

Tell The good News
2 Timothy 4

10th June, 2012

We have two paragraphs here. First is directed at Timothy and on to us, the second is Paul's reflection on his life. The first is about the heat of service the second puts that service into context.

But we begin with the most serious of calls:

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:

This is very formal language set in the context of two facts.

1. We are in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, who is the judge of the living and the dead.

So stop messing around, get serious and concentrate on what is being said. This message to 'Preach the Word' comes with all the formality and more of the state opening of parliament. Except this is not a Queen reading a statement prepared by a prime minister, this is the apostle of Jesus Christ declaring the primary objective of the servant of Jesus Christ. You are not judged by your peers, or by the church leadership or Paul or the world around us, you are answerable to God alone. We might direct you to God's word, give prophetic words of encouragement or warning but you

answer to Jesus, your Saviour and Lord. He is the King of the kingdom of heaven.

2. In view of his appearing and his kingdom

These two events are somewhat back to front because he is speaking of the second coming when Jesus will appear again. Last time he came as Saviour, next time he will come as judge of all the earth. And in between times the issue is has his kingdom come in your life and my life.

God's message today is centred on three words:

“Preach the Word”.

We tend to think that is what I am doing this morning and Oli next week but to simplify this command to those with a gift of preaching is to reduce our role to being passive spectators or formal speakers.

This command is far from that.

The word 'Preach' has all sorts of wrong connotation today. The Greek word *kerusso* is much wider and more significant. In fact modern translations will tend to use the word 'proclaim' because it has the connotation of a herald and a public proclamation. Not inside the church, where we teach but outside around Sainsbury's, in your front room, at the club you go to, where you work. It is best illustrated by looking at our Gospel, Matthew.

Ch3:1 John comes preaching in the deserts of Judea. In 4:17, Jesus began to preach, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" and in verse 23 Jesus teaches in the synagogues and preaches the good news of the kingdom. That was John's ministry and Jesus' ministry

summarised. So this is simply a call to imitate Jesus.

Proclaim the Word!

Jesus was not silent and his followers cannot be either. It is our solemn duty and joy to obey the call the proclaim the Good News to everyone whether they want to hear it or not. So the question is what to proclaim, what to tell your friends.

The Word

Paul is not speaking about the Bible here, he has just said that

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And the New Testament is yet to be recognised as authoritative. So what is he talking about? It is clearly a significant statement but is more than a statement, John sets it out in the beginning of his gospel. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The word you are called to proclaim is Jesus, not anti-abortion, anti-homosexual, anti break-up of marriage and the message the formal church is all too often misrepresented as being what the Word is. If we do not convey the idea that Jesus is our message, Jesus is the one to listen to, Jesus is the way to life, then we are not proclaiming the Word.

The next phrase has particular prophetic significance to Liz and I. Late one summer's evening we were sitting on a bench overlooking the sea at Walton on the Naze where we were serving the Lord proclaiming the Word

to children as part of CSSM, we were asking the Lord whether he wanted us to lead the mission in the coming years. This scripture jumped out of the page because when you work in a seaside resort there are only two seasons, in season and out of season. The summer and the rest of the year. There were people in Walton who ran restaurants for 10 weeks then packed up and went to live in Spain for the rest of the year. And we were part of that culture arriving with the holiday makers and running major events for children and families and then going off to our home churches. And God said to us, preach the Word in Season at Walton CSSM and out of season in Mottingham. And we obeyed that calling for a number of years.

be prepared in season and out of season;

I want you to listen to the Authorized Version of the Bible here

be instant, in season and out of season.

Are you instant when it comes to proclaiming the good news?

We live in an instant world, I get frustrated at Costa Coffee, waiting for my cappuccino to be prepared, at MacDonalds or the Fishing Net I hope the meal has been prepared before I order it, so it arrives immediately I have paid. Once a week we have a microwave meal, hopefully just having to put it in, set the timer and wait for the ping!

The word the AV translates Be instant and the NIV be prepared means both ideas, there is an urgency about

you proclaiming the Word. You should be ready. Are you?

What is your instant gospel? We may need to add water and process it further but what is the instant message you are ready to tell given the opportunity?

I am going to revive some simple ideas because we have made this gospeling far too complicated and are successfully persuaded by Satan that we need to leave it to the experts in evangelism. Rubbish the Great commission was to the church, the body of Christ and when you meet a friend you are Christ's representative. It is your message that they will listen to. So be prepared.

Six things God wants you to tell:

1. **Your Personal Testimony** to what God has done in your life.
2. **Your Need as God sees it.** all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Roman 3:23
3. **Your Own Helplessness** Jesus said "I am the way in the truth and the life, no one comes to the father but by me" John 14:6
4. **God's Provision for Your Need:** God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16
5. **God's Promise to Meet Your Needs:** "Jesus said, 'I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand'."

John 10:28 "Being confident of this, that he (God) who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6 "Therefore He (Christ) is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because he always lives to intercede for them." Hebrews 7:25

6. **Accept Him By Faith Today** ⁹ *if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* ¹⁰ *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* Romans 10:9-10

Can I remind you that the full gospel is what we are studying for 2-3 years on Sundays. In fact it will take eternity to fully assimilate the fullness of this Word. But the instant, ever ready to an answer to the faith that you have is best started by these six statements. So important do I believe this that I have produced a leaflet for you to take away and use to memorise. I actually think one of the reasons we are tongue-tied is that we have not learnt the script! Brian used to say that training to fly helicopters was a whole lot about learning the chants that meant that in a crisis you automatically did what you had trained your brain to do. This is much more important than air/sea rescue, this is about turning your friend away from the brink of hell and directing them to eternity with Jesus. So learn what to tell and when in a jam, be ready with your

instant gospel eager to expend it to the full riches of the revelation of God in Christ Jesus as revealed in Scripture and by the Holy Spirit.

God's word does not stop with the instant gospel. *correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction*

There is a place for Alpha, Christianity Explored, Teaching on Sunday Mornings, being at the House group, learning to read the Bible for yourself daily. The instant gospel needs to expand to the full gospel -

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

⁵ *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

Timothy is not an evangelist, he is a teacher and leader but he, like all of us have to do the work of an evangelist. That is everyone's privilege and joy to tell the Good News. There is no place in the church for I have my ministry and I'm not the evangelist so don't expect me to train for this. Everyone of us has the responsibility of telling the Good News of Proclaiming the Word. Some are specially called to be evangelists just as some have a prayer ministry but ALL are called to prayer.

Now let's look at the end game. Paul, maybe only days away from execution, writes about his life. For 30 years he has served Jesus Christ.

⁶ *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Death is seen as a thanksgiving offering rather than a disaster, a departure rather than the end of life. He has fought the fight, probably making lots of mistakes and plenty of failures, he certainly had times when he might of given up but he kept the faith. The race was a marathon, but like the London Marathon the point of the race was to finish and receive a medal rather than some competitive race. But what joy he has as he lifts his eyes to the coming death:

⁸ *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

We talk a lot about God being judge as if that is scary but when you have trusted Jesus, he is going to award you for your faith. Not whether you felt good or did great things but whether you stuck to him, trying to stay on course when everything around you said give up on Jesus. The crown of righteousness is not for good works it is the gift of grace for responding to the love of God

in Christ Jesus. Paul is looking forward to joining James who he had executed and you arriving in heaven 2000 years later and demonstrating that God has an amazing way of picking the most unlikely people and making them his special friends.

You may not be expecting death this next week but be encouraged that you will gain the crown through Christ.

And can it be...

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine;
alive in him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach th' eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.*