



Northland Reformed

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Preaching—the Media of Gospel Delivery

The word *media*, which comes from the Latin plural of medium, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the “agency or means of doing something,” or the “means by which something is communicated or expressed.” Therefore, when we speak of the news media, we are referring to the way in which the news is communicated to us.



Or, when we use the term social media, it is a reference to the means, or method, by which social information is communicated. The same is true of television media (communication by television) and print media (communication by newspapers, magazines, or books).

The most widely used form of communication today is digital media. We live at a time when the truth of God’s word could be delivered in full-color, high-definition images, on state-of-the-art screens, with surround-sound audio. Yet, we still resort to the same method of delivery used by the apostles of the first century. Haven’t we outgrown that outdated method? Shouldn’t we “get with the times?” Aren’t we being foolish when we stand before twenty-first century men, women, and children and proclaim the message using first-century technology?

In one sense, yes, we are being foolish—just as the apostles were being foolish two-thousand years ago. But we are promised that our foolishness will be rewarded. Remember that it “pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21) because the “foolishness of God is wiser than men,” (1 Cor. 1:25) and therefore, God has “chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise” (1 Cor. 1:27). Far from being foolish, the preaching of the word of God is “the power unto salvation for all who believe” (Romans 1:16).

Many Christians, even those who regularly sit under faithful biblical preaching, do not fully understand the necessity and power of preaching, most likely because they have not been taught a good theology of preaching. Why did God choose preaching as the necessary media by which to communicate His message of grace? What happens when God's word is faithfully preached? These are the questions that this article will seek to answer.

Why is Preaching Necessary?

Due to the modern medical process of vaccination, illnesses that once resulted in the deaths of many have been virtually eradicated. Vaccines are designed to boost the immune system by causing the body to develop antibodies which then fight the sickness when it enters the body. But a vaccine does no good if it is not given to the patient. A vaccine must be applied via a media. And the media most often used is a needle, applied by a trained medical professional, in a facility designed for that purpose.

Now let us extend this illustration to preaching. Just as you cannot hope to receive the benefits of a vaccine without going to the doctor and having it injected into your body, through the media of a needle, so also you cannot hope to receive the benefits of God's grace without going to church and having it injected into your heart by the media of preaching. We would do well, therefore, to think of the weekly preaching of God's word as our spiritual vaccination against the world, the flesh, and the devil and the daily reading of God's word as a booster shot until our next Sunday vaccination. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4), and we live Lord's Day to Lord's Day.

Preaching, therefore, is necessary because it is the chosen media, or means, of applying God's grace to our hearts. It is the primary means of grace because preaching is the primary way by which the Holy Spirit brings about salvation. Salvation begins with the preaching of God's word, for "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). And salvation is strengthened by the preaching of God's word, for we are instructed to, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:2-3).

What Happens When the Word of God is Faithfully Preached?

Preaching is different from a Bible study, a Sunday School class, or a theological lesson. While preaching includes a teaching element, it is not simply a lecture. When a lawfully called man, who has been ordained by God, preaches God's word, he does so with power. God proclaims that "as the rain comes down...so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11). Just as the rain falls to the earth, penetrates the soil, and causes food to grow before it evaporates and ascends again into the clouds, so also God's word showers our hearts, penetrating them with grace and causing us to grow in the likeness of Christ. Therefore, when the word of God is faithfully preached, two primary things happen to those who hear that word by faith—Christ speaks truth to the heart, and the Holy Spirit applies truth to the heart.

Christ Speaks Truth to the Heart

Romans 10:14 asks three questions, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" The word *of* in the second question is not in the Greek text but has been supplied in the English versions. The meaning of the question, therefore, is not, "How will they believe in Him (Jesus) *of* whom they have not heard?", but rather, "How will they believe in Him (Jesus) whom they have not heard?" In other words, the question implies that when preaching happens, people are hearing Jesus Himself speak to them! Remember the story of Mary and Martha recorded in Luke 10:38-42? Martha welcomed Jesus but was distracted with much serving. Meanwhile, Mary, her sister, sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. Martha's heart had forgotten the main thing, the importance of hearing His word. Because of this Jesus mildly rebuked her saying, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Let us not forget the one thing that is needed is for us to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word. And it is this very thing which happens most powerfully when His word is faithfully preached. Does this change the way you view preaching? Does it make you desire to sit at the feet of Jesus every Sunday?

The Holy Spirit Applies Truth to the Heart

Not only is Christ speaking to His people through preaching, but when the word of God is preached, the Holy Spirit always accompanies it with power. We see this most clearly in the ministry of Peter and Paul. On the day of Pentecost, Peter and those who were with him were “all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). Then Peter, beginning in Acts 2:14, stood up and boldly preached Christ, concluding with these convicting words, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). When the people heard Peter’s sermon, the Holy Spirit applied the gospel and they were “cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” Likewise later, when Peter stood before the rulers, elders, scribes and the high priest, he was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:8) and spoke so forcefully that “when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

Paul, like Peter, was also a powerful preacher. Writing to the church in Corinth, he reminded them that “my speech and preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). And in his first letter to the Thessalonians he asked them to remember that “our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

How exciting it is that every time God’s word is preached things happen! This is because the voice of Christ is speaking in, and the power of the Holy Spirit working through, that preached word. However, this does not always mean that what happens is pleasant. The Holy Spirit is sent to “convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). The preaching of the gospel is not a message that we, as sinful people, are always happy to hear. First, it tells us that we are sick, when we tend to think we are well. Just as a person who does not think they are in danger of physical illness will not go to the doctor and seek a physical vaccine, so also a person who does not feel they are spiritually sick will not go to Christ to seek a spiritual cure. Second, conviction of sin is painful. Like a vaccination, which is painful to receive and can have the side-effects of making you feel sick or causing your arm to be sore for a few days, so also the conviction of sin can be painful. But it is worth exchanging the short-term pain for the long-term gain. A person who rejects a vaccination puts themselves at risk of sickness, and potentially death. In the same

way, a person who rejects the application of God's preached word, by either choosing not to sit under it or not to receive it by faith, rejects the only life-giving and life-sustaining means of grace.

