

The Church: Preaching That Makes Jesus Known

2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Timothy 4:13-16

Grace Church | 9.1.19

Good morning. Welcome to church. Let me give you a little background on what you've stepped into. Here is a place of worship, a place where we want you to see Jesus the savior king. And here is a place for broken people. We all enter into worship this morning not because we are nice happy Christians, but because we are miserable sinners in need of a friend, and in Jesus we have found a powerful friend. A friend who loves us, saves us, changes us, and never leaves us. So we worship him, because our friend Jesus is God—creator, sustainer, and savior of the world. And he died, and rose, that we might enter into worship by his blood alone. You are welcome here, sinners and saints. We have some good news for you. In fact, our church is all about good news. We have lots of ways you can hear good news. If you want to know more, fill out one of these cards in the lobby. They are at the big table that says "connect".

Also, on your way out you'll be handed these little bitty cards that have some upcoming events. On one side is for everyone, on the other side is for college. Take one or two or three, put it in your wallet, set it on your dash, hang it on your fridge if you can find a magnet small enough.

Also, if you want to hear the good news of Jesus on Sunday's at 9am, please sign up for equipping courses. You need to get in on this guys. We've put a lot of work into helping you see Jesus through theological and practical means. And that goes for your kids too. Grace Kids meets every Sunday at 9am, so bring your littles and we will give them the gospel of Jesus, and sign up for a class and we will give you the gospel too.

This morning, we start a new sermon series called The Church. For five weeks, we will be opening up the blinds and reminding you why and how we do what we do together. I want to lay some groundwork of thought for us. Let me ask you this: do you love the church? A weird question if you're a visitor. Maybe a hard question for you to answer even if you're a member. Maybe you're here just because you always have been, and so week after week you make it. Or you have been asking that question already and struggling, because you've seen that the church is less perfect than you first thought. But many of our members will answer that question in the affirmative. So my follow up question is why? Why do you love the church? Why do you love *this* church? Because here is the reality today: if the church of God has not become dear to you, you have a bit of a problem we need to work through. You're freely forgiven, and no guilt but somewhere along the way there's a disconnect. This is Jesus' bride, which he bought with his blood. If you don't love the church, you are neglecting the people that are most precious to Christ.

Don't get me wrong, the church will let you down. It will leave you hanging. It is not perfect. It will frustrate you. This church will do that, maybe it already has. But Christ loves this church unconditionally. And then we are hit with this from John 13:34-35,

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We aren't very good at this, are we? I'm not. But if you're anything like me, that means you've come to the right place. The church is the only place where we should be able to fail each other again and again and yet walk in and feel nothing but freedom. Where guilt should hold us, the gospel of grace flows. So what are we doing, with a sermon series called “the church”? I want to give you fuel to love this church. Fuel to love all the crazy, Jesusy stuff we do together. Fuel to love one another, fuel to wake up on Sunday morning with joyful expectancy to gather with the body, fuel to make gathering with the church in community during the week your food and drink for life.

Let me remind you of our mission. This is why we exist as a church. If you're a member, you've committed to make this your mission to. And you've committed that as we fail each other daily in this mission, we give each other grace.

Grace Church exists to glorify God by making Jesus known in the church, the city, and the world.

The elders have identified five elements, five aspects of our church, which make up what we do and who we are. Five elements that propel our mission forward. Preaching, Liturgy, Belonging, Ordinances, and Mission. These five elements constitute what we believe is the very content of our life and ministry together. When we come together and when we go out together, these five things constitute us.

How do each of these five elements “Make Jesus Known”? Because here is the reality of who we are striving to be together: we are to be a people of *purpose*. In each of these elements here is our question every week: what is the purpose of this? In other words, what is the Biblical, gospel reason behind this part of our church? I hope you find that each of these elements are distinct. They set us apart from the world. In finding their purpose, we will find ourselves by God's grace to be a people who have been so shaped and formed by Jesus that we do some weird, purposeful, stuff. And we love it. My prayer is that as we dig into why we do what we do, you would learn to love the church and her people. You would look at your fellow members in a new light, because you understand them and they understand you. You both understand the reason you get together on Sunday and in community groups during the week and do all this weird stuff. Weird, life-giving, gospel stuff.

