

The Preacher

by Vance Havner

We need anointed, authoritative, absolute, and apocalyptic preaching that comes from a divine unction and sticks to the old-time faith.

Duration: 19:18

Scripture: Exodus 30:32-33, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 22:37, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Revelation 21:5

Topics: "Preacher"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of the role of the preacher in today's society. He emphasizes that despite the push towards celebrity and entertainment, the Bible still states that people need a preacher to hear the word of God. The preacher argues that the kind of preaching we need is the same as it has always been. He criticizes a radio preacher who focused on worldly matters instead of the true message of redemption. The preacher urges believers to preach the truth of the Bible and to be aware of the apocalyptic times we are living in, referencing various biblical events and symbols.

Transcript

In these wild and weird and wicked times, the work of the preacher is being rethought and revamped and reexamined. Some think his main business, according to Ephesians 4.12, is to be the quipper of the layman for their ministry. And he is being pushed away from the center of the platform to the wings in favor of celebrities and experts and entertainers.

But the book still says, How shall they hear without a preacher? What kind of preaching do we need? It's a good thing for God's people to make up their minds about not just what kind they like, but what kind we need. We need the same kind we've always needed. Nothing important has changed.

Just because we've split the atom and gone to the moon doesn't mean we need a new kind of preaching. We have a new kind in some quarters, but we don't need it. There is a lot of cheap preaching going around today.

I heard of a preacher back in the days when haircuts were fifty cents apiece, and he had a barber in the crowd who said, I'll take care of you, I'll be your barber and I'll just take it out in preaching. The preacher said, I'll have you know I don't preach any fifty cent sermons. He said, that's all right, I'll come several times.

We have a lot of that. What kind of preaching do we need? We need anointed preaching. I used to hear a lot about unction.

That's a word I haven't heard much of lately. Un-ointment. This divine unction is not sold over any counter.

Simon Magus tried to buy it, but it's not for sale. It's not compounded by any apothecary, it's not put together by chemistry. A preacher may be wrapped in all the robes of learning, steady walls decked with diplomas, his home filled with travel souvenirs from many lands.

He may wear all the trappings of ecclesiastical prestige and pageantry, but he cannot function without unction. If he tries, he'll spend his time taxing him down to the runway and never take off. John Wesley demonstrated that a long time ago when he started out equipped with some of the most formidable qualifications for a preacher.

He was an Oxford man, he was a man of prayer. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all preachers. His mother, one of the godliest women who ever lived.

He himself was a missionary, but not ready to preach. Some years ago when I went out to Dallas to the evangelistic conference and spoke over at Southwestern, I got an invitation by some means or other to ASMU to talk to the preacher boys. I had prepared a sermon on John Wesley, mostly, and wondered why, since I was going to a Baptist conference.

But that's where I got to use my method of sermon. I said, But many a pre-order's gate Wesley today starts out to convert the Indians without ever having been converted himself. In Exodus 30 we are told about three restrictions on the anointing oil for the priest.

Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured. God does not anoint old Adam for his service. Whoso compounds any like it, don't imitate it.

Or whosoever puts any of it on a stranger shall be cut off from his people. We ought to remember those restrictions with regard to the work of the Spirit today. Then the preaching ought to be authoritative.

Some time ago I heard one of our preachers say we must get away from authoritarian preaching. I think we need to get back to it. We've already gotten away from it.

Jesus taught us having authority, not as the scribes. These days when there is no king in Israel and every man does what is right in his own eyes, authority goes out and anarchy comes in when it does. Jesus met the devil not in his own power, have you noticed that? Not in his own name, but with the scriptures.

It is written, it is written, it is written. If he could defeat the devil with three verses out of Deuteronomy, we ought to be able to defeat him with the whole Bible. Don't be ashamed of the old-time faith.

There isn't anything newer. We have a New Testament about a new and living way, entered by the new birth that makes new creatures of us with a new name and a new song, walking in newness of life, living by a new commandment, headed for a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. Almost the last word in the New Testament is, Behold, I make all things new.

No wonder the gospel is good news, N for North and E for East and W for West and S for South. Good news for all directions, old time, new time, any time, all the time. God is not running an antique shop.

This is new. These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority that no man despise these. For some years we had the expression, Tell it like it is.

But you can't preach it like it is if you don't believe it like it was. If you don't believe that the Bible is God-breathed and Jesus, virgin-born, that he died for our sins and rose bodily from the grave, then you can't preach it like it is, for that's the way it was, and the way it was, it still is. You can't preach Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today if you don't believe in what he was yesterday for what he was and what he is now.

My wife was a Quaker. Quakers are wonderful people. They got their name from the fact that they used to shake, they were moved by what they believed.

They were shook up by what they believed. I know a lot of folks today that are not shaken by what they believe, but they are shaky about what they believe. It's almost the unpardonable sin to be dogmatic anymore.

