

PREACHING AND LEADING TWO

(This document is to go with the questions for discussion in the Preaching and Leading seminar. It is a series of answers to the questions raised).

1. God's intended role for His church.

Here I am dealing with the bottom line issue for the church's existence. I would start with God's call of to Abraham and that through him the nations of the earth were to be blessed. After the fall God wanted to work through Abel, but he was killed, then Noah and he failed, and then after the Tower of Babel God desired to reach the nations through one nation. Israel was designed by God to be a light unto the Gentiles and she too failed in doing what God intended, (Isa. 49:6) (Rom. 10: 18-21). Jesus Christ said that he would build His church and the Gates of Hell would not prove to be stronger than it. The Apostle Paul says that as the Gentiles come to faith, Jew and Gentile becoming one in this new entity called the church God's wisdom is displayed to the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms. (Eph. 3: 7-13). The Apostle Paul's concern was that everything that happened, did so that the Gospel might be advanced (Phil. 1: 12-18). At the end the whole point of everything on earth was that the blood of Jesus Christ would purchase the redemption of all peoples in the whole world (Rev. 5: 9-10).

GOD'S INTENDED ROLE OF THE CHURCH IS TO DISPLAY HIS WISDOM TO THE ANGELS BY BRINGING PEOPLE ALL ACROSS THE WORLD TO FAITH.

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY THE CHURCH'S PRIMARY TASK IS MISSIONAL!

2. The greatest impediments to the church accomplishing this role are:

A theology that basically says the church exists to benefit and please believers. I believe this theology is taught both explicitly and implicitly. In the Western world a consumerism that places the interest of the believer above that of the unbeliever. In the Western world a Protestant Reformation that while doing much that was good, failed to focus on the church "in community" accomplishing a mission (the push was toward individual piety), and although there was the emphasis of the individual priesthood of the believer for personal salvation, the culture of the times focused on representation. Another cultural phenomena, was the fear of strong leaders because of what the church was reforming from in the Roman Catholic tradition.

3. The part pastors play in leading the church to fulfill its role is:

They function as true shepherds caring for God's flock.

They lead the church to be missional.

As missional leaders they are responsible for the mission, vision, values, and structure of the church.

Their role in preaching is to call the congregation to adopt the mission, embrace the vision, implement the values, and use the structure to allow all this to happen.

4. This means that the preacher's role Sunday after Sunday is:

Every Sunday in some way in the service the vision is cast, or at least a piece of it and the mission is referenced.

Stories become the focal point of communication.

The people are approached from a positive perspective and the negative is dealt with descriptively so that any legitimate guilt is developed by overhearing the need.

The "so what" application is always made to the congregation and what it needs to be or do as a body.

THE TASK OF PREACHING

1. The preacher must be:

One who sees himself or herself as a leader fulfilling a leadership position.

A person who is willing to be transparent.

A person who is willing to be vulnerable.

One who is authentic about God, life, and the culture.

2. The new demands for preachers are:

Fundraiser

Vision Caster

Story Teller

Recruiter

Shape corporate and individual values

Corporate Evangelism presentations

3. Topics that need to be addressed each year:

- Theological issues
- Biblical basis for beliefs and living
- Missions
- Finance
- Family issues (assuming complex families)
- Vision
- Corporate values
- Mission
- Evangelism
- Discipleship

4. The following must happen in the preaching event due to 21st century demands:

- Story
- Visual
- Speaking so the culture hears
- Authentic
- Transparent
- Vulnerable

5. The answers above means the preacher must do the following:

- Learn to be a good story teller
- Learn to structure sermons like stories
- Learn to incorporate the media into sermonic presentations
- Understand both pop culture and the issues behind current cultural phenomena
- Learn how to speak to the emerging culture
- Learn how to be positive
- Learn how to move groups to act
- Learn how to lead through preaching and use the platform to develop one's leadership role

PREACHING AND THE WORK OF CHURCH TRANSFORMATION

1. Urgency

Topics

The eternal issues related to sin and death
The death of your own congregation
The loss of friends and families and the inability to reach your own children and grandchildren
The testimony of Christ and the ability to influence a community for Him and righteousness
A collective sense of guilt accompanied by low morale about the current situation

Passages

Those on the eternal differences for believer and unbelievers
Studies of all the NT churches that by the 3rd century AD were dead
OT passages where Israel mourned its losses
Old and New Testament passages where individuals mourned losses

Development of sermons

Most will need to be developed inductively since you are preaching to people who believe any change is not worth the loss of the status quo no matter how bad the status quo is.
Most will need to be permeated with stories and personal testimonies of frustration.
They cannot, with rare exceptions be riddled with guilt either individually or collectively.

Overhearing

You do this by telling stories and letting people share their stories.
You demonstrate that issues being faced are common and historical to all organizations.
You lift up past victories and let people connect the dots that these formally good ministries are no longer producing the same results.
You allow people to feel the loss and smallness, sometimes by simply showing pictures of a filled sanctuary that is now half empty.

Using the past

- I would tell all the stories I could about all the great things that happened in the congregation in the past.
- Find statements, oral or written, where leaders in the past affirmed a clear mission and sense of vision.
- Use long time members to share stories of both acts of faith in the past and great accomplishments.
- Go to passages Old or New Testament, where people feel the loss of past victories and accomplishments.

