

The Power and Necessity of Preaching

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We begin this morning, beloved, with a most important question. And this is the question. Why must we preach? Why do we have preaching? Why does preaching matter? Is preaching necessary?

And that is a question that probably every one of us asks at some point from a certain point of view. The weary listener in the pew maybe asks that question: Why preaching? The ministry who becomes weary in his labors and sometimes discouraged asks that question: Why preaching? And certainly this is a question that Church asks at different points: Why preaching?

And we can ask that question from both a negative and a positive point of view. And if you look at the Church world today and the Church scene today in modern America and in the modern world it is asked from a negative point of view. Why preaching? Why do we need that?

An author who wrote a book about preaching says this in his introduction, “Preaching is being replaced with performances, exposition with entertainment, doctrine with drama, theology with theatrics.” He issues a strong call to return to biblical expository preaching. That is what the Church needs today.

But there are men with itching ears and people with emotions that they want tickled and they won’t endure, as Paul says to Timothy, the won’t endure sound teaching and preaching.¹ And they say, “Why preaching? Surely there is something else.” And so they replace it with their theatrics and their entertainment and their drama and their performances.

But we should ask this question this morning from a positive point of view. Why preaching? Why must I preach? Why must the Church stay with preaching and why do you need preaching in your life? Why?

And certainly one reason is simply this. God commands it. That’s what Paul says to Timothy as a pastor in the Church. This is his great calling, 2 Timothy four verse two, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all

¹ See 2 Timothy 4:3

longsuffering and doctrine.”² This is the calling of the minister. This is what the Church needs because God commands it.

But also you need it. The catechism tells us why. In this Lord’s Day the catechism comes to the important subject of the sacraments. And there will be six or seven Lord’s Days that treat the sacraments, 18 questions in all. And that was necessary at the time of the Reformation because the disputes on every side about the sacraments with the Roman Catholic Church and then among the different Protestant groups. This was one of the great issues and so the reformers set forth very clearly the biblical teaching on the sacraments.

But the sacraments are only one of the two means of grace. And this morning in the first question we are called to look at the means of faith or the means of grace. We have considered faith, the content of faith in the Apostles’ Creed, the necessity of faith for righteousness in Lord’s Day 23 and 24 so that our righteousness and salvation is founded in Christ alone through faith alone in him.

Now the catechism asks a very important question. Whence your faith? Where does it come from? And it begins with an answer of sovereign grace, “From the Holy Ghost who works it in our hearts. Faith, too, is the gift of God.” But now the catechism tells us the Holy Spirit works that in our hearts through means, mediately, not immediately, not separate from everything else, not as an independent work of his. But he uses the means of the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments. And the primary means is not the sacraments, as Rome would teach, but the preaching of the gospel.

You notice the distinction in question 65. “From the Holy Ghost who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.” And this is what the catechism says. “Faith is worked,” That is more important, “by the preaching and confirmed,” or strengthened, “by the sacraments and the preaching.”

And so we want to speak this morning on the primary means of grace, the preaching of the gospel. Paul when he speaks of his calling says, “I came not to baptize, but to preach. Christ sent me to preach.”³ That is the primary calling of the preacher. That is the primary calling of the Church. And that is what the child of God needs above all else. That is what we want to emphasize this morning, that the minister should do this, that this is the work of the Church, but especially that you, you, you and you—every one of you as individuals needs this more than anything else in the world, the preaching of the gospel.

And that has to be emphasized today not only because the Church asks this from a negative point of view. We don’t need the preaching, but because there are individuals in the Church here this morning who by their actions show that they don’t think the preaching of the gospel is very important.

² 2 Timothy 4:2

³ See 1 Corinthians 1:17

You know who you are. You are not here as you should be under the means of grace, receiving the preaching of the gospel. And especially to you this morning is the word from this sermon and from the Word of God. You need, you need the preaching of the gospel in your life.