So up this morning is preaching. A sermon about sermons. To all those not shaped by the good news of Jesus, it's weird that we come to church and hear some guy get up every single week and teach and lecture for 40 minutes. Who does that? We live in a cultural where we don't have the time and attention spans to do that. Why not just play a video? Have a discussion? Do something that is more interesting, more polished, more professional? So think about that for a second. Preaching is ancient, and nearly every single evangelical church today has a “sermon” time on

Sunday morning. But if you step back, it's weird. It's impractical. It's antiquated. Just text us the details man.

So this morning I want to show you why we preach and what we preach. I want you to leave loving Grace Church more when you leave, because I want you to feel the conviction that Grace Church is a church that preaches Jesus. And Jesus is the one you really need to love. Because he won't let you down.

So, without further ado, here are three vital aspects of our preaching: 1. Our preaching is seriously urgent. 2. Our preaching Makes Jesus and the Word of His Gospel Known. 3. Our preaching is persistent Unto Salvation.

Our Preaching Is Seriously Urgent (2 Tim 4:1, 3-5)

Why does a preacher take this stage week after week? Why is it that for as long as your pastors are here, we will never, even for one Sunday, fail to give you Biblical preaching? Because we understand that preaching is seriously urgent. We will never have a sermon-less Sunday at this church. You'll have to get rid of me before that happens. What is Grace Church? Grace Church is a church that knows how deadly serious this preaching thing is.

Look at verse 1. Here is the apostle Paul, writing to his disciple and son in the faith Timothy. It's widely accepted that this is Paul's last letter in the Biblical canon. Paul is just months away from his death, maybe less. He won't see Timothy again, he won't get to speak to him again or write to him again. He's closing shop, and he has one last, final, all important charge for Timothy.

Paul wants Timothy to know that what he is about to say is serious, so what does he do? He "charges" him. The Greek word here is meant to give emphasis, to admonish Timothy emphatically. *I charge you, Timothy. I, the apostle Paul, your friend and mentor and father in the faith. I charge you Timothy. But not just me, there are others with me who charge you to this task as well. God is here—the Father is watching, waiting, aware of your duty.*

And Christ Jesus is here to, charging Timothy through Paul, charging us. Jesus is witness, Jesus the preacher. Jesus who after performing too many miracles to count leaves a city where there are still miracles to perform. Why? He tells us in Mark 1:38, "And he said to them, 'Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.'" Jesus the preacher, come to earth for that very purpose, stands ready to admonish us with Timothy.

Not only Jesus the preacher, but Jesus the judge who is coming again. Jesus the judge who is elevated by God to bring all men into submission to his rule and authority. Jesus the judge who no man escapes from, living or dead. Jesus the king who has appeared and will appear again, who has not forgotten, who has and will bring his kingdom to bear in the world. This Jesus, says Paul, charges you Timothy.

And what is the charge? What is the charge that Paul, that God, that Jesus, with holy authority and example, give to Timothy, and by way of Scripture give to us? *Preach the Word*.

Why do we preach? Because God is watching, church. Because Jesus our preacher, judge, and king is compelling us, pleading with us, commanding us, obligating us. Because he is coming back, and when he comes back, there will be no more need for faulty preachers, but Jesus the judge will preach himself, and bring all men to bend the knee. Preach, because the end is coming. Preach, because time is running out. Preach, because as Paul says in Romans 10: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”.

Here is an urgency, church. We are committed to preaching, because we would not be faithful if we didn't. Here's another reason we preach. **Go to verse 3-4.** We preach because everyone is listening to something or someone.

