



REFLECTIONS

Grace
OPC

Applications

By Pastor Brian De Jong

James 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Sometimes people think that teaching the word of God is excessively difficult. “How on earth do you prepare and preach two sermons each week?” they wonder. There is a fair amount of work involved in “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Good pastors will spend time in their studies, poring over the Hebrew or the Greek. They will diligently read and consider commentaries as part of the exegetical process. Much thought and prayer goes into every sermon that is worth its weight in salt.

Yet I would maintain that such preparation is not the really hard work. And so is the “really hard work” the actual preaching of the sermon in the worship service? Is that what I mean? Again, it does take a fair amount of labor to preach well among God’s people. There needs to be clarity of thought, good organization of ideas, and precision of expression and presentation, if a sermon is going to hit the bullseye. If a pastor hasn’t understood the passage adequately, if his sermon lacks a clear organizational structure, or if he mumbles, or endlessly repeats himself, or chooses words that don’t communicate to his hearers, then his sermon may fail to measure up. Yes, preaching is hard work, but it is not the hardest work.

By now you’re probably getting impatient to know what is the hardest work – what is “really hard work.” In my opinion, the hardest thing is application. Not in understanding applications, or explaining applications, but instead in

doing applications. It is difficult to prove yourselves doers of the word. Doing what the word says is where the real challenges come in.

What is the alternative? What might people do instead of applying God’s word? It is not uncommon for people to sit through a sermon, and take some pleasure in hearing what they’re hearing. They may fully agree, and give their own silent, private “Amen” to what the preacher is saying from the pulpit. On the way out of the sanctuary they may

sincerely thank the pastor for his sermon. “Great sermon, Pastor! Thanks!”

But as they wind through the fellowship hall, in search of the choicest of refreshments, and as they stir a little sugar into their coffee, thoughts of the sermon slowly fade into the background. After Sunday School, they have mostly forgotten all but the main points of the message. By the time that day is dying in the west, memories of the sermon have been laid to rest.

Monday morning, the alarm clock rings, and another week is begun. In the hurry scurry of daily schedules, much more pressing details fill their minds and hearts. Church has been overcome by work, and it is another day in the rat race of life. If someone stopped them on the street and asked, “What did your pastor preach about on Sunday morning?” they would need a good while to call up the topic to the top of their brains. This is the experience of many, many “forgetful



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Mnemonics...

- *Appetizer Fellowship, March 1st*
- *Session Meeting, March 10th*
- *Joint Service, March 15th*
- *Men and Boy’s Leadership Breakfast, March 28th*

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This is What It's All About

By Brian Wingard

Through the past several weeks our congregation has been touched by death. One who has died has been a member and others parents of those who are members. It is understandable if many among us may have asked the question, "Why so many deaths at this time?" At the deepest level of the secret workings of God's providence, it may be a question whose answer is hidden from us. Our catechism tells us that "bold and curious searching into [God's] secrets" (Larger Catechism Q&A105) is one of the sins forbidden by the first commandment. The Lord's Revelation, however, does not treat death as a secret, nor is it silent about lessons that may be drawn from it. We may, then, rightly ask, what can we learn from these melancholy occurrences?

There is a tendency in people, both believers and unbelievers alike, to keep death at arm's length and confront it only when it intrudes upon us. This is truly natural for unbelievers, for the Bible speaks of them as being subject to slavery through the fear of death all their lives. (cf. Hebrews 2:15) For believers, however, this attitude may unintentionally falsely testify that we have no greater hope than our unbelieving friends and neighbors. Deliverance from sin and its wages is, nonetheless, what the gospel is all about. This deliverance comes, not through the avoidance of death, but through the conquest of death by Jesus Christ in His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "If we have hoped in Christ for this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." (1 Cor. 15: 19) The church broadly speaking, however, often appear to give more regard to Marx's criticism of religion as "the opiate of the people," than to the apostle's inspired declaration. So there is a constant search for *relevancy* in this creation, and the promise of eternal life and the resurrection is minimized.

The message of the conquest of death, however, is irrelevant only as long as death *is* kept at arm's length. Death will, nevertheless, enter every family and still every heart in the grave, barring those alive at the coming of the Lord. The French 18th century freethinker and atheist, Voltaire, despised religion during his active life. Be that as it may, the terrors and rage that overtook him upon his deathbed are said to have caused one of his care givers to remark that she never wanted to attend an atheist during his final illness again.

Let us be clear, the gospel has many consequences that have great relevance to this world. The exercise of the "royal law of liberty," as James calls it, certainly falls within this category. The strength that many have found in faith in Christ to break the chains of addiction or other enslaving behaviors can also be mentioned. However, these are *consequences* of the gospel; the gospel does not terminate upon them. The gospel terminates in eternal and everlasting life. Moreover, eternal life is centered in Jesus Christ who said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and he who lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11:26)

Jesus proved these words provisionally in moments after He said them by raising Lazarus from the dead. He proved it absolutely not many days later, when He rose from His own

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This is What it's All About Continued....

tomb, thus vindicating His saving work of the cross. This is what the gospel provides that is found nowhere else in all creation—victory over death. “Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory, where, death is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15: 54b-57)

At the end of the day, a Christian funeral is not an extraneous interruption in the life of the congregation. It is our opportunity to witness together concerning the absolute truth of the gospel! The death of death in the death of Christ, and the “sure and certain hope of the resurrection” is truly what the gospel is all about.

