

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 21st August
Occasion: Ridley college preaching conference dinner
Series: N/A
Title: Watch your life and doctrine, closely
Passage/s: 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:1-2
Outline:
 1. Preach the word
 2. Watch your life and doctrine closely

INTRODUCTION

- Famous golfer Tiger Woods and the blind singer Stevie Wonder meet in a bar
 - Tiger turns to Stevie and says, "How's the singing career going?"
 - Stevie replies, "Not too bad. How's the golf?"
 - Woods replies, "Not too bad, I've had some problems with my swing, but I think I've got that right now."
 - Stevie says, "I always find that when my swing goes wrong, I need to stop playing for a while and not think about it. Then, the next time I play, it seems to be all right."
 - Incredulous, Tiger says, "You play GOLF?"
 - Stevie says, "Yes, I've been playing for years."
 - Tiger says, "But—you're **blind!** How can you play golf if you can't see?"
 - Stevie Wonder replies, "Well, I get my caddy to stand in the middle of the fairway and call to me. I listen for the sound of his voice and play the ball towards him. Then, when I get to where the ball lands, the caddy moves to the green or farther down the fairway, and again I play the ball towards his voice."
 - "But how do you **putt?**" asks Tiger.
 - "Well," says Stevie, "I get my caddy to lean down in front of the hole and call to me with his head on the ground and I just play the ball toward his voice."
 - Tiger asks, "What's your handicap?"
 - Stevie says, "Well, actually—I'm a scratch golfer." (ie, his handicap is zero!)
 - Woods, incredulous, says to Stevie, "We've got to play a round sometime."
 - Stevie replies, "Well, people don't take me seriously, so I only play for money, and never play for less than \$10,000 a hole. Is that a problem?"
 - Woods thinks about it and says, "Yep, I'm good for that. \$10,000 a hole is fine with me. When would you like to play?"
 - Stevie Wonder says, "**you** pick a **night.**"
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- Well I don't know about playing golf in the **dark** – in fact – I can't play golf in the **light....**
 - ...but sometimes it **feels** we are doing **ministry** in the **dark....**

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- because we don't **always** know the way forward
- because we often feel like it's a **dark world** in which we live...
- because at times with our **preaching**, it feels like we **floundering** around in the **dark**...
- And although we read in John's gospel 1:5 - *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*; sometimes it **feels** that the darkness **DOES overwhelm!** //
- I want to encourage you tonight... as you seek to make a difference in the **world**... and in your **church** – and in your **people**... to see **preaching** as the most **important thing you do**...
- Let me remind you of **two very precious verses** – one from 1 Timothy – one from 2 Timothy... and so to give you two simple take home messages -
 1. **Preach the Word... and**
 2. **Watch your life and doctrine closely...**

1. PREACH THE WORD

- 2 Tim 4:1-2 - *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*
- There is an end to this **present** world in **sight**.
- Jesus is **coming**
- **He will judge all**
- So that **best** thing Timothy can **do** is / **preach the word**...
- ...whether it's **fashionable** or not; whether he **feels** like or not; whether it's **acceptable** or not... he is to '**preach the word**'
- And did you notice that the purpose and intent of **preaching** of the **word** is the **precisely** the same as the purpose of the **Word itself**...?
- So immediately before these words we read *all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*
- And now Paul says by **PREACHING THE WORD –correct, rebuke and encourage!**
- Make **preaching** the very **heart** and **centre** of your ministry; and God will use it to **transform lives**... //
- Often my training rector Simon Manchester was asked what was his strategy to grow the church and I always loved his response... "**to preach well next Sunday**".
- And I think that in 30 years of ministry – mission plans and the like... they can serve us **well**... and I'm not **knocking** them... we have one at **Noosa**... but it must be **built** on the systematic **teaching** and **preaching** of the **Bible**.... // whatever the strategy... You need to work **hard** at **preaching well next Sunday!** //
- Let me tell you about **Cath and Adrian**. Both grown up in committed Roman Catholic families – both in country areas. Met at Uni in Sydney, married, had kids. Adrian a successful lawyer.
- Their kids were similar ages to our own, and my wife Susan met Cath at school activities...
- After establishing relationship with Cath and a couple of other women from our church, Susan

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asked whether Cath would like to read the Bible with her. She **agreed**.