You know how many ways there are to hear something these days? They have podcasts on spotify now. I thought that was for music. We are so used to having something in our ears that we don't notice that Chick-fil-a plays that soothing K-Love instrumental. You know what I'm talking about? It just floats in, you know? But truly, Paul is making an astute observation here. We are not original—each of us have teachers and preachers—and we tend to like those that scratch our “itching” ears, that suit our own passions, that make us feel right and justified. We *accumulate* these teachers, gathering them in. We don't have to listen to the truth if there are endless myths and feel-good stories to immerse ourselves in. Who has time for preaching when our ears and heads are full of what is easy to hear?

We preach because people need it. The word preach means to *herald*. To publicly *proclaim*. To shout it from the rooftops. We preach, because if we don't, the world will never hear us through the static. At Grace Church, we preach militantly, fighting against all the voices that tell you what you need is something other than the transforming power of the grace of God in Christ.

Church, I hope you see that this is unique. We don't preach what we want to hear, we preach what we need to hear. At Grace Church, we don't skip over passages. We aim to preach the whole counsel of God. We preach because we understand the urgency of this task and the seriousness of this task. The end is coming, people must hear. So we preach. That's why.

But what do we preach? **Read verse 2.** There it is, clear as day. *Preach the Word*.

Our Preaching Makes Jesus and the Word of His Gospel Known (2 Tim 4:2)

I'm currently enjoying a novel called *All the Light We Cannot See*. It came out a few years ago. It's set in WWII France, and one of the main characters is a young girl who is blind. Before the War, her father helps her navigate her way in comfort by crafting an intricate model of their neighborhood out of wood. As she studies the model over and over and over, eventually the streets and parks and shops around her little house begin to make sense. In a way, she can see, due to her Father's careful care in revealing the world to her in a way she can understand.

You should see preaching in this way. Sin has blinded us, more than we know. Our spiritual sight is an inch deep. We need a way to grasp the reality of God's true nature in the world, we need a way to see the gospel of grace. And God knows just the way. Instead of keeping us in our blind states, he reveals himself. In a way, he crafts a model of the world for us to see. He shows us the story of himself. Instead of fashioning it for us in a model, he uses the words of men to write his revelation in a book.

Hebrews 1 shows us what this kind of revelation looks like. In former days, God spoke through prophets, heralds of his word, who called out the blindness of the people and crafted the right model of the world in their minds. But now, God has revealed himself finally and fully in Christ. Christ is the wooden model for us, the only way we navigate the neighborhood of grace without falling captive to the blinding power of sin. At the cross, he opens wide the new and living way to God by means of showcasing the magnitude of God's free love for sinners. Jesus Christ, the incarnate *word* of God, is revealed as his true self at the cross: full of saving grace for sinners. And in his resurrection, he again reveals the true nature of word of God: full of power over sin and death.

What then is preaching? Preaching is a God-given means that the word is re-revealed to his people. Notice Paul's instruction, it's quite simple. Preach the *word*. Don't preach your opinion, don't preach morality, don't preach helpful tips for a better life, don't preach stories or illustrations with no grace or power. Preach the word. Preach Christ. Regular, Biblical preaching is the act of reminding sinners that God is not silent. He does not leave his people blind. Biblical preaching is the way the word of God comes to life as it's heralded, the way that blind fools become wise by turning over and over again God's revealed model of the world in their hands. We preach to make Jesus known. He is the living Word, and the written word reveals him.

Here is something I pray every week you can take to the bank. It does not matter our text. Your pastors are under the theological conviction that the Bible is all about Jesus, and in every text in every place, his gospel is there. Just as on the road to Emmaus, the resurrected Jesus explained all the scriptures concerning himself, We can confidently preach Jesus from all the scriptures, because he is the "yes and amen" to all the promises of God. This conviction binds us: Christ and his work is the substance of our preaching. Always.

When you walk through those doors on Sunday morning, we will preach Christ to you. Find me, tell me, if that doesn't happen. I will repent, I will redouble our efforts. You can go a lot of places and hear a lot of things on Sunday morning, but my promise to you is that from this pulpit we will preach Christ. From this sacred desk we will never stop proclaiming our sacred savior. He is the substance and power of God. "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified."

