

February 9, 2014

“Glory to God in the Church through Unapologetic Preaching”

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

On the last Sunday of this month, after the morning Worship Service, we are going to hold our Annual Meeting. This is a time we ask our members to come together in order to vote on their new leaders for the year, vote on the budget for the year, hear our plans and vision for the new year, and have an opportunity to ask any questions of the leadership. We also give out an Annual Report which contains reports from all our department leaders.

In preparation for that each Sunday we are asking our leaders to give an oral report. They have done a great job.

Because of this we have designated February as “Ministry Month.” Along those lines we put together a Preaching Series that would also highlight our ministry here at the Church of the Nazarene.

Pastor Nick mentioned last week that he, John, and I have been meeting on Tuesdays for prayer and discussion of God's direction for our church. Our discussions are being spurred on by our reading of a book called the Vertical Church by James MacDonald. We don't necessarily agree with everything in the book, but it has led us to look at ourselves, our church, and most important God's direction for us.

The book has helped us to consider the glory of God coming down in the church and how this would affect and change us. We long for God to manifest Himself in our services, in our Bible Studies and Home Fellowships, in our meetings and all that we do. We are praying and seeking ways that would allow God to reveal Himself to us and to act in ways that will cause us to say, “Now, that was God! There can be no other explanation.”

We are praying and seeking moments in time when time stands still; when God shows up and we are changed forever; Powerful, extra-special moments that are packed with meaning.

How long has it been since you had a powerful moment like that? That changed life forever? A moment so powerful that time stood still?

How long has it been since you've been a part of powerful moment that changed another person?

We desire for God to break into our routine and speak loud and clear and touch us so powerfully deep in our soul that we can never be same again; and we believe the time has come. Jesus said so...

Mark 1:15 (NIV)

"The time (NLT – promised by God) has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

And so this month we are looking at four pillars that we believe will bring God's glory down in our church. Pastor Nick spoke of the first one last week: Unashamed Adoration (Worship).

John 4:23-24

"...the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

- (1) We need to worship in spirit (i.e.) with our human spirit, the inner being where God indwells us, that means we need to consciously focus on God as we come together to worship not just go through the motions, but focus on God and His presence.
- (2) And worship in truth, or in a true way, or with genuineness. We need to be sincere and make sure that our expression of worship is genuine and led by the Holy Spirit.

The Father is looking for those who will worship Him that way, and when Jesus is fervently worshipped in spirit and truth it brings down His glory at church.

The second pillar which we are going to look at today is: "Unapologetic Preaching."

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

I have been preaching in this church for 28 years. Some of you were here when I first came to the church and would confirm that I certainly didn't use lofty words, or impressive wisdom. You would confirm that my preaching was very plain, and not very clever. I admit that I came in weakness, timid and trembling. I hope I have improved somewhat in my preaching, but now as then I decided that what was most important was Jesus; who He is, what He has done for us by His crucifixion, and therefore why we should be totally devoted to Him. Then as now I rely only on the power of the Holy Spirit because I want you to trust not in human wisdom, but in the power of God.

And preaching the authority of God's Word without apology, in the power of the Holy Spirit, brings glory down in church.

Preaching is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility. Because of that responsibility preaching takes a lot of my time, effort, and energy. I love preaching, I hate preparing. I work on my message all week long, from praying about the topic, to meditating on the Scripture, to researching, to thinking of illustrations. When I'm not writing, or even when I'm exercising in the morning, I'm going over the message in my mind. I'm tweaking, and changing things in the sermon right up to the moment I leave my office to come over here on Sunday, and the message is still changing even as I'm preaching it. And while I am preparing a message, God is preparing me. I've mentioned before, God speaks to me, convicts me, changes me, before I get to share His message with you. Over the years I have discovered that the preparation of the preacher is more important than the preparation of the message. So why do I do it? As Paul said:

1 Corinthians 9:16

Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News!

It is what God has called me to do. I want to be faithful to transmit the message I believe God has given me for you.

What is Preaching?

"Truth communicated through personality."

- Phillips Brooks

(God's truth communicated through human personality)

What is Preached? The Bible. Why the Bible, because it is God's Word...

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Why do we preach the Bible?

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Why do we preach the Bible?

Isaiah 40:8

The grass withers and the flowers fade,
but the word of our God stands forever."

How do we preach? With sincerity and authority, not our own authority, but God's

2 Corinthians 2:17

You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.

Do you know the number one response when Jesus preached? Not how loving He came across, not how scholarly or dynamic He was, but like this:

Mark 1:22, 27

The people were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike the teachers of religious law... Amazement gripped the audience, and they began to discuss what had happened. "What sort of new teaching is this?" they asked excitedly. "It has such authority!"

Authority, preaching is to resound with "Thus says the Lord" authority. We preach the authority of God's word without apology. We don't preach our own thoughts, we preach with authority and without apology God's written revelation, which is eternally binding. We want to help those who hear see the Lord's heart behind what He forbids and allows, but our loyalty is to God not to what the listeners want to hear. We want our church to be a place where people hear God's authority for their lives from the Scriptures.

What happens when we preach? Listen to what Jesus said,

Luke 10:16 NKJV

"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

Whoa! Jesus says the person who hears the preaching, regardless of our gifts (mine, Pastor Nick's, or John's) but in proportion to our faithfulness to Scripture, actually hears God speaking.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Yes, we preach to you, it is our mouths moving, but what is convicting you, and changing you, and touching you is God speaking. I know that God has spoken powerfully to me during a sermon I was sitting out there hearing. I can't tell you who was preaching, I don't remember that, but I remember what God said to me. The sermon is not about the preacher. I use to ask my wife after I preached, "How was the message today?" I don't ask that question anymore, because it isn't about how well I

did, or who liked my message, or how interesting I was, it is not about me at all. If I make it about me, God's voice will not be heard in the sermon. Who do we preach?

2 Corinthians 4:5

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 4:5 THE MESSAGE

Remember, our Message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you.

Christ is preached for the Bible from beginning to end is about Christ.