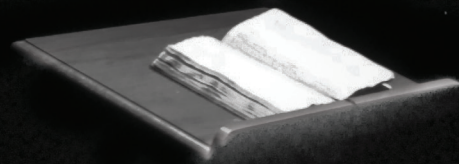


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PERSPECTIVE

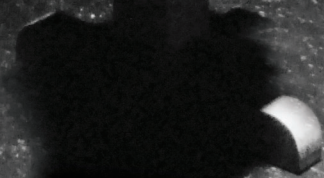
THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HE'S PREACHING

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE SERMON

What Does
It Mean
to Preach Christ?





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- April 1** **Will You Be Content?**
| Timothy 6:3-10
- April 8** **The Easter Sermon**
Matthew 28
- April 15** **Living with a Purpose**
Psalm 108
 Associate Pastor: Bryan Pillsbury
- April 22** **Will You Be Patient?**
| Timothy 6:11-19
- April 29** **Will You Guard the Truth?**
| Timothy 6:20-21

> FIGHTER VERSE

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Psalm 127:1

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Use the QR reader on your mobile device to sign up to receive each issue of *Perspective* by email.



Knowing the Body

[our newest members

The following adults were voted into membership at the Church in Conference on March 25.
Please get to know and love them.

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” - John 13:35



Steve & Pat Arnold

Roswell, GA



Jesse & Delaine Brannen

Adelyn

Atlanta, GA



Katherine Marshall

Atlanta, GA



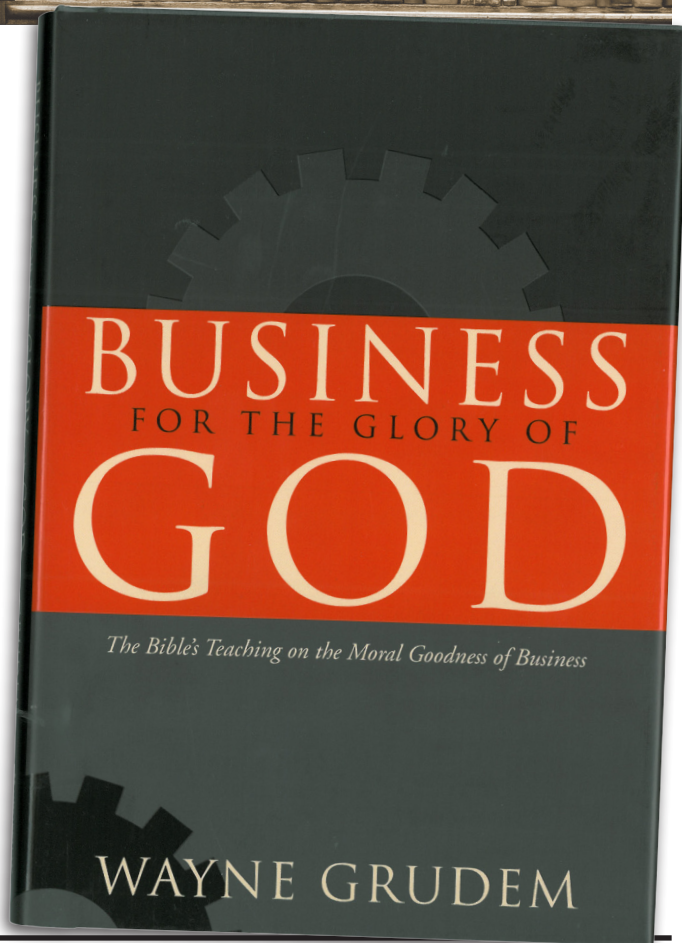
Stephen Parsons

Smyrna, GA

Business for the Glory of God

By Wayne Grudem

Reviewed by Wayne Elliott



WHY, WE MAY WONDER, WOULD one of today's most respected evangelical theologians care about the world of business, much less be moved to write a book analyzing the theological basis for business? After all, isn't business far removed from the halls of the theological academy? Wayne Grudem is a graduate of Harvard University (BA), Westminster Seminary (MDiv), and the University of Cambridge, England (PhD). He has served as president of the Evangelical Theological Society and recently as general editor for the *ESV Study Bible*. Many of us at Mount Vernon are familiar with Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, which has been taught and studied here for many years. So what would move Grudem to think and write about business?

This short (83 pages) book reveals a surprising answer. Grudem understands that all aspects of business, including ownership, profit, money, competition, and borrowing and lending glorify God because they reflect God's nature and His provision for man. Rather than seeing business as inherently evil or an enterprise fueling the fallen nature of man, Grudem understands that business activities (like all activities of man) sometimes are manipulated or misused as a means to sin, but that the inherent nature and practice of business is a God-given blessing to mankind.

