

Mission, Values and Vision

*⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
(Ephesians 3:8-10. ESV)*

Message 6

Word and Deed

February 23rd, 2014

Titus 2:1-10

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Introduction:

Good morning! Open your Bibles to Titus 2:1-10. We're looking this morning at one of the passages that informs our 5th Core Value. Let me read that to you:

We deeply believe that our Gospel presentation should balance word and deed, in a faithful and culturally relevant manner.

In that Core Value we are saying that we want to find a Biblically faithful and culturally useful way of balancing word and deed in our Gospel ministry. That's what we're saying but the truth is, I can't imagine our grandparents feeling the need to list this as one of their Core Values. Every other Core Value we have looked at thus far – the power of Biblical preaching, the need to care about lost people, the need to pray, the need to love one another – I am absolutely sure would have come as naturally to their minds as they came to ours. This one however, we have to admit is culturally located. This Core Value is a reaction to the mistakes and missteps of the 20th century.

The liberal church in the 20th century made the decision to lead with the social implications of the Gospel rather than leading with the Gospel itself. They began to speak of the "Social Gospel". They began to pursue good things like literacy, the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of social equity and human dignity but they did so in a way that increasingly eclipsed the Gospel. They were seeking the effect while neglecting the cause and the outcome was entirely

predictable. The mainline Protestant Church went into freefall and in a single generation went from cultural dominance to absolute irrelevance. The United Church of Canada, which was the dominant Protestant Church back in the 1930's, 40's and 50's was by the 1990's the fastest shrinking religious body in North America.¹

Sadly, many in the shallow end of the Evangelical pool are starting to drink the mainline Kool Aid and now we are increasingly hearing from Evangelical lips the same sort of non-sense we heard from the mainline folks 70 years ago. The Evangelical-light folks declare: "We're into deeds not creeds" and "we preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary using words".

If history teaches us anything it is that nobody learns anything from history. You cannot preach the Gospel without words! The Gospel is a message; it is news and news has to be announced. You can dig all the wells you like, you can build all the soup kitchens you like but if you don't tell people the Gospel with words then all you have done is fed and watered people on the way to hell.

The Bible is pretty clear that Jesus understood his own ministry as being word centric. Announcing his sense of mission to his hometown synagogue in Nazareth he said:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me **to proclaim good news** to the poor. He has sent me **to proclaim liberty** to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor**." (Luke 4:18-19. ESV)

Whatever it was Jesus came to do it seems to have involved an awful lot of talking. Word ministry was absolutely central to his sense of mission. It was also pretty central to the mission he gave to the church; Luke records Jesus saying:

"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that **repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44-49. ESV)

¹ According to Reginald Bibby author of Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada, 1993.

As you will recall from the first message in this series, the main command in this passage is the verb translated “must be proclaimed”. The church was sent out on mission with a message to proclaim. That’s what we were told to do. He didn’t say: “Go and dig wells in my name”, he didn’t say: “Go and build hospitals in my name”, he didn’t say “Go and teach children to read in my name”- he didn’t say any of that, he said: “repentance and forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed in my name to all nations”.

That’s why when the Apostle Paul went out to obey the Great Commission we have no record whatsoever of him digging a well, building a hospital or teaching a child to read, instead we have him saying:

²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2. ESV)

So let’s all agree that the Bible knows nothing of preaching the Gospel without words. Not one time in the Bible is anything said to preach the Gospel except a human mouth. The Gospel is a message; we speak the Good News of what God has done in Christ to secure our redemption.

That’s what we’re called to do so what then is the place of good deeds? That is the question I want to answer this morning and to do that I’d like to walk you through Titus 2:1-10; one of the main texts we would go to in order to understand the value of good deeds in support of Gospel ministry. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

¹But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ²Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. (Titus 2:1-10. ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

This passage has a fairly obvious and simple structure, there is one main command followed by three predicted results given in logical sequence. First of all in the opening verse we notice the main command:

Main Command: Teach Sound Doctrine

¹But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

The word he uses there is *lalei* which means literally “to utter words”. It is often translated as “to preach” and rightly so, but it literally means “to utter words”. He says: But as for you – YOU MUST UTTER WORDS that are true and in accordance with sound doctrine. You can’t preach the Gospel without words Titus – that isn’t an option; don’t even try, you’ll pull a muscle and make a fool of yourself. You must preach sound doctrine. You must trust in the Word of God to do the work of God. That’s the main command in this paragraph.

