

10-23-22

Sermon- Guarding the Entire Message

Scripture- 2 Tim 4: 1-8, CTW- PS 65

Hymns- 692, 554, 33

Theme- Sometimes in the middle of the fight, we look around us and do not see a wealth of support for the cause of Jesus which we are trying to uphold. Paul tells us to prepare for those times by going ever deeper into the word and way of Jesus. It reminds me of Paul's words in Philippians 4:13- "I can do all things through He who empowers me." How about you?

I. Introduction

Harry Reginald Hammond, better known as "Reg" to all of his friends, had felt a calling on his life to serve as a minister in the Church his whole life. Reg's father was an Episcopal priest as well as Reg's four brothers.

Reg seemed to somehow dodge the ministry though. He was well established in the grocery business when World War II broke out and he enlisted in the Army. The horrors of war deepened his faith in ways that he never imagined. He was awarded five battle stars and a Bronze star.

Reg says this about his war experience, "I saw more bodies in a short time than most undertakers will see in a lifetime. Young men dead alongside the road. Every night I would pray for those guys and for myself."

After the war, Reg still couldn't embrace the call to ministry. He went to school and became a teacher. He felt that he "was drawn to service of some kind".

Over the years he started and dropped ordination studies twice. Finally, many years after his retirement in 1980, he accepted the

call to ministry and was ordained in the Anglican Orthodox Church.

At age 79, he was the oldest person ever ordained in the Anglican faith. As he was ordained, fulfilling a calling that had been on his life for so long, Hammond said he had “a deep sense of satisfaction...a sort of wonderment and pleasure.”

One of his parishioners said of Reg, “When he was ordained it seemed as if he was correcting a mistake.” (**Tom Brokaw, The Greatest Generation**)

Tonight, I want to talk with you about a calling that everyone of us has as a Christian. That calling is to preach the Word of God...to whoever will listen! **In the Bible, the word “preach” means to “announce, make known, or spread a story widely”.**

Preaching is announcing to the world the good news of the gospel of Christ. **This is a responsibility that we all share.** This is the responsibility that Paul leaves for Timothy to carry on as he begins to conclude his letter to him.

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word”...

An effective Christian is one who is actively involved in preaching the Word. This was the most important component of Paul and Timothy’s ministry. It must be the most important part of our service to God as well. The message of God’s Word is the most vital message a person will ever receive, but they must have someone to tell it to them. Paul describes three situations we all face as Christians in relation to preaching the Word of God.

II. THE ORDER: TO DUTIFULLY PREACH GOD’S WORD.

Paul orders Timothy in **II Timothy 4:2**, “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and

encourage- with great patience and careful instruction.” Jesus also gives the command to preach in **Mark 16:15**, “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.’”

A. It is our duty, it is our calling to preach the Word of God. It is an order from God that cannot be ignored. Paul emphasizes the importance of this order by prefacing it by saying in verse 1, “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:”

When we are not obedient to the will of God in our lives, it causes trouble. We were made to worship God. We were made to spend our lives serving Him. We were made to **spread his Word to the world**. Paul writes in **I Corinthians 9:16**, “Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. **Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.**”

What compels you to action? For some it is a cause. For some it is an injustice.

Paul was compelled to preach and take action because of a personal encounter with Christ. We read about Paul’s encounter with Christ in the book of Acts. Paul is on his way to persecute Christians when he is stopped in his tracks by the risen Christ.

That day changed Paul’s life forever. It rearranged his priorities and focus in life. The same is true of us when we encounter Christ. That reshapes our whole life. We are compelled to take action for Christ. One of those actions is that we are to be actively preaching the Word of God to others.

B. The order is not just to preach the Word, but to do it in a way that is effective, relevant and communicates God’s Word in ways that people will understand it. That’s why Paul tells Timothy to “be prepared...preach with great patience and careful instruction.”

We see first of all that our order is to dutifully preach God's Word. If only it were that easy. Secondly, we see...

III. THE OBSTACLE: DISREGARD FOR THE TRUTH.

Paul writes to Timothy, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." **II Timothy 4:3-4**

A friend of mine tells the story about when he was a Boy Scout. In his troop, they played a game when new Scouts joined the troop. All the chairs in the room were lined up in a pattern, creating an obstacle course through which the new Scouts, blindfolded, were supposed to maneuver.

The Scoutmaster gave them a few moments to study the pattern before the adventure began. But, as soon as the new Scouts were blindfolded, the rest of the Scout troop quietly removed all the chairs!

A. Sometimes we are able to see the obstacles that we're facing and sometimes we're not. Sometimes the obstacles that we face change. The great obstacle that we face in regard to preaching God's Word is man's disregard for the truth.