Grudem begins by acknowledging that "few people instinctively

think of business as morally good in itself" (11). When young people ask, "How can I serve God with my life?" they don't often hear the answer, "Go into business." Why is that? Probably because much of today's news and reports about business tend to stress misuse, wrongdoing, and manipulation. But are these sinful activities *inherent* in the business enterprise? Not at all. As Grudem explains, "Many aspects of business activity are morally good *in themselves*, and that *in themselves* they bring glory to God—though they also have great potential for misuse and wrongdoing" (12).

In *Business for the Glory of God*, Grudem explores the following aspects of business activity:

1. Ownership
2. Productivity
3. Employment
4. Commercial transactions (buying and selling)
5. Profit
6. Money
7. Inequality of possessions
8. Competition
9. Borrowing and lending
10. Attitudes of heart
11. Effect on world poverty

Although this reviewer graduated from business school and law school, and for many years worked in, led, and advised business enterprises, and although I can defend the enterprise system from a viewpoint of economic theory, I found Grudem's explanation of the theological underpinnings of business to be very refreshing, encouraging, and instructive. I only wish this little book had been available to me as an undergraduate in business school.

How often do liberal commentators and politicians, steeped in Marxist theory, decry the inequality of possessions that may result from competition? This anti-competitive attitude appears not only in reaction to business but in those schools where grades are no longer awarded and in youth sports where everyone gets a trophy.

Grudem writes:

It may seem surprising to us to think that some inequality of possessions can be good and pleasing to God. However, although there is no sin or evil in heaven, the Bible teaches that there are varying degrees of reward in heaven and various kinds of stewardship that God entrusts to different people...So we should not think of all inequalities of possession as wrong, or evil. In fact, inequalities in possessions provide many opportunities for glorifying God...[T]he Bible does not teach a "health and wealth gospel" (or at least not until heaven!). In this present age, there are inequalities of gifts and abilities, and there are also evil, oppressive systems in the world, and because of these things many of God's most righteous people will not be rich in this life. As for those who have large resources, they also are to be content in God and trust in him, not in their riches... (51, 55, 56)

We know from economic theory that the very nature of barter or exchange in a free society is good in itself because through such transactions we do good to other people. As Grudem explains:

This is because of the amazing truth that, in most cases, *voluntary commercial transactions benefit both parties...* Buying and selling are activities unique to human beings out of all the creatures that God made...We can imitate God's attributes each time we buy and sell, if we practice honesty, faithfulness to our commitments, fairness, and freedom of choice. (36, 37)

Indeed, "because of the interpersonal nature of commercial transactions, business activity has significant stabilizing influence on a society" (37).

Grudem provides a helpful illustration of the interpersonal growth which can come from commercial transactions:

An individual farmer may not really like the auto mechanic in town very much, and the auto mechanic may not like the farmer very much, but the farmer *does* want his car to be fixed right the next time it breaks down, and the auto mechanic *does* love the sweet corn and tomatoes that the farmer sells; so it is to their mutual advantage to get along with each other, and their animosity is restrained. In fact,

they may even seek the good of the other person for this reason! So it is with commercial transactions throughout the world and even between nations. This is an evidence of God's common grace, because in the mechanism of buying and selling, God has provided the human race with a wonderful encouragement to love our neighbor by pursuing actions that advance not only our own welfare but also the welfare of others—even as we pursue our own. (37-38)

In his clear and concise manner, Grudem explains how the "process of borrowing and lending multiplies the available wealth in the world more times than it is possible to calculate" (71). Imagine that—borrowing and lending is not only not evil in itself, but is a God-given gift to provide for mankind.

From a Christian perspective, one of this short book's most impactful chapters deals with the effect of business on world poverty. Grudem asserts: "I believe *the only long-term solution to world poverty is business*. That is because businesses produce goods, and businesses produce jobs. And businesses continue producing goods year after year, and continue providing jobs and paying wages year after year" (80-81).

Grudem notes that excessive government red tape and obstacles to the enterprise system effectively destroy economic growth. Many oppressive government systems stifle individual enterprise and commercial exchange, thus robbing citizens of realizing the fruit of their God-given talents and work. Grudem decries "evil governments that confiscate a country's wealth and thus prevent business from helping people overcome poverty. Yet another [obstacle] is repressive governments that hinder and destroy businesses in order to enhance their own power" (81).

