
The Sunday Sermon at Church of the Saviour

T Teaching

The spiritual truths of the message are clearly derived from the teaching of the passage. Sufficient time is given to the exposition of the scriptural text so that the exhortation flows from the clear teaching of God's word in that text. A variety of styles and formats may be selected to achieve this purpose.

The basic historical and cultural background of the passage is explained. Wisdom guides the preacher in determining how much time and attention is given to geography, Greek words, cultural practices, and the like. It should be accessible and helpful to the listening congregation, without being overwhelming.

The spiritual truths of the message direct people to the greatness and graciousness of God. God reveals himself in the Word, and the message should demonstrate that the gospel is not only from God, but about God. God uses his Word read and preached to bring people before him so that he can carry out his purpose in their lives.

The spiritual truths of the message are shown to be redemptive. They point to Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. His grace empowers us to live in newness of life. Old Testament messages cannot be "synagogue sermons" but must direct people to how Jesus fulfills all that God has been saying and doing in the old covenant. New Testament messages cannot stop in telling people to follow the example of Christ or obey the teachings of the apostles. The messages are to direct people to trust and rely on Christ as our source of spiritual life and power to live a holy and obedient life.

The message should feed the believer and challenge the unbeliever. The same gospel by which we begin the Christian life (conversion) is the good news by which we continue and complete the Christian life. Sanctification and justification are by grace through faith in Christ. We do aim to frequently address unbelievers and call them to repent and believe the gospel. By this, believers are reminded again of the gospel and find strength and hope for the spiritual journey. Also, messages specifically directed to those who already know the Lord are used by God to bring unbelievers to new life in Christ.

The message is designed not simply to inform the mind of the truths of the Scriptures, but to melt the heart and to move the will. God uses the teaching of his Word to bind our hearts to himself in loyalty and love. Knowing truths about God must lead people to honor and love and long for God. The teaching facet of the message, therefore, cannot ultimately be separated from the exhortation facet. Everything God says and does is designed so that he might be feared, honored, worshipped, loved, and delighted in by us. As he increasingly becomes our chief treasure and joy, life change will have to take place. Our thinking, our desires, our choices, and our behaviors will become different. The message must point out specifically how the gospel is transformative.

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Illustration

Some illustrations are designed to shed light on the teaching of the text and message. Other illustrations are designed to illuminate the exhortation of the text and message.

Illustrations should not be too prominent. They are like the windows of a house. They bring light into the room. They are to serve the listeners so that they clearly see, and feel the power of the message.

Illustrations do more than provide examples that shed bright light on biblical truth. They can also powerfully move people's affections. Both longer stories and shorter similes, when done well, can warm people's hearts. Vivid portrayals of biblical truth and life can powerfully impress righteousness upon the soul, so that the power of godliness is experienced by them.

Illustrations serve best when they are produced from the familiar landscape of those who listen. The Bible itself is filled with metaphors and anecdotes that arise out of the shared experiences of the people that are addressed. The illustrations of the message should come from what people already know, so that they can grasp what they do not yet know, or live.

Exhortation

The message is not complete without the summons. God reveals himself in Scripture so that he might be served and loved and obeyed by us. The message needs to instruct people how to do this. The example of the Bible is to give to people specific and helpful instruction how to live the Christian life. A scripturally based message must do the same. Although the Holy Spirit may take the message and show the bearing of the passage to people in specific ways, this does not absolve the preacher from demonstrating how God's word directs us to live in concrete terms in the situations he places us.

The exhortation cannot be simply the law without the gospel. People cannot live the Christian life in their own strength. The exhortation must call people to look to Christ, and the power of the Spirit, to do what God commands. Only as we rely on him can we grow and change into the likeness of Christ.

The exhortation should be both individual and congregational. The people who listen to a message need individual direction from God's Word regarding their life and their personal relationship with the Lord. The church also needs guidance about how we act as a body. The vision and mission of the church and the goals and strategic direction of the church need to be urged upon the congregation as its biblical basis is made clear. Not every

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message can give full exhortations individually and congregationally. Each sermon has its own emphasis. Both sets of exhortations are valid and important.

The Sermon and the teaching ministry of the church

The sermon is not the only time or occasion when biblical teaching takes place in the life of the church. We teach one another by our words and actions all the time. There are LIFE groups, Adult Education and Training classes, seminars, special training, discipling relationships, and other opportunities to learn and grow from God's Word.

LIFE groups, discipleship relationships, and counseling sessions tend to place more emphasis upon exhortation, without sacrificing teaching. The Question, what does this gospel truth look like in my life, tends to predominate.

Adult Education and Training classes are able to pursue at greater detail the concerns of the historical background of the text, and the doctrinal and theological significance of the text, without sacrificing exhortation.

The sermon endeavors to teach and apply God's word, sacrificing neither clear exposition of the text nor helpful exhortation from the text to believers and unbelievers. We need to provide such strong biblical exposition and exhortation as described above, as well as many additional opportunities to learn the scriptures, and to live the scriptures.