The Reach Beyond a Pulpit

Jo Wagner 18 September 2018



Preaching entails doing the work of a herald: to publicly proclaim or eagerly advocate a religious message or belief. This bold action is fundamental to Christianity. Because 'since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach[a] to save those who believe.' (1 Corinthians 1:21, ESV). Preaching is not merely the job of an exclusive group of professional theologians – Jesus commissioned all of His followers to do it (Matthew 18:18-20). And like Peter and John, who preached powerfully as ordinary men, with no special training (Acts 4:13), we can too.

There is a reach beyond a pulpit when ordinary Christians understand that preaching should be part of their everyday life:

Christianity is the only religion in the world that is rooted in and sustained by good news. In other words, before Christianity is a philosophy or a theology or a moral way of living, Christianity is news. And not just any kind of news – it is a good news message of events that changed the course of history.

> Although He lived in history, the news of His victory is relevant for eternity, and for every people group that ever lived on this planet.

Consider how Scripture highlights the proclamation of this good news: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings the good

news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns"' (Isaiah 52:7, ESV).

So what is the good news? It is the news about Jesus Christ, the Greatest Man in History. He had no servants, yet they called Him Master; no degree, yet they called Him Teacher; no medicines, yet they called Him Healer; no army, yet kings feared Him. He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world. He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him. He was buried in a tomb, yet He is alive today. He brought forth a new covenant – a new Kingdom – a new birth – a new race – a new species – a new culture – and a new civilization. He ultimately triumphed over death and made salvation available to everyone who believes in Him. Although He lived in history, the news of His victory is relevant for eternity, and for every people group that ever lived on this planet.

This news must be preached. We would be selfish to keep it to ourselves in a world that is filled with deceiving and bad news. We are bombarded with these demoralising messages all the time: on the radio, on television, on social media, in conversations. Do not be so consumed by the fumes of bad news that you forget the absolute, never-changing good news that trumps any bad news, any day.

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For some bizarre reason, God wants to use us to be His voice on earth. Preaching has always been God's way of communicating with His people. We see a pattern right through Scripture of how God appointed spokesmen to speak on His behalf.

In the Old Testament, prophets were God's preachers: 'And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem' (Nehemiah 6:7, KJV).

The New Testament speaks of many preachers of whom Jesus was foremost The Preacher. He preached in synagogues and in houses. 'He said to them, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:43).

Later, Paul became a preacher: 'I am eager to preach the gospel... I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...' (Romans 1:15-16). And now this prominent preacher beckons us to imitate him as he imitates The Preacher (1 Corinthians 11:1).

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How do we do this? We make ourselves available to God. We never just “eat” the Word to fill our own spirits, we always prepare a “meal” from what God provides for us to share with others. The result is that our spirits become a theatre of revelation, and our lives ‘a letter read by men everywhere’ (see 2 Corinthians 3:2).

To conclude, the reach beyond a pulpit is when ordinary Christians speaks with the intention of convincing someone of God’s perspective (with the emphasis on Jesus). We do not need a pulpit to do this. We have ample opportunities to preach every day. Whenever someone asks for “advice”; whenever we have a Bible study with our kids; whenever we discuss current events with colleagues; whenever someone speaks bad news.

Great rewards await the faithful preacher (1 Corinthians 3:8, Matthew 25:23, Revelation 22:12).