

What do we preach?

Why do we preach?

How do we preach?

...we preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23)

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

Him we proclaim... that we present everyone fully mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28)

- Do we always need to preach Christ when we're preaching from the Old Testament?
- How often is Christ preached from our pulpits?

We preach Christ from all the Scriptures

- Acts 2:22; 8:35; 17:2-3

Spirit → Word → Christ

The apostles have understood Jesus was telling them in Luke 24:44-47

Spurgeon: "I would never preach a sermon - the Lord forgive me if I do - which is not full to overflowing with my Master. I know one who said I was always on about Christ, and he would come and hear me no more; but he said if I preached a sermon without Christ in it, he would come. Ah, he will never come while this tongue moves - for a sermon without Christ in it? A Christless sermon? A brook without water? A cloud without rain? A well which mocks the traveller? A tree twice dead, plucked up by the roots? A sky without a sun? A night without a star? It would be a realm of death—a place of mourning for angels, and laughter for devils! O Christian, we must have Christ!"

We preach out of zeal for Christ to increase joy in Christ

- Philippians 1:20-26

The 1 thing Paul desires – v20 - that Christ is honoured/exalted

He has a debate with himself about whether life or death is preferable (not a dilemma many of us have!) and decides death is actually preferable because he will be with Christ

There is only 1 reason for Paul to live – “for you” and particularly for your “joy in the faith”

Same in 2 Cor. 1:24

Joy is key to godliness – e.g. youth group pregnancies – where is their joy?

Paul's 1 desire (Christ exalted) is the same as his 1 reason (your joy) – v26 – Christ is most glorified when people are most enjoying Him

The difficult thing is that to exalt Christ you must cut down man.

Martin Luther said, “Preach so that if the people don't hate their sin they will hate you.”

We search the Scriptures as the Word about Christ

- John 5:39-47

Two problems – they don't seek Christ in the Scriptures & they seek glory from man instead
We must stop seeking glory from man and seek the glory of God in the face of Christ in the pages of Scripture.

That is the point of the Scriptures – that we would find Christ there and have life in him.

Luther: as the shepherds to the manger to find Jesus, so we go to the Scriptures to find Him.

What books of the Bible or parts of the Bible do you find it most difficult to see Christ in?

- Problem, Promise, Pattern, Presence – e.g. Genesis 3
 - Problem – Satan, Sin, Death, Curse
 - Gen 3 - Sin, death and curse come into the world, no way back to the tree of life, cherubim with flaming sword – Jesus comes to deal with this problem, as he dies the Temple curtain with the cherubim woven into it torn, because Jesus has taken the blow of the sword of judgment
 - Sometimes we see Christ in the Old Testament in his not being there and us needing him to be there. He is the answer to the problems.
 - E.g. Ecclesiastes
 - Every time you read in the Old Testament – “and he died, and he died...” – it’s crying out for Christ. Every time you see wickedness and pain and tears – it’s crying out for Christ.
 - The book of Judges is a spiral of sin and in the last section of the book it is getting almost as bad as it could possibly get. The Levites have idols and concubines, priesthood is for sale, there is gang rape, a body is cut into pieces, there’s civil war. It is a very very dark picture. And throughout you get the repeated phrase: “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). That is the big problem – we need a king.
 - And then the kings come along and some are ok but they’re mostly pretty rubbish – we need a better king.
 - Promise – Seed, Serpent Crusher
 - Gen. 3:15 - This is probably the most important promise in the whole Bible. Throughout all the Old Testament we are looking for one born of woman, seed of the woman, who will be the Serpent Crusher.
 - In Genesis alone you get this word “Seed” 46 times
 - Joshua – 10:24-25
 - Judges there are several times when someone crushes someone’s skull
 - David defeats Goliath and cuts off his head but David is not the final serpent crusher; he is promised that from his line will come the seed
 - The Prophets and the Psalms are all about this Promised Seed in David’s line.
 - Isaiah says the virgin will give birth to a child (7:14); to us a child will be born, one born of woman who will finally break the yoke of our oppressor (9:1-7)
 - Pattern – clothing, Adam, tree
 - clothing [Gen. 3:21 – a hint of how redemption will come – wrapped in a death]
 - Adam is a pattern of Christ – in fact in God’s sight there are only 2 men – 1st Adam and the 2nd Adam – 2nd Adam is tempted by Satan like the first Adam but he resists. Like Adam he has to make a decision in the garden – a much harder garden – and he chooses God’s will.
 - As Adam was cut off from the tree of life so Christ goes willingly die on a tree that he might become the tree of life to us.
 - And then he rises again on the first day of the week – as the firstborn of a new creation.
 - And on Easter morning He’s met by Mary and do you remember what she mistakes him for – the gardener – and he is – he is the second Adam remaking Eden for us.
 - Through Bible there are loads of patterns - basically three categories – Events, People, Things:

1. Events – Genesis 6-8 [the Flood]; 19 [destruction of Sodom and rescue of Lot]; Exodus 12 [Passover]; 14 [Red Sea] – the similarity between all of these events is that they are salvation-judgement events – the very same event is salvation and judgement – just as the Cross is the judgment and the salvation of the world in Christ. Basically all salvation/judgment events in the Scriptures are pointers to the Cross
2. People – esp. anointed ones – prophets, priests and kings
 - i. Prophet – preaching the Word; persecuted (like Jeremiah), sometimes doing miracles (like Elisha)
 - ii. Priest – representative of the people who carries them into the most holy place (Ex. 28:29).
 - iii. King – also a representative of the people – the king goes up the people go up; the king goes down the people go down. Especially David - massively important as a pattern of Christ – let's not teach children that they are David defeating the Goliaths of their lives. David is the christ who single-handedly defeats the great enemy while God's people stand by trembling on the hillside. David is also the persecuted king, and he does things like 1 Sam. 22:2: "And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became captain over them". (Clearly he's not a pattern of Christ in everything – e.g. Bathsheba – then he is more the Problem.)
3. Things – Noah's Ark, Temple, Sacrifice, Feasts, Means of grace – basically anything through which atonement or blessing or provision or grace comes to Israel is probably a pointer to Jesus – e.g. the wood thrown into the salty water or the Rock in the Desert hit and pouring forth water or the Snake lifted on a pole (Numbers 21//John 3 – Jesus become a curse for us, become sin for us, so that we look at him on the Cross as our substitute and are saved).
 - Presence – LORD walking in the garden – Gen. 3:8
 - Jesus is not only longed for and promised and patterned in the Old Testament– he is actually there. Jesus actually spoke to and sometimes appeared to the Old Testament saints and they put their faith in him. That might sound a bit strange at first but:
 - The Bible is Trinitarian from Genesis 1 onward "Let us" cf. John 1:1
 - John 1:18: The unseen God and the seen God.
 - So all the way through the Bible there is an unseen Most High God and there is a ground-level God you can see – the Son – sometimes called 'the LORD', sometimes 'the Angel of the LORD' or 'One like a Son of Man' or 'the face/presence of God' – who meets the patriarchs and prophets and talks with them and eats with them and even wrestles with them.¹
 - It was Jesus who saved his people out of Egypt (Jude 5).
 - Christ has always been the object of true faith, the one the faithful OT saints looked to and the one the unfaithful rejected (Hebrews 11:26; 1 Cor. 10:94). Abraham looked to Jesus (John 8), Moses looked to Jesus.
 - John 14:6 – in OT and NT

Key thought:

The Word is all about Christ, so preaching the Word will mean proclaiming Christ

¹ E.g. Genesis 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 26, 28, 31, 32; Exodus 3-4, 13-14 19-20, 24, 33; Numbers 22; Joshua 5; Judges 2, 6, 13; 2 Kings 19; 1 Chronicles 21; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1-2, 8; Daniel 3, 7, 10; Zechariah 1, 3