How sweet is it when the preacher preaches Jesus? Our Jesus, who did not consider the joys of heaven a barrier to his love for us. Our Jesus, who came to preach the coming of his kingdom to broken people without hope. Our Jesus, who drank every drop of the cup of God's wrath for us. Our Jesus, who spilt his blood to wash us clean forever and ever and ever. Our Jesus, who told death and sin "you're done" and kicked them to the curb with the blinding victory of the empty tomb. This is our Jesus. No one compares.

Why should you love the church? Because it's the place where Jesus is preached. It's the place and the people where his word comes alive. It's the place where he is known.

How do we preach Christ? Well the model is there for us in the rest of **verse 2**. First, we preach *Jesus no matter what*. One preacher says it like this: "there are only two times when we are called to preach: in season and out of season."¹ Even if it's hard, we preach Jesus. Even when it is inconvenient, if the nations rage around us, we preach Jesus. If it's illegal or if it's unpopular, we still preach Jesus.

Secondly, we preach Jesus with *conviction*. **See verse 2**. We call sin out. We reprove, or reveal sin, for what it is. We rebuke even. We don't preach Jesus by skirting around the hard stuff and trying not to step on anyone's toes. In our preaching, we hope your human sensibilities are offended. We hope you get uncomfortable. Because when you are uncomfortable in your sin, we exhort you. Real preaching not only points out sin, it calls sinners, exhorts them, to repent and believe, encouraging them that with repentance comes grace.

But this conviction and exhortation is not harsh. Thirdly, we preach Jesus *pastorally*. With patience and teaching, says the text. When your pastors sit down to consider how they might preach to you, you are on our mind. When I sit in the coffee shop to write my sermon, I have a member directory open on my computer to. I think of you, of your needs, your sins and idols, your hurt and pain. I remember how hard and painful it is when life doesn't go right. When the cancer won't ebb, when you lose the job you love, when your friends desert you and loneliness is your present reality, or when the ones you love the most are suddenly taken from you. And with patience and teaching, preaching is meant for the sheep.

¹ Charlie Dates, "The Church Confessional", For The Church National Conference 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRzSRJx1V-M>

Our preaching should be evangelistic, but our preaching is never aimed at the visitor. Our preaching is aimed at our church members. They are the ones here, week after week, committed to the life of the church. They are the ones we preach to with patience, enduring with them for months, years, decades even if God would have it. And we don't preach for emotionalism. Preaching involves *teaching*, a careful explanation of the text, not a shallow application or an abstract rant. We preach Christ *pastorally*, with the endurance and the learning of the members in mind.

What is it that we preach? We preach the Word. The word makes Jesus and his gospel known. That's our goal, our aim, our always. We preach Jesus in every season and in every text, with conviction and pastoral care. So next time the preacher steps into this pulpit, expect that. During the week, long for that. Look forward to that. You'll get to see Jesus.

Our Preaching is Persistent Unto Salvation (1 Tim 4:13-16)

The command to preach the word is not complicated. Calvin calls God's revelation to humanity *baby-talk*. It's God condescending to our level. We can't handle if God used actual God words. All we can handle are divine goo-goo-gah-gahs. But do not be mistaken, even the baby talk of God has power. Let's take a look at the significance of the preached word. What does it do? **Turn with me to 1 Timothy 4:13-16.** This is my last point, and it's a short one. Really, I just wanted to bring up this text because I couldn't help it. When I read this rightly, it opened my eyes.

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

This is preaching. Publically reading, exhorting, and teaching of Scripture. As we persist in this, immerse ourselves in it, pay careful attention to it, keeping a close watch over it, what happens? What happens when we take our preaching seriously, when the pastors and the people are all in on this weekly act? "Persist in this, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers".

While on a church history study tour in New England, I visited Pennepack Baptist Church. A historic church, one of the first baptist churches in America. The most interesting thing about this church is that they have a story they like to tell of one of their first pastors, Elias Keach.

