

We Proclaim What Must Be Proclaimed!

Last Sunday, we saw Jesus proclaim the truth of salvation in his home town of Nazareth. The people, however, rejected him, even tried to murder him. Jesus walked away and returned to his base of operations in Capernaum, right along the Sea of Galilee. He did some preaching there, but ended up doing a LOT of miracles. As his popularity spread, more and more people came to be healed through miracles. The miracles were getting more attention than the Word of God Jesus was proclaiming. He announced that he had to go to other towns because his primary job was to share the plan of salvation. He had to proclaim what must be proclaimed.

That's the same encouragement that the Apostle Paul shared with young Pastor Timothy. Paul knew that he was going to be executed soon, so he wrote a final letter to his dear friend and student, Timothy. This was like Paul's Last Will and Testament. He was giving final directions and encouragements to Timothy before he died. He essentially told him to proclaim what must be proclaimed.

It would be a long Bible class to try to explain each phrase of these verses from chapter 3:14 – 4:5. I'll simply highlight some sections. Paul explained what God's Word gives in verse 15, **“the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** In other words, the Bible is the only book which will tell you what you need to know about salvation. It's the only book that will tell you about sin and forgiveness through Christ, as well as death and resurrection from the dead and going to heaven.

There are lots of religions, sects and cults that give people opinions about spiritual things, but they do not tell the truth of salvation. Scientology teaches people a synthesis of philosophy, physics, and psychology which is supposed to make them healthy and happy. But there's no Jesus. Transcendental Meditation encourages people to feel certain vibes in the universe and then follow those vibes. Again, no Jesus. Stoicism involves maintaining emotional control and rationality in the face of life's challenges. You are to connect with nature and the universe to gain perspective. Again, no Jesus. Taoism urges people to align with the natural flow of life and find balance within. Still, no Jesus. Recently in Columbia,

over a dozen girls were overcome with anxiety as they were using a Ouija board for guidance. And the chapel at Harvard recently had a service where they were reading Taylor Swift lyrics as sacred text. And, of course, we can't forget Satanism which is purposefully aimed at contradicting the Bible. Such things do not point to salvation through Jesus. We need to know about such un-Christian ideas and boldly proclaim the truth of the Bible.

St. Paul also explained what God's Word is (:16,17), **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God [any believer] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** In contrast to all those other cults, the Bible comes from God's mouth. You can trust it. It is “useful,” for Christian living. It is useful for teaching. We would not know what God has determined is best for us in life if we did not have the 10 Commandments. The 10 Commandments are for our good, but we do not always follow them. We sin. God's Word, however, also rebukes us. It exposes our sins to the light. It rebukes us, letting us know where we are wrong. This is good for us. We need to know when we're going in the wrong direction and putting our soul in jeopardy. The Bible is also useful for correcting. That has the idea of setting something straight, or restoring. When we sin, the Bible restores us. It tells us the message of salvation. It tells us that our sins are forgiven and that heaven is in our future. God's Word is also useful for training in righteousness. It motivates us to do the right thing for the right reason. You can't find such a powerful book with a powerful message to change hearts and lives anywhere else in the world. This is what we need for guidance and salvation. This must be proclaimed or we are lost.

That's was Paul's dying message to Timothy – the message must be proclaimed. He explained to Timothy (:3), **“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season.”** That is, be ready whether it is convenient or not – whether you are sitting on your neighbor's porch and he asks about the Bible and Jesus, or when your neighbor asks you why God would permit an airplane and helicopter to collide and dozens of innocent people died. When you're sitting on the porch with your neighbor, you can explain how the Bible tells about Jesus and what he did for us. When your neighbor asks you about a tragedy, you can simply say that our world is infected with sin and random bad things happen which can not be expected or explained. We learn to trust in God even when things don't make sense to us.

Now I'll summarize 4:3-4. God's Word must be proclaimed because many people will not put up with sound doctrine. They will ignore and disparage what the Bible says. People will look for people who say what their itching ears want to hear. Again, they will ignore God's Word to find whatever they want to hear. They will turn aside to myths which can not be backed up with history the way the Bible can. The truth of God's Word needs to be proclaimed because there is so much anti-Christian ideas in the world.

Author Sam Harris wrote a book called, "The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason." Author Bertrand Russell wrote, "Why I Am Not a Christian." In it he said, "I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am that they are untrue." German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, wrote "The Antichrist," in which he stated, "What is more harmful than any vice?—Christianity."

There is a real war going on between what the Bible say and what many people come up with in their own minds. Jesus made sure to proclaim what must be proclaimed because people would not figure it out on their own. The Apostle Paul encouraged Pastor Timothy to proclaim what must be proclaimed because so many people reject the message and miss out on the message of salvation. The same is true today. People reject that truth of salvation and so we need to share it with them – with your neighbor on your porch, with your relatives, with co-workers and classmates, as a congregation to our community, as a synod to missions around the world. The Bible is the only way that people are going to hear the truth of salvation. We simply must proclaim it as God gives us strength and opportunity.

During this Epiphany season, we are reminded that God anointed (chose) Jesus to preach God's Word, and to tell us something we would never have guessed on our own. Jesus preached freedom. Not political freedom. Not financial freedom. The freedom Jesus preached is a release from the darkness of sin and death forever. And he did more than preach. He rescued us. On his cross, he put himself in our dark dungeon and released us into the light. Jesus didn't just talk about freedom; he set us free.

You are fully and eternally free from all punishment for your sin. Jesus signed your pardon papers with his blood and sealed them with his resurrection from the dead. Have you ever been nagged by guilt, buried under a burdened conscience, or terrified by the darkness of death? The

message of Jesus is as breathtakingly wonderful as it is simple: You are saved. That is the message that we and the whole world needs. May the Lord give us the strength and the opportunity so that we proclaim what must be proclaimed. Amen.