

What is Preaching? – Biblical Context

- Old Testament
 - Prophesying or proclamation of God's message to his people with the purpose of calling the people to respond with repentance, dependence, and worship.
 - Such proclamation could be new revelation by God through his prophets (Ex: Moses, Elijah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and various minor Prophets)
 - Such proclamation could also be a reference back to what God has already revealed in the scriptures, calling people to repent and turn to God for mercy and forgiveness (ex. Ezra/Nehemiah, Josiah, and Jonah)
- New Testament
 - John the Baptist proclaims the immediate coming of Messiah, calling the people to repent and turn to God for the Promised King has come.
 - Jesus Proclaims the Kingdom of God has come, explaining that the law and the prophets were pointing to and were fulfilled by both his birth (his incarnation), his ministry (his perfect obedience to and explanation of the will of God the Father) and his fast-approaching suffering, death, and resurrection (his atoning work on behalf of those who are his through faith). "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" Mark 1:15
 - Peter preaches the "first Christian sermon" at Pentecost, explaining the events taking place just after the resurrection and ascension of Christ through an explanation of God's promises in the Scriptures (the Old Testament prophets) and the salvific work of Christ in his death and resurrection. In light of who God is and what God has done, Peter calls the people to repent and believe. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - Paul Timothy to be faithful in preaching and teaching. "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." – 2 Timothy 4:1-2
- Functional Definition:
 - Preaching is the faithful declaration and proclamation of what God has said and done for the purpose of calling people to respond in repentance towards, faith in, and worship of who God is as revealed in his Word.

Preaching as Evangelistic and Apologetic - the Early Church

- Earliest Christian Churches (33-150 AD)
 - Often informal exhortations and discussions of scripture modeled generally after the writings of Paul to the churches and the teaching of Jesus towards his disciples. The setting for such preaching would usually have been in the context of believer's homes. Most early preaching would have centered around how we as Christians should live in light of our union with Christ
- Irenaeus (130-200 AD)
 - Wrote *Against Heresies* (a defense against Gnosticism) citing three pillars:
 - The authority and truthfulness of the scriptures
 - The practice of Christian life handed down from the Apostles to the Churches
 - The teaching of the Apostles past to their successors leading in churches
- Tertullian (160-220 AD)
 - Deep dependency on the authority and necessity of the scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) and a conviction that if the scriptures are true, they must be taught authoritatively
 - Used a passionate, rhetorical style to proclaim the truth of scripture for the purpose of calling pagans to believe the Gospel (at times evangelistic, and at others apologetic) and push believers to live their lives simply and devotedly to Christ.
- Origen of Alexandria (185-253 AD)
 - Follows an allegorical method of interpreting and preaching the scriptures
 - Borrows heavily from the Greek style of rhetoric and logical persuasion in preaching and teaching

- Augustin of Hippo (354-430 AD)
 - He believed that the primary role of the bishop was to shepherd the flock by interpreting and preaching to them the Word of God. He believed that the bishops preaching should bring the life of the Gospel to the lost sinner and strengthen the faith and assurance of God's children.
 - Worship centered around a corporate response to scripture.
 - Wrote the first "preaching manual" and said that preaching should be "teaching, delighting, and persuasive"
 - Vehemently defended Christian orthodoxy through teaching and preaching

Sacramental Worship, Homily and Scholasticism – The Medieval Period

- With the decline of culture, education, and commercial prosperity that was common in the Roman Empire, the character of the churches gathering and worship progressed from one focused on worship responding to the proclamation of truth, primarily through preaching to a sacramental form where worship was a response to truth through ceremony, symbol, and tradition.
- Gregory the Great (540-604 AD) – could be considered the first "pope" in the formal use of the term
 - Simplified worship style centered around liturgy, the Lord's Supper, and song
 - Created simplified songs for congregational worship. This style is known today as Gregorian chants
 - Emphasis on more generic homilies that were copied, disseminated and, repeated throughout many churches
- Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274 AD)
 - Greatest proponent and master of the scholastic method of theology and preaching
 - Focus on a clear systematic style of preaching that focuses on a clear articulation of doctrinal teaching, but not necessarily a direct exposition of scripture
 - Scholasticism and scholastic preaching generally limited to the Universities and to some degree monasteries and noble courts (although this would have varied greatly).
- The common experience of Christian worship in the Western Catholic Church in the late medieval period would be the ceremonial and liturgical performance of the Lord's Supper among the priests, a homiletic sermon and songs by choirs (both generally in Latin). The general populous would mostly observe and not participate, expect perhaps to take the Lord's Supper once per year at Easter Mass.

Reformation – The Recovery of Spiritual Vitality Through Preaching

- Martin Luther
 - The scriptures alone are authoritative and sufficient for informing the body of Christ on life and godliness
 - Focus on expository preaching of a law-gospel dialectic both for proclaiming the Gospel unto salvation and encouraging the believer to live the Christian life
- Henry Bullinger
 - "The Decades" a collection of 50 sermons (5 collections of 10 sermons) that outlined the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. These served as a basic theological and preaching manual (of sorts) for aspiring preachers to study and replicate as training for pastoring future churches
 - Functioned as the primary source for systematic theology among reformed pastors for the first 150 years of the reformed tradition
- John Calvin
 - The most diverse and prolific preacher of the early reformers
 - Preached 1-2 times per day, 6 days per week through the majority of his career
- The vast majority of the reformers held preaching to be the primary role of pastors within the church and believed that worship and Christian life flowed from it.
- They believed that so far as it reflects the Word of God, preaching was the word of God (that is to say, it's as if God himself was speaking).

Practical Implications

- Preaching and worship are inseparably linked
- Sound biblical preaching is vital to the health of the local church
- The life of the church flows out from both a sound understanding and application of the biblical teaching and the urgent call from God to respond.