

**General Topics :: Just Preach the Gospel Theology****Just Preach the Gospel Theology - posted by dougkristen (), on: 2004/11/19 10:44**

Preface: This is an article for thought and discussion. While I don't completely believe what he says, it is interesting to ponder the thoughts given. Is culture changing or revival just preaching the gospel or making disciples, or is it both. I believe it is both. We can't change the culture (bring revival) without preaching the Gospel to the lost. Amen?

Grace,
Doug

"Everyone here can save himself in his own fashion. To educate the young people into religious ways may perhaps be the task of the Church, but to educate the young in politics is very much our affair.... The youth belongs to us and we will yield them to no one. And the denominational press is equally superfluous.... For the Churches there is only one solution, which will ensure peace: Back into the sacristy. Let the Churches serve God; we serve the People."

Josef Goebbels, 4 August 1935

Many of them (the clergy) were so deeply shocked by the tumultuous course of events in the first year of Nazi rule that their only wish was to withdraw from political involvement of any sort. Both their sense of loyalty to established power and their theological leanings, strongly influenced by the Pietistic tradition, inclined them towards a purely "spiritual" ministry, concerned only with individualistic salvation and ethics, and a readiness to obey the government's orders under all circumstances. On that account they were prepared to accept the Nazi dictum that "politics do not belong in the Church."

JUST PREACH THE GOSPEL

- And Other Out of Balance Statements -

by Randall Terry

"I believe we need to share the gospel."

Just preach the gospel. Just preach the gospel. Just preach the gospel. Just preach ... oh. Iâ'm sorry. Was I droning? I must have slipped into the mantra of the average separatist Christian. Babies are being murdered!

"Just preach the gospel," they tell us.

Neo-pagans are taking over! The White House and the Supreme Court have fallen under the control of Godhaters!

â'Just preach the gospel," they drone.

Planned Parenthood is brainwashing and corrupting children!

"Just preach the gospel," they insist.

Why? Why do they cling to an obviously inadequate solution?

Why not Ask Why?

After years of observing this phenomenon and innumerable discussions and debates about this knee-jerk excuse for avoiding prophetic action, I have a good overview of "why."

As clearly as I can tell, the "preach the gospel" mindset falls into two distinct groups.

Group One views preaching the gospel as the social cure-all.

Group Two views society as incurable and terminally corrupt. They preach the gospel to snatch individuals out of this corrupt age, out of hell, and into heaven.

Let's explore both these views behind this worn-out cliché.

But before we do, let's step back and define our terms. What do I mean by "preach the gospel"? Or more importantly, what do "they" (that unnamed, unfaced group) mean by "preach the gospel"?

What "They" Mean by "Preach the Gospel"

After many years in the faith and innumerable conversations with Christians on this topic, this is what I understand us to be saying when we say we "preach the gospel" in its narrowest sense. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ the Son died for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. He was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven from whence He will return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. He that believes in Him shall be saved; he that does not believe shall be damned. Many debate whether mere "faith" is enough, or whether repentance is also required. (Count me in the repentance group.) I realize this is a very cursory overview, not discussing redemption by blood, justification by faith, what compromises true faith, imputed righteousness, regeneration by the Holy Spirit and more, but for our purposes, I believe it will suffice and 99.9 percent would agree with this overview of the gospel (or at least know what I'm talking about).

One other critical observation: For both factions of the "just preach the gospel" crowd, it seems they believe it is either the believers' sole duty in this culture to "preach the gospel," or they think it is their "primary" duty. The primary duty of "preaching the gospel" is so paramount that it has the practical effect of being their sole activity, or at least their sole concern (or at least the sole beneficiary of their lip service). They believe our calling from God is to go from person to person, crowd to crowd preaching the gospel.

Medicine for Society

The "gospel as cure-all" crowd believes that as we keep preaching, society will become a better place because of the influence of the gospel and because more and more individuals will be converting. The influence of the gospel and the salvation of certain individuals will result in better laws, more righteous television programming, more godly universities, better newspaper stories, etc.

Well, I hate to be the one to point out the emperor's naked rear-end, but something doesn't add up.

We have more "gospel preaching" in America than any other nation on earth. Yet America is growing more corrupt by the week; injustice in the courts is growing; oppression against Christians is on the rise; mockery of the holy has become common; homosexuals are demanding the right to be married and have children; television borders on the pornographic; pornography is growing more vile and violent; Nazi-like doctors want to kill the elderly and are harvesting aborted babies' body parts; our tax money pays for blasphemy. Need I go further?

All of our gospel preaching hasn't stopped a tidal wave of iniquity from sweeping over America, a tidal wave that threatens our very survival.