- Eventually came to **church**.
- And eventually Adrian **joined her**
- I went to have lunch in the city with Adrian and he told me directly – ‘I don’t think I’m across the line yet’... but he loved the fact that in our church, in the sermon time, everyone was encouraged to pick up and open the Bible and we’d look together at the passage being preached...
- 6 months later, I had lunch in the city with Adrian again.
- “You know how I told you last time that I wasn’t over the line? – I am now” – he said.
- The **preaching** of the **Word** – both **informally** and **formally** – had done a work in both **Cath** and **Adrian**.
- And for **both** of them – that began a life time of service. Cath has just ticked over 20 years as children’s minister at my old church... and Adrian began to be involved in many things – including travelling to **Zambia** to teach Moore College external studies courses with one of the other ministers...
- **Preach the word...**
- The word will **transform** and **empower** people. The word will bring **help** and **comfort** to **people**.
- Only on Monday I had an two emails from people who were at church on Sunday – one a **regular** – the other a **widow** whose husband’s funeral I took 6 weeks ago and she’s been coming on and off since...
- I was speaking on Psalm 13 and encouraging people to tell God **exactly** how they feel as David does in that Psalm – “how long will you forget me!”
- **Parishioner** - I appreciated your sermon last Sunday - it spoke to some of the **doubts** that I have sometimes.
- The **widow** – not a Christian I don’t think – but wrote - I appreciated your homily yesterday, which leaves plenty of food for thought. //
- I don’t tell you that to blow my own **trumpet** in any way – but simply to share that **preaching** the word will bring **hope** and **comfort** and **transformation**.
- Another email recently blew me away because this person had really **grasped** the fact that our ministry at the Anglican Church of Noosa is based **entirely** around **preaching** and **teaching** of the **word**...
- I hope you won’t think me **indulgent**... or again that’s I’m blowing my own **trumpet**... but a man emailed me when I shared with the congregation that I’d be speaking at the conference tonight...
- He said in part:
 - I think your personal testimony of the journey to bring the Word of God back into the life of the Anglican Church of Noosa would be a strong and assuring message of encouragement to share
 - The way you preach the word, particularly in today’s world of almost ignorance of scripture, is of significant importance. The methodology you have introduced to Noosa,

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is exceptional. I have not come across such thoroughness before in my whole Christian life of church attendance. This method of preaching is what creates impact and encouragement! Real solid preaching.

- The fact that you do the hard yards, in publishing a weeks-worth of Bible readings plus commentary on the subject for the coming Sunday's sermon, then publish the full script of the sermon plus a dozen questions for the discussion groups, is the **corner stone** of the **preached word** at **Noosa**.
- I can't tell you the **impact** that email had on me – I read it **almost** in **tears**... //
- ... that someone had clearly **understood** that **preaching** is my **absolute priority** – and **passion** – and **privilege** – and has seen the **difference** it has made in the **life** of our **church**... //
- Brothers and sisters – **preach the word**....
- I could tell you about Doris who has become wonderfully more **gracious** in her dealing with everyone since she has understood **grace**
- I could tell you about drug addicts **Dave and Maz** who we helped out of homelessness into a housing commission home - Dave came **back** to Jesus... Maz came to **know** Jesus... they had been together **17 years** and had three **children** and when they came to know Jesus, wanted me to **marry** them... so they were **married** in the **eyes of God**
- When Maz, aged only **37**, died of a rare cancer, just **5 weeks ago**, she died with a **calm** and a **peace** and a **trust** in **God**...
- On the day she died, Dave texted me and said – She is with God and I'm at **peace** with that...
- **Preach the word**...
- I could tell you about **Bill and Cath**... Bill aged **95** drove himself to **golf** and **back** one day... came home – had a swim in the pool to cool off and fell and hit his **head**... leaving him with stroke-like symptoms from the **bleed** on his **brain**...
- I went to visit and take communion to them in the **nursing home**...
- I asked them whether they were **sure** of going to be with God for eternity when they died... they said 'they **hoped** so'. My heart **sank**. They'd heard my preaching for 10 years, but only **hoped** so??
- So I **preached** the **word**... Titus 3 – saved, not because of righteous things **we** have done but because of God's **mercy**... and again went through that it's not about what **we** have done for **God** but what **he** has done for **us**... through the **death** and **resurrection** of the **Lord Jesus**...
- And so I asked them whether they could say **NOW** that they were completely sure... and they **could!**
- And I said that the next time I came I would ask the same question... and I wanted to hear them say '**absolutely**' when I asked that first question and that when I asked '**why**', I wanted to hear them answer "because Jesus died for me..."
- I said, "why don't we practice that? - if you died tonight – would you be sure of spending eternity with God?" "**Absolutely**", they said... "And why? Because Jesus **died** for me." We then shared **communion** with great **joy** together that afternoon //
- Brothers and sisters **preach** the **word**.
- In **church**... as you **visit**... at the **bedside**... at the **funeral**... at the **baptism**.... In the **car park**... //

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- Can I ask – **DO** you think **preaching** is the most **important** thing you **do**?
- If I had a look at your **calendar** for these past 6 weeks – would that be **evident**?
- Are there clearly **large** amounts of **good quality uninterrupted and un interruptable time**, marked out for **sermon prep**? Time that is **protected... blocked off...** time where **nothing else** can get in the way...?
- **Preach the word...** and take charge of your **calendar** to give it the time that it **needs...** //
- But second:

2. WATCH YOUR LIFE AND DOCTRINE CLOSELY


- From 1 Timothy 4:16 - *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*
- Where I work, doctrine has **not** been '**watched**' //
- At a clergy conference last week, a speaker from the UK was speaking about **forgiveness of sins** and **eternal life...**
- **Forgiveness of sins** he said, addressed our **anxiety** about the **past**
- **Assurance of eternal life** he said, addressed our **fears** for the **future.** //
- What was so **unusual** about that?
- that in the 10 years I've been where I am, I've rarely heard **anyone** talk about **forgiveness of sins** and the **assurance of eternal life.**
- Rather, people talk about the work of the church as addressing **climate change...** or LGBTQI issues //
- I was at a commissioning of a new priest and the preacher spoke about how the new priest's job was to **connect lonely people with each other** – nothing about **Jesus** or the **gospel...**
- I've been on **interview panels** to fill vacant parishes where I've asked the priest what they think ministry is all about and they talk about "**creating community**" – nothing about **Jesus** and the **gospel.**
- Yes – watch your **doctrine** closely – lest the agenda of the **world** – becomes **your** agenda... and is **confused** for the **gospel itself...**
- Stay on course... //
- resolve to preach nothing but **Jesus Christ** and **him crucified...** //
- Watch your **life** and **doctrine** closely...
- And of course both **life** / and / **doctrine** are so closely related that you can't **separate** them **out...**
- Show me someone who has **slipped** in their life, and I can more often than not, show you someone who has changed their **doctrine** to justify how they now see the world...
- Tell you a very sad irony... many of you will be aware of Paul Tripp's book on ministry called "A dangerous calling"... about the **challenges** and **rigors** of ministry...
- Like many books published it has **endorsements** on the **back...**
- **3** out of the **5** people who wrote endorsements for that book on the dangers of ministry, //
- are no **longer** in **ministry...**

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- **James MacDonald** was fired for “engaging in conduct ... contrary and harmful to the best interests of the church.”
- **Josh Harris** has sadly abandoned his faith in Christ.
- **Tchividjian** stepped down explaining that he “developed an inappropriate relationship with a friend.” //
- Just this past week, a well-known Christian song writer has publicly declared he no longer believes...

Marty Sampson has been one of Hillsong’s most prolific songwriters, having written or co-written over 90 hit worship songs since 1998. He announced his loss of faith via a post on Instagram which stated:

“I am losing my faith and it doesn’t bother me ... it’s not for me ... I am not in it anymore. I want genuine truth ... and Christianity just seems to me like another religion.”

- In the last 3 years, at **least 3** Anglican clergy I know, have committed **adultery**... and ended up out of the ministry...
- Please, **brothers** and **sisters**, watch your **life** and **doctrine** closely!! –
- How will you do that?
- By ensuring your accountable to someone else. Find a prayer partner or triplet where you have permission to ask each other anything... about your trust in Jesus.. about whether your righteousness is exceeding that of the Pharisees... about anger, lust, marriage, love and prayer for enemies... etc...
- Make sure someone knows exactly what is going on in your life! / and be transparent...
- **Persevere in life and doctrine**, says Paul, *because if you **do**, you will save both **yourself** and your **hearers**.*
- The **opposite** then must also be true... if you **don’t persevere** and you consequently **shipwreck** your **faith** – then the **damage** and **harm** to the **gospel** and the **church’s reputation** is **immense!**
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- Let me finish much more **positively**... by asking you to reflect on the amazing **privilege** that is **ours**...
- Paul Levy who reviewed Paul Tripp’s book “A Dangerous calling” wrote:

“I have been the Pastor of the same congregation for 12 years. I enjoy it. I mean, I really enjoy it. There is no other job I would want to do. It has been a privilege. My eldest brother Dave works in the manufacturing industry. Dave leaves the house each day just before 7am and he’s rarely home before 7.30pm. He was made redundant 10 years ago and, because of the nature of the industry, his work is nearly always precarious. For 3 years he had to work in Holland most weeks which meant being away from his family. By contrast, I am paid to study the Bible, to read great books, to pray, to preach and care for people. I work long hours but I love it. Because of the nature of Christian ministry I’m able to have breakfast and dinner with my young family. I do not know another man in the church where I serve who is able to do this. I am protected from many of the stresses and strains of life. Being able to be a full time

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minister is an enormous privilege. There is no greater calling. Miserable, Moaning Ministers are a disgrace."

Well, I'm not sure I'd agree that they are **disgrace**... we all know days of **discouragement**... but there **many** times too, where we **fail** to see the unique **privilege** of our position...

...and then he quotes Geoff Thomas, from the Jackson Reformed Theological seminary who writes in a similar way:

*The full-time gospel ministry is still a protected oasis. We are relieved of so many of the tensions and temptations that those to whom we minister are meeting each day. They work with their minds and bodies in this evil world / and give their hard - earned money to **us** so generously that we may spend our days - think of it - in the quiet of our **studies**, in the **Bible**, in **evangelism**, and in **pastoring** God's **people**. I hope you will never join with those ministers who sit around grumbling with other pastors about all the alleged hardships of being preachers. What a marvellously **privileged** life we **lead**!*

- Brothers and sisters – you want your people to be salt and light in the world??
-**preach the word**... make it the very **heart** and **centre** of your **ministry**...
- And / **watch your life and doctrine closely**... keeping **Jesus** as the centre... ensuring the Word of God is continually **shaping** and **challenging** and **transforming YOUR** life, just as you want it to do in the lives of **your people**...
- And **each** and **every** day... // **count the blessings** – the **many many privileges**... of being set **free** / to **rightly handle** the **word** of **God**!