

## THE DEAREST PLACE ON EARTH (5)

### What's so special about preaching?

#### A. Introduction

1. The Lord Jesus, the head of the church, instructs each local church to appoint a plurality of qualified men to be elders.
2. The elders are to feed, know, lead, protect, care for, and love the flock under their care so that as a local church we display God's glory to the world around us.

"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10-11)

3. But how are they to do this?

How are the elders to lead a local church so that it is the local church that the Lord Jesus wants it to be?

#### B. What makes a church, a church?

1. Since the Reformation, Christians have talked about 'the marks of the church' as a way of distinguishing a true church from a false church.

*"Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."* (John Calvin)

*"The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."* (Martin Luther)

*"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."* (Article 19 of the 39 Articles)

2. The two marks of a church are a) the right preaching of the Word/Gospel and b) the right administration of the sacraments/ordinances.

These two marks both create and preserve the church.

The right preaching of the Word of which the central message is the Gospel, creates the church.

The right administration of baptism ensures that only genuine believers are admitted into the membership of the church.

The right administration of the Lord's Supper (only to genuine believers not including believers under church discipline) helps to ensure that church is distinguished from the world.

3. So the way the elders are to lead a local church is by ensuring that the gospel is preached and the ordinances are administered correctly.

#### C. What does the Bible say about preaching?<sup>i</sup>

1. God is a preacher.

The Bible begins with a sermon.

God created the world by speaking.

“And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3)

God preached a sermon to Adam about how to live in this world.

“And the LORD God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17)

## 2. Satan is a preacher.

Satan preached a sermon to Adam and Eve about how to live in this world.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?” (Genesis 3:1)

Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie of Satan’s sermon over God’s.

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (Genesis 3:6)

Satan has continued to preach every day since then.

## 3. God has preached another sermon.

A sermon about Jesus.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

“The LORD had said to Abram, Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

He sent prophets to preach this sermon too.

The Old Testament prophet’s commanded people to repent of their sin, turn back to God, and trust in Jesus.

## 4. The Lord Jesus came to earth as a preacher.

He preached in response to Satan’s sermon – unlike Adam and Eve He did not believe Satan’s lies.

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'” (Matthew 4:8-10)

He began His ministry by preaching the gospel.

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matthew 4:17)

His priority was to preach the gospel.

“Jesus replied, Let us go somewhere else— to the nearby villages— so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” (Mark 1:38)

He instructs His followers to preach the gospel (particularly the elders of local churches).

“He told them, This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning

at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49)

"For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel— not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." (1 Corinthians 1:17)

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17)

"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; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction." (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

#### 5. Right preaching is proclaiming God's Word about Jesus!

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)

### **D. Why is preaching God's Word about Jesus so important?**<sup>ii</sup>

#### 1. God's Word CREATES the church (His people).

God created His people by His Word.

"Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:26)

God recreates His people by His Word.

"The LORD had said to Abram, Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:1-3)

"And God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:1-3)

"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me to and fro among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, Son of man, can these bones live? I said, O Sovereign LORD, you alone know. Then he said to me, Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet— a vast army." (Ezekiel 37:1-10)

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth... Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:14, 12)

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless

they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:13-17)

Preaching God's Word about Jesus is the means by which He creates His people.

## 2. God's Word TRANSFORMS the church (His people).

God makes us more like Himself through His Word about Jesus.

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

God's Word moulds and shapes us.

"Jesus answered, It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (Psalm 119:105)

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

## **E. Preach the Word!**

### 1. Preach the Word – Expositionally.

*"Expositional preaching is that preaching which takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture."* (Mark Dever)

Preaching that lets God speak, so that He can create and transform.

Preaching that will be about Jesus (Luke 24:27).

Preaching that ensures that the sermons are not just on the topics that interest the preacher – it forces the preacher to proclaim the whole counsel of God.

### 2. Preach the Word – Primarily.

It is the primary way to feed, know, lead, protect, care for, and love the flock.

It is the primary way of creating unity in a local church.

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from 'Why is preaching important?' in Vintage Church by Mark Driscoll & Gerry Breshears

<sup>ii</sup> Adapted from 'Mark One: Expositional Preaching' in Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever.