

The Preaching and Pulpit Ministry of Christ Church

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Timothy 4:2)

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

The Bible is the Word of God, revealed for the salvation and building up of His people (WLC 4). The Lord has designed that the Bible be communicated not only through reading, but *especially* through preaching (WSC 89). Because of this, the preaching ministry of a church must be of the highest priority. Efforts to reach out into the community are essential, and those efforts seek to bring people to hear the Word of God preached. In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ is presented as God's solution for sin, the judge of the world, and the hope of mankind. With this principle in mind and 2 Timothy 4:2 and 1 Corinthians 1:21 as a foundation, the Session of Christ Church is committed to the following principles:

- 1. Preaching must proceed from the Bible.** When the preacher goes into the pulpit, he does so as a herald of the King. The Greek word that the New Testament uses for preacher (*kerux*) originally had that meaning: messenger or herald. A herald does not declare his own message; he is given a charge by his king. The message that God has given to us is the Bible. It is His revealed will. It was the message of the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus Himself. This means that we do not preach about current events from news sources, politics, or the academic interests of philosophers. The Bible is the sole authority of faith and life, given by (*breathed out*, 2 Tim. 3:16) God.
- 2. Preaching must be centered on the Lord Jesus Christ.** Because the Bible is the story of the redemption of sinners through the finished work of Christ, preaching must focus on the Person and work of Christ. Sermons are to present Jesus to those who do not know Him, and to direct believers to Christ for His all-sufficiency. Paul puts it this way: "we preach Christ crucified." This does not mean that we look for strained or allegorical interpretations in order to find Jesus, but at the heart of each sermon should be a call to see what Jesus has done and how that must affect the hearer.
- 3. Preaching must be exegetically faithful and theologically accurate.** Preaching is not a lecture to convey theological propositions, but sermons must be in accordance with the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures. There are a host of theological truths that stand behind every sermon: the sovereignty of God, the Deity of Christ, the sinfulness of man, and more. If preaching from a text results in theological error, it is not proper preaching. Likewise, preaching is grounded *in the text*. The words, phrases, and concepts in the Biblical text matter. A preaching text is not a starting point from which to launch out into the preacher's favorite subject or pet peeve. Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, with every word coming from the Holy Spirit, we must preach the text. Too often, preachers desire to be more exciting or more relevant than the Bible, and bring a different message than is found in the text.

4. Preaching must be evangelical in intent. Preaching is designed to engage the hearer and bring about a response. The hearer should not be able to sit and listen with detachment to a sermon. Every sermon should have in it some element of the call of the gospel. Certain texts are more evangelical than others (*e.g.* John 3:16, Mark 1:15; Romans 5:8), but every text provides an opportunity to show the Savior to sinners. As Luther said, “To preach Christ is to feed the soul, to justify it, to set it free, and to save it, if it believes the preaching.” We dare not neglect preaching as a means of *converting* grace. Every sermon should be an opportunity to bring the gospel.

5. Preaching must not foster extra-Biblical opinions. Because we have described what preaching is, it clearly follows what preaching is not. Preaching should not be an opportunity to subject the hearers to the political or social opinions of the preacher. The preacher has the authority to preach alone what the Word of God declares, not the opinions of men. The Bible tells us what duty God requires of us (WSC 3) and it speaks clearly about sin. But the preacher must use caution so that he does not bring his personal or extra-Biblical opinions as if they were “thus says the Lord.” This is especially true in a day in which there is great division in our culture on a host of issues. Commentary on political legislation or the latest social causes distracts from the purpose of preaching and gives the impression that such opinions have divine authority behind them.

6. Preaching must be authoritative. Because preaching is grounded in the Word of God, it carries with it authority. The faithful preacher declares the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and does so not in man’s wisdom, but in the power of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:4). Effective preaching seeks to apply the Word of God to the lives of the hearers. This is true whether the application is to come to Christ, obey the Word of God, or to encourage others to love and good deeds. The closer an application comes to the text itself, the more likely it is to be properly understood and have effect. A sermon is not primarily information distribution; rather, it is the means that the Lord uses to bring about growth in grace.

7. Preaching demands a response. God has given preaching for the purpose of bringing the lost into the Kingdom of God and for the growth in grace of His children. This means that the hearer of preaching should be brought to respond in such a way that real change occurs. The pulpit ministry of the Church should seek to bring about a response from the hearer such as “what must I do to be saved?” or “what duty does the Lord require of me?”