I go to church and I don't want to hear an expert in the art of almost saying something. I want somebody who knows what he is talking about. I don't want to come away feeling like I've been to dinner where they didn't serve anything but kool-whip.

We're not supposed to be apologetic with an inferiority complex in the presence of the New Left and the hippies and the jet-set. One of our great black preachers said, I don't belong to the right wing or the left wing, they are both flapping on the same old bird. That's the way I feel about it.

If anybody is embarrassed, let it be the other crowd. Jennings Bryan won a nomination as candidate for President by a great speech in which he said, The humblest citizen of the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error. Another of our black preachers said today, you don't have to be in who's who to know what's what.

You certainly don't. The humblest man can know if he sticks to the book. We don't have to call in TV celebrities and athletic personalities to put the gospel over them.

We're trying to fix up something that doesn't need fixing up. You might as well gill the lily and paint the sunset, hobnob with Sodom, we're told, and get chummy with Gamara, and visit the love-inns to know what the hippies are thinking, and drink ginger ale at the country club to find out what that crowd is thinking, and read Playboy to know what the world is thinking. What difference does it make what they are thinking? My ways are not your ways, neither are my thoughts your thoughts.

Some of these avant-garde boys ought to wake up. The devil told me that if I didn't get with it, I'd have nowhere to preach, and I started preaching this way. He said, you'll starve, and from the way I look, you may think the devil is right, but I'm doing all right, and I'm busy in my seventies, and I ever was in my sixties and fifties and forties and thirties and twenties.

Some dear fellows are knocking themselves out trying to keep up with the procession. They ought to get up today. We don't need something new half as much as we need something so old it would be new if anybody would try it.

We've all been in the novelty shop. Somebody needs to get back to the antique shop and get hold of some of the old fruits that will last forever. We have to have a new lingo today, they tell us.

Everything has changed its phraseology. It used to be a problem, now it's a hang-up. It used to be a blessing, and now it's a meaningful experience, whatever that is.

We ought to be relevant and communicate and dialogue with the now and study the spectrum and seek fulfillment and involvement and get down to the nitty-gritty. I've often wondered, what is the nitty-gritty? We're supposed to get down to that? Oh, I wouldn't worry about that. They used to call it itch, and now they call it allergy, but you scratch just the same.

Instead of setting the pattern, the professing church today is wearing itself out, imitating every fad that comes along. Every time the world comes out with something new, here comes the church trotting along trying to imitate it. God didn't call the church to be an accompanist to anything.

He called the church to be a soloist. We've got our own song to sing and our own message to give. They say, well, the end justifies the means, but we forget that the means determines the end.

If it's an unworthy means, you have already spoiled the objective before you ever get to it. Then we need absolute preaching. This is a day of relativism.

Right is still right, though, and wrong is still wrong. But we've smudged it into indefinite gray. But if it was right 50 years ago, it's still right.

If it was wrong then it's wrong now. We're living in a day of wars that we neither win nor lose. Everything has got blurred.

Douglas MacArthur said before Congress, in war there is no substitute for victory, and there isn't. I like to read what one great preacher says about another. Joseph Parker said this about Spurgeon.

The only colors that Mr. Spurgeon knew were black and white. In all things he was definite. You were either up or down, in or out, alive or dead.

As for middle zones and graded lines and light compounded with shadow in a graceful exercise of give and take, he looked on them as heterodoxy and as the implacable enemies of the metropolitan tabernacle. In other words, you knew where Spurgeon stood. We're dealing in absolutes, the absolute authority of the scriptures, the absolute lordship of Christ, the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit.

That sounds too dogmatic for some folks, because they're living in a fog. They've moved all the way from dogma to smogma, and that's a terrible place to live. Jesus Christ was absolute.

He that is not with me is against me. He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. That only leaves room for two kinds of folks.

There is no such thing as an inactive church member in the light of that verse of scripture. Because if you're not gathering people for Jesus, you are driving people away from Jesus. He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

But you're active one way or the other. But while we're authoritarian and absolute, we must be affectionate, speaking the truth in love. Some speak the truth and don't have love, and some preach love and don't have the truth.

Get the mixture right. A man with one foot in hot water and the other in ice water isn't a bad fit. We ought to sort of mix it.

The truth will keep you from dissolving into sentimentality. Love will keep you from hardening into severity, and the truth will keep you from turning to sugar, and love will keep you from turning to vinegar. I know the Lord preserves his Saints, but he doesn't pickle them.

Be steadfast and unmovable, but so is a monument. After all, we are people. The Lord who drove the money changers from the temple could weep over Jerusalem with a broken heart.

I don't want to finish my course as a minister hard and embittered. I've seen some examples of the scenario of the poor advertisement for the preachers. Finally, the preaching of today ought to be apocalyptic.

The preacher ought to sound like the book of Revelation. Because we are living, we are dwelling in a grand and awful time. In an age on ages, telling to be living is sublime.

