

Preach the Bible

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[0 : 00] You can open up your Bibles to the New Testament, to the book of 2 Timothy.

We were in 1 Timothy last week, this week we're in 2 Timothy. And we're going to go from chapter 3, verse 14, all the way into chapter 4, verse 5. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy, this letter is a bit later than the first letter that he wrote.

This is towards the end of Paul's life as far as we know. So these are sort of some of his last words and the things that he urges for this young minister, Timothy. Verse 14 of chapter 3.

This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray, let's ask for God's help as we study together. Gracious God and King, won't you meet with us in your word this morning?

[2 : 29] Won't you teach us truth? Won't you open our eyes and not just the eyes in our heads, but the eyes of our hearts to see the truth of your word? Lord, we thank you for your son Jesus.

It's in him that we hope and as we read the word, it's him that we see and we want to see him clearly this morning. So be with us now, we pray, for Christ's sake. Amen.

So we continue in our series on worship, made for worship, understanding what it is that we do when we gather here on Sundays.

Trying to figure that out. What are we supposed to be doing when we get together? Many of you have grown up in church, maybe you just go through the motions because, well, you've always done that. But have you ever stopped to think and say, well, why do we do the things that we do? Well, that's what we're trying to answer in this series. Now, I preached my first sermon to an adult congregation in December of 2002.

[3 : 27] So that's almost 23 years of preaching to adult congregations. In all of that time, I was thinking about it, I have never preached a sermon on preaching. But that's what we're going to do today.

We're going to preach about preaching. We're going to think about preaching and the role of preaching in the worship service. So the first half of the series, we set up definitions of worship, why it's important to gather for worship.

And the second half of the series, what we're looking at are the specific elements that make up a worship service, that we know from Scripture are supposed to be there. We talked last week, and you might want to remember these categories because they're pretty helpful to frame things.

We talked about elements and forms and circumstances. Elements are the things that should be there. We know from the Bible we've got to do these things. Forms are, well, how do we actually do them? Like what shape do they take in the worship service?

And circumstances are things like, well, what time are we supposed to meet on a Sunday? There's no verse in the Bible that's going to tell you that. Use your brain and try and figure it out. We're looking really at the elements here over the next few weeks.

[4 : 31] We started last week with reading Scripture, the public of reading Scripture. Now we move on to the next one. The key verse we had last week was 1 Timothy 4, verse 13.

Paul, talking to this young Timothy, tells him how to minister, and he says this. He says, Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, and to teaching.

So we don't just read the Bible in worship like we talked about last week. We're to preach, teach in worship.

So let's think about that this morning. Two things I want to do. I want to show you, first of all, that preaching is an element of worship. Make the case for that. And then number two, I want us to look at three keys to biblical preaching.

Three keys to biblical preaching. But let's first try and understand why we think preaching is a key element of worship. As we did when we were thinking about reading the Scriptures in worship, we need to understand what Paul means when he gives us instruction.

[5 : 35] I know we're living 2,000 years downstream of fourth, so we've got all sorts of baggage in our mind when we hear that word preaching. But what did Paul mean back there in the first century when he gives us instruction to Timothy to preach and teach?

Now the longer passage that we just read, 2 Timothy 4, makes it a little bit clearer. So look down at that. If we look at verse 1 of 2 Timothy 4, Paul says, In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing in his kingdom, I give you this charge.

So remember, this is the end of his life. He gives this important charge to Timothy. Preach the word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

So Timothy is to preach the word of God consistently, in season and out of season, patiently, with great care. And that involves instructing people in a variety of different ways.

So there's correcting, there's rebuking, there's encouraging there, and I think that's kind of just a catch-all for a bunch of different things there. Now the word that we have there for the word preach is a Greek word. It's the word *karuso*.

[6 : 43] It means something like to herald news, the formal heralding of news. It's more formal than just teaching. It carries a level of weight and authority.

So think something bigger than just a classroom environment. If you go back to the passage that we looked at last week, 1 Timothy 4, where he mentions preaching and teaching there, Paul uses a different word there.

And the word he used there is something close to our English word, exhort, which is to strongly encourage or urge something. So you can see there's a level of like, well, we're trying to get at something here.