This morning let's look at that under the theme, "The Power and Necessity of the Preaching of the Gospel." And we will notice three things. First, what preaching is and then, second, the power of the preaching and then, third, our need for preaching. And I want this morning to be as clear as possible so that you understand why you need preaching in your life so that there is no question when you leave here that this is biblical. This is what the Christian needs.

I want this morning to be as plain and clear and passionate about this as I can.

First, what is preaching? The New Testament Scriptures use two words to describe preaching. The first word is the word from which we get the word "evangelize." And it means simply this, that in preaching one brings good news.

You think of Isaiah chapter 52 and verses seven, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publish peace; that bring good tidings of good, that publish salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"⁴ This is what the preaching of the gospel is. And how beautiful are those who bring the gospel, the bringing of the gospel because the gospel is good news. It is good news for sinners. It is God's provision of the way of reconciliation and the way of salvation and a way of deliverance for sinners. And this is what we need. What wonderful news.

The Apostle Paul speaks to the Ephesians in Ephesians two and he says to them about this and that God or that Christ:

...might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.⁵

And this is what Paul is saying. "You Ephesians were in darkness. You were outside of the walls of the Church and God sent his Son who came and shed his blood to break down that wall, to make access for you into the fellowship of believers and into the presence of God. And you who were in darkness were called from darkness into his marvelous light. You were translated from the kingdom of the devil into the kingdom of his dear Son. You who were under the bondage of sin were freed. You were liberated."

Think of what liberation is. What a glorious message of good news. The enemy has been defeated. The allies are coming. We are free. That is the message of the gospel to sinners: Good news, good news.

⁴ Isaiah 52:7

⁵ Ephesians 2:16-18

And that's the word that the Scriptures use to explain what preaching is. In Acts chapter eight verse four we read: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."⁶ And that word is proclaiming the good news.

In Acts 13 verse 32 the apostle Paul in one of the first sermons that he preaches on his first missionary journey says, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled."⁷ Glad tidings, good news. That is the gospel, good news for sinners.

And, of course, it is good news because the content of the gospel is Christ and salvation. When Paul speaks of what he preached in Corinth he says to the Corinthian Church, "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."⁸ That was his purpose when he went to Corinth, to preach the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, the good news of the cross, to bring sinners there, not to preach himself, not to preach a gospel of extra gifts, extraordinary gifts that the Spirit might give to some and not to others, but to preach Christ. That is the good news of the gospel.

That is the one word. The other word that is used in the Scripture which probably the more important one, in the Greek it is the κηρυξ (kay'-roox). It has the idea of being a herald or an ambassador or one who announces something. And that teaches us not just the content of the gospel, but it teaches us more about the character of the gospel and the character of preaching. A herald or an ambassador was someone who was commissioned by a king or a ruler to bring a specific message to the people. He used the king's own words. He was not allowed to add anything to the words of the king. He wasn't allowed to take anything away from the words of the king. He wasn't allowed to add his own interpretation to the words of the king, but he brought the king's words. He said, "This is what the king has said. Thus saith the king." That is the idea of the preaching of the gospel.

The apostle Paul recognizes that about himself when he says in 2 Corinthians five verse 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."⁹ Notice what he is saying. Not only that he is a herald or an ambassador, but also this. When he beseeched, God did it by him. God spoke. He brought the words of God and not his own to the Corinthians.

And he was willing to go to prison for that before he would open his mouth as a preacher of the gospel with his own words he would die. He says, "I am an ambassador in bonds that therein I may speak boldly."¹⁰ That's a preacher.

⁶ Acts 8:44

⁷ Acts 13:32-33

⁸ See 1 Corinthians 2:2

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:20

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:20

This is the word that Paul uses in 2 Timothy chapter four when he says to Timothy, “Preach the word.”¹¹ “Be an ambassador for Christ,” he is saying, “Herald the gospel.”

In another place he tells Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth.”¹² He says you come with the Word and the authority of Christ. Don’t be afraid to speak.

