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Why Preach?

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bende Stätte bekam und befielt. Dies ist freilich richtig. Ninive ist, wie schon im Juniheft dieser Zeitschrift ausgeführt worden ist, wieder zurückgefallen in sein gottloses, heidnisches Wesen, wie spätere Stellen, z. B. Jes. 10 und 37 und 2 Kön. 19, zeigen, hat das Reich Israel zu Siskias Zeiten zerstört und das Reich Juda mit Krieg überzogen, weshalb ihm das Verderben und der endliche Ruin und Untergang angeflücht wird. Vgl. Mat. 2 und 3 und Zeph. 2, 13—15. Die Zeit des Neuen Testaments war eben damals noch nicht gekommen, die Zeit, in der die Heiden in Scharen eingehen sollten in die Kirche des Neuen Testaments und da ihre bleibende Wohnung finden, wie Jesaja und Micha voraussagen: „Es wird zur letzten Zeit der Berg, da des Herrn Haus ist, gewiß sein, höher denn alle Berge und über alle Hügel erhaben werden; und werden alle Heiden dazu laufen und viel Völker hingehen und sagen: Kommt, laßt uns auf den Berg des Herrn gehen, zum Hause des Gottes Jakobs, daß er uns lehre seine Wege und wir wandeln auf seinen Steigen. Denn von Zion wird das Gesetz ausgehen und des Herrn Wort von Jerusalem“, Jes. 2, 2, 3; Micha 4, 1, 2.

Schön bemerkt darum Hesselberg in einer ganz anspruchslos geschriebenen und wenig bekannten Auslegung: „In ihm“ (dem Buch Jona) „leuchtet ein himmlischer Strahl der ewigen Milde und Erbarmung Gottes über ein Volk, das in Todesschatten saß, ein Spiegel für das Volk Gottes, damit es erkenne, daß nur Buße vom Zorne Gottes errettet.“¹⁷⁾

Dies sind einige heilsgeschichtliche Gedanken aus dem kleinen viel verspotteten, aber in Wahrheit ganz herrlichen Buche Jona. Wir gedenken, nun noch eine kurzgefaßte Auslegung des Gebetes Jona darzubieten.

L. Fürbringer

Why Preach?

Preaching, if it is to serve its divine purpose, must have a very definite objective. This the preacher should not only know, but of this he should be conscious. What is the objective? Why preach?

I

The purpose of all Christian preaching — at all times, at any place, before any audience — is the salvation of sinners and the glory of God. The Lord says: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel,” the good news of salvation, “to every creature,” Mark 16:15. “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” Acts 1:8. Of his own preaching Paul said: “I deter-

17) Zitiert von Deltisch in Rubelsach-Guerides Zeitschrift, I, 2, 120.

mined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," 1 Cor. 2:2. "We preach not ourselves," says Paul, "but Christ Jesus, the Lord," 2 Cor. 4:5. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. 5:20. And since God is our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, all glory belongs to Him and should be given to Him. "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen," Rev. 1:6.

II

But while the salvation of the sinner and the glory of God is the *final* objective of all Christian preaching, that is, of the spoken Word, the written Word has the same purpose. All that the Christian preacher preaches he takes from the Bible, the written Word; he has no other source. "We speak wisdom . . .; yet not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. 2:6, 7. "Preach the Word"—thus Paul admonishes Timothy and all Christian preachers, 2 Tim. 4:2. But why should the Word be preached? Why does it not suffice that men have the written Word? The written Word works faith and sustains it, puts the love of Christ into the hearts of men, strengthens Christians to resist sin and lead a godly life, takes them from earth to heaven. The Word that is *preached* can do no more; it is the same Word. The preacher can add nothing to it, can give it no additional power. Why, then, did God give us "the ministry of reconciliation," "ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor. 5:18, 20; "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers," Eph. 4:11; "elders in every church," Acts 14:23; "elders in every city," Titus 1:5; "overseers to feed the church of God," Acts 20:28; "bishops apt to teach," 1 Tim. 3:2?

