

Epiphany ... and Preaching

This year's long season of Epiphany (seven weeks long—a bit longer than usual) is designed to reveal (*Epiphany!*) ... who Jesus is. Jesus is revealed as the Son of God and Savior of the world through many unlikely witnesses. Miracles bear witness to his authenticity, demons bear witness to His divinity, prostitutes and lepers bear witness to His mercy, Kings and Governors bear witness to His royalty, even as Apostles and Prophets bear witness to His genius as He outsmarts the most powerful and most intelligent creature ever to exist ... Satan. Epiphany reveals to you just who it is who meets you at the altar each week.

But most profound in this season of Epiphany is the place of *preaching*. Epiphany, perhaps more than any other season of the church year, reveals just how powerful and unique preaching really is. So we see Jesus preach His inaugural sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff), then to the synagogue in Capernaum (Lk 4:31ff), then to the Lake of Gennesaret where a crowd presses in around Him (Lk 5:1) to His Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:17f). Jesus preaches!

Preaching raises the dead. It exorcises demons out of people and drives them back into Hell. Preaching creates faith in unbelievers, nurtures faith in believers, cleanses penitent sinners and condemns the impenitent. Preaching saves babies while they're still in their mother's wombs. Preaching saves the deaf, the senile, the intelligent and the incompetent. Preaching is the number one tool of Epiphany. Preaching is a miracle. It's the miracle of creation.

In **2 Corinthians 4:5-7**, the Apostle Paul makes the stunning connection. He writes, **“For what we [preaching Apostles] proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the**

surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

Paul actually connects preaching ... to **Genesis 1:3: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light.”** God preached light ... into existence. Now, through “jars of clay” (Paul means common men, “earthen vessels”), God (“not *us*!”) is *still* creating life ... by speaking. God's creating in Genesis 1 is *not* over. The Creator is still at work with the same means—His Voice, the Eternal Word, coupled with the Holy Spirit hovering over the water.

That's why Paul is so insistent (in Romans 10:14-17) that faith is created ... through *preaching*. Christians must be created, not persuaded. Only God can create, and He creates by the sound of His voice. Jesus attaches that voice to mere “jars of clay,” to those He calls and sends out when He says, **“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).**

Preaching is more than one Christian teaching other Christians about God. It is the voice of God booming out over the face of His earth creating life out of death and making pure what is evil. To hear one who God calls and orders and sends faithfully proclaim God's Law and Gospel is to hear God's voice from heaven (see Hebrews 12:22-25, and come to church each Lord's Day!).

So preaching is so much more than one Christian conveying information to other Christians. Preaching is the miracle of Creation, the means God appoints for your salvation, the work of His Spirit, and it occurs wherever He sends His “clay” servants to speak “in His stead and by His command.” So rush to the next worship service to behold this miraculous work of God first hand. God is still revealing His Son by opening Heaven and saying, **“This is My Son, My beloved; listen to Him” (Lk 9:35).** This is Epiphany.

Pastor Peter Cage