

WHAT ANGELS LONG TO HEAR 1 Peter 1:10-12

Some of you may be wondering what we're doing here. Why we're making such a big deal about ordination. You may even wonder 'what is ordination'?

Ordination is the church recognizing what a man believes he recognizes about himself- that he is called to be a minister of the gospel. This is a high calling, and should not be undertaken lightly.

And at the core of what any ordained minister does is preaching and ministering the sacraments. Oh, ministers do lots of other things. I could spend the rest of this sermon detailing the tasks that a minister does- counseling, leadership development, evangelism, hospital and jail visitation, mercy ministry, etc... But at core of a minister's work is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, wrestling to understand and explain what God has revealed to us.

I believe this passage in 1 Peter is about preaching. It may appear on the surface to be about the writing of Scripture, because it talks about the Old Testament prophets and because Peter does talk elsewhere about the writing of the Bible. And this is probably a case of 'both/and'- where Peter is addressing the preaching *and* writing of Scripture. Nevertheless, this passage tells us some very powerful things about the preaching of God's word.

It tells us 3 things: that preaching is traditional, it is Christ-centered, and it is volatile.

Preaching is traditional

By 'traditional' I do not mean 'old' or 'boring'- like a church that has a 'contemporary service' that's for fun people and a 'traditional service' for boring people. By 'traditional' I mean part of a tradition. Now, when I say tradition some of you will automatically think 'Presbyterian' or 'Reformed.' I don't even mean that, though it's partially true. The tradition I'm talking about is a tradition that goes back to Moses- it's the prophetic/apostolic tradition that proclaims the salvation of God to the world. In every age and every generation from the time of Moses through today God has raised up ministers to tell His story.

Look at some of the things that Peter tells us here about this tradition. There are three things:

1. The Old Testament prophets predicted the life and sufferings of Christ. Not some random Messianic figure, but a specific suffering servant who would be descended from the line of David, who would suffer under Pontius Pilate and who would be pierced for our transgressions. And all of those predictions came true.

2. The Old Testament prophets announced the gospel to people living in their time, *but also to you and me*. Look at verse 12, "It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you." Those men of old knew that they weren't just speaking to the people in their time, but for future generations. As Paul says in Romans 15, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." What Paul is saying is that Isaiah wrote for you, Ezekiel wrote to you, Jonah was written for your benefit.

3. Like the New Testament apostles, the Old Testament prophets preached salvation by grace alone. Again, verse 12 says, “those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit.” The good news they preached was not law or land, it was salvation through faith in a Redeemer. There are not two stories in the Bible, the story of a God of law and wrath in the Old Testament and a story of a God of love and grace in the New Testament. There is one story, and the Bible has a beautiful continuity to it, agreeing in all of its part that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and the great desire of all nations.

Dave, your preaching is to be a part of this great tradition.

It’s not to be new or innovative. I get quite tired of all the Christian conferences and Christian books I read or hear about talking about ‘the new way of doing church’ or ‘the 7 practices of a transformational church.’ I know that we need to contextualize our ministry and that we can learn from others who are doing ministry well. However, it often seems that modern pastors are looking for that new silver bullet that will make them successful and effective. There is no silver bullet- the ministry is about laying your life for your people by laboring in prayer and feeding them the Word and the sacrament.

Your preaching is not to be competitive or to draw a name for yourself. Dave, you and I have always been competitive. It started when you beat me out of the womb by 9 minutes. It continued when you were unable to beat me in basketball or golf starting in middle school. It will continue this summer when we do the Dorst Decathlon (which I’ll win again). But the pulpit is not the place to be competitive, to show off your moves. It’s the place to preach what God has given you to preach with no thought of your own glory or reputation.

And your preaching is to be solidly biblical. The whole world contains insights for you to mine for understanding and illustration, but your message must at core be the gospel message of Scripture. Not the latest headlines or opinion polls.

Preaching must be in the tradition of God’s revelation.

Preaching is Christ-centered

Notice the wonderful truth that Peter develops here in verses 10 and 11. He’s talking about the Old Testament prophets, and he says that the Holy Spirit predicted through them the sufferings and glories of Jesus Christ.

Some people say, ‘You can’t read Jesus into the Old Testament. Only the passages that specifically talk about a Messiah can be interpreted in the light of Christ.’