We're not just wanting to convey information. But then, after those two things, if you take those two words, you take the heralding, you take the exhorting. In both passages, though, there's an instruction part.

There's a teaching or instruction that's connected to this activity. So it's not then just kind of forceful bluster. You know, there are some versions of preaching out there that like if I just say it loud enough and with enough passion, then you're going to believe it.

[7 : 51] And I don't really have to have any logic or reason to my sermon. If I've just got a couple of like pithy Christian sayings and I string them together and then I say them with force, like open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 9 and then you're like, oh, this is a powerful sermon.

It's not just that, though. It's not just bluster because Paul says there's got to be teaching. There's got to be instruction. So there's got to be logic. There's got to be rhyme and reason. There's got to be content to this preaching.

Now, where does the preaching come from? What's the backdrop to this? Did you just invent preaching at that point or where does it come from? You cast your minds back to a passage we looked at last week, Nehemiah, where Ezra reads the law to the people.

There's a very interesting detail that gets added in Nehemiah 8, verse 7. It says, The Levites instructed the people in the law while the people were standing there. They read the book, they read from the book of the law, making it clear and giving meanings that the people understood what was being read.

So even back then, they didn't just read the scriptures and then leave everybody and go, Cap, you figure out what it says. The Levites came alongside the people and explained. And so as with the public reading of scripture in Nehemiah 8, the public explaining and teaching of scripture becomes a hallmark of synagogue worship when you start to move to that period that's in between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[9 : 14] So by the time Jesus comes around then in the first century, it's really common to go into a synagogue in the ancient world and to hear not only the Old Testament read, but then to hear the Old Testament expounded upon, taught.

In fact, they'd often do two lessons. They would do a lesson from the law first and then they would do a lesson from the prophets. There might actually be a place in John chapter 6 where Jesus talks

about the bread of life where he's modeling that synagogue teaching that you see there. So that's one line of thought behind what Paul's saying here. This was a sort of a practice that was common in the synagogue, particularly the teaching aspect. The other origin for preaching that we find in the Old Testament is the preaching of the prophets.

So in several Old Testament places, the pronouncements of the prophets are described as preaching. Haggai's ministry is described as preaching.

Jeremiah talks about other prophets preaching. Ezekiel is instructed to preach as he prophesies. Amos' ministry is described as preaching. Even when God calls Jonah to go and prophesy against the city of Nineveh, he says, go to that great city of Nineveh and preach against it, he says.

[10:30] And so it's almost certain then that the prophetic ministry of the Old Testament forms something of the backdrop in Paul's mind as he gives this instruction to Timothy. And in the prophets, you're going to see as you read, if you go into the Old Testament, you read those books, you're going to see a lot of that heralding and a lot of that exhorting going on.

So to sort of tie this all together, I suspect that if you bring the sort of teaching component of the synagogue together with the heralding and the exhorting of the prophets, you get what Paul has in mind.

And so he says to Timothy, that's your ministerial task. That's what you've got to give yourself to in season and out of season. That's what you've got to keep doing. Preach the word. But then what about the location?

Why should the worship service be the location of preaching? I mean, the prophets preach in all sorts of different places. They preach in the desert, in the wilderness, they preach in king's courts, foreign cities.

Why worship? I think it's pretty clear, and we say this at the beginning, but it's pretty clear that from the New Testament, particularly the book of Acts, that preaching doesn't only take place in the worship service.

[11:44] So the apostles and the prophets in the New Testament preach in all sorts of different places. So I don't think preaching is only preaching when it's in the worship service, but I do think the worship service is the primary place that preaching should be located.

Why would I say that? Well, obviously, you first of all got that synagogue connection, that connection to synagogue worship. It seems pretty clear that the New Testament apostles take a lot of synagogue worship over to the way that they formulate and conceive of New Testament worship. And the instructions that Timothy gives, he has that background in mind, Paul gives, sorry, to Timothy. Clearly, in the passage we saw last week, he has the synagogue in the back of his mind as he says, give yourself to the public reading and to preaching and to teaching.

So that's a formal worship service. But then right at the very beginning of the book of Acts, the first snapshot that we get of the early church, Acts chapter 2, tells us that the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

So there's an instruction element to their gatherings right from the get-go. They're not just all singing songs or reading scripture or participating in rituals.

