

Preach



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Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we *preached* the gospel of God to you.

(1 Thessalonians 2:9)

The Greek word that is most often translated as ‘preach’ is ??????? – *kérussó* (Strong’s 2784). The word in the Koine has an uncertain origin but the definition is ‘to be or act like a herald’ or ‘to proclaim’.

The role of a herald has changed with time. Coming to the English language from the Old French *heraut* from the Frankish via *herewald*, literally ‘war-ruler’, in other words a martial or commander, it has three distinct contemporary meanings:

1. A messenger

2. A harbinger

3. A steward (of heraldry -a rank/position at the College of Arms)

All three meanings are relevant to the ‘preacher’ of the Gospel, who is entrusted (stewardship) with a message of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In the same passage to the one above Paul says:

...we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.
(v4)

But there is another meaning, especially given to the verb ‘to herald’ and this is ‘sing the praises of’ - this is surely what all Christians, joy-filled with the fruit of the spirit, wish to do? However, sadly this is often not the case.

Nowadays, the idea that a Christian should ‘preach the Gospel’, in other words, proclaim the good news of Jesus to those not in faith that he is the Christ, has become frowned upon. It conjures images of street corner evangelists ranting at passing ‘sinners’, or the ‘churched’ smugly speaking of their salvation behind walls of hypocrisy or, yet again, salesmen arguing people into belief, akin to door-to-door hawkers of vacuum cleaners.

It has led to many Christian organizations involved in social action ministry, such as those running night shelters, to discourage volunteers from speaking about Jesus – some even require a signed commitment to not proactively mention the Gospel.

What has gone wrong? To paraphrase Peter (Acts 5:3), how has Satan so filled the hearts of Christians? How is it that Christians feel confident enough to defy God and disobey the Great Commission that unequivocally states:

Go into all the world and proclaim (kérussó) the gospel to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15)

It seems that Christians need to reclaim this word ‘preach’ and rescue it from the insinuations of the evil one. It is not:

*** convicting people of their sin and telling them they are bound for hell, apart from stating the obvious, that is not ‘good news’, judgement lies not with any only with Jesus, and conviction of sin comes through the Holy Spirit.**

*** talking down to people from a position of self-righteousness; while lives are transformed in Christ, the sinful nature is ever-present.**

*** a slick presentation, a hectoring declamation or a well-honed argument. Faith in Jesus Christ is through a blessing, it cannot be found in reason.**

Preaching should be heralding; that is, speaking joyfully of Jesus, singing his praises; telling people of how people are transformed in Christ, and how they can be also, through faith in him.

Telling them this, that Jesus says this:

‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.’
(Revelation 3:20)

The best witnesses to Christ not only demonstrate love but speak of its origin, which is Jesus; perhaps the Great Commission was given as a commandment because Jesus knew that it would be challenging. We have the experience of Paul to show that ‘heralding’ can arouse people to opposition.

It is understandable to fear persecution, even though the follower of Christ is blessed in such circumstance (Matthew 5:11), but the usual excuses for not sharing one’s faith are not acceptable. If we say simply that believing in Jesus will bring life in abundance, we cannot ‘put people

off' or be offensive. Of course, people can choose to reject you along with your message, and they can take offence, but this is their choice; however, if the witness speaks of and from love about hope, and declares that Jesus is the source of that hope, then the herald will have done his work faithfully.

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