But that’s not what the Bible itself tells us. On basically every page of the New Testament we see the New Testament writers using the Old Testament to understand the work of Christ and the identity of God’s people. Jesus Himself tells us that He’s not just found in a few places, He’s found everywhere. In Luke 24, we read, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” ‘All the Scriptures’ means the whole of the Old Testament, the Bible that Jesus and His disciples read.

Verse 10 tells us that ‘they searched and inquired carefully’ to know when Jesus would be coming, but they were sure that He was coming. The Old Testament prophets not only predicted Jesus, but they knew he was coming. They just didn’t know when he was coming.

Dr. David Murray even brings out this interesting idea- that though the New Testament gives us more specific detail in some areas, the Old Testament actually has more details about some aspects of Jesus' life. He writes, "Nowhere in the New Testament are we given such insight into the emotions and feelings of the Lord Jesus during His sufferings as we are in Psalms 22 and 69. Likewise, Isaiah 53 contains considerable detail [that the NT doesn't necessarily have about Jesus]."

Dave, whatever passage of Scripture you preach from, whether it be Genesis or Revelation, Psalms or 2nd Corinthians, you need to preach Christ. Because that passage is preaching Christ. And if you don't open up how Christ is predicted or foreshadowed or is logically necessary, you have not given the full meaning of the passage & you haven't preached the gospel. If you preach the OT as all about laws & principles for living, you're sending people back to the harshest slave-driver there is, the law. Biblical preaching does preach the law, but it never fails to proclaim Christ's fulfillment of the law and His triumph over death and judgment. You can't leave people with the bad news that they're sinners without reminding them continually of the good news that they're saved by God's grace in the person and work of Christ.

Preaching is volatile

Last year the Boise State Broncos beat the Oregon Ducks in a close football game. As Oregon running back Lagarrette Blount was walking across the field after the game, a Boise State player began taunting him. As the player turned his head, Blount jumped towards him and delivered a punch that made his knees buckle.

The end of a sporting event can be a volatile situation, especially if you have a close game and angry losers. I would submit to you that true Christ-centered preaching is extremely volatile.

Verse 12 says that 'angels long to look into these things.' The verb there is the Greek word *epithumeo*, which means 'to desire' or 'to long' and is used of strong desires both for good and bad. And the Greek word for look is the word *parakupto*, which means "to peek or peep into a situation from the vantage point of an outsider."

The picture here is of unseen, intensely curious observers looking in on the church's worship. They are searching as intently for the truth of Jesus in your words as the prophets were searching intently for the revealing of Jesus to the world.

Dave, when you get up to preach, I want you not just to look at the first few rows and see who's paying attention, who's taking notes and who's doodling in their bulletin. And I want you not to just look at the back rows, to see who's awake and who's pinching themselves to keep their eyes open. (I know that never happens here, of course) I don't even want you to just look for compliments after the service, hoping that your message hit home with some people.

If you only look at what's happening in the physical realm, you're bound to be disappointed. I want you to look at what cannot be seen with physical eyes. You must look with faith all around you to see that there are angels in the empty seats and in the rafters bending down to listen to your words. Angels who can't believe how amazing the good news is that you are preaching. Angels who hear you proclaim Christ crucified and they look at each other and say, "Did you hear that? Did you hear what that pastor said? He told them the story! Praise Jesus, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, he proclaimed the truth and brought light into this dark world!"

You see, even if nobody raises an eyebrow to your preaching, here on earth, the preaching of the gospel is a cause for meditation and celebration in heaven. And not just the angels. But more importantly, the Lord God Almighty has a passion for His name to be glorified. And if you will preach the gospel, even if nobody remembers it tomorrow, the Lord Jesus will remember it for all eternity and will be delighted in you.

Your preaching is volatile and has the capacity to revolutionize the world because the Holy Spirit is behind it. And He'll use it for His purposes. And He is using it all over the world- the gospel is advancing and gaining a foothold in Latin America, Africa, Korea, China, the Phillipines- from people sharing in casual conversation, but primarily through the preaching of God's Word.

Your job as one ordained in the service of Christ, representing Christ before His people, is to be faithful to deliver Christ's word with humility and integrity and power.

Amen. May it be so.