[13:02] There's an instruction element there. You get a very similar feel if you read the book of 1 Corinthians, where Paul is, he's often actually trying to bring some order to what were quite chaotic worship services.

Like, we're Presbyterians, so our services are not particularly wild. Corinth was wild. People were getting drunk at their worship services. So it was out of hand. And then Paul writes a letter to try and bring some order and some shape.

And you get the sense that there's supposed to be an instruction component to the worship service. So 1 Corinthians 14, verse 26, he says, what then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.

Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. So there's that reference to that word of instruction in the context of the worship gathering. In that same broader context, actually, there's about several chapters there of that part of 1 Corinthians that are dedicated to regulating worship. He talks about prophets speaking in worship. 1 Corinthians is one of the earliest letters we have in the New Testament, which means at that point they don't have the other letters of the New Testament.

[14:13] They don't even have the Gospels written yet. And so they've got the Old Testament and they've got visiting prophets and apostles who will come around and teach in their worship gatherings. And so that was like their main teaching component.

But he describes, interestingly, Paul describes the ministry of these prophets with the same language that he uses for preaching in 2 Timothy chapter 4, the language of exhortation. So with all of that data and with the synagogue background, it's pretty easy to make the case that public teaching and exhorting was a key, key feature of New Testament worship.

One of the central pillars of what they did when they gathered. And so I think we can safely say from the evidence of the Bible, if you don't have a portion of your worship service set aside for the more formal teaching and application of Scripture, if you don't have a sermon, then you don't really have a biblical worship service.

So that's kind of the baseline there. That's making the case for preaching as an element of worship. Let's think about three keys to biblical preaching.

Now here's where we're starting to move into the form territory, as in how do we actually do this in our church. Here are the three keys. Number one, preach the text.

[15:34] Now this might seem fairly obvious, but it needs to be stated. The main point in preaching is to convey the meaning and the application of the biblical text to the hearers.

2 Timothy 4, verse 2, preach the word, Paul says. Not your own ideas, not the latest cultural or sociological insights, not politics, not a form of spiritual pop psychology or self-help.

Preach the word, he says. Now he says that, interesting, and this is why we started our reading earlier on. He says that on the back of what he said at the end of chapter 3.

So just so we're crystal clear by what he means when he says preach the word, so we're clear on what he means by the word there, go back to chapter 3, verse 14. He says this to Timothy, he says, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus.

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. It's off the back of those comments about the sufficiency of scripture that he then says to Timothy, I charge you, preach the word.

[17:09] So we know what he means. Preach scripture. If the content of the preaching is not being derived from the text of scripture, then it's not really preaching in the biblical definition of preaching.

I just alluded there to preaching your own ideas or the latest cultural or sociological insights or preaching politics or a form of spiritual pop psychology or self-help.

Sadly, very sadly, the content of a lot of preaching in churches today is more than scripture. And in some ways that shouldn't surprise us because even back there in 2 Timothy 4, in the first century, Paul says people are going to gather teachers around them who just want to hear what their itching ears want.

A lot of that stuff is often dressed up in Jesus' language and it's given a sort of spiritual veneer, but it's not the text that you're getting. It's something else that you're getting.

But friends, we need the text. We need the text. You need the text. I need the text. We need God's self-revelation. We want to know what God has said. You and I live in an incredibly complicated, sometimes painful, sometimes beautiful, sometimes infuriating world.

[18:38] That's the experience you're going to go out to straight after I finish this sermon. You're going to go out to this experience. Right now, you're carrying that experience in your heart as you sit here and you listen. You're processing so much through that life experience.

We face so many complex challenges, challenges on the inside, like existential challenges. How do I find meaning and purpose? How do I ground my identity? How do I find hope and joy? How do I find contentment?

Challenges on the outside. How do I deal with my work situation? How do I deal with this illness that I've got? How do I deal with family dynamics? How do I deal with the state of our city and our world and our country?

We live in the midst of all of that disorientating complexity. What we need when we come into this place, coming to seek communion with God is we need clarity. We want to hear the voice of one who has an infinitely better vantage point than us.

