



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

Preaching the Word (Homiletics)

Lesson #18

D. Preparing to Preach the Word

- Step 1: Begin with Prayer
- Step 2: Choose a Text
- Step 3: Study the Text and Context
- ▶ **Step 4: Look for Law and Gospel**
- Step 5: Select the Main Point
- Step 6: Determine the Order of Presentation
- Step 7: Apply the Word to Your Audience
- Step 8: Choose the Right Words
- Step 9: Prepare an Introduction and a Conclusion

The Bible contains two main teachings: the law and the Gospel. It is important for you to study your text carefully to determine what part of your text is law, and what part is Gospel. The Holy Spirit uses both the law and the Gospel to do His work. It is written: **“The letter (law) kills, but the Spirit (Gospel) gives life”** (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The law tells us what we should or shouldn't do. The law shows us our sin and condemns our sinful thoughts and actions. When the Bible tells us to do something or not do something, that is the law. The Holy Spirit uses the preaching of law to convict sinners of their sin and condemn their thoughts, words, and deeds.

The Gospel tells us what God has done to save us by sending His Son Jesus Christ. The Gospel shows us that we our sins are freely forgiven by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospel shows us our Savior and the salvation we have through Him. The Holy Spirit then uses the preaching of the Gospel to give forgiveness of sins and new spiritual life. He also uses the Gospel to create in believers a love for the Lord so that they delight in doing those things that please Him.

You must preach the law and the Gospel

Jesus explained the work of the Holy Spirit to His apostles: **“If I depart, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged”** (John 16: 7-11). **“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you”** (John 16:14). Jesus also told them **“that repentance and remission of sins (law and Gospel) should be preached in His name to all nations”** (Luke 24:47).

It is important that we use the law and the Gospel as the Lord intends us to use them. Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus help us to preach the law and Gospel correctly. Paul warns that some are **“desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm”** (1 Timothy 1:7). These people were trying to use the law as a way to save sinners or to help in their salvation. But Paul says: **“We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murders of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,**

for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers” (1 Timothy 1: 8-10).

The Gospel of Christ assures us that our sins are forgiven. Through faith in Christ we are already perfectly righteous. The law cannot make us more righteous. We do not need the law for that purpose. The law condemns sinners for their sin; it does not to make them righteous. We do not preach the law so that people will live in a more godly manner, but so that they will seek forgiveness in their Savior Jesus Christ.

The law made Paul aware of his sin, but the Gospel showed him Christ as his salvation from sin. Paul summarizes the Gospel in these words: **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”** (1 Timothy 1:15). **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”** (1 Timothy 2: 5-6). This is Gospel.

We preach the law to make people aware of their sin and their need for their Savior. We preach the Gospel to assure them that their sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ. In your sermons you will want to kill the sinful nature of your hearers by preaching the law and then give them new life by preaching the Gospel.

There are times when we must preach the law and nothing but the law. Paul instructed Timothy: **“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”** (1 Timothy 5:20). Unrepentant sinners need to hear the law so that the Holy Spirit will lead them to repentance. But if someone is repentant, we must preach the Gospel to assure them their sins are forgiven because of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

When we preach to a group of people, however, we will generally preach both the law and the Gospel, because we do not want to withhold the Gospel – the forgiveness of sins – from all those who are repentant, even if there may one or two who are unrepentant.

Paul told Timothy how to use the Bible: **“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Gospel provides the wisdom for salvation; the Gospel is the doctrine that preaches Christ and forgiveness of sins. Reproof and correction, however, come from the law. The law reproves and corrects, but always with the final goal of imparting forgiveness and eternal life through the Gospel.

Looking for the law

To find the law in a passage, look for words that tell us what we should or shouldn’t do (commands). This can also involve attitudes or thoughts we should or shouldn’t have.

Sometimes a text may not contain a clear word of law telling us what we should or shouldn’t do. It is still important to preach the law by talking about sins that are common to all of us. If your text is an account from the Gospels, you can look at the actions and word of the people around Jesus. Often their words or actions demonstrate a sin, like unbelief or self-righteousness. You can point out their sinful actions or attitudes as a way to preach the law to condemn the same sin in your hearers.

Looking for the Gospel

To find the Gospel in a passage, look for words that tell us what Jesus has done to save us. Look for words that tell us our sins are forgiven. Do not confuse earthly blessings or earthly help with the Gospel (the Good News). The fact that Jesus is always with us and helps us in this life is certainly good news, but it is not the Good News that our sins are forgiven, and we have a home in heaven.

Sometimes your text may not contain a clear presentation of the Gospel. For example, the second half of most of the letters of Paul contain simply exhortations where Paul encourages us to live in a way that

pleases God. It can be tempted to preach a whole sermon from these passages on what we should or shouldn't do and how we should live. But that is only preaching the law. Such a sermon leads either to the sin of pride and self-righteousness: "I am doing these things; I am good!" Or such a sermon leads to despair: "I am not doing all these things; I am a lost!"

But we must always do as Jesus commanded: **"Preach the Gospel"** (Mark 16:15). The law prepares us for hearing of the Gospel. The Gospel must be the focus of our sermons, for we are **"ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit"** (2 Corinthians 3:6). The Gospel of Christ is God's final word to sinful mankind. We must *always* preach the Gospel in *every* sermon. We must always talk about the forgiveness of sins that we have through Jesus.

The motivation and ability to live as God wants us to live comes from the Gospel: **"We love Him because He first loved us"** (1 John 4:19). Before we tell Christians what God wants them to do, we must first remind them what God has done for them in Jesus. And we will want to preach the Gospel to assure them that they are forgiven for all the times they have failed to do all that God wants them to do.

It is important that we remember Paul's words to Titus. They guide us in the right way to use the law and the Gospel: **"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority"** (Titus 2: 11-15).

Questions

1. What is the main difference between the law and the Gospel?
2. How do we know that the Holy Spirit wants us to preach the law?
3. Why can no one be saved if we only preach the law?
4. For what purpose does the believer in Christ no longer need the law?
5. What are some of the passages of Scripture that show that we must use the law?
6. List the statements in the passages above that refer to the law.
7. List the statements in the passages above that present the Gospel.
8. Why do believers in Christ still need to hear the law?
9. Why must the Gospel of Christ predominate in our preaching?
10. What must we always talk about in every sermon?

Study Jean 3:14-18 and try to find the law and the gospel in this passage.