

## **Preaching is Not a Subspecies of Natural Rhetoric**

Excerpts From John Piper, Expository Exultation, pg 103, 104

So the question we are asking is not: What are the natural things that a preacher can do to increase natural knowledge and natural feeling? I have no interest in that question whatsoever. Preaching is not a subspecies of natural rhetoric. It is not a means of using language to persuade the natural mind to act differently. Rhetoric can move the natural mind in stunning ways. Whole movements in society can be awakened by such rhetorical skill. But this effect on the mind may have no taste for the beauty and worth of God. Preaching has no interest in such persuasion. Preaching aims to bring about the spiritual sight of the glories of God in Christ. It aims to awaken and sustain the spiritual "taste" that God is supremely beautiful and satisfying. Rhetorical success short of this are fatal -especially in the church.

So the chief and ultimate aim of preaching -to bring people to see and savor and show the glory of Christ, and all that God is for us in him -is an aim that cannot be accomplished by a preacher who is a "natural person." It cannot happen in a people who are "natural persons." Rhetoric can achieve amazing things by way of excitement and persuasion. But that is not the aim of preaching. What makes preaching unique is that it is a miracle aiming to be the agent of miracles. And the main miracle it aims to experience and bring about is the spiritual sight and spiritual savoring of the glory of God revealed in Scripture.

The word spiritual in 1 Corinthians 2:14 ("spiritually discerned," pneumatikos anakrinetai) does not mean "religious" or "mystical" or "otherworldly." It means originating by the Holy Spirit and having the quality of the Holy Spirit.

*And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

*1 Corinthians 2:13-14*