As Grudem writes, a "large reason business activity has not yet solved world poverty is *negative attitudes toward business in the world community*" (82). Of course, beyond widespread economic and theological ignorance, a major reason for negative attitudes toward business is the abuse and misuse of commercial transactions by sinful men. That, of course, is potential in every human endeavor. For similar reasons—the misuse and abuse by a few practitioners—the public perception of such inherently worthwhile and traditionally respected vocations as the ministry, politics, and the law, have fallen in respect in recent years.

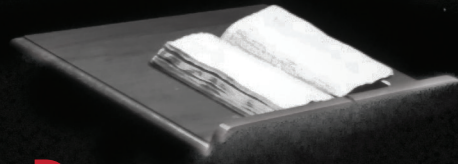
Scripture teaches that all good things come down from the Father of lights. We should be thankful for His gifts and responsible in our use and exercise of them. Man should create reasonable systems of law to minimize abuse and misuses, and then take joy and pleasure in the good gifts our Lord has blessed us with, business included.

I highly recommend this short and accessible book. It would be particularly helpful for young people who are considering career directions and who would benefit from a better understanding of God's provision of business enterprise. Grudem's book serves as a reminder that God has provided for us in every conceivable way and that His common grace blesses all creation. ■

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN HE'S PREACHING

A USER'S GUIDE TO THE SERMON

What Does
It Mean
to Preach Christ?



ONE OF MY EARLIEST SERMONS was delivered on a Sunday evening. When it was done, I was fairly pleased. I said things that were true. I smiled. I included practical application. My pants were zipped. All in all, I thought, a good showing.

A few of us gathered after the service to review the day and my message. One friend gave me this constructive criticism: “That message was fine, except that it could have been delivered in a synagogue.” That was not a compliment! While there are surely many wonderful things said in synagogues each week, a preacher should never be accused of delivering a talk that could just as easily have been given by a rabbi.

There is nothing wrong with talking about time-management, parenting, and ways to live a moral life—but if these points are disconnected from the atoning work of Christ on the cross they are, well, not *Christian*. On that Sunday evening I attempted to preach God’s Word without reflecting upon Jesus Christ and, in that sense, I failed to truly preach the Word.

Have you ever listened to a message like that? Perhaps it met many other standards of a quality message: clear points, challenging application, etc. But you knew it was missing something. You just couldn’t quite lay your finger on it.

A sermon without Christ and his atoning work is not a sermon.

Admittedly, some sermons do manage to preach Christ, but they don’t seem to work. It’s as if the preacher taped Jesus to the very end of the message because he knew he *had* to. Sadly, too many sermons are, as Carl Trueman put it, “contrived contortions of passages to produce the answer ‘Jesus’ every week. It doesn’t matter what the text is; the sermon is always the same.” In some sermons, Christ seems thrown in as if he’s that estranged uncle you feel obligated to invite to Thanksgiving dinner. So if Christ can’t be ignored, but he can’t simply be tacked on, how is Christ to be proclaimed in each message?

To answer that question, we have to understand that the Bible is one story, and this story doesn’t make sense without Jesus Christ. He is what the whole story is about. Christ is what ties the whole story together. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible lays out a plan of redemption. In different kinds of literature, through different men in different places, this plan is being unfolded until we discover that it is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Obviously this is really important for preachers to know. But it is important for you to know, too. How you understand the Bible will affect both how you read it and how you listen to preaching.

If you see the Bible as a collection of isolated, unrelated events then you will probably flip back and forth from text to text looking for any word that will scratch your itch-of-the-day. But the Bible is not a collection of random stories—it is one Story climaxing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No matter what passage you may be reading in your quiet time or hearing preached; it is about Christ.

Let’s unpack this idea in greater detail.

Preaching Christ Means Telling a Story

Maybe in English class your teacher taught you that every story has a plot. Your teacher was right! My favorite book is *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by the nineteenth-century author, Thomas Hardy. It is a tragedy (what does this say about me?!) set in rural England. The main character, Michael Henchard is a hard-working, quick-tempered, and despicable man.

The story begins with Michael drinking in a pub with his wife and daughter in between his search for work. It is a horrible scene because Michael gets so drunk he actually sells his wife. The rest of the book is the story of Michael’s regret and redemption. He settles down in a neighboring village, makes a small fortune, and even becomes the town mayor. But in his heart he remains a quick-tempered fool and, in the end, he loses everything—again.

The climax of the story is Michael’s realization that family is more important than fortune. But it’s too late.

