

The Centrality of Christ and the Cross

-Sermon Essential #2 (John Piper Lecture # 14)

[Sermon Essential # 1 -All to the glory of God, Sermon Essential #3 – Through the Holy Spirit and obedience of faith]

Boasting only in the cross in every sermon. Each sermon and proof text should relate to Jesus Christ and his saving work. What the apostle Paul says is indispensable to his preaching should be indispensable to ours.

- “Him [Christ] we proclaim” (Col. 1:28).
- We “preach... the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).
- “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23).
- “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).
- “Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

-John Piper, Expository Exultation, pg 221, 223

*We do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Christ's sake.
2 Corinthians 4:5*

As pastors and church leaders we have to ask ourselves whether we can honestly say with Paul, “we preach not ourselves”? Can we really say we do not preach ourselves? Let me tell you, we preach ourselves when we seek to advance our reputation, our influence and our own wellbeing. We preach ourselves when our pulpits become the occasion of conjecture and personal opinion rather than the exposition of the text. We preach ourselves when we intrude continually with stories about ourselves or attempts to display our cleverness.”

-Alistair Begg, “Inadequacy: The Surprising Secret to Being Useful to God.”

...Paul wrote most of the New Testament Epistles and planted most of the Gentile churches in the first century. His incessant mention of the Lord Jesus speaks volumes. (Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.) Paul was consumed with his crucified, risen, and reigning Lord. If the heart is occupied with Christ, Jesus will pour forth from the lips and the pen. He will ooze out of every pore.

How many times Paul referred to Christ in the opening chapters of some of his letters:

- Colossians 1 (29 verses): 30 references to Christ
- Ephesians 1 (23 verses): 26 references
- Philippians 1 (30 verses): 20 references
- Romans 1:1-9: 11 references
- 1 Corinthians 1:1-10: 13 references
- 2 Corinthians 1:1-5: 5 references
- Galatians 1:1-4:4 references

-Jesus Manifesto, Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ, Leonard Sweet & Frank Viola, pg 15

Christ is all (Colossians 3:11). These three words are the essence and substance of Christianity. If our hearts can really go along with them, it is well with our souls; if not, we may be sure we have yet much to learn.

Holiness, J.C. Ryle, pg 196