Many will not read the Word; they perhaps do not even have it. To these it must be preached. To such people we send our missionary preachers, in home and in foreign fields.

Many who do read the Word do not understand it. That is no fault of the Word. It speaks a simple and clear language. Even though Christ spoke clearly to His disciples, saying: "He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated and spitted on, and they shall scourge Him and put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again,"—clearly spoken,—yet we read: "And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken," Luke 18:32-34. Even after His resurrection Jesus "opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures," Luke 24:45. The disciples had the preconceived wrong idea of a temporal kingdom which Christ would establish.

They asked: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom unto Israel?" Acts 1:6. In like manner many today come to the Bible with preconceived wrong ideas, which have become so fixed in their mind that they are thereby kept from understanding the plain language of Scripture. They need a Philip to say unto them: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Acts 8:30, and to give them the true understanding. Such people need preachers to open the Scriptures unto them.

But our church-members have been instructed in the Word (parochial school, Sunday-school, catechumen class); they also have their Bible at home. Why preach to them? They should advance in Christian knowledge. They are not to remain babes, who must be fed on milk, but should arrive at that full age to which belongeth strong meat, Heb. 5:12-14. They should not remain "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," Eph. 4:14,15, but should grow up to be men in understanding, "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," Heb. 5:14. Much of this could and would be accomplished if all our Christians would regularly, prayerfully, and carefully read and study their Bible. But do they?

Shall the preacher then be satisfied if he can say that he preaches the Word of God, that his sermons are orthodox, that he is presenting the doctrines of the Bible? If that is all, and if a sermon it must be, then church-members could be directed to read a sermon at home from one of the many sermon-books which we could recommend. We could also add a good commentary. *But the preacher must do more. He should preach the Word as the particular spiritual needs of his church-members demand it. That is why God gives preachers to Christian congregations.* They are to be *watchmen*, who hear the Word at God's mouth and give warning unto men, Ezek. 3:17-21; they are to *watch over the souls of men*, as they that must give account, Heb. 13:17; they are to be *pastors, shepherds*, who give heed to all the flock, protecting them against grievous wolves; they are to be *overseers*, who feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood, Acts 20:28, 29; they are by their teaching to advance their hearers not only in spiritual knowledge, Heb. 5:12 to 6:3, but in *grace*, 2 Pet. 3:18, in *faith*, Matt. 15:21-28; 17:20; 6:30, and in *good works*, Matt. 5:14-16; John 15:8; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Gal. 5:16-26; Matt. 25:31-46. Not only instruction but instruction for the purpose of *edification*, as this is demanded by the particular needs of the people, that is the real purpose of preaching to a Christian congregation. By such preaching also the strangers who may be found in the church audience will be served.

III

In the 14th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of preaching to the Christian congregation; its purpose, he says is *edification*. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to *edification*," v. 3; "he that prophesieth, *edifieth* the church," v. 4; "that the church may receive *edifying*," v. 5; "forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the *edifying* of the church," v. 12; "*when ye come together*, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto *edifying*," v. 26. If any one cannot speak for the *edification* of the church, "let him," says the apostle, "keep silence in the church," v. 28. In the church, the apostle says, he would rather speak five words that can be understood, so that the hearers will be *edified*, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue, which are not understood and therefore edify no one, v. 19.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4, the apostle writes: "He," the ascended Lord, "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ," vv. 11, 12. Of his and the other apostles' authority as preachers Paul says: "which the Lord hath given me to *edification*, 2 Cor. 13:10. When the persecution in the days of Paul had somewhat subsided, we read: "Then had all the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were *edified*," Acts 9:31. That the blessings of the kingdom of God are given for the edification of its members we learn also from Rom. 14: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. Let us therefore, follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may *edify* another," vv. 17-19.