The plot in this great story is obvious. You saw the *introduction*, right? A hard-working fool with his family. But every plot has a *complication*, too. The complication in this story takes place when Michael loses his family. The *climax* is the moment in the story when the main character undergoes a dramatic change. In this case, it was when Michael learned what finally matters. And the story has a *resolution*—Michael has learned his lesson, but it is too late! Tragedies don’t have happy endings.

But pick any story and you’ll find the same elements: introduction, complication, climax, and resolution. This is because every good story is simply borrowing from the Greatest Story Ever Told, the Bible.

The plot of the Bible is magnificent. It, too, has an introduction, a complication, a climax, and a resolution. And what ties the entire Story together, what brings this plot unity, is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Until you see that, you’ll never understand the Bible the way God meant it to be understood. In other words, you’ll never understand any passage in particular unless you have a sense of the Bible as a whole.

The storyline of the Bible is not hard to grasp. In fact, the four parts of a plot correspond to the four main themes of the Bible. When we see how Christ is the point of each part, we will better understand what to expect from the preaching we hear.

Introduction → Creation

Complication → Fall

Climax → Ministry of Christ

Resolution → New Creation



A sermon without **Christ** and
his atoning work **is not a sermon.**

Introduction

The Bible begins with the creation of all things. God *is* and always *was* and always *will be*. The universe and all that is in it was created. God is uncreated. He is the Creator. He made plants and bugs and oceans and he made humanity. It began with Adam and his wife, Eve. God made them and they dwelt together, perfectly, in God's presence. He really did walk in their midst.

The introduction of the Bible takes up just the first two chapters, but what chapters they are! The glorious start of human history. There was no sin in the world and there was no death. Adam and Eve lived under God's righteous authority. They bore his image and his likeness. They had work to do, but the work was not toilsome.

Have you ever had a day where you woke up refreshed, worked hard every hour, accomplished a great deal, and put your head on your pillow at night with a sense of overwhelming satisfaction? I hope you have lots of days like that. But even our best day of work pales in comparison to those days in the Garden where Adam and Eve lived under God's direct and loving supervision. They experienced what life is supposed to be like. For a time, there was no sin in the world. Every day was very good.

Do you see Christ in all of this? Christ is there in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Apostle John shows us how, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Son has always existed. He is one with the Father and the Spirit. Jesus is God.

We are also helped by Paul, who teaches that the world was created by, through and for Christ: "For by him [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16-17).

It should be no surprise, then, that the Jesus we meet in the Gospels has authority over creation. He was there, "in the beginning" and, more than that, "all things were created through him." Jesus is Lord of Creation.

But it is not just that the Son of God can rightly be called the

Christ. Jesus is God *and* he is man. Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."

Not only was Jesus alive at the time of creation, not only did Adam and Eve live in a world created by and for Jesus, but the sinless state of humanity in the introduction of the Bible is a pointer to the perfect life of Jesus Christ. In all these senses, Jesus is the point of the introduction.

Complication

You probably know it already, but creation gets complicated pretty quickly. Adam and Eve disobeyed God. He gave them a clear command in Genesis 2:16-17 but by Genesis 3:6 that command had been ignored. God created Adam and Eve. He made them and he had the right to expect perfect obedience. But they rebelled against God's loving authority.

As a result, for the first time, they experienced the curses associated with sin. God severed their relationship with him. He expelled them from the Garden. Work would now be difficult. Childbearing would be painful. Not only that, but the curse of sin would not just affect them, it would affect their children, and their children's children, and their children's children's children! You get the point.

The sin that entered the world under Adam's watch corrupted everything. From now on, every child born to man would be sinful. It's as if we all sinned in the Garden. Of course, if you or I were there with Adam and Eve, we would have done the same thing. In fact, we probably would have sinned sooner! They were the best humanity had to offer and they still failed. Don't you think you would have failed, too? In any event, the proof is in the pudding: we all sin. But our sin is connected to that first act of treason in the Garden. This is why Paul wrote in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."

Christians in earlier days understood this idea better than we do. The earliest Americans learned through a popular book called *The New England Primer*. Think of it as the first homeschooling curriculum. To teach the letter, "A," they taught this rhyme, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." It's true! The vast majority of the Bible is simply the unfolding and spreading of sin's curse.

Just as Michael Henchard spent most of his life in the shadow of that horrible act of selling his wife, humanity has lived in the

The Son has always existed.

He is one with the Father and the Spirit.

Jesus is God.