The context here helps to explain the force of the “but” in verse 1. In chapter 1 Paul is expressing concern about the false teachers that he knew were operating in the area. There are false doctrines in circulation and Paul tells Titus to confront that with the truth. In fact he says of these false teachers:

¹¹They must be silenced

You need to shut these people down because their doctrine is false, it is untrue and it is powerless to change lives. The proof that their doctrine is false can be seen in their own faulty character, he says in verse 16:

¹⁶They profess to know God, but they deny him **by their works**. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (Titus 1:16. ESV)

Bad doctrine results in bad character and bad works. In contrast to that, Paul says, good teaching and good doctrine, in the miracle of God’s Providence, produces good character and good works. The Bible is absolutely consistent on this point. Jesus said:

¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20. ESV)

Good teachers and good doctrine in a church should, over the long haul produce good fruit. If we believe that the Word of God does the Work of God, then we would expect this to be true.

Therefore, whenever you see a church where there does not seem to be a lot of truly converted people who are growing in character and righteousness then in all likelihood the problem is false teachers and bad doctrine. That's the force of the "but" in 2:1. Don't be like them, with their false doctrines and rotten fruit, you preach the truth. Preach what accords with sound doctrine and you should see the fruit of converted character. That's the first predicted consequence.

Result #1: Sound Teaching Will Produce Converted Christian Character

Look at verse 2, right after telling Titus to preach what accords with sound doctrine he immediately says:

²Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

Paul is doing here what he does in all his letters, he is moving from faith to fruit. Paul never confuses fruit with faith – it is always faith alone that saves us, but as Calvin says, the faith that saves us is never alone. It always results in a change in how we live. Older men will be living this way now and older women this way, and he encourages Titus to minister in that direction. He tells Titus to expect and nurture good Christian living in three specific places:

- i. In the home (v. 2-6)
- ii. In the marketplace (v. 9-10a)
- iii. In himself (v.7-8)

There is a way that true conversion shows up in the intimate relationships of the home. There is a way that the Gospel changes older men and older women and through them younger men and younger women. And there is a way that the Gospel shows up in the marketplace.

⁹Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰not pilfering, but showing all good faith

The word Paul uses there translated as “showing” all faith is *endeiknumenous* – you can almost hear the word “indicate” in there can’t you? Paul is saying that there is a way of behaving as an employee that indicates you are a Christian. It involves having a submissive attitude – doing what you are told; it involves being well pleasing – going above and beyond – it involves being pleasant and compliant rather than mouthy and combative; it involves not pilfering – not skimming or stealing but “showing all faith”. Paul tells Titus to nourish converted character so that his people can act like real Christians at home and at work.

Thirdly, Paul tells Titus to look for and encourage good living in himself:

⁷Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸and sound speech that cannot be condemned

Set an example of good works and healthy speech. Preach a good Gospel to yourself and you should see good character and good works in yourself just as surely as you see them in your people. Good teaching will result in good living and good deeds just as surely as the bad teaching in chapter 1 resulted in bad living and bad deeds. Roots produce fruits. You cannot simply hang good fruit on a rotten tree – you have to dig up the old rotten tree and plant a new one, a good one, based on believing in the true message of the Gospel. Teach what accords with sound doctrine and your people will live well and produce the fruit of good works, and that in turn, Paul says will result in:

Result #2: Good Living And Good Deeds With Result In Reduced Persecution And Slander

Notice the result clause in verse 8:

so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (Titus 2:8b. ESV)

If Christians live well and do good deeds that ought to reduce and forestall persecution and slander. Of course it won’t eliminate persecution entirely, after all Jesus said:

¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:19-20. ESV)

¹¹“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12. ESV)

Clearly then, some persecution and some slander is inevitable – BUT – if we live well and do good deeds then at least, when it comes it will be for Jesus’ sake! Persecution and slander because we are foolish, wishy washy, and immoral is not persecution for Jesus’ sake and there is no blessing associated with that. Peter knew that, he said:

¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (1 Peter 4:14-16. ESV)

There is good persecution and bad persecution and if we live well and do good deeds then we should eliminate the bad kind and suffer only the good kind. In addition to that, good deeds and good living may even win us small windows of favour and opportunity in the host culture. Paul held out hope for that. He said:

But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, ¹¹and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹²so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. (1 Thessalonians 4:10b-12. ESV)

Ideally, Paul says, if we live well and mind our own affairs and conduct ourselves wisely before the pagans, we may gain space and peace in which to do Gospel work. We may silence false accusations and create space for Gospel witness.

Historically, that’s exactly what happened. The Romans persecuted the Christians initially because they didn’t understand them. The Christians didn’t participate in their pagan feasts, they weren’t tolerant of other faiths and so the Romans hated them and countless Christians were burned at the stake or eaten by wild animals in the coliseum. But then something happened. The Romans began to notice how much easier and cheaper it was to govern a province that had Christians in it. Christians cared for widows and orphans – they did good deeds at their own expense – they didn’t even require a tax exemption and the Romans started realizing that Christians – hateful as their doctrine might be – are remarkably useful people and they began to grant them peace. That is one of the very important ways that our good living and our good deeds partner with the Gospel in Christian ministry.