Now we ply this idea of heralding to preaching and it teaches, first, that anyone who preaches the gospel must be commissioned. He must be sent by the King of Kings Jesus Christ to preach the gospel. No one has the right to appoint himself as a preacher. Christ didn’t even do that. He came and he says, “Sent by the Father to speak the words that the Father has given unto me.”

And so, also, in the Church and in the world today if a person does it on his own, his message has no official weight. A tourist from the USA maybe is visiting China or Myanmar and he sees the destruction that is going on there. And he even gets to meet someone very important and so he tries to explain to that important government representative the will of the United States government. “This is what our government wants to do.” But what he says has no weight and no authority at all. It is only when an ambassador, a Secretary of State goes and explains what our government wants to do that then there is weight in the explanation. So also with the preaching of the gospel.

Christ calls and Christ sends through the church preachers of the gospel. That is something that is lost today not only in lay preaching, but also in the ordination of women into the office of the ministry of the gospel. Christ very clearly from the Scriptures does not commission the Church to ordain women into office. And so their message is not the official proclamation of the gospel and the Word of God.

Romans 10, “How shall they preach, except they be sent?”¹³ And it was the Church, the Church in Acts chapter 13 at Antioch that commissioned and laid hands on Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel as missionaries.

So first it means anyone who preaches on their own or anyone who preaches must be commissioned or called. In the second place it means this that the one who preaches must speak only the revealed Word of God. He must be faithful in his preaching to the Word of God.

Paul says to Timothy, “Preach the Word.”¹⁴ Not just preach, but preach the Word. And he has just explained in the end of chapter three to Timothy what that Word is, the Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God, which are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.¹⁵ He says to Timothy, “That’s the content of your preaching. Preach the Word of God. Don’t bring your own words.”

¹¹ 2 Timothy 4:2

¹² 1 Timothy 4:12

¹³ Romans 10:15

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 4:2

¹⁵ See 2 Timothy 3:16

And a minister might do that. He might not bring his own ideas, his own sentiments into the preaching of the gospel. He must take the Word of God and exposit and exegete and explain what is in the Scriptures and lay that before the audience because that is what preaching is. He may not bring his own words. He may not take away from the words. He may not let his preaching be influenced by public opinion, by tradition, by what people think. But as an ambassador he must say, "Thus saith the Lord."

Now in one sense that makes preaching very simple, doesn't it? A minister doesn't have to come up with his own creative ideas. He has got to labor in the Word of God and bring that in his preaching and nothing else, nothing more and nothing less. He stands not before his audience. He stands to be judged not before man, but stand before God whose word is very clearly revealed in the Scriptures. He must say what the Bible says. He must preach with an open Bible.

The reformers had pulpit Bibles and that was a sign, a symbol that this is what preaching is. This must be central. The Word of God is what must be preached.

One expositor of Scripture says this. "A minister may gesture only with one hand and he must point with his finger to the text that he is explaining with the other. And then when this hand grows weary from gesturing he must point at the text with that one and gesture with the other because he must be conscious of this that he must preach nothing other than the Word of God."

And so that gives a very simple, easy explanation of what preaching is. It is the Word of God and nothing else.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians two verse four, "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom."¹⁶ But he brought the Word of the Holy Spirit revealed in the Scripture.

But at the same time that makes preaching a very difficult task. And it does because the natural man doesn't want to hear the Word of God. We think of examples of that in the Scripture. This was the cause of the despair of the prophet Elijah. He says in 1 Kings 19 verse 10, "I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."¹⁷

And this is what Elijah is saying. "They have despised the Word by killing the prophets and the Word has been ineffective and I am the only now that believes it." The Word is offensive. There is discouragement in preaching the Word. The people of God don't want to hear it. The natural man resists the man of God. And Elijah despairs.

God says to Ezekiel, "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions:

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:4

¹⁷ 1 Kings 19:10

be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”¹⁸ The audience will say things. The audience will glare. God says, “Speak, thus saith the Lord.”

