broader implications than just preaching but would certainly include it. Truly, if we are going to be effective preachers, we must communicate truth the way He did.

Preaching Like Jesus:

1. He started where people were: — Jesus often taught people in response to (1) a question: "Teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?" or (2) a pressing problem: as when the mother of James and John requested a special honor for her sons, or (3) an emotional situation: as was the case with the death of Lazarus. The preaching of Jesus had an immediacy about it—it was always relevant, pertinent, and on target to the need of the moment.

Timing means everything. After the attacks on 9/11, wise would have been the preacher who shelved his planned sermon and spoke instead to the need of the hour—a reminder that evil is real, good can come from tragedy, or that God is in control even in our darkest days. When the April 1999 tornado hit east Nashville with a vengeance, I remember speaking the Sunday following on "Making Deals With God." I knew, because of human nature, that many of our folks had done exactly that as the storm ploughed through their neighborhood. It struck a nerve and seventeen people responded to the invitation to pledge that they intended to do exactly what they promised God they would do. Timing is critical in preaching.

2. He gave them good news: — The gospel is GOOD NEWS Jesus looked around and say "distressed" and "downcast" people (Matthew 9:36) who had given up any hope of living with God. Jesus renewed their hope without excusing their sin or ignoring it.

3. He took truth and made it practical: — The goal of Jesus' preaching was not just to inform but to transform. He preached to change lives! Too often we think preaching is about diving into the "meat" of the Word, impressing people with our exegetical skill, and leaving folks in awe at our command of the original language. The truth is, the deepest kind of preaching is the kind that makes a difference in people's lives! There is a time and place for everything, but a sermon that the common folk fail to understand and apply is an opportunity lost.

4. He spoke in an interesting way: — Jesus was not boring. How preachers can take the most exciting book in the world and bore people to tears is beyond me. This is not about “style,” it’s about communicating effectively the truths of God so that people will hear. This is not about “entertaining” people; it’s about speaking in an interesting and understandable way. The greatest compliment a preacher can receive is this: “I understood what you said.”

Jesus told stories (Matthew 13:34) that touched the hearts of His hearers. Stories hold our attention, stir our emotions, and help us remember the point being made. Sometimes we forget that the Bible is a book of stories. Jesus used simple words. He did not use the classical Greek—the language of the scholar. He could have but He didn’t. He talked about birds and flowers and lost coins and lost boys and everyday stuff to which people could relate.

5. He wasn’t afraid to challenge people to change: — When He finished the Sermon on the Mount, He didn’t say—“Well, thanks for listening and have a nice day.” He challenged people to change. He challenged Nicodemus. He challenged the rich young ruler. He challenged the woman at the well. It does us no good to preach the gospel of Jesus if we do not motivate our hearers to make a life-changing decision.

“With many other words He solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’” (Acts 2:40). That will always be the preacher’s message. May we preach with the passion and compassion of Jesus.