Furthermore, we've probably had more people say "the sinner's prayer" who claim to be "born again" than in any other nation on earth. We have more churches, more gospel radio, gospel television, gospel literature, gospel tracts, street meetings, evangelistic crusades, gospel music, "win the world, win your town, and win your neighbor to the Lord" training seminars than any nation on earth. American Christians spend more money on domestic and foreign missions than any other group of people on the planet. And yet, America is fast becoming the moral cesspool of the earth.

If the "just preach the gospel" solution was an agenda for cultural reformation, we should see the millennium practically in progress! But obviously something is drastically wrong with this simplistic, detached solution and it's time we accept that fact. The "just preach the gospel" game plan for victory is a categorical, colossal failure.

In all fairness, this "social solution" seems reasonable, and in a way it is. If everyone at CBS, from Dan Rather to the entertainment division, became Christians tomorrow, we would expect a difference in the way the news is reported and what types of movies are shown. (Unless they were "discipled" in Jesse Jackson's church.)

However, the real problem with this battle plan is that it severely limits the scope of the church's role in the earth. In fact, I would say it has had a crippling effect on the ability of the church to be salt and light in this nation.

The same Bible that commands us to "go into all the world" commands us to rebuke the ruthless, to defend the fatherless, to care for the widow, to speak up for the oppressed (see Psalm 82:1-4; Proverbs 24:10-12,31:8-9). In fact, true religion before God is to help the widow and orphan in their distress (James 1:27). If we fail in our biblically commanded societal duties, our very worship becomes a stench in God's nostrils, and He has promised not to hear our prayers (see Isaiah 1:10-18). He said in verse 15, "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

Not Either / Or

The cure of America's illness is not an either/or proposition. Preaching the gospel is not in conflict with social reformation and visa versa. Both are critical. God's concern is for the spirit, soul, and body. Our goal should be the whole counsel of God. God's Word explains how fallen men can be reconciled to God. God's Word instructs the individual, the family, the church, and the state in how they can please God. God's Word provides clear direction for all of life's affairs, and as Christians we are to herald the entirety of God's Word.

Do God a Service-Put a Pornographer in Jail

For example: A pornographer needs to be converted to Christ. We should call him to repentance and share our faith in Christ with him. At the same time, we should be confronting and exposing his business and trying to get him put in jail for his criminal behavior. If the laws against pornography in his community aren't being enforced, we should be working to replace the sheriff or the district attorney with a God-fearing leader who will uphold the law and punish the guilty.

"But why not just preach the gospel, and forget about these 'worldly' tactics?"

What you call a "worldly tactic" is actually a godly, God-ordained duty to rebuke and punish the wicked.

Furthermore, God is deeply concerned for the young men and women whose minds will be warped permanently by exposure to filth; God is deeply grieved for the young girls and boys who will be molested and forever marred by men who are slaves to the demon of pornography, men who use pornography to disarm and molest children. (One police study showed pornography was involved in 80 percent of child molestation cases.) And as anyone who has dealt with victims of sexual abuse can tell you, simply hearing and believing the gospel does not instantaneously heal someone nor set them free from the pain, the false guilt, the anguish, or the horrifying memories of sexual abuse.

Our churches are filled with women who have been sexually abused. Yes, they are on their way to heaven, but in the meantime their lives are riddled or even filled with pain. Other women-who never make it into our churches-become hostages of the pornographic underworld, slaves in prostitution, or simply wind up in successive abusive relationships.

In that light, you can see how it is in everyone's best spiritual interest for the church to demand that law enforcement hammer pornographers. We must expend energy in both "preaching the gospel" in the narrow sense, as well as "living the gospel"-the good news that the Lord is come-and extending the rule of His authority into all arenas.

Let's face it, the "just preach the gospel" as a cure-all for social ills isn't working. In fact, it could be labeled a colossal failure. We must keep preaching the gospel, but we must also herald the whole Word of God and extend the authority of God into every citadel of power.

Another Notch on My Evangelistic Belt

For Group Two-the snatch 'em from hell crowd - I have much less patience and even a little contempt. Let me explain.

This "gospel only" crowd is prepared to tolerate every injustice, ignore every oppression, as long as they can share "Th

e Four Spiritual Laws" with everybody. The world is going to hell and is irretrievable. It will get worse and worse, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. To be involved in politics, the care of the poor, the care of the elderly, is to preach a social gospel. And heaven knows, we are not called to preach "social gospel." We're just supposed to get souls into heaven.

Let me give a couple of examples how this plays out.

