

A) Sermon Slides

Slide 1: Title

Messy Church but Healthy Prescriptions

Acts 6:1-7

Slide 2:

Acts 6:1-7 (ESV)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Slide 3:

We should not idealize the first church. It was messy

Slide 4:

The "mess" in the First Jerusalem Church:

- 1) Some people of a different culture were being "neglected."
The charge of "Hebrew Privilege."

Slide 5:

The "mess" in the First Jerusalem Church:

- 1) Some people of a different culture were being "neglected."
The charge of "Hebrew Privilege."
- 2) The threat to subjugate the Word of God for social concerns.

Slide 6:

Acts 6:2

"And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables."

Slide 7:

The major threat to the movement of God is whatever threatens the ministry of the Word.

Slide 8:

They overcame both threats with one prescription:

Spiritual Delegation

Slide 9:

They chose 7 men who were also of the same culture as those who felt oppressed.

Slide 10:

Mark 5:19 (ESV)

“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

Slide 11:

Why it matters that the church never forsakes the "ministry of the Word" to wait on tables.

Slide 12:

The hope of mankind, and the greatest threat to the kingdom of the world, is the preaching of Jesus Christ.

Slide 13:

"Christianity as a way of life appeals perhaps to more people than ever before when it is presented as a translation into modern terms of the teaching and spirit of Jesus. At the same time Christianity as a series of propositions about God, about heaven and hell, and in particular, about metaphysics, is looked upon with increasing suspicion. In this field it is regarded as one of man's interpretations of his experiences, but not necessarily either a true or a final one.

Evangelism must therefore utilize a different approach.

What I want to say in this article is that the authoritarian method of approach becomes increasingly ineffective; in fact, it is by its very nature precluded."

Slide 14:

We have been given Revelation. The Word of God. We must not sacrifice that for "waiting on tables."

B) Group Discussion

1) Have someone read the text, Acts 6:1-7

What is this about? What themes and ideas and/or lessons jump out at you personally?

2) Two things you never want to see:

1) Someone making sausage, and

2) The inner-workings of a church

Have you had "messy" experiences with a church in your past? Can you share?

Do you find it more disheartening because the church is supposed to be different? How has church mess affected you and/or your family?

3) There are two threats facing this church:

a) Hebrew "privilege"

b) Temptation to expend time and effort away from the "ministry of the Word."

Have you ever considered systems in your own local church that may not benefit some, or only benefit some? How would you know about these issues?

There must have been some/many in the church who thought this should be a concern for the Apostles. How do you feel about their answer? (Acts 6:2)

4) The "prescription" solved two issues at once!

- Talk about the wisdom of appointing 7 Greek Jews to oversee the allegations and probable systemic problem facing the church.

- Talk about the wisdom of the Apostles sticking to their commitment to the ministry of the Word, and prayer.

5) A couple of quotes to consider:

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

"Preach the Word, and if necessary, use words."

Why are these not true biblically? Or what is the unbiblical communication here?

We have to learn better diagnose our culture.

What do we see in this early church? Were the Apostles being driven by social concern? Poverty? Slavery? Institutional Bias? Roman Government? The unfairness of judicial systems and cultural prejudices? Understanding personal stories and journey?

What was driving them? Motivating them? What were they willing to die for and to?

Talk about this tension today.

Why are we driven to understand and learn tolerantly from one another more than we are driven by communicating God's revelation to mankind?

What is the "Hope" of the world?

(This should be a great discussion about the tension we all feel to be liked and loved before we assume to present truth. How we don't want to assume we have truth that others don't have. That we don't want to judge. That we are afraid of losing them if we present truth. And finally how we think it is unloving to present truth if we are unwilling or unable to "wait on tables.")

Wrestle well with these tensions!

Prayer and Praise