Result #3: Good Living And Good Deeds Adorns And Commends The Doctrine

Paul provides a third predicted result in verse 10:

so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. (Titus 2:10. ESV)

Good living and good deeds adorn and commend the doctrine of God our Savior! The word Paul uses there in verse 10 is the Greek word *kosmosin* and it means “to adorn” or “decorate”. Good deeds decorate Gospel doctrine – isn’t that great? Isn’t that simple? Sprinkles decorate a birthday cake, but you don’t sit down and eat a bowl of sprinkles. The sprinkles aren’t the point, they point to the point. They improve the point. They beautify the point. So it is with good deeds and good living.

Last week we talked about how a good church commends the Gospel. Many of us have probably experienced the difficulty of doing Gospel ministry without the benefit of a good church in support. Its terribly difficult. You can’t point to your church as proof of the power of the Gospel and you can’t partner with your church in discipling new believers. That’s a terrible place to be! How much sweeter when the person is already half convinced of the Gospel’s truth and power because they see the love and health of your church? How much easier to disciple people when you can plug them into groups and expose them to brothers and sisters who are themselves full of life and spiritual vitality! A good church adorns the Gospel and here to that Paul adds good Christian living and good works also adorn and commend the Gospel.

Let me just slip out of teacher mode and into cheer leader mode. I love how easy it is to share the Gospel in this town because of the witness and testimony of First Baptist Church, Orillia. Now, I’m not saying that the members here are all perfect or anything like that – the church is full of recovering hypocrites as Dr. Craig likes to say, and that’s as true of our church as it is of every other. We’re sinners saved by grace in here. But, I can tell you that this church has a reputation for good works and increasingly for good living in this city. Divorce is rare in here. Families are big and generally happy. Wives are different at First Baptist Church and husbands too. Don’t think that doesn’t get noticed and don’t think it doesn’t help display the power of the Gospel. Our good deeds go before us in this city when we go to share the Gospel. People know about reCOVER. They know about Family Circle and how helpful it has been to so many people who

are going through hard times. They are starting to hear about the food ministry. They know of our support for The Pregnancy Resource Centre, The Light House, Living For Jesus and more. That's good stuff, that's really helpful stuff and I want to encourage you to do more. Call your elder and ask for more of that in next year's budget. Not in a nasty way, just in a communicative and helpful way. Let them know that those good deeds help you share the Gospel in this city. They adorn and commend the doctrine of God our Saviour.

Application And Exhortation:

That's the text – its a very simple and straightforward text and I think the issue as a whole is very straightforward if we take the Bible as our starting place. But as I mentioned off the top, we hold this Core Value against some rather serious head winds in the church in general and increasingly within the Evangelical movement and even, sadly, within our own denomination. This is one of those issues where if we don't stand firm, if we don't keep these convictions before our eyes and force ourselves to this standard, we will fall back, we will forget and we will go along to get along and we will perish with the crowd. So, let me leave you with two strong exhortations. In light of this text and others like it, I urge you therefore brothers and sisters:

1. To maintain your faith in the power of the Gospel

Paul said:

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, ~~£~~ as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17. ESV)

Let me be even more clear for those who think that you can preach the Gospel without words – I urge you brothers and sisters to maintain your faith in the power of Gospel preaching. 1

Corinthians 1:21 says:

²¹For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through **the foolishness of the message preached.** (1 Corinthians 1:21. HCSB)

Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. (Romans 10:17).

Secondly, I urge you brothers and sisters:

2. To care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering²

I can't shake the feeling that part of the reason the Evangelical world is beginning to substitute the social Gospel for the actual Gospel is because increasingly we do not believe in hell. If hell isn't real or if it isn't forever, then the greatest good would be wells in Africa and clinics in India. But if hell is real and if hell is forever then, yes by all means let's dig a well and by all means let's build a hospital but for the love of God and the souls of men and women let us also and with greatest urgency preach the Gospel! Let us dig the well and give the water and say to the one who receives that whoever drinks of this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks of the water of Christ shall never be thirsty again.

Let us build the hospital, yes, and let us say unto the one who is healed, everyone who is healed in this place will become sick again and will die but the one who has faith in Christ, yea though he die, YET WILL HE LIVE AGAIN!

If heaven is real and hell is real then we should care about all suffering ESPECIALLY eternal suffering. We should care about all good and all human flourishing especially eternal good and eternal flourishing. That's what we're saying with this Core Value. We're not saying that good deeds aren't important, of course they are! They are the necessary and evidential fruit of every truly converted heart. They shut the mouths of our accusers and provide us space and time in the culture to preach the Gospel. More than that they show forth the power and beauty of our message. Good works are good! We're all for them but we were not saved by good works and neither will they be. We were saved when the Spirit of God softened our hearts to hear and receive the implanted and saving word and so shall they be.

How beautiful on the mountains still are the feet of those who bring good news. This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

² A line by John Piper. There is a version of it in Finish The Mission by Piper and Mathis.

