



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

Preaching the Word (Homiletics)

Lesson #8

B. Examples of New Testament Sermons

7. What We Learn from These Examples

The goal of all these sermons was to proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah and as the only Savior of the world. The desired effect was that all listeners would recognize:

1. that they were sinners deserving punishment
2. that in love God had sent Jesus to save them from their sin and its punishment through His life, His death, and His resurrection
3. that they should put their complete trust for salvation in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins He won for all and therefore for them also.

On Pentecost, Peter was mainly addressing Jews who had rejected Jesus and had called for His crucifixion, so he accused them of the murder of the Son of God. This was a strong and severe preaching of the law of God that condemns sinners. But after the Holy Spirit had used this preaching of the law to convict his hearers of their sin, Peter was quick to proclaim forgiveness of sins and offer baptism as a means by which they would receive the forgiveness of sins.

There was no need emphasize God's condemning law in Peter's message in the home of the Gentile Cornelius. God had already prepared Cornelius for Peter's preaching and Cornelius was already a believer in the true God of Israel. But Cornelius and his family did not yet know that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. Nor did he know that the God of the Jews was actually the God of the Gentiles also. Peter's sermon in this Gentile home concluded with the Good News of the forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit used this message to convince these Gentiles that Jesus was their Savior. The fact that the signs of Pentecost were repeated in this Gentile home served to show that the old division between Jews and Gentiles had disappeared and now both Jews and Gentiles could be united in worship through trust in the same Savior and the same forgiveness of sins.

Paul had the privilege of bringing the Gospel to audiences made up of both Jews and Gentile God-fearers. To these audiences Paul used what they already knew and believed from the Old Testament to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the Old Testament types and prophecies, and to show that in Jesus there is forgiveness of sins.

When Paul addressed pagans in Athens, he did not refer to the Old Testament at all, but used their natural knowledge of God to lead them to the true God, the Creator and Preserver of the universe. He then tried to introduce them to Jesus of Nazareth as God's appointed Judge. He was laying the groundwork for His presentation of Jesus' death and its meaning by speaking of Jesus' resurrection. But at this point Paul was interrupted by their objections. But even in Athens he must have been able to get to the good news of Jesus and His forgiveness in some way, for several persons became believers in Christ through Paul's preaching and teaching.

It is very clear that all of the sermons recorded in the Book of Acts were centered on Christ. The type of audience these preachers faced determined their method of approach, but their aim was always the same. They wanted to preach the Good News of Jesus, centering on His life, death, and resurrection, and the results of His work: the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. In his sermon at

Antioch of Pisidia, Paul used the term justification together with the term forgiveness. He pointed out that his listeners could not be justified by obeying God's law.

God wants His believers today to preach the same Gospel that Peter, Stephen, Philip, and Paul preached. Paul once wrote: **“We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake”** (2 Corinthians 4:5). Peter, Stephen, Philip, and Paul all preached Christ and they were intent on telling their listeners about the forgiveness of sins that Christ won. **“Our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant”** (2 Corinthians 3: 5-6). The new covenant is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus said: **“Preach the gospel”** (Mark 16:15), and that is what we must do. Paul wrote to Timothy: **“Preach the word!”** (2 Timothy 4:2). What is that Word? Paul tells us the answer to that question in the previous chapter: **“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). Therefore: **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching”** (2 Timothy 4:2).

Questions

1. In what way were all the sermons from the book of Acts similar?
2. What differences do we see in them?
3. Why did the preachers change their approach at different times?
4. What must be present in every Christian sermon?
5. Why is the preaching of the law necessary?
6. Why is the preaching of the law more necessary sometimes and not others?
7. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the preaching of the Gospel?
8. How can we know that we are preaching God's Word rather than our own ideas?
9. Who makes us sufficient for the preaching of the Gospel?