He was son of the famous Benjamin Keach of London. Arrived in this country a very wild spark about the year 1686. On his landing he dressed in black and wore a band in order to pass for a minister. The project succeeded to his wishes, and many people resorted to hear the young London divine. He performed well enough till he had advanced pretty far in the

sermon. Then, stopping short, looked like a man astonished. The audience concluded he had been seized with a sudden disorder; but, on asking what the matter was, received from him a confession of the imposture with tears in his eyes and much trembling. Great was his distress though it ended happily; for from this time dated he his conversion.²

This man was saved while he preached. Do you understand the kind of power here for salvation. This word is powerful and effective. When it's preached, and the preacher gets out of the way, it saves people church. It saves them, and it keeps them. Why are we so serious about preaching Jesus? Why do we persist in it? Because by doing so we save preachers and hearers alike. Every week I'm up here, I'm preaching to myself. Without this word, I would be dead and condemned.

I got nothing else today church. If you'd let me, I'd preach for an hour. I hope you are seeing why. Let's end with some application for you.

1. Prepare your heart for salvation by hearing.

You may feel like this has nothing to do with you. The vast vast majority of you will never preach from this pulpit, or any pulpit. So why does it matter? It matters because in the course of your life, if you are faithful to obey Jesus and not neglect the gathering of the body of Christ, you will hear a lot of sermons. Some will be better than others. Some will be confusing, some clear. Most forgettable. But every sermon you hear, if it points you to Jesus, is part of your fuel. You need Christ heralded to you like you need to eat. You may not remember every meal, but it sustains you. You may not remember every sermon, but it sustains you. And it's your business, because I may prepare the meal and hold it out to you, but I can't shove it down your throat. As you mature in Christ, you must learn how to eat. You have to learn how to be a listener of the word.

Be expectant when you come on Sunday. You know the text before hand. I send it out every single week. Read it, digest it, anticipate the truth you will receive from it. And when you come, open wide. Pray for your preachers. Prepare yourself to be changed by the preached word of God.

2. Raise your standard for this sacred task.

I hope after today you love getting preached at. I may love preaching, but it's better for me to hear a sermon than deliver one. But I also hope today that you expect much from the pulpit. You expect to see Jesus. Don't be a nitpicker, that's not what I'm saying. Don't be the guy who picks apart every sermon. No one likes that guy. Be the church member who doesn't look for an eloquent, polished, preacher, but looks for Jesus. I'll preach some bad sermons every once in a while. Maybe more often than not. You may hear some duds from this pulpit. But if you hear Christ, be satisfied. He is your portion, your reward. Raise your standard for preaching. DON't look for flash or

² Morgan Edwards, *Materials Towards a History of the Baptists in Pennsylvania*, Volume 1)

“relevance”. Don’t look for the best communicator. Savor every bit of Jesus the preacher gives you, and ask for more.

Here is something to try. Ask someone to come to church with you. When they ask “what do you do?” or “what is it like?”, give them a simple answer. Say, we preach about Jesus. That’s it. We proclaim Jesus. He’s everything to us.

3. Support the work of making Jesus known in the pulpit.

Maybe some of you should come to our preaching symposiums. Or you should support a ministry resident. Or you should pray for your preachers. Or maybe you should just be easier on your preachers. Encourage them. I realize this is me more often than not! So yes, you should encourage me. But I’m of the conviction that we need more faithful preachers. I don’t want to be the only one up here. You need to hear from a diverse audience. Maybe God is calling you to be equipped for this work? Consider applying to our pastoral residency. This starts in January, and we want to train preachers of the word. Whatever it might be, look for ways you can support our pulpit ministry. It’s so vital and integral to our church.

Last thing, church. I wanted to say thank you. What a joy it is to lift up Jesus to you. I love you, because Jesus loves you, and because you make Jesus known to me. May this pulpit, even though it’s too short, never stop singing the glory and sweetness of Jesus. Let’s hold each other to that, Church. Our preaching makes Jesus known. It’s who we are. It’s weird, and we love it.