We want to hear the voice of one who knows infinitely more than us. We want to hear the voice of the one who is working out his good and glorious purposes even in the midst of all the chaos that we experience and that we see.

[19 : 47] What you don't want this morning is you want the voice of Stephen. That is what you do not do not want. You don't want Stephen. You don't want his ideas. You don't want his hot takes.

You want the voice of God. We will never hear that voice in our churches if the sacred text of the Bible is not the driving content of preaching.

Don Carson, who is a New Testament scholar, says this about preaching. He says, if God in Scripture, if God according to Scripture has repeatedly disclosed Himself to human beings through His Word, God speaks to Moses at the burning bush.

He speaks, yes there is thunder and lightning at the giving of the law but the thunder and lightning by themselves don't mean much apart from the giving of the law. He speaks and defines the terms of the tabernacle.

He speaks through Jeremiah and we hear about the new covenant. He speaks through Isaiah and we understand the suffering servant. He speaks, He speaks, He talks, He talks and as He comes and speaks and talks He presences Himself with us.

[21 : 00] How then does God presence Himself with us today? There is a sense in which preaching at its best, so help us God, when it is anointed by the Spirit of God, is the critical means by which God presences Himself with us again.

It is God repeating the words again. The words God used to confront other people with His presence in the past, He now uses again to confront men and women afresh.

That's a self-disclosing act. In that sense, preaching is never merely a communication act. It is a revelatory act. That is what gives it its high seriousness.

We want God to come and be with us and to speak to us. If we want that, then our preaching must come from the text. The place where we know God has spoken before.

Now practically, the way this works out is, I think the dominant form of preaching that we do on Sundays should be what you might call expository preaching.

[22 : 10] We mentioned this last week. Basically defined, expository preaching is getting what's actually in the text. So it works itself out and working systematically through books of the Bible.

Expositing them. Getting out what's there. Expositing their meaning and applying it to our lives and our context. That doesn't mean you can never ever do topical preaching where you sort of start with an idea or a topic and then you say, well I'm going to go to the Bible and try and find out what the Bible actually says about this particular topic.

I think there's an appropriate occasion for those sorts of things. There's a sense in which this series is a topical series. But even then the text drives a sermon. If I go to my study with an idea and think, oh this should be about, this item should be in worship and I go and study the Bible and it says, oh actually no, that item shouldn't be in worship.

I change my sermon. Because the text must drive it. Even in the topical sermon. Another practical application of this, it means then that ministers, preachers, should be giving themselves to the in-depth study of the Bible during the week so that they can faithfully preach Sunday in and Sunday out.

You want to know what ministers do? They don't play golf between Sundays. This is what they should be doing. This is primarily what they should be doing. I'm not really good at golf anyway. It's why we often require our ministers to study the original languages.

[23 : 37] Hebrew and Greek. We want the word. Not some guy's opinion. We have social media. We have enough opinions already. We don't want more opinions on a Sunday.

After I preached that first sermon to an adult congregation in December of 2002, one of the elderly deacons in the church came up to me and he gave me a book on the subject of preaching.

I don't know what was going through his mind when he gave me that book. Maybe he was thinking, no, that was such a good start. I really want to encourage this young man in his preaching. Or maybe he was thinking, wow, that was an absolute stinker and he needs some serious help.

Either way, he gave me a book called I Believe in Preaching by John Stott. I think it's got a different title nowadays. But I'm so very glad that he gave me that book. Because that book had a profound impact upon me and upon my calling as a preacher.

Stott was a very famous Anglican minister in London in the back half of the last century. He was renowned for careful exposition of the text. He's got some great stories in the book about good and bad preaching examples he'd seen in the UK during his time.

[24 : 51] My favorite story that he has though is the one where he tells the story of a minister who proudly boasted that he could prepare his sermon in the five minutes that it took for him to walk from the church manse, which was the church housing for the minister, to the sanctuary on a Sunday morning.

I can prepare my sermon in the five minutes it takes me to walk from the manse to the church. After his first Sunday, the elders called an emergency meeting after the service and then decided to relocate the manse to 15 miles away from the church building.

We need ministers who are going to work hard at study and preparation so they can diligently preach the text. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2, verse 15, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

The preacher is a workman who works hard at rightly handling the word of truth that is scripture. So we preach the text.