In addition to the preventive nature of preaching—convicting us of sin and causing us to turn from it—there is also the productive nature of preaching—building us up in the faith. The Holy Spirit both “convicts of sin” (John 16:8) but also “guides into all truth” (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit applies the truth of God's word to our hearts by increasing both our knowledge of God's word and our obedience to God's word. But remember, the Spirit is like the wind (John 3:8). You cannot see the wind until you see the effects—the rustle of leaves, the swaying of tree branches. So also, you might not see the work of the Holy Spirit immediately but know that He is always working through the means God has provided.

Conclusion

Has your view of preaching changed after reading this article? Do you see the preaching of God's word as absolutely necessary to your birth and growth as a Christian? Do you see the danger of rejecting this primary means of God's grace?

Remember, God's word is the powerful media by which God both brings us to new life as Christians and sustains us in our life as Christians. We cannot do without it any more than we can do without food, water, or air.

Perhaps in the past you have neglected preaching or failed to understand its importance. If so, now is the time to take advantage of this great media, or means, of grace that God has given you, for the “love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5) and is now continually poured out through the preaching of His word.

But be patient. Sometimes the preaching of God's word strikes our heart like a thunderbolt from heaven, and we feel the immediate work of the Spirit. But often, sitting under preaching is like standing in a light rain shower. You don't feel yourself getting wet, but when you come inside from the rain you realize that you are completely soaked! So, keep putting yourself in the path of God's showers of grace, knowing that His word will never return without accomplishing all that He sent it to do.

Rev. Christopher Campbell

Congregational News



Bridal Brunch – Courtney Waggoner

On April 13th the ladies of Northland Reformed Church, along with family and friends, gathered at the church for a unique twist on a wedding shower, a bridal brunch.

Good food and fellowship was enjoyed by all in attendance and Courtney was blessed with gifts in celebration of her upcoming wedding to Sam Termorshuizen.



My God richly bless this young couple as they prepare next month to be joined together in marriage and in all their years as a husband and wife.



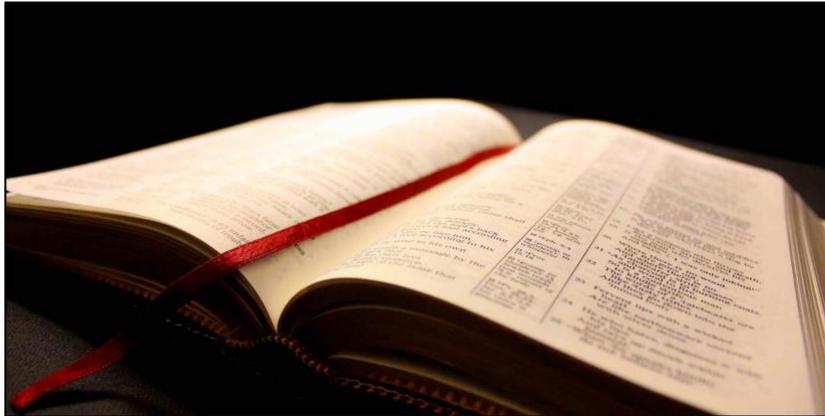
Looking Ahead to May

REGULAR MEETINGS

- Sunday Worship | May 5, 12, 19, 26 | 9:30AM & 5:00PM
- Men's Morning Fellowship @ Cracker Barrel Tiffany Springs | May 4, 18 | 7:00AM
- Prayer Meeting | May 15 | 7PM
- Friday Night Fellowship | May 17 | 6:30PM | We will meet for a meal and lesson

SPECIAL EVENTS

- Ladies' Night Out | May 9 | 6:30PM | The ladies will meet at the Cheddars in Liberty
- Lord's Supper | May 12 | 9:30AM | Following the morning service we will have a fellowship meal. Please bring a dish to share. Dessert will be provided.
- Mother's Day | May 12 | God has blessed us with mothers who have loved and cared for us. Let us remember to take time to thank them and to pray for God's blessings upon them in the coming year.
- Pre-Synod Clean Up | May 18 | 9AM | We will gather at the church to prepare the facility for Synod. If you are available, please join us.
- RCUS Synod | May 20-23 | All are welcome to attend any open session of Synod. All are also highly encouraged to attend the two evening worship services, the first Monday evening at 7pm and the second Wednesday evening at 7pm. The theme of the preaching this year will be the Canons of Dort.



Scripture Memorization

“Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.” – Psalm 119:11

May 5	Psalm 139:1-3
May 12	Psalm 139:4-5
May 19	Psalm 139:6-8
May 26	Psalm 139:9-10