Speaking of the wickedness of man, Paul writes in **Romans 1:25**, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator- who is forever praised. Amen." The question of our age is asked by Pilate as he interrogates Christ in John 18:38a, "**What is truth? Pilate asked.**" This is a good question!

B. George Barna writes, "To the average American, truth is relative to one's values and circumstances. Only one out of every four adults- and even fewer teenagers- believe that there is such a thing as absolute moral truth."

Barna suggests that this disregard for truth “may be the single most intense threat to the health of the United States and its people.”

The problem for all the doubters out there is that God’s Word is the Truth. It doesn’t matter what your circumstances are or whether you believe it or not, **it’s the truth.** You don’t have to believe something for it to be true.

Barna goes on to give the implications of a disregard for the truth: “Without absolute moral truth, there can be no right and wrong. Without right and wrong, there is no such thing as sin. Without sin, there can be no such thing as judgment and no such thing as condemnation. If there is no condemnation, there is no need for a Savior.”

C. Unfortunately, we will meet resistance in preaching God’s Word. A disregard for the truth leads to hardened hearts and deaf ears. People would rather listen to myths than to the truth.

I remember when my first wife and I were expecting our first child. I found out that there are lots of different myths that accompany pregnancy. Here are a few:

- The way that a woman carries the baby during her pregnancy, either high or low, can indicate the baby’s sex.
- The fetal heart rate can indicate your baby’s sex. If it’s over 140 it’s a girl, under 140 it’s a boy.
- The shape and fullness of a woman’s face during pregnancy can indicate the sex of the baby.
- If a woman experiences a lot of heartburn during pregnancy, the baby will be born with a lot of hair.

Contrary to popular belief, these are all myths and are not true, although there are some people who swear by these statements.

But this is what we're dealing with when we preach the Word of God. **People would rather believe a myth than the truth.** This is the greatest obstacle we face.

We've seen that we have an order, to preach God's Word. We also have an obstacle in man's disregard for the truth. Now we see...

IV. THE OUTCOME: DEPARTING TO AN ETERNAL REWARD.

A. GOD ALWAYS REWARDS FAITHFULNESS! If we are faithful to carry out God's order to preach His Word in spite of the various obstacles we will face, we have the promise of a happy ending.

We will leave this life for an eternal reward. Paul was making his exit here in **II Timothy 4:7-8**, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

B. How can we show others the strength of our belief?
In the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, a Japanese gymnast, Shun Fujimoto, was competing in the team competition. Somehow, during the floor exercises, he broke his right knee. It was obvious to all reasonable observers that he would be forced to withdraw.

On the following day, Fujimoto competed in his strongest event, the rings. His routine was excellent, but the critical point lay ahead- the dismount.

Without hesitation, Fujimoto ended with a twisting, triple somersault. There was a moment of intense quiet as he landed with tremendous impact on his wounded knee. Then came the thunderous applause as he stood his ground.

Later, reporters asked about that moment and he replied, "The pain shot through me like a knife. It brought tears to my eyes. But now I have a gold medal and the pain is gone."

This is the promise that we have from God. One day, if we remain faithful, the pain will be gone, the hurt will be gone, the sickness will be gone, the tiredness will be gone, the tears will be gone and we will have a reward of eternal life in heaven with God.

Jesus himself gives us this promise in Revelation 2:10b, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

V. Conclusion

A. It's obvious that God is calling us to announce his message of the good news of salvation to the world. For some of you that calling could lead you to become a "preacher", for others that call will lead you to share God's Word with your neighbors, friends and co-workers.

I will never forget the first time I ever preached in a church. My friend in ministry, Mark Meister, was the pastor of Bethany church in Sunbury at the time. He was also one of my prison guards in Allenwood before that. He invited me to come and preach my first sermon in front of people I had never met before...

My sermon wasn't very impressive. I had no confidence in my ability. Mark actually had to walk me down the aisle with his huge hand on my shoulder...not a problem for him because he is 6 foot 9!

As I started preaching God's Word, it just fit...it felt comfortable to be there. I remember feeling "WOW, this is what I'm supposed to do with the rest of my life: tell others about God and the eternal life that we can have through His Jesus because of what happened on a cross 2,000 years ago.

You see folks, I had I had already committed myself to becoming a minister, but it was that day that I actually committed myself to one day being a preacher of His word and His way...

B. Today, there may be some of you who are resisting God's call to share the Gospel with someone. Maybe you haven't totally given your life over to Christ.

God's calling you to repentance and faithfulness to Him. Will you answer God's call? God may be calling you to serve in a specific area. He has a job for every believer. Believe that!

Will you answer God's call? You have the privilege of getting to tell others the good news of God's Word. I love to tell people good news. You have a calling to preach God's Word. Will you answer God's call?

Amen? Let Us Pray...