

A preacher's pep talk

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When I am in the locker room of my study, feeling dejected, downcast, weary and defeated from the preaching effort, I read:

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:12-15).

Why do we keep preaching? Why don't we just get rid of the whole thing and free up 10-20 hours of our week? Why don't we get rid of preaching in exchange for some group sharing or more coffee time?

Paul tells us that we preach because people still need to hear about the God who is generous to all. We preach because people still need to hear there is a God worth believing in. We preach because it is the opportunity for someone to hear some good news.

This calling requires the best of our imagination, skill and love. Our task is to open up the good news of Jesus Christ through speech that is clear, dramatic and artistic. Our sermons should lead others to join in a conversation about transformation in Christ and a faith that pushes us out of the worlds in which most of us are trapped.

In 1907, P.T. Forsyth began his Lyman Beecher Lectures with these words: "It is, perhaps, an overbold beginning, but I will venture to say that with its preaching

Christianity stands or falls. . . .The Christian preacher is not the successor of the Greek orator, but of the Hebrew prophet. The orator comes with inspiration; the prophet comes with a revelation.”

Revelation is why we keep preaching. God uses the spoken word to reveal the living Word. This is an event that can't be teased or manipulated by technique. Even a bad sermon can be used by God to reveal God. That is the hope of us who preach. Revelation is always gift—always grace. On this grace Christianity stands or falls.