Creator. There's more. When the Son of God took on human flesh he did what Adam failed to do—Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus never sinned. Jesus is the pinnacle of humanity. He is the crown of creation. From now on, those of us who want to know what it means to be truly human need look no further than

shadow of Adam's sin. We see it in the flood, which only Noah and his family escaped. We see it in Israel that constantly heard God's command (just like Adam) but disobeyed (just like Adam). We see it in individuals like King David who had so much knowledge but still murdered. We see it in men like David's son,



Lord's Supper Fellowship Meal

Sunday, May 6, after the evening service. See Connections Corner for details.



Elder Recommendations

due Sunday, April 29

The Elders are soliciting your recommendations for new Elders. Part of what it means to be a congregational church is that you, Mount Vernon member, are involved in this process. Please prayerfully keep the following questions in mind as you make your recommendations:

1. Does the man exemplify the biblical qualifications of an Elder found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9?
2. Does the man have the theological convictions and boldness to stand on the Bible's authority in the face of a culture that is increasingly hostile to Christianity?
3. Does the man love the church by modeling a strong commitment to worship, the regular assembling of the church, active service and humble support of authority?
4. Does the man appreciate and agree with the church's distinctives as laid out in our Church Covenant and Statement of Faith?
5. Does the man practice good stewardship of his time, talents, and resources?

Recommendation forms can be found in the church office and are due back in the church office by Sunday, April 29. All adult male members, including staff, are eligible to be recommended.

Solomon who had so much wisdom but still rebelled. We even see it in religious types like Saul who, out of zeal for the Old Testament Law, persecuted and even killed Christians.

We see sin in our own lives, too. We've seen husbands neglect their wives. We've seen wives disrespect their husbands. We've seen children yell at their parents. We've seen employees lie to their employers. Not even Google has enough space to record the sins of humanity.

And what about you? Have you seen the "complication" of sin mess up your life?

None of us is perfect. We all fall short. Left alone we would turn away from God, forever. As a result, we all deserve God's wrath. It would be unjust for God to simply turn a blind eye to our rebellion against him. We deserve eternal punishment because we have sinned against an eternal, holy God. Where will our help come from?

Perhaps you can already see how it is that Christ is the point of this complication. Only Christ, the perfect Son of God, could rescue us from the punishment we deserve. Only Christ could pay the penalty for our sins. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said he did not come "to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." The ransom is the price that needs to be paid for someone to be released. As humans we are born in bondage to sin. The only way out is for someone to pay the price of release. That Someone is Christ.

The Old Testament teaches us our problem is always our sin and the answer is always our Savior. When God freed Israel from bondage to Egypt this was a foreshadowing of Christ freeing us from bondage to sin. When God forgave a sinner with the sacrifice of a lamb at the Temple, this was but a foreshadowing of eternal forgiveness purchased with Christ's redeeming blood. When the prophets speak of a day when "the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk" (Joel 3:18) they are prophesying the end of sin that only Christ can deliver. Jesus is the point of the complication.

Climax

The climax of the Bible is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Most of Scripture is looking forward to this momentous achievement. It is through his death and resurrection that he secured us peace forever. This victory is the grand climax of Scriptures' storyline.

It is a climax promised as early as Genesis 3:15 when the LORD tells Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." The promise is of Eve's offspring defeating Satan, bruising his head. Surely this happened that dark night when the Son of God was crucified. Yes, Satan bruised his heel when the Savior died. But the triumph belongs to God because with his death and resurrection, Jesus defeated the power of sin and death.

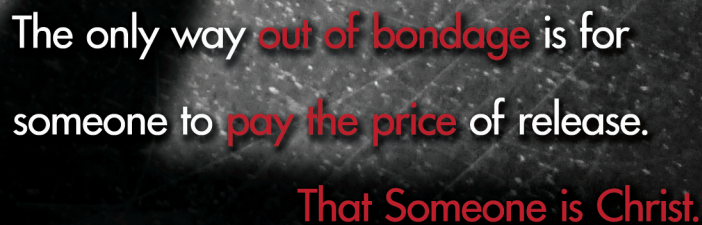
Sin and death have no answer for the redemption purchased by Christ's blood and the future promised by his resurrection.

Satan was a fool to think he ever stood a chance. Satan may have urged Herod to kill all the newborns in Judea in order to stop the reign of Jesus, but his plan would never have worked. Jesus reigned from a cross. Jesus rose from the grave. Jesus is exalted (Rev. 12:5; Acts 2:32-33). Satan is disarmed (John 12:31; Col. 2:15).

At the climax of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Michael Henchard lost everything, and he learned a valuable lesson. But at the climax of the Bible, the Son of God lost his very life and taught the world a valuable lesson: salvation comes only through him.

