

24 September 2019

SELC District Eastern Circuit Pastors Conference
Christ the King Retreat Center, Greenwich, NY

Jesu Juva

“Preach the Word”

Text: Luke 22:24-30; 2 Timothy 4; Isaiah 61:1-3

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Preach the Word!

Ready or not, Paul says. 10 am, 10 pm, or 3 am. ***Preach the Word***. That’s what you’re given to do. That’s what you’re given to say. Sometimes people will want to hear it, sometimes not. Doesn’t matter. You’ll get tired and impatient. Frustrated and flummoxed. Some days you’ll want to, some days you won’t. No matter. ***Preach the Word***. The Word *made flesh*. Give ‘em Jesus.

That’s what Paul told Timothy. That’s what Paul himself did. He practiced what he preached. Paul, greatest missionary of all time. . . . Hold on - I’m not so sure. His congregations actually were a mess. The Galatians - how quickly they were turning to another Gospel. The Corinthians - they had problems all over the place! The Romans - how many times does Paul say: *don’t you know?* Like he’s banging his head against the wall. (But you don’t know what that feels like, do you?)

Maybe that’s why when Paul wrote to Timothy, he threw in these word too: ***Preach the Word . . . with complete patience and teaching***. I actually like how the NIV puts it: *with great patience and careful instruction*. Or in other words, don’t expect them to get it the first time you say it. Or even the 100th time. Just keep saying it, preaching it. Preaching Him. ***Preach the Word***. Preach Jesus. Give ‘em Jesus.

And that’s what you do. All of you. God has called and ordained you, put you where you are, and gave you the same charge. Give ‘em Jesus.

And sometimes you nail it! Right? We heard that in one of the videos yesterday. You have those Sundays when it all just comes together. The Law, the Gospel, your delivery. You connected. You had the people. Best sermon ever. Just great! Step down from the pulpit feelin’ good. . . . And then, after the service, not a peep. From anyone. Not even your wife. No: *great sermon Pastor!* No: *thanks for that word, Pastor, just what I needed to hear*. Nothing. And then the questions and doubts come. Satan whispers in your ear: *failure. You disappointment*. Or, maybe you even get stung with criticism. Because you touched a sore spot. Because you didn’t say what their ***itching ears*** wanted to hear.

So Paul told Timothy: ***be sober-minded***, clearheaded - don’t get too high or too low.

Endure suffering - because you will. **Do the work of an evangelist** - because preaching the Gospel, preaching Jesus, is hard work. **Fulfill your ministry** - *diakonia* the flock you've been given to *diakonia*. Just give 'em Jesus. That's what they need. That's what you need.

That's what the disciples needed. The disciples who, like *two seconds* after Jesus put His Body and Blood into their mouths, were arguing about who was the greatest. (Which, you think, would make Jesus take His turn banging His head against the wall.) Greatest? Greatest? Yeah, you're all the greatest. The greatest messes! Just look around this table. Here you have the greatest betrayer, the greatest denier, the greatest doubter, the greatest open-mouth-insert-foot-er, the greatest hardhead . . . Each one, all of them around that table, each of you sitting here, the greatest like this, in some way. But look where you are now, Jesus says! At My Table, being served by Me. Eating My Body, drinking My Blood, receiving My forgiveness, life, and salvation. You've made yourselves great in sin. I make you great as sons.

And then Jesus got up, and instead of banging His head against the wall, had a crown of thorns banged into it, and then had His head banged against the cross. *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*. For me. The greatest for the least.

And while Jesus was on that cross, Satan didn't whisper into His ear, but shouted in His face through those mocking Him: *failure! You disappointment*. And Paul, in Rome, imprisoned for proclaiming Jesus, at his **first defense no one stood by him; all deserted him**. Think the whispers started then for him? *Failure. You disappointment. But*, he says, **the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it**. The Lord who preached even from the cross, stood by Paul and preached through him, and now through you. Every time you step into the pulpit, every time you dip your hand into some water, every time you stand at the altar, every time you place your hand on a bowed head - you are not alone. The Lord you preach stands by you, speaks through you, and fulfills His *diakonia* through your *diakonia*. When you speak, He speaks. What you do, He does. What you give, He gives. That's His promise, for all of us the same.

And His promise **for you** today. Jesus absolved you today. Of all your greatest sins. I don't know what sins you confessed earlier, but this I know: **they're gone**. As far as the east is from the west. I know, because I heard Jesus say: *I forgive you all your sins*. And they are. Remember your baptism? Because Jesus remembers it. He washed you then, He washed you now. And you are. Squeaky clean.

And Jesus spoke to you today. I don't know what you're struggling with right now, but this I know: **you're not alone**. The Jesus who speaks through your *diakonia* also *diakonia*-ed you here, spoke to you. I know, because I heard: *This is the Word of the Lord*. And it really is. Him speaking, not Dan.

And now, Jesus feeds you. I don't know how weak you feel right now, how frustrated, how tired, how close to just quitting. But this I know: the food that sustained Moses for 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Sinai, the food that sustained Elijah for 40 days and 40 nights after Mt. Carmel, the food that sustained Paul in his dark nights, is now given to you. I know, because I hear Jesus say: *This is My Body, This is My Blood*. And it is. Food, to strengthen you. To Jesus you.

And so with Jesus' *diakonia*, Paul's confidence is your confidence, for you and for the people you serve: ***the Lord will rescue [you] from every evil deed and bring [you] safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.***

So thank you, brothers, for all that you do, your faithful *diakonia*. I know it's not easy. Thank you for preaching the Word, ready or not. For the early mornings and the late nights. To the grateful and the ungrateful. For giving Jesus. Fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith.

But remember this, too, which is so easy to forget: the Jesus you give is the Jesus **for you, too**. And ***there is laid up for [you] the crown of righteousness***, that is not only for Paul, but that Jesus Himself will place on your battered head. And in the end, you can't get any greater than that.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.