To Jeremiah...remember Jeremiah was called as a young man to be a prophet and he said, “Lord, I can’t do this. They will despise my youth. I am just a child.”¹⁹

And God says:

Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.²⁰

This is the preaching of the gospel.

Paul, the apostles, they were persecuted. They were imprisoned. They were martyred because they preached the gospel. Paul says to Timothy in the passage that we read, “Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions...endure afflictions.”²¹ This is what will happen he says to Timothy when you preach the Word of God.

So that is preaching. And where you find that preaching which is faithful to the Word of God, which comes from a man called by God through the Church you must receive the preaching as the authoritative Word of a herald of the King of Kings Jesus Christ.

Now second we want to look this morning at the power of preaching and I want, first, just to demonstrate the power of the Word of God from the Scriptures. Preaching does something.

In Isaiah chapter 55 verses 10 and 11 Isaiah says:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.²²

As preachers go forth preaching the gospel that is in the Word of God, preaching the Scriptures there will be fruit. It will be like the rain that comes and brings the seeds in the spring time and the flowers in the spring time to life. “So shall my word be.” It does something. It is powerful. It accomplishes what God sends it to do.

¹⁸ Ezekiel 2:6

¹⁹ See Jeremiah 1:6

²⁰ Jeremiah 1:7-8

²¹ 2 Timothy 4:5

²² Isaiah 55:10-11

In Jeremiah chapter 23 verse 29 Jeremiah the young prophet is called to preach to the false teachers, the ones who preach their own words and who seem to have no fruit and the judgment of God came on the nation and on them despite their preaching because their preaching was false. And this is what Jeremiah says, as a judgment on them, but a call to true preaching. “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”²³ That is the Word of God. It is powerful, like fire that burns, like a hammer that breaks in pieces.

The Word of God is powerful. Hebrews chapter four verses 12 and 13 and think of all the different things that are said here. “For the word of God is quick...”²⁴ That is, it is alive.

[It is] powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight.²⁵

It doesn't just come to the outward man, but it pierces not just into flesh, but into the heart and it discovers the intents and the thoughts of a man and it opens him up like a book before God. And he is exposed. That is the Word of God. It is powerful.

And someone is going to say, “Well, those texts that you just referred to, pastor, they all refer to the Word of God, but not preaching. The Word of God is powerful. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. The Scriptures are. But not preaching.”

The Word of God is enough. And it is true, the Word of God is...the Scriptures are. Luther said, “The Bible is alive. It speaks to me. It has feet. It runs after me. It has hands. It lays hold on me. For the Word of God is living. And it is.”

Someone asked Luther, “How do you defend the Bible?”

Luther responded, “Defend the Bible? That's like being asked to defend a lion. I don't defend a lion. I turn it loose.”

The Scriptures, no one denies it, the Scriptures are powerful. But God never intended the words of the Scriptures to just stay on paper. God never intended that there they would just be read personally. God intended that his Word be preached, that there be men who dig into the Scriptures because the Scriptures are without limits. They are deep. And they must be opened up. There must be explanation of the Word of God. The preaching of the gospel and the preaching of the Word of God is older than the written Word of God.

²³ Jeremiah 23:29

²⁴ Hebrews 4:12

²⁵ Hebrews 4:12-13

Noah was a preacher. Enoch was a preacher. God intends his Word to be preached and explained. And it is the preaching of the Word that is powerful.

Paul recognizes that public declaration of the Word of God is powerful when he says in Romans chapter one to the Roman church which he hasn't visited yet, he says:

As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth²⁶

He wanted to preach the Word. He could send them Bibles, but he wanted to preach the Word because it is the preaching of the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation. And the power of it is this: that the Word that the minister preaches and explains is the Word that God has revealed. If God's Word is so powerful, as Luther said it, that it is like a lion then wouldn't we want to preach it? Wouldn't we want to turn it loose against sin and the enemy? Because this is the power of God. And the Word preached is the letting loose of that Word.