Do you see how Christ is the point of the climax? In Adam we all became sinners, but through Christ we may all be made righteous. Romans 5:17, "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." In other words, sin and death entered the world through Adam. But upon his death and resurrection, righteousness and life entered the world through Jesus Christ.

The cross is not a message reserved for Good Friday; it is the message to be preached every single Sunday and a message to be cherished every single hour of every single day. The cross was preached in Genesis 3. It is foreshadowed with the sacrifice of the ram for Isaac in Genesis 22. It is the point of the Passover in Exodus 12. It is the fulfillment of the Tabernacle prescribed in Exodus 26. But it is not merely the existence of sacrifice in the Old Testament that foreshadows the climax of the cross—it is the reality of sin that pervades every chapter like water filling a sponge. The problem is always our sin. The answer is always and only the cross.



The only way out of bondage is for
someone to pay the price of release.
That Someone is Christ.

Resolution

How does the divine drama end; what is the resolution? We can say the end has already come. With the arrival of Christ, with his perfect work, with his death and resurrection, and ultimately with his return, a new Story is about to begin.

We can say that the end has come in Christ, but there remains a future hope. We are looking forward to a day when our faith will give way to sight (2 Cor. 5:8; Heb. 11:1). That day will come. The new Story begins with the restoration of the world God first created. Revelation 22:1-5:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds

of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

When Christ returns, everything will be made new. We get a taste of heaven today (2 Cor. 5:17). But when Christ returns the perfect fellowship that Adam and Eve knew for a season will be restored.

In all this, we see that Christ is the point of the introduction, the solution to the complication, the heart of the climax, and the glory of the resolution.

But don't take my word for; listen to Christ himself. Jesus described himself as the focal point of the Scriptures: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). Jesus described himself as the point of every passage in the Bible: "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). For this reason, when Paul preached the Bible, he preached Christ (1 Cor. 2:2; Col. 1:26).

Christ is the thread that ties the storyline of the Bible together. He is the centerpiece of the narrative. We cannot rightly read the Bible if we don't see this. Good preaching will make this clear.

The problem is always **our sin.**

The answer is always
and only **the cross.**

I love *Consumer Reports* magazine. In the pages of this periodical, I learn how to evaluate everything from cameras to leaf blowers. There are numerous factors to be considered including price, durability, and effectiveness. How much more should we know how to evaluate a sermon? There are many measurements we could use: Did it make me laugh or cry? Did it include enough stories? Was it too severe or too light? But the most important evaluation to make is simple: regardless of the text, was Christ preached?

Five Reasons Every Sermon Should Preach Christ

It can be hard to figure out how Christ is the center of every text. I think this is one reason pastors tend to spend less time in the Old Testament, and when they are there, they often use it to package moralism instead of seeing how the story points forward to Christ. This can be frustrating to listeners who are eager to know how the Bible fits together and who are tired of hearing the same message over and over again.

GOOD FRIDAY

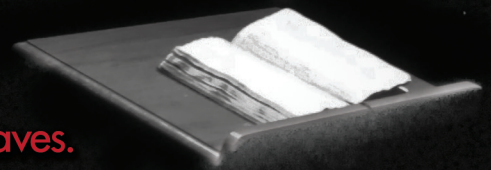
SERVICE

APRIL 6
12:00 PM

FREE CHILDCARE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN 3 & UNDER

It is not a Christian sermon until it uncovers

the beauty of Christ and his gospel which saves.



There are many reasons it is imperative that Christ be the center of every sermon. Here are five.

1. Because we are saved by faith in Christ

Every sermon that preaches Christ is an opportunity to be reminded that we are saved by grace through faith in him. We cannot trust him too deeply or too often. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that saved us, and it is this gospel that will sustain us.

This is why Paul could write that you have been reconciled in Christ's body "if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Col. 1:23).

We are not to shift from the hope of the gospel. This is the foundation upon which church and personal ministry rests. It is not a Christian sermon until it uncovers the beauty of Christ and his gospel which saves.

2. Because whom you serve is as important as how you serve

Have you ever given someone a gift only to realize that you actually gave them something you wanted? This is fairly

natural. We go shopping, see something we like, and assume that others will like it as well. This is not a good idea. Part of honoring someone else is giving them the gift they want. This requires knowing them.

Part of honoring Christ is serving him the way he wants. To do this you need to know him. This is why it is so important to listen to sermons that present to us Jesus Christ. As we get to know him better, as we see how he is the fulfillment of the Law we will better be able to serve him.

