

Preaching The Gospel To A City

Introduction. It often seems that Christians have an impossible task. There are so many people who are lost, and so few workers (Matthew 9:35-38). But things are not so different today than they were in Bible times.

The prophets of old had some of the same problems. In fact, many of the Lord's messengers preached in vain. It is not that God's message was vain, but that the response it generated was in vain. The people did not repent.

However, there was a prophet of old who had great success, but he was the one most reluctant to try. About 700 years before Christ, Jonah went to preach to the heathen city of Nineveh. We can glean from his experiences the necessary lessons for preaching the gospel.

I. ***Don't Run From Difficult Duty***

A. Jonah ran from his duty to God (Jonah 1:1-3).

1. The context of the book suggests to us that he did not want God's mission to succeed. He was a patriot and Assyria was the enemy. It would have been much better militarily for Assyria to be destroyed.
2. It could not have been easy for Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and cry out against its wicked practices.

B. Being unfruitful is by far easier than being industrious.

1. The world can choke out our seed-spreading ability (Matthew 13:22).
2. But note that our laziness is condemned (Matthew 25:24-26).
3. We can run away from our responsibilities to the Lord.
 - a. 2 Timothy 4:10.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 4:2.

II. ***Be Confident With The Sign God Provides***

A. Because of the disobedience of Jonah, God appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah after he had been cast overboard by the sailors (Jonah 1:17).

1. While inside the great fish, he prayed to God for forgiveness (Jonah 2:1-9).
2. Jonah repented and preached to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:1-4).

B. A sign was given by Jesus relating to Jonah that should motivate us to preach the word.

1. Jesus would be three days in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:38-41).

2. This was a sign that represented the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that we preach to a lost world.
 - a. Romans 1:15, 3-5.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.
3. Many other signs were written in the book, but these were written that we might believe (John 20:30-31).

III. ***Preach The Word Of God***

- A. Jonah was given God's commission to deliver God's message to Nineveh (Jonah 3:2).
- B. The power to change people's lives is still in the gospel.
 1. The apostle Paul completely changed his life because of God's message to mankind (Acts 26:4-6; Galatians 1:13-14).
 2. The Corinthians were persuaded to give up all kinds of ungodliness (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
 3. The Colossians were living in their sins (Colossians 3:5-7).
- C. That same life-changing message must be preached if we expect anyone to be saved.
 1. We must preach the word (1 Corinthians 1:21; 2 Timothy 4:1-4).
 2. We must go to all mankind (Mark 16:15).

IV. ***Don't Be Afraid Of A Confrontational Message***

- A. Jonah's message was a hard one to preach (Jonah 3:4).
- B. There comes a time when we must preach "tough" and "controversial" lessons.
 1. If some of us lived in Jonah's day we likely would have said, "You are preaching too hard" or "You are critical of too many people!"
 2. Jeremiah stated that the prophets prophesied falsely and God's people loved it (Jeremiah 5:31).
- C. We cannot blindly and bitterly lash out with the gospel. We must always use wisdom, love and prudence in our preaching.
 1. Colossians 4:6.
 2. Ephesians 4:15; 5:2.

V. ***Remember The Urgency Of The Task***

- A. There was an urgency about Jonah's message (Jonah 3:4).
 1. The people of Nineveh only had 40 days.
 2. Either they would turn from their sins or perish.
- B. Souls are dying and most of us have wasted too much time already.

1. Colossians 4:5.
2. Luke 14:23.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:34.

Conclusion. The responsibility of Nineveh was to repent; the responsibility of judgment belonged to God; the responsibility of Jonah (like our responsibility today) was to attempt to change a city. Let's be about that task in Lufkin.

If you are here and need to repent of sins today and are ready to begin a new life in Christ, we beckon you to come forward. If you, as a saint, have not been worthy of your calling because of sin, we plead with you to repent, confess and let us pray to God for forgiveness. If any are in these situations today, please come to the front.