Preaching to an entire community

- It means learning both the blessings and the needs of the community.
- It means meeting with and listening to community leaders and letting them or their words state the needs.
- It means helping the congregation find niches that the entire congregation or specific ministries in the congregation can meet.
- It means finding ways to serve the community.
- It means offering hope to the congregation of how the group that comprises the congregation can change the community.

Preaching to generational issues

- Letting people know that the pastor and leaders are aware that different generations have different needs, while recognizing that no generation is excused from serving our Lord with an outward focused mission.
- Helping the congregation to feel the impact of having missing generations in its midst.
- Helping the congregation see that intergenerational connectedness comes in ministry and community, while honoring differences.
- Honoring all generations for that which is positive and speaking with a balanced prophetic voice to generational sins.
- Preaching to show how the congregation can offer hope to all generations.

Preaching to national issues

- Providing sermons on how the national culture both works against and for the Church of Jesus Christ in the nation.
- Demonstrating that what your congregation is facing is not uncommon in the nation, while telling stories of those who contradict the trend.
- Offering hope that your congregation can make a significant difference in the lives of people in the community who do not yet know Christ but one day will.

Preaching about new groups that you need to bring transformation

You tell their stories, and let them share stories.

You tell stories of how such groups are accomplishing the same thing in other congregations.

Preaching to help people see dysfunction

You basically hold up a mirror in a descriptive way without producing guilt, rather letting the obvious be used by the Holy Spirit to do that.

You let people know how others are hurt, left out, or not ministered to because of the dysfunction.

2. Vision

Vision has a certain look

It is big enough to stir the blood, small enough to be accomplished in a specific time (5-10 years) and small enough to be placed on a bumper sticker. It reflects excitement, passion, accomplishment beyond serving ourselves, and enough specificity to give it legs.

The preacher is seen as a combination of prophet, salesperson, pied piper, forecaster, and passionate leader who has seen over the next hill.

Good vision sermons cause people to say I not only want to do that, join that, be a part, but will enlist my resources and those of others to make it happen.

Vision comes through stories

The preacher

Must know God is in it and that it is right

Needs to be convinced through prayer, interaction with those smarter than one's self, and discussion with people about the hard questions, that this vision is worth pursuing.

It demands prayer, commitment for the long haul, courage, doggedness, flexibility, and an openness to working with bright people who will enhance the vision.

The preacher needs to be a person of:

Conviction

Passion

Excitement

Balanced in dealing with responses

Preaching vision without boredom

New stories, new stories, and more new stories

The ability to look at the vision as a diamond with hundreds of brilliant facets that still come back to the beautifully cut diamond is necessary to not be boring.

You must be able to relate the vision in broad terms and specific terms.

Making a good stump speech

The ability to articulate the need both in broad terms and specific ones.

The ability to help people feel the urgency

The ability to find a solution that is both broad and specific at the same time.

The ability to articulate potential strategies, that while stretching paradigms make sense and are doable.

The ability to take broad ideas and demonstrate specific implications and results that may happen.

The ability to answer major objections that reflect that good thinking has not gone into the process of envisioning.

The ability to make your stump speech in 3 minutes or 3 hours through the use of story after story after story.

The ability to constantly show how the vision will benefit people while helping them achieve something better for others.

3. Multiplying the communication of the vision by 10

How

Recognize that every sermon, every service, every staff or board meeting, every public encounter, written or oral must touch on vision and or mission.

Align as many staff and board member to the same commitment. Let them carry the vision banner as often as possible.

Find catch phrases and slogans that people can easily remember.

Connecting urgency and vision

Always show how the vision answers critical needs being faced today.

Show how the vision will make the lives of people better.

Demonstrate how the vision will enable people to accomplish selfless acts.

A two-year plan

Focus sermons on specific needs that are resulting from being dysfunctional, and tie the end of each sermon into some aspect of the vision.

Divide the communication of urgency and vision up into quarters of the year and when you deal with one always take people back to the past sermons.

Develop broad Biblical themes between urgent issues and visions of how the urgent issues were or will be handled. For example:

Egypt – The Exodus to Promise Land

Disjointed nation – To National Pride under David

No walls – To A Protected City Under Nehemiah

No hope – The Incarnation

No church – A Strong Church Reaching the World

Sin reigning – A Returning Lord and Righteousness

Reigning

Need to develop a sermon calendar.

Use the creative cycle

4. Preaching systemically

Topics for change

Change

Leadership

Growth

Fruitfulness and faithfulness

Paradigms

Godly mission and vision

Transition

Passion, courage, risk

Areas for change

Mission and vision

Values

Structure

Views on Leadership and Ministry

Understanding of Culture

Expectations

Preach on excellence
Serving the King
Higher expectations bring more commitment
Demands needed to have, enjoy, and benefit from community
Harmony is not to be confused with unity

Short term wins

Stories
Celebrations
Honor in sermons
Always take them back to vision

The Past

Always honor what is good about the past
Show how legalism comes from letting the past control the future
Show how we have been saved from an evil past
Recognize those who have made significant contributions, while
demonstrating you cannot live on past victories.