A sermon that paints in words a picture of the Savior will be a sermon that drives us to serve him better. William Hull expressed this idea well, "We are there to preach Jesus Christ as Lord. That is our awesome assignment: to put into words, in such a way that our hearers will put into deeds, the new day that is ours in Jesus Christ as Lord."

3. Because you will never exhaust the wonder of knowing Christ

Some may think that preaching Christ from every text is boring. They ask questions like, "Won't I tire of learning more about Jesus? Won't I tire of being reminded again and again of my need for Christ and his provision of everlasting life?"

FRANK DISCUSSIONS

FOR MEN ONLY

On Wednesday, April 25, starting at 7:45 pm, the men of Mount Vernon will resume our open discussion about living and fighting for purity in today's culture. We will focus on two questions:

1. Are you committed to sexual purity?
2. Are you planning for sexual purity?

Guests are welcome to attend. Contact Doug Young at 404-255-3133 or dougyoung@mvbchurch.org if you have any questions.

I want to put to death the misguided notion that being reminded of the gospel is boring. How many of us go to the beach or the mountains every year without growing tired of the view? There is always something new to see. A new hue of red in the colors of the sunset, a crag in the mountain we had never before noticed. There is something about the sheer vastness of nature that defies boredom.

How many husbands grow more in love with their wives each year? I pastor a church with many senior men. They regale me with stories of their wives. They still love the wives of their youth—now, more than ever. How is it we can look at a person so often and still grow more deeply in love with them? Because a simple relationship is more complex than any star in the sky.

The richness of nature's splendor and even the electricity between two lovers will always pale in comparison to the profound majesty of knowing Christ. Every biblical sermon is an occasion to plumb the depths of the Savior. He is a mine of inexhaustible riches.

4. Because you need the grace of Christ to sustain you

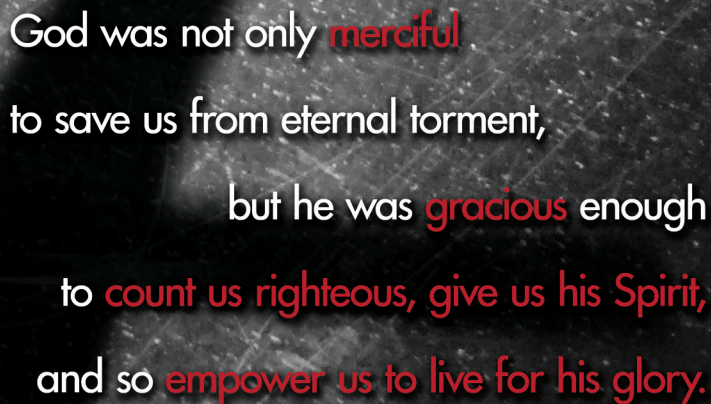
It is amazing how often we try to live life on our own. If we have to move a heavy box, how many of us try to do this alone? This is true when it comes to the various challenges we face as believers. We try to collect tips from any source we can find: the advice column in the newspaper, our favorite blog, a motivational preacher. We want a list of rules that will help us become better spouses, better parents, better children, better employees, and better friends.

But no matter how much instruction we receive, it will never be sufficient to prepare us for the trials that lie ahead. Only Christ is sufficient. Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

And so we need to know the One living in us, the One fighting for us, the One who gave himself to save us. Our job as believers is to find a home in him. The job of preachers is to uncover Christ in the Scriptures, nothing more and nothing less. The job of listeners is to turn to the Christ of the Scriptures.

A sermon that tells you what to do more than it unfolds what Christ has done will leave you feeling battered and broken. Worse than that, sermons like this leave us thinking that Jesus died to make you a better friend when, in reality, he died to make you a friend of God, to reconcile a wrathful God to sinful humanity. The only way this was possible was through the death of the perfect, human, and divine sacrifice. God was not only merciful to save us from eternal torment, but he was gracious enough to count us righteous, give us his Spirit, and so empower us to live for his glory.

It is good to leave a sermon knowing what to do. Preaching the Savior without demanding a response is not preaching. But if preachers fail to make it clear that is the grace of God that produces obedience in our lives, they are creating cults, not churches. As a preacher, I want to be part of a church that is



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blown away by the grace of God. The only way I know to do that is to show how the grace of God sustains us. This requires preaching Christ himself.

5. Because only Christ can dethrone sin

In the opening scene of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Indiana Jones is in the jungle, standing before a small golden idol resting on a platform. In order to steal the idol without triggering an ancient alarm, Jones has to replace it with bag of sand of equal weight. Jones does just that and, for a moment, all is well. But soon the platform senses the difference. The alarm system is triggered. Darts start flying, boulders start moving and Jones has to run for his life.