Wherever in the texts just quoted the word "edification" or "edify" occurs, the Greek either has the noun, *οικοδομή*, the act of building, building up, or, in New Testament metaphorical usage, "the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness" (Thayer); or it has the verb *οικοδομέω*, to build (up from the foundation), "to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness" (Thayer). The word used in the English translation is of Latin origin, *aedificare*, having the same meaning as the Greek word, to build.

In the Christian congregation the *foundation* has been laid — Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 3:11; "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (not their person but their doctrine), "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone," Eph. 2:20. The members

of the congregation are Christians, having the right and only foundation for their faith and hope: *the Savior* as He comes to them in Word and Sacrament. Upon this foundation they are to be built up; and preaching is to serve this purpose. For this purpose the Christian preacher is to be a watchman, Ezek. 3:17; a shepherd, Jer. 23:4; an overseer, Acts 20:28; a nurse, 1 Thess. 2:7; a minister, 1 Tim. 4:6. Of course, he is to be all this in his entire relation to his congregation, but also in the pulpit he is to be preeminently a *Seelsorger*, ministering as such to all his people Sunday after Sunday and as often as he preaches. Preaching should supply the particular *spiritual* needs of the congregation, of a people who are Christians indeed but who still have the sinful flesh and live in a world in which they are surrounded by sinful people and exposed to the powers of darkness.

Preaching, therefore, of which no more can be said than that it is orthodox or Scriptural, but which does not supply the *particular spiritual needs of the Christian congregation* does not serve the real purpose of preaching. A preacher of such sermons is not that *Seelsorger* in the pulpit which he ought to be. To fill in a half hour, more or less, in the pulpit merely with an orthodox sermon does not in itself serve the real purpose of preaching. The *particular spiritual needs* of the people entrusted to the care of a pastor must be supplied. The Christian hearers should be edified, built up spiritually. The spiritual life of the Christian congregation should be deepened and enlarged, spiritually advanced. The Christians should by the Word of God be fortified against the false doctrines and the sins of their time. They should be encouraged to lead a Christian life. They should be comforted in their trials and tribulations. To this end the preacher should "preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine," 2 Tim. 4:2. Edification, with all that it implies — that is the concise Scriptural answer to the question, Why preach?

If the objective of preaching to a Christian congregation is to be reached, the preacher's heart must be filled with love to his Savior and to those souls for whom the Savior died, some of whom He has entrusted to the preacher's pastoral care, and for whom he must give account; the preacher must study the spiritual needs of his people; and he must give sufficient time to the careful preparation of his sermons.

Blessed is the preacher who in reference to the pastoral care of the flock which God has entrusted to him can say with Paul: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you, publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance

toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. . . . Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to *build you up* and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," Acts 20:20, 21, 26, 27, 31, 32.

JOHN H. C. FRITZ



Fallow Fields—the Church's Youth

The caption of this article is taken from a chapter in the very interesting and valuable book by Henry W. McLaughlin, entitled *Religious Education in the Rural Church*. The expression was used to designate and describe the condition of untold thousands of children, chiefly in the mountainous districts of the Southern Appalachians, who were growing up without a knowledge of God and of the Savior, until the Director of Country Church Work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States learned of their plight and organized a movement to bring them at least the fundamentals of religious education. The book shows that the remedy proposed was still very inadequate, chiefly because more emphasis seems to have been placed upon the amelioration of social conditions than on that of the children's personal relation to their Savior on the basis of His redeeming blood.

And yet this book, and others like it, is very stimulating; for many of the problems broached by the author may be transferred, without essential changes, to the field of work among the confirmed youth of our Church. One might begin with a series of true-false statements, such as:

A fallow field on a farm is one which is intensely cultivated.

The Church has taken care of all the fallow fields in every part of its area.

Our Church has given public sanction to more intensive work among its young people.

The young people of our Church are overorganized.

The Church is providing adequately for all the needs of its young people.

All our congregations have established, and are maintaining, adequate contacts with all their young people.

The talents of our young people are being developed in such a manner as to make them efficient workers in the kingdom of our Lord.

It would be an interesting experience to have these statements discussed in pastoral conferences and to get the reaction of pastors