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## ***Preaching the Word Part 1***

What has Jesus called us to do in our preaching? Every Sunday morning we stand up before our brothers and sisters to preach the word of God but what do we mean when we say “word” of God and what do we mean when we say “preach”?

The Word of God (with a capital “W”) is the second person of the Trinity. He is the Son of the Father and the one who came in the flesh as Jesus. (John 1:1-14) He is also the one in whom the whole creation lives, moves and has its being. (Acts 17:28) To preach the word must mean, first and foremost, to preach the eternal Word of the Father.

The word of God (with a small “w”) is written in scripture as a witness to us about the Word in whom we live and through whom we have our adoption as children of the Father. It does us and our listeners no good to preach the word (scripture) if we do not preach The Word (Son of God.) We are not called to proclaim what the bible says, we are called to proclaim the identity of Jesus as the incarnate Word of God and the savior of the world. (1 Timothy 4:10) So, every time we give a sermon we need to use the scripture to help ourselves and our listeners better understand the truth of their identity as adopted children of the Father, in the Son, by the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit inspired the bible to be the infallible testimony to the Word of God and to the Word’s personal mediation between the Father and the creation. When we use the bible the way the Spirit means for it to be used – to help people see their connection to the Father, in the Son – then it is the most useful and important tool in our preaching toolbox. If we try to use the bible as a magic book to get health or wealth or as a self-help guide to make ourselves better people then we will fail to truly preach the Word.

So, the Word of God is Jesus. It is him, and the connection he forms between humanity and the Father, that we are called to preach. What, then, does it mean to preach? Preaching is also the word of God. It is the proclamation of the Word (Jesus) using the word of scripture under the inspirational direction of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is constantly testifying to every human being about his or her inclusion in the life of the Triune God through the Son. The more we are in step with the Spirit’s testimony the more we will be successful in proclaiming the Word to others.

This preaching is called the “euangelion”, or “good news”, in the New Testament. The euangelion is not a sales pitch or an invitation. It is a proclamation of a fact. Preaching the good news of the Word of God does not mean that we are trying to “sell” people on how good Jesus is and how much he can help them. It does not mean that we are inviting them to get themselves into Jesus or get Jesus into themselves. We are proclaiming to them the fact that Jesus (the incarnate Word) has gotten them into himself and gotten himself into them.

You can picture the meaning of the word “euangelion” in this way. If a Roman city was in great danger from invasion by barbarians, and the Emperor came to take up residence in that city, he would make every house in that city safe even though he resided in only one of the houses in the city. (See: *On the Incarnation* by St. Athanasius.) The good news of his arrival and of the safety of all in that city would be announced by heralds in the street. The euangelion is the good news of the

accomplished fact that the Emperor has come and now all are safe.

The only invitation implied in this announcement is to believe or not believe. The Emperor has arrived. The city is safe. You are safe. This is a fact and your belief does not make it true or untrue. It is true apart from your will or decision. If you believe this fact then you can relax and enjoy life. If you don't believe it then you will continue in the hell of anxiety and fear.

The same is true of the gospel of Jesus, the euangelion that the Son of God has entered this world. By taking up residence in one human body, the Son has made all humanity safe. (Romans 5:18) We preachers of the Word are called to announce to the world the King's arrival and the world's safety. Our preaching is not a sales pitch such as "make Jesus your King and you will be safe." Our preaching is not an invitation such as "come on over to Jesus' city, it's a lot safer than this city you live in now." Our preaching is the proclamation of the Truth: "Good news! Good news! The Son of God has come in Jesus and now we are safe!"

Some will believe the truth that they are in Christ and are safe. They will respond with joy, repent of believing lies about Who the Father is, and be baptized. Others will not believe the truth that they are in Christ and are safe. Their lack of belief will not make the truth any less true. They are still in Christ and are still safe. What their lack of belief will bring is anxiety, fear, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

That's why it's so important that we preach the Word! We don't want even one person to miss the truth of who they are in Christ.

Next issue we'll look at specific examples of how to preach the Word.

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