That's the first key. Second key, preach for change. Go back to 2 Timothy 4 there.

[26 : 10] In verse 2, Paul says, preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

So look at the words that describe what preaching is actually doing. Correct, rebuke, encourage.

Those words show that in Paul's mind, preaching is not supposed to leave people unchanged.

So for those people who have wrong thinking about God or wrong behavior that doesn't accord with God's word, preaching should correct them.

For those people who are stubbornly pursuing sinful paths in their life, preaching should rebuke them. For those people who are struggling with grief and despair and weakness and spiritual darkness, preaching should encourage them.

Preaching should change people. The aim is not just to educate you. It's to change you. You're not supposed to listen to a sermon here on Sunday, go out for lunch afterwards and then go, oh, that was intellectually stimulating.

[27 : 24] You're supposed to listen to a sermon and go, I need to change. I need to be a new person. God uses preaching to make you into a new person.

See, you want personal transformation. Everybody wants personal transformation. That's why you get an advert about some form of personal transformation every time you try and watch a YouTube video.

And now they're AI and the sound is not even in sync with the video anymore. Everybody wants personal transformation. personal transformation. But if you want personal transformation, you don't primarily need a new diet.

You don't need Tai Chi. You don't need, I see, you've all seen the adverts as well. You don't need a new exercise regime. You don't need better productivity apps.

You need the regular preaching of God's word. That is what you need for personal transformation.

This is Isaiah 55, verse 10 to 11.

[28 : 28] As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth.

It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. when ministers faithfully proclaim the word of God, in the power of the spirit of God, the purposes of God are accomplished.

He brings them about in your life and my life. People change. If you want to stay the way that you are, if you're comfortable right now and you want to stay the way that you are, if you don't want God to interfere with your life, if you don't want Him to turn it upside down, if you don't want the ensuing chaos that is going to come as you grow in holiness and you strip away sinfulness, well then don't come to church.

Don't come to worship because you are not safe here from those things. Here you are in great danger of changing because here we preach the Bible and when you preach the Bible people change.

So that's the second thing. preach for change. Last one, number three, preach Christ. Go back to chapter 3 verse 14.

[30 : 05] Paul says, You see how Paul describes the goal of Scripture there?

The telos, the ultimate aim. It's not just to reveal God in a sort of generic sense. Otherwise, he could have sent us an encyclopedia with different entries about the different attributes of God.

It's not just to reveal God in a generic sense. It's that the goal is to point the way to God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's not just Paul who thought this. Jesus thought this too. If you grew up going to Sunday school or getting some sort of religious education here in South Africa like many of us did, then you probably have some knowledge, at least, of the great stories in the Bible.

So Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, Daniel in the lion's den. But if your religious education was anything like mine, you were often taught those stories as disconnected, isolated stories with sort of moral principles attached to them.

[31 : 27] Sort of like Aesop's fables. How to be a good human being or how to be inspired to reach your goals. We had no idea, many of us, how the stories fitted with the rest of the Bible.

How the stories fitted together. What does Daniel have to do with Cain? What does David have to do with Moses? A lot of Christians in churches today still hear the Bible being taught like that.

But what if Scripture is not just a random sampling of stories aimed at sort of morally improving us? What if the Bible is not actually about us at all?

What if it's a single story about somebody else? Jesus thought the Bible was a single story about somebody else. He thought it was a single story about him.

He says as much. The very end of the Gospel of Luke, after his resurrection, he's on the road to a place called Emmaus and he's walking next to two men, one of them named Cleopas.

[32 : 36] And they're very downcast because their leader who they had given their life to follow was now dead. at this point, they're not quite aware that Jesus is alive.

They'd heard some rumors, but they're miserable and they're walking down the road and Jesus comes alongside them. He hides his identity from them and he starts talking to them. They say, haven't you seen what's been going on?

Haven't you seen what's happened? And he rebukes them and says, how foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.

That phrase, Moses and the prophets, that's Hebrew shorthand for referring to the Old Testament.

Jesus taught these two people on the road to Moses the story of the Old Testament, of the Bible.

That was the Bible at the time. He taught them the Bible, but instead of isolated, disconnected stories about moral improvement, Jesus taught them the Bible and he said, you know what the Bible's about?

[33 : 51] It's about me. You know what Daniel's about? It's about me. You know what Moses is about? It's about me. You know what Noah's about? It's about me. As a young Christian, when I saw this for the first time and I heard preaching that joined the dots together, it just changed my experience of the Bible completely and my understanding of Jesus and the gospel completely.

There's a clear and definite plot line to the Bible across all its diverse authors. We talked about that last week. It's diverse cultural and historical settings.

It's diverse genres of literature. There is one single narrative. narrative. There is the plot line, a four-part drama series. There's a creation story at the beginning that sets the scene.

There's a crisis as humanity falls into sin with Adam and Eve. There's a resolution to that crisis as Jesus Christ comes and dies in the place of sinful humanity, rises from the grave to declare victory over sin and over death and there's a conclusion, the hope of eternal life with God in the new creation.

Every single part of the biblical literature falls somewhere in those four parts of the drama. And at the center of that drama, at the center of the story is the hero, the redeemer, Jesus Christ.

[35 : 13] Every part of the story either leads up to him or reflects back on him and his heroic achievements. The Bible is not primarily a how-to book for good moral living.

It is the redemption story of Jesus. It's not primarily about you. It's about Jesus. Every one of those seemingly isolated and disconnected stories that you learned in Sunday school is actually about

Jesus.

You learned about Adam and Eve and about Cain and Abel and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Moses and Job and David and Esther. It's all about Jesus in the end. I don't think anybody has put this better than Tim Keller once did when he spoke about this subject.

He put it this way. He said, Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden, his garden, a much tougher garden and whose obedience is imputed to us.

Jesus is the true and better Abel who though innocently slain has blood that cries out not for our condemnation but for our acquittal. Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing whether he went to create a new people of God.

[36 : 33] Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us all. And when God said to Abraham, now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me.

Now we at the foot of the cross can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from us.

Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserve so we like Jacob only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us. Jesus is the true and better Joseph who at the right hand of the king forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.

Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant. Jesus is the true and better rock of Moses who struck with the rod of God's justice now gives us water in the desert.

Jesus is the true and better Job the truly innocent sufferer who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends. Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

[37 : 50] Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn't just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one. Who didn't just risk his life but gave his life to save his people.

Who didn't just say if I perish I perish but says when I perish I'll perish for them. Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in.

He's the real Passover lamb innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He's the true temple the true prophet the true priest the true king the true sacrifice the true lamb the true light the true bread.

The Bible's really not about you it's about him. Friends if we're going to teach the text week in week out then we have to preach Christ.

We only have one trick and that is it. Because it's only when our hearts are melted by his saving love that that real change that we spoke about actually starts to happen.

[38 : 56] no amount of exhorting on my part is going to bring about moral change but Christ will. Sunday after Sunday Jesus has got to be the hero the hero of the story not the preacher's eloquence not the some practical tips that you gain through the sermon not some sociological insight Jesus has to be the hero because he's the hero of scripture.

and without him we truly truly are lost. We need him to be the hero of every sermon. Let's pray together.

Our Father and our King we want to obey you by making sure that preaching is central to our worship. Won't you help us as a church to always hold high this ideal of preaching and preaching from the text of studying the words that we might faithfully teach it no matter who stands in this pulpit.

Won't you help us as listeners though to realize that this is a moment where you are engaging us with your heavenly voice and we had best respond that real change should come out of preaching and won't you help us to see more than anything else that the reason we can change is not because we have strength within us to change but because Jesus Christ has done his saving work on our behalf and it's in him that real change comes.

Teach us not just to love preaching because we like theology but teach us to love preaching because we love Jesus and we love what he's done for us.

[40 : 50] Father I pray for other churches in our city and I'm not saying we're perfect at preaching but I do pray for many churches Lord where the word is not preached and where the gospel is not

clearly upheld and Jesus is not the hero of every sermon.

I pray that you would have mercy upon the churches in our city and you would restore biblical preaching in pulpits. Give ministers a conviction that your word is truth and it can be preached and that it will change and transform and that Jesus is the center.

Won't you bring that about in our city Lord we pray. We ask this all for Christ's sake and his glory.
Amen.