

Preaching Christ in a Post-Modern World

Notes on Lecture 9

Applying Christ: Getting Down to Earth, Part Two

By Tim Keller

3 Macro-Strategies for Applying a Text

- 1) Critique religion as well as irreligion (read notes from part one)
- 2) Aim at heart motives as well as the outward behaviour
- 3) Look at the text through three application perspectives

2) Aim at heart motives as well as the outward behaviour

Self-justification is the doctrine of the Pharisees. If Christ is not your righteousness something else will be. You can avoid Jesus by avoiding outward sin.

Religion is more of a subtle enemy of the gospel than irreligion, which is practised by the open rebellious person, because religious behaviour looks like holy behaviour.

Irreligious people need to be shown that they are practising self-justification.

A Basic Outline for Aiming at the Heart:

- i) Speak about what the narrative tells us to be; what standard is the Bible setting for us?
- ii) Speak about how that standard is unreachable: we are all sinners who miss the mark.
- iii) Speak about how the problem is resolved in Christ: He obeyed, He loved God perfectly etc
- iv) Speak about how the people should rest in what he did to do the same through His power: we can obey because he obeyed.

In every text of scripture there is a moral standard to reach. The good gospel preacher illuminates the tension between man's effort and scripture standards. The preacher then should move the focus from the people and onto Christ. The gospel preacher should be showing people that all sufficiency is found ultimately in Christ. Our inability is not down to bad effort but rather a lack of faith in the gospel.

The job of the preacher is to get people to wish that Jesus were true.

3) Look at the text through three application perspectives

According to Vern Poythress you can only understand a text if you:

- i) Understand the original meaning of the text (normative element)
- ii) Work out how the text applies to us today (existential element)
- iii) Work out where the text is within the context of redemptive history (situational element)

The three application perspectives are:

- i) The doctrinalist approach- looking at the text to see how it supports sound doctrine
- ii) The pietistic approach- looking at the text's relation to experience (eg how does this text change my prayer life)
- iii) The cultural transformationist approach- looking at how the text affects culture

Vern argues that preachers need to use all three application perspectives to give the people balanced application.

Example: Luke 4:31-37

Doctrinalist: The passage teaches the deity of Christ; it demonstrates his sovereignty over evil spirits and shows the grace of God towards people.

Pietist: The passage teaches that Jesus will work if I let him and once, I'm delivered I have to tell my friends.

Cultural transformationist: The passage teaches that Jesus is working in the world liberating people from oppressive structures.

All three perspectives are needed to be balanced. The perspectives are not opposing each other. If you go deep enough into one perspective, you get to another.

Example: Esther

Doctrinalist: God is the only real King. He is sovereign over all things including evil making everything work for his glory and our good. God's plan of salvation works even when God is not mentioned.

Pietist: If God seems to be absent in your life, he's not. God uses a woman from the outskirts of society to bring redemption. God uses weakness to shame the wise.

Cultural transformationist: God calls us to serve Him with redemptive work in the secular world.

Believers are needed to be a light and witness in the secular system.

God calls us not only to change individuals but also to change society.