Update from Malawi

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We thanked the Lord because we had a good visitation to Mozambique. We departed here in Malawi on Friday last week. We had a nice journey to and from, I and my fellow friend Malizani Million. We had a wonderful service, but they told us the challenges they experience there. They built another structure, but they told us that they are very scared because some other people intimidate them that they will burn it down again. As I told you in my precious email that they don't know about Christianity, but they are based on ancestor's beliefs and spirit rituals. When we reached them with the word of God, they received it, discerning that what was proclaimed to them was not the word of man, but the word of God. They believed on Jesus Christ to be their personal savior but not only for themselves but because of the grace of God to favor them. Reaching the point of belief in the word of God and then becoming Christians. Although some of their relatives criticized them, they did not decline to stand on Jesus Christ. We have them some books, Bibles, and catechisms to encourage them. You can see below some good fruits: They started a Sunday School class, teaching children memory verses and the Lord's prayer.

The teacher of this class brought the children in front of us in order to show us how they performed the things they have been taught. The children spoke memory verses, then sang a song, and recited the Lord's prayer. But it is our prayer for God's favor to build the church, for God's favor to be evident in the area around. We pray the church would bring much glory to God and shame on those who have been speaking that they will burn down the church. The church asked us if we could assist them with the iron sheet, but they need 46 sheets which is almost \$350.

In Christ,

Peter Chikaonda





What Muslims Admire about Christ



Titles of the Christ - Online Radio Series

The celebration of Christmas is widely watched and discussed by urban Muslims. Some even join in decorating their homes and exchanging gifts. In major Arab cities with Muslim majorities, it is not unusual to even hear Christmas music and songs played in shops and malls. As with most cultural Christians, most Muslims understand Christmas to be the dazzling and sentimental social event. Yet, some do

give it deeper thought and ask daring questions.

Some of those responding to gospel programs over the radio or internet, share their thoughts:

TJ of Iraq - *I do realize that the birth of Jesus (Issa) is a very important event for Christians. The fact that heavenly and supernatural happenings accompanied it makes me ask the question - Why didn't the Jews believe in him?*

The staff brainstorm about how to best answer such questions. In this context, it was vital to point out that most of the early followers of Christ were Isradites who believed the message of the Old Testament and recognized that Christ had fulfilled it. Sadly, the majority lacked sufficient knowledge of their Scriptures or held preconceived religious and political ideas that blocked their understanding.

SA of Bahrain had a different question: *It is true that Jesus' birth was miraculous, but it doesn't make sense that God would become man in him. Please explain this.*

This is a very common Muslim reaction to some Christian teachings. It requires an honest biblical response. This time it was helpful to respond in part with the words of a convert from **Khartoum**:



Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness

— Matthew 5:6

God is the Creator of man. So, because He truly loves man and wants him restored to Himself, He decided to do what is required [for restoration]. Because He is God, He can do anything, including becoming man.

It is encouraging how others react:

MM of Egypt wrote: *It does make sense that God is able to come to us as one of us to save us.*

AK of Yemen writes: *Sure, we do know and believe the Gospel (al-Injil) which clearly shows that Jesus (Issa) was not only human, but also divine.*

FO, a North African lady says: *I have often wondered about the celebration of Christmas that I see on TV from all over the world...*

She went on to talk about

Christ as the most uniquely intriguing person in history. She pointed out His influence on those who follow Him: *Gentle and positive...* She goes on to say: *Nobody else in humanity resembles him in contributions to the good of the world... I am amazed that in our own Koran, neither our Prophet Mohammed nor any other prophet named is endowed with such unique titles ...*

She lists many Koranic statements that set Jesus apart from all others: *born of a virgin without man... the very Word of God... uttered directly by the Spirit of God... all-knowing... morally perfect... infallibly sinless (unlike all other prophets)... Satan could not entice Him (unlike all other prophets)... manifested power to create and control the elements of nature... healed the sick... raised the dead... defeated death itself.*

Finally she quotes a Koranic statement of Christ's promise to His followers of eternal blessing, as the one who alone will judge all humans. She concludes: *I call on all people, including our Muslim people, to love Him and celebrate His birth. I do love him dearly.*

We thank God that over the internet many more Muslims are exposed to the gospel. Now it is so much easier, even than just a few years ago, to promptly connect to answer their questions. The MERF Arabic gospel sites also provide many free resources for download. Detailed answers are available for seekers and spiritual nourishment for new and mature believers. Please pray for the faithful staff and volunteers involved and that the Lord continues to bless these vital media ministries.



