

“CLARITY IN PREACHING”

A man who stood close to President Barack Obama and other heads of state while providing sign language interpretation at Nelson Mandela’s memorial Tuesday was a “fake” who was making up his own gestures, sign language experts say. “He was moving his hands around, but there was no meaning in what he used his hands for.” Ingrid Parkin, principal of the St. Vincent School for the Deaf in Johannesburg, said she’s received complaints from the deaf community from Canada to China and that his movements look “like he’s signing gibberish.” Stood in front of 90,000 people – worldwide audience of deaf people got nothing out of it. True in preaching: The audience must understand what you are saying/must get something out of it. Our scrip: The Priests brought clarity out of God’s word. Going to look at what brings clarity in preaching.

I. THE NEED FOR CLARITY

A. A great waste of time and effort: Preaching that is unclear

1. What is he talking about? What does this have to do with that? What is the point?

a. It’s boring b. People aren’t stirred to action c. People don’t develop a hunger for the word themselves

2. Ezra is a wise preacher – because he is a clear preacher

a. Neh 8:8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

1. Distinctly: To separate/make clear 2. Sense: To think through (implications) 3. Understand: What to do with it

B. How do you develop clarity in preaching?

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

1. You must have a passion for the word - and for preaching: *Prepared = focused*

a. Any good preachers I know of/admire – preaching is their passion/it is their life! b. The Bible is their passion!

2. You must work hard at it! *To seek the law of the Lord....*

a. Clarity is an obtainable skill: Seeking to understand what makes preaching good and working at it

II. THE PATH OF CLARITY

A. Choose a text to preach from

1. Bible is a deep book! Any theme you preach on is found throughout 66 books

a. Common mistake is to preach too broadly: It become mush

1. 15 points of positive prayer: Better to choose 1 text on prayer and preach all that is in there!

2. Preaching is not saying things that are true – it is declaring truth FROM A TEXT!!

a. It is easier: What are you going to preach? Whatever is in the text!

b. It has a self-limiting factor that causes you to focus – and enables people to understand easier

B. The preacher has to understand it first

1. It will never be clear to the hearers unless it is first clear to the speaker

a. Sometimes I have studied a text/series; I won’t preach it until it is clear to me

2. Wrestle with a text – struggle with it: Pray over it/think about it/say it out loud

a. Preacher in seminary: Choose a text and for 30 minutes write down everything you can think of. At end: Which thoughts came in the 1st 5 minutes? Most came after a period of time

C. Follow a single theme: *Theme: A unifying or dominant idea (that runs through the whole sermon)*

1. A single text can have multiple possible themes

a. If I look at old sermons I see the 3 points were actually 3 different themes. I should have chosen/developed one

2. Questions to begin identifying the theme

a. What is the problem being addressed? b. What is the command given in the scripture? c. What is the context?

d. Why am I preaching this? e. Where am I going with this? f. What am I hoping to achieve?

g. What have I preached recently? Don’t preach from the same theme you did last week

h. If text has different characters: How would this have been different for this one than that one?

D. Know what you want the people to do with this truth: Wise preaching has practical goal in mind of action

1. What is it that the people are to do with this information?

a. Neh 8:13-14 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,

2. These are questions you should ask yourself when preparing a sermon

a. Why am I preaching this? What’s the practical application?

1. Encourage? Warn? Repent? Give? Help? Prepare? Inspire for calling?

E. You must think and organize logically

1. Life operates in sequence – we can’t violate progression if we want there to be fruit (end result)

a. *KJV first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. NIV first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.*

2. This is called linear thinking (thinking in a line)
 - a. Logical sequence of ideas – you have to move in sequence/order/line:
1. If this is true – then this must be true...then this must be true – this is what we should do about what is true!
3. The brain is a computer: If you organize logically – people's brains can follow you

III. THE POWER OF CLARITY

A. When we do our part in preaching God gets involved and blesses (His part)

1. Ezra 7:9 the good hand of his God was on him...God was helping him!

a. This is anointing: God supplying what we don't have/doing what we can't do; A miracle!

2. This is God's word: Inspired/God-breathed; God is in here!

a. We can bring people into contact with God: That can be life-altering

1. Protection 2. Correction 3. Inspiration 4. Hunger: *You make them want the word for themselves*

5. Healing/strength: *Lori battling cancer; I've been listening to your sermons over and over. Keeping me sane*

a. MR: I said I want a word from God. God spoke to me – brought life/energy; I still feel it now!