Jesus -- The Hard-Hearted Savior

I have had people tell me that they are not involved in pro-life because Jesus has called them to preach the gospel. Translation: Jesus would have us stand idly by while a murderer ripped the arms and legs off a little girl and then crushed her head. We should do nothing to intervene, because Christ hasn't called us to. But He does want us to give a gospel tract to the murderer and smile and say, "Jesus loves you."

Moreover, Jesus Himself would not get involved. I had a man write and tell me that in Jesus' day, infanticide was a regular practice, and Christ did nothing to stop it. In other words, Jesus of Nazareth would walk by a crying baby girl left outside to be eaten by animals so that He could be about the Father's business-winning souls. This is a blasphemous portrayal of Christ.

"In fact," they say, "all those babies who are being aborted are better off-they're going directly to heaven!" (I've had Christians tell me this.) It saves the soul-winners a lot of work.

Others say, "We shouldn't fight against pornography. It's just a symptom. The real problem is sin. Just preach the gospel!"

Translation: While God-hating pagans traffic in the bodies and souls of women, children, and men, and while the porn shops sell filth that ends up corrupting and destroying youth-including church youth-you don't have to get into a long, distasteful, confrontational battle to close the porno shop. You don't have to confront the owners of convenience stores that sell women's bodies like lunch meat over the counter, nor do you have to boycott these stores and inconvenience yourself-just give a gospel tract and say, "God loves you."

These misguided Christians have separated most of the Bible and its mandates from life and law. For them the Bible is a handbook on personal salvation and personal holiness and happiness, but little more. This gives them a warped, unbiblical view of life and Christian duty.

If They Are "Gospel Preachers," I the More!

At this point I would like to speak as Paul spoke to the Corinthians and discuss a part of my persona - one that is seldom seen in front of the camera: the evangelist.

I am a gospel preacher. For example, ever since I became a Christian, I have picked up hitchhikers and told them of God's grace and mercy extended to us through the death of Christ. When I have a sinner in the car, I don't focus on the moral collapse of Western civilization, I focus on their need for Christ.

As my wife and friends will testify, many are the times I have shared Christ with store clerks, food servers, and cab drivers; many are the times I have preached in airports or in the street, both in America and in Central American countries. One time I exited a radio studio in downtown Pittsburgh after being a guest on a big radio show around midnight. I was shocked to see a group of listless teenagers hanging around at a bus stop. To the surprise of my hosts, I walked up to them, put down my briefcase, and preached Christ to them. They listened, then we left.

Finally, because of the doors God has opened for me, I have the opportunity to preach Christ to many who may not hear it often-folks like Fay Wattleton, Patricia Ireland, Kate Michelman, Phil Donahue, Senator Bob Packwood-just to name a few. Many are the times I have preached Christ to college students, high-school students, and especially to angry mobs of pro-abortion activists. We recently led to the Lord a pro-abortion activist who had tailed us for three years. When we saw her at an event, we took the time to share Christ with her. She has left her pro-abortion activism and is regularly attending a Spirit-filled church.

I give this background for two reasons:

1. To show that I believe in preaching the gospel. When I take rhetorical shots at the "I'm just called to preach the gospel" mindset, I am not taking shots at preaching the gospel, but rather I am challenging a deficient, out-of-balance view of what our duty as Christians is to this generation. Offering salvation is critical, but our duties do not end there.

2. I preach the gospel to the lost regularly. Many Christians who duck taking action under the excuse of "We're called to preach the gospel" seldom actually preach the gospel to the lost. For many, it may have become an excuse to vindicate their laziness or cowardice.

I have to wonder how many ministers who use this fine are able to preach to sinners regularly, and how many just preach in their pulpits, week after week, to the same old crew. Being salt and light in the great cultural battlefields of our day puts us in direct contact with myriads of sinners. Activists who preach the gospel probably preach to more sinners in one day of demonstrating than a pastor who seldom preaches outside his pulpit does in the course of a year.

We're living what they're preaching.

God help us to live and preach the whole counsel of God. God help us to see that if we're being taxed to death, the cure might not be sharing "The Four Spiritual Laws." The cure might be to work feverishly to eject the socialist, messianic statist from office and replace them with God-fearing statesmen.

As the Bible says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Prov. 29:2). Where would you rather live-in freedom or oppression? Who would you rather have rule, the righteous or the wicked? Where would you rather "preach the gospel"-in America, where you can still preach with much liberty, or in China, where you'll probably spend years in jail for preaching? Even gospel preaching fares better in a society where Christians are active in every realm of society, culture, and law.

Maybe we need to look at Christ's words a little more closely: "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20, emphasis added).