Jonah in the Scripture passage that we read recognized the power of the spoken, declared Word of God. Jonah preached and his Word was powerful. It was effective. He came and he said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."²⁷

Now we shouldn't imagine that that was all that he said, but that was the content of the message of Jonah to this sinful city. "God is going to destroy this city for her wickedness. Repent!" That was the message of Jonah and it was a powerful word.

The people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast. They said, "No eating, no drinking. Everyone in sack cloth. We have to repent. We have to turn from our sins. This is the Word of God." And there was great repentance.

That was exactly what Jonah feared. That is what brought Jonah despair. It was different than Elijah. Elijah didn't recognize the power of the Word because he didn't see the positive fruit on the preaching of the gospel. Jonah knew the power of the Word. He knew that when he spoke with the Word of God to the sinful city they would repent and he didn't want it. They were outside of the covenant. They weren't God's Israel. How could God bring them to repentance? It didn't seem right to Jonah as a Jew.

And so he dared not open his mouth. He ran from the calling to preach the Word because the Word of God is powerful. Jonah understood it. He opened his mouth with courage and confrontation and comfort and they repented.

What does preaching do? Well, preaching—as the catechism puts it—"Works faith." And preaching saves sinners. That is what preaching does.

²⁶ Romans 1:15-16

²⁷ Jonah 3:4

Romans 10 makes that very plain. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”²⁸ How shall they call on him whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?²⁹ Preaching causes them to call, to believe, to be saved. The preaching saves sinners. It does that by uncovering the sinner before God.

In Hebrews chapter four it penetrates into the depths of my heart. It opens me up like a book before God. And one of two things will be the result. I’ll see myself before God in my sin and I will either say, “I hate this God and I hate this gospel and I don’t want to hear the preaching and I will run from it.” God’s Word is a double-edged sword. It will harden sinners or it will open me up and bring me to my knees in humility before the cross and I will see Christ as the only way. That is what preaching does. It is powerful. It convicts.

And that is what we should want in our preaching, too, the preaching isn’t just a lecture. The preaching isn’t just something that comes to my mind. The preaching isn’t just something that is nice to hear that tickles my emotions, that makes me feel good, but the preaching is going to make me squirm in the pew and make me feel uncomfortable and make me feel my sin and unworthiness. It is going to convict me. It is going to reprove me, rebuke me, admonish me. We want that because the preaching, as well, is going to bring me to Christ.

Paul says, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ.”³⁰ That doesn’t mean he didn’t preach what man must do. He didn’t preach the law. He didn’t preach rebuke. He did. Corinth needed that probably more than any other church that he preached to. But it was all to bring them under the conviction of their sin and to the foot of the cross to believe in Jesus Christ.

Preaching calls the sinner to action, calls the sinner who sees his sin to believe in Jesus Christ. That is preaching. It addressed the whole man, the heart, the will as well as the mind.

Now what is it that gives preaching this power? There are really three things that give preaching this power. The one is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works faith in my heart by the preaching of the gospel. That is, the Holy Spirit comes where the gospel is preached to open the heart of the sinner in the work of regeneration to be receptive to the gospel. And we call the two together the effectual call, God calling the sinner out of darkness into the light and into the knowledge of his Son. The Holy Spirit makes preaching powerful.

But, second, God speaks through the preaching. That is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians five and verse 20 when he speaks of himself as an ambassador. He says, “We are

²⁸ Romans 10:13

²⁹ See Romans 10:14

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:2

ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."³¹

When the minister is faithful to the Word of God and says, "Thus saith the Lord," that is the power of the Word.

And then this in the third place that Christ himself speaks to the sinner the saving Word of grace. "How shall they call on him," Romans 10 says, "of whom they have not heard?"³² But literally it is, "Whom they have not heard." In the preaching you don't hear the voice of a man. You don't come to hear just the preacher and a man. But you come to hear God in Christ speaking to you. It is Christ's voice that calls a sinner to see himself and to faith and to the foot of the cross and to repentance. Christ's voice does that. My voice can't do that. No man's voice can do that. Only Christ can speak such a powerful saving Word to the sinner.