I heard a radio preacher some time ago preaching from the text, When these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. But he didn't get the right angle on that blessed truth. It was spring, and he said, Just as the crocuses are coming up, so we are on the dawn of a new age of brotherhood, socialism through education, legislation under religious auspices, the social gospels, paradise.

The crocuses are blooming. I thought to myself, after looking at the newspapers and listening to that, Lord deliver us from this kind of preaching that gets up and all we can think about is croaking about crocuses. We've got something facing us more serious than all this.

Lord, have mercy on such a preacher. Beloved, we are living in a day of beasts and seals and trumpets and the four horsemen and the harlot on the beast and scorpions and dragons and a sea of glass mingled with fire and earthquakes and falling stars and Babylon and the bottomless pit and the lake of fire and Gog and Magog and the 666 and the downfall of the devil and the great white city coming down. There's no time to tiptoe through the tulips in a day like this.

I know that the news is bad, but for a Christian, good news is bad news and bad news is good news. When they shall say, Peace and safety, that sounds like good news. Sudden destruction draweth now, that's bad news.

When you see men's hearts failing them for fear, wars and rumors of wars, that's bad news. But lift up your heads, your redemption draweth nigh. It's exactly the other way around with the Christians.

I'm not waiting for the abolition of war and poverty and urban renewal. I'm living in the great until. Next time somebody asks you what time it is, tell them it's until.

That may give you a chance to point out that the New Testament is just loaded with until. He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. I'm waiting until he that hindereth be taken out of the way.

I'm doing nothing before the time until the Lord come. I'm waiting until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. I'm waiting until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

I'm waiting until he's put all things under his feet. I'm waiting until he subdues all things under himself. I want to be sincere and without offense until the day of Jesus Christ.

I want to hold fast what I have until Jesus come. When I partake of the Lord's supper, I want to show forth his death until he come. I want to remember that he said, Occupy until I come.

I'm waiting until all enemies be made his footstool. Until. A. J. Gordon's tombstone has on it just three words, until he come.

When my dearly beloved was about ready to go to heaven, she couldn't talk, but she could still write, and she had heard this sermon quite a bit. She managed to scribble how I don't know, but I keep it, I have it. I'm going through things I can't tell you about until.

That was all. Nowadays I preach this so much that I'm getting a lot of letters from good people, and many of them, instead of signing sincerely or yours truly, are signing until. I think that's a good way.

Well, you say, how will his enemies be made his footstool? By the preaching of the gospel? No. By social action? No. By improving the environment? No.

That's important, but that won't do it. When we're up to our ears in crocodiles, it's no time to discuss how to drain the swamp. We've got crocodiles on our hands.

When he comes again, it will be cataclysmically, apocalyptically, and suddenly. He's not coming to hold a summit conference with his enemies. He's not coming to reconcile, he did that the first time.

He's coming to destroy and to conquer and to subdue. The day of reconciliation will be over, and the day of retribution will begin. The first time he came quietly, a babe in Bethlehem, he didn't cry aloud, nor was his voice heard in the streets.

Next time there will be plenty of noise, the voice of an archangel, the trumpet of God that will wake up the dead. People used to ask, how can an angel's voice and a trumpet sound be heard around the world? They don't ask that now. A man can blow a trumpet in New York and be heard in Australia.

Our eardrums have been shattered by the devilish dissonance of rock and roll and sometimes even gospel jazz. If a man can blow a trumpet loud enough to deafen the living, an archangel ought to be able to blow one loud enough to wake up the dead. I'm expecting it! Bev Shea sent me this record, The King Is Coming, his album.

He said, Vance, I've had criticism from some of the super-fundamentalists. He didn't tell them that, but I do. I'm a fundamentalist, too.

He said they don't think that song has the eschatological programming logical order. I don't know what they mean. I said, Bev, don't worry.

Some of us Priests can be pretty preposterous sometimes. And indeed we can. I believe he's coming.

I don't have all the program worked out with all the eyes dotted and all the speech books. I believe he can come any minute, and I don't belong to the crowd that thinks he may not come for a million years. I'm looking for him.

There's a lot of difference between waiting and watching. Everybody has to wait. You can't do anything else but wait.

But are you watching? The book says to watch. Dr. W.B. Reilly, for 40 years, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, a great man of God, baptized my wife, a great old warrior of the cross. He knew a Methodist Bishop who didn't believe a lot in looking for Jesus to come any time, and after some separation they met.

The Bishop said, Well, Reilly, Jesus hasn't come yet. Reilly said, No, Bishop, and for your sake I'm glad he hasn't. I'm looking for him.

That just about wraps it up. I'm not looking for signs. We've had plenty of signs.

I'm listening for a shout. Peter says there will be scoffers saying, Where is the promise of his coming? The next time you hear some fellow say there are no signs, you've just seen another sign. He's a living placard advertising the very thing that he denies.

So I'm listening for a shout, even so come Lord Jesus. God give us anointed preaching today, authoritative, absolute, affectionate, and apocalyptic. God bless you.

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