

Rethinking Cross Centered Preaching

by John Piper

This sermon challenges the common approach of making every text a pathway to the gospel, emphasizing the importance of diving deep into the actual words and phrases of the inspired text. It encourages preachers to build sermons on the cross rather than just towards it, highlighting the power of imputed righteousness in enabling obedience to biblical imperatives. The focus is on wrestling with the text to reveal its true reality and offering it as a blood-bought gift to the listeners for understanding, embracing, and obedience.

Duration: 5:55

Scripture: Psalm 1:2, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Deep Understanding of Scripture", "Imputed Righteousness and Obedience"

Description

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Transcript

So, I don't think that the controlling question, how can I preach the gospel from this text, has, over the last 40 years or so, produced the kind of preaching that makes for strong, Bible-saturated, doctrinally rich, mature, stable, counter-cultural churches with a passion for radical obedience to God's word. I don't think it has served us well. So, I'm gonna offer you an alternative to those who think that preaching Christ or preaching the gospel from every text means dealing in some general comments about what the text says, hovering just above the text, seldom explaining the very words and phrases, and then moving on to the real concern of making a gospel crescendo with Christ and his atonement and the forgiveness of sin so everybody can walk out relieved.

I think that kind of preaching tends to dull the expectations of the people that they might actually see fresh, new, beautiful, tough, deep, scary, wonderful things in the text. I think it tends to treat the actual words and phrases and logic of the inspired text as having minor significance by giving the impression that they don't need to be treated with any particular rigor or care. They're just preparations for the main thing that's coming.

I think it tends to train people in bad habits of how to read their Bibles by diminishing the rigor and earnestness of meditating on the words of God day and night. I think it tends to weaken the seriousness of practical biblical imperatives on how to live the Christian life in all holiness and purity and love by inserting the substitutionary atonement at critical moments when the emphasis should be falling on the urgency of obedience because that's the urgency of the text. So I want to commend to you an alternative to making every text a pathway to the gospel, to having the driving question in your sermon preparation be how can I preach the gospel from this text? I want to wave a yellow flag in front of the saying that is so often attributed to Spurgeon.

Take your text and make a beeline to the cross. Nobody knows if Spurgeon said that. At least I can't find any Spurgeon scholars who can show that he did, but that doesn't matter.

It's not the point. Here's the point. Instead of taking your text and making a beeline to the cross, I think you should take the cross and make a beeline to your text.

Instead of building your sermon toward the cross, build your sermon on the cross. Instead of preaching biblical imperatives as pointers to Christ's perfection and imputed righteousness, I think we should preach imputed righteousness as the power to obey biblical imperatives, or to put it another way, standing on the power and the promises bought for God's elect by the blood of Jesus, wrestle, wrestle with the words and phrases and sentences and flow of thought in the text. Wrestle with them until you see the reality that's really there in those words, and then show it to your people, and show them how you saw it, and then offer it to them.

Offer it to them as a blood-bought gift, urging them with all your might to see it and understand it and embrace it and be glad in it and obey it and share it. Let the reality of the text be the crescendo of the sermon.

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