And that is consolation for us because you don't have to come to hear a man. You don't have to come hear me or any other man in this pulpit, but you come to hear the voice of Jesus Christ as the power of God to your salvation, to the saving of your soul. And that is consolation for the preacher, too, because he doesn't depend on himself and his own words and what he might say, but so long as he speaks the Word of God that will do the work.

Someone once asked Luther, "What did you do after the Reformation had begun?"

Luther said, "I did nothing. The Word of God did it all. The Word of God did it all."

It is the power of God unto salvation.³³

We want to finish this morning by seeing the necessity of the preaching of the gospel. Now it is self evident after what we have said about what preaching is that preaching is necessary. If preaching is the means to faith, if preaching is the power of God to salvation, if preaching is the voice of Christ, if preaching is what God uses to show us ourselves and to bring us to repentance and to the cross, then the churches and the pulpits and the individuals need the preaching of the gospel more than anything else. It doesn't matter what I think about the music in church. It doesn't matter how hot or how cold it is in church. It doesn't matter if there is two or 200 or 2000 in the congregation. It is what comes from the pulpit that matters. I need the Word of God. The churches need to proclaim the Word of God. There needs to be preaching. There is an urgent call to the churches today and we mustn't think it doesn't apply to us. Churches are losing it. Churches close to us are losing it because people want something else.

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5:20

³² Romans 10:14

³³ See Romans 1:16

They ask that question, “Why preaching?” from weariness and dissatisfaction. They don’t want to be convicted and uncovered and called to faith. “Give us a social gospel. Give us some entertainment.”

But we can slip very quickly, too. We need the preaching, the pure preaching of the Word of God.

Now I said I was going to be passionate and I have been. I want to show my passion now not just for the Word of God and not just for preaching and not just for the honor and reputation of the church, but my passion for your souls especially those whom I already addressed in the introduction. You aren’t here as you should be. God knows who you are. You know who you are. The elders know who you are. You have heard it.

Why are we so concerned? Well, it is not just because we are concerned about the honor of Christ and maintaining the preaching of the gospel and maintaining your witness in the Church to other believers and your example...all those things. But it is your soul. It is your soul that we are concerned about. This is the Word of life. This is what you need.

Where are you? Aren’t you hungry? Don’t you need the Word of God?

It is the power of God unto salvation.

Don’t you care about your soul? See, that’s why the elders tell you you ought to be in church because your soul, the salvation of your soul is tied to the means that God has appointed, the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit works faith through the preaching of the gospel.

Perhaps you say, “Well, I know I am a Christian. I know the Bible. I know that God loves me. I think that is enough.”

It is not enough. God has appointed the preaching. That is the devil’s lie. He is deceiving you. God has appointed the preaching as the way that Christ will speak to your soul through your salvation. You need... you need the preaching of the gospel.

And all of us do. This isn’t just a word for a few in the congregation, but it is a Word for every one of us. Does the preaching teach you? Does the preaching rebuke you? Does the preaching bring you to repentance? Does it pierce to the dividing of your soul and expose you before God and bring you to your knees and bring you to repentance? It ought to. It is not something to just listen for other people so you can say, “I hope so and so heard that.” But you and you and you, every one of you needs the preaching of the gospel yourself.

This is Christ’s appointed means to work faith. If you don’t hear it for yourself your faith will die. Your faith will grow cold. It must speak to every one.

May God give us a passion for it and a heart for it and an ear for it and a love for it for the sake of our souls. Amen.

Father, we thank thee for the means that thou hast appointed to work faith and salvation in us, to keep us alive in our faith. Lord, give us a love for the preached Word so that it is maintained and all its glorious purity and power and necessity amongst us for the glory of Christ. Amen.