Spiritually speaking, too often we do the same thing. We try to replace the idols of our lives with bags of sand. If we struggle with an idol of lust, we try to replace it with a bag of will power. If we struggle with the idol of insecurity, we try to replace it with a bag of self-confidence. But these are only temporary fixes. Eventually, lust and insecurity will have their way with us. They are too strong to be defeated by bags of sand.

To defeat sin we need to replace it with something brighter and better. For this reason we need Christ. If we feel the weight of our sin robbing us of a life that pleases him, then we need to ask ourselves the question, "Am I looking to Christ and to what he has done for me?"

There are not enough bags of sand in the world to replace our sin, but there is Christ who defeated it. In Christ we will find power to resist temptation and forgiveness when we fail.

Spend the rest of your life mining Scripture with a body of believers that is utterly dependent upon Christ. Only Christ can dethrone our sin because he defeated it once for all. That is why he must be proclaimed.

When you hear a sermon, the first question you should ask is, "Was Christ proclaimed?" That is not enough to determine if the sermon was good, but it is the right place to start. Christ is the centerpiece, the point of every text. He should, therefore, be the point of every sermon. ■

~Aaron Menikoff

This article is adapted from a sermon given on March 21, 2010.

April 2012

1 Palm Sunday ▶ 10:30 am Lord's Supper	2	3	4	5	6 Good Friday Church Office Closed ▶ 12:00 pm Good Friday Service	7
8 Easter Sunday ▶ 6:00 pm No Evening Service	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Guest Preacher: ▶ 10:30 am Bryan Pillsbury	16 ▶ 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon	17	18	19	20	21
22 ▶ 10:30 am New Parent Recognition	23	24	25 ▶ 7:45 pm Frank Discussions	26	27	28 ▶ 8:30 am Property Cleanup & Workday
29	30					

EVENTS ◀ ▶ BIRTHDAYS

Churchwide ▼

April 1 10:30 am Lord's Supper

We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationships with one another in preparation for this celebration of Christ's death and resurrection.

April 6 12:00 pm Good Friday Service
(See ad on page 9.)

April 8 6:00 pm No Evening Service

There will be no evening service on Easter Sunday. We encourage members to use this time to be in fellowship with family and one another.

April 28 8:30 am Property Cleanup & Workday

Jim Clayton, the Deacon of Building & Grounds, is organizing a number of projects that we need your help in completing. After a few hours of work, we'll have lunch together at Slopes BBQ.

Children ▼

April 22 10:30 am New Parent Recognition

We will have a time during the morning service to recognize and pray for parents of new children.

Adults ▼

April 16 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon

Everyone 50 and older is invited to the monthly RW&A luncheon. Bring a covered dish.

April 25 7:45 pm Frank Discussions
(See ad on page 10.)

1 Melissa Jackson
Spencer Zaghikian
2 Joy Branch
Evelyn Norwood
3 Nell Baldwin
Jane E. Hall
Lauren Kail
4 Ragan DeFreese
5 Bob Earl
7 Rodney Barry
9 Drew Clayton
12 David Carver
13 Amelia Holmes
Rick Hutchins
14 Susan Lawrence
15 Peter Miller
16 Pat Arnold
Teresa Dean
17 Jo Anne Tyson
18 Angi Bemiss
Josh Brundage
Alex Pattillo

19 Dustin Butts
Luke Gurley
Cole Warren
20 Donna Anderson
Dennis Mosby
Madison Reid
21 Dan Nable
Tim Newlands
22 Jena Coen
Ruby Fussell
Mark Hughes
23 Lesley Wetherington
24 Pam Hutchins
25 Paul Hoover
Paige Pillsbury
27 Jane Payne
28 Stephanie Nash
29 Jake Anderson
Donna Brundage

Knowing MVBC

Knowing MVBC is a four-session course that introduces you to life at Mount Vernon, covering the following topics:

• **Knowing Our Commitments: Church Covenant**

• **Knowing Our Beliefs: Statement of Faith**

• **Knowing Our Structure: Leadership**

• **Knowing How to Be Involved: Discipling & Serving**

Anyone interested in membership or knowing more about life at Mount Vernon is invited to **Knowing MVBC**. All four sessions will be offered Sunday, May 6 (session 1 at 9:15 am in the Mount Vernon Room and sessions 2-4 starting at 12:15 pm in Room 232). Lunch will be provided.

You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin, by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133, or by email at info@mvbchurch.org.



Mount Vernon

BAPTIST CHURCH

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www.mvbchurch.org