Straight Talk on Jesus the Christ is one of many free downloads at the Issa-alMasih gospel website.

SOCIAL FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES 2020

February 14, 2020	Taco / Game night	Ladies Group
March 1, 2020	Evening Fellowship / Appetizers	Ladies Group
April 5, 2020	Fellowship Lunch	Ladies Group
May 14, 2020	Anchor of Hope Baby Shower	Ladies Group
June 3, 2020	Bay Beach	Deb / Wendy
June 7, 2020	Fellowship Lunch	Ladies Group
June 25, 2020	Mini Golf	Wendy
July 4, 2020	Golf – Sunset Hills	Roger & Deb
July 12, 2020	Men Serve Fellowship Lunch	Pastor Brian & Crew
July 17, 2020	Fire on North Beach	Jeff
July 20 – 23, 2020	Camp Westminster	
August 13, 2020	Church Picnic	Ladies Group
September 10-12, 2020	Church Campout / pitch in supper	Pastor Brian
September 25, 2020	Worldview Movie Night	Pastor Brian
October 9, 2020	Sub / Game night	Sara / Wendy
October 31, 2020	Reformation Conference - Snack	Ladies Group
November 1, 2020	Reformation Conference Lunch	Ladies Group
November 14, 2020	Harvest Home	Ladies Group
November 26, 2020	Thanksgiving Football Game	Jonny Arndt
December 6, 2020	Evening Fellowship / Soup & Bread	Ladies Group
January 8, 2021	Bowling / Pizza / Game night	Pastor Brian
February 12, 2021	Taco / Game night	Ladies Group



Designed for His Glory

*Cultivating Our Time
and Talents for the Kingdom*

2020 New Hope Women's Conference

Friday, April 3rd

&

Saturday, April 4th

New Hope OPC

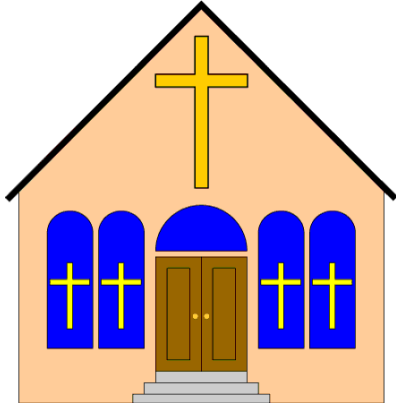
Guest Speaker

Hannah Anderson

For more details see the bulletin board in the fellowship hall



Joint Service



The Joint Service at Calvary has been rescheduled for Sunday, March 15th at 6:00pm.

40 Days For Life

One of the Social Fellowship Committee's ideas for this year was to be a part of the 40 days For Life, a faith-based effort involving a peaceful, prayerful presence outside an abortion facility asking God to put an end to abortion. This will be from February 26 -April 5, from 7 am until 7 pm. We can sign up to do a time that works. If you would like to participate, please contact Roger or Deborah Arndt and we can select sometimes that work best.



March Birthdays

Paul Damkot	1 st
Lynn Baatz	5 th
Oliver Mamazza	6 th
Tammy Voskuil	8 th
Margaret Adam	10 th
Caitlin Ver Velde	19 th
William Wilke	23 rd
Tim Voskuil	24 th
Joe Mamazza	29 th



March Anniversaries

Jeff & Wendy Froh
March 1st, 24 years





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

March 2020



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Appetizer and Dessert Night	2	3	4 Prayer Meeting	5	6	7
8 Daylight Savings begins	9	10 Session Meeting	11 Prayer Meeting	12	13 Home missions Banquet in Chicago	14
15 Joint Service	16	17	18 Prayer Meeting	19 Presbytery Seminar at Hope OPC, Grayslake	20 Presbytery at Hope OPC, Grayslake, IL	21
22	23	24	25 Prayer Meeting	26	27	28 Men & Boys Leadership Breakfast
29 The Lord's Supper AM	30	31				

Mozzarella Stuffed Chicken Meatballs

Ingredients:

Sauce

- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 medium onion, grated
- 1/4 cup dry red wine
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Meatballs:

- 1 pound ground chicken
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs (Unseasoned regular breadcrumbs would work just fine.)
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella, cut into roughly 1/2-inch cubes
- 16 ounces spaghetti, cooked, for serving

Directions:

1. Stir together the tomatoes, onion, wine, tomato paste, garlic, basil, oregano, and salt in your 6-quart slow cooker. Combine the chicken, egg, parmesan, breadcrumbs, basil, oregano, garlic powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Be sure not to over mix this, as it can make the meat tough.
2. Scoop out 1 tablespoon of the meat mixture, form it into a disk, place a mozzarella piece in the center, and wrap the meat around the cheese, rolling to form into a ball. Repeat with the remaining meat and cheese. Carefully place the meatballs into your slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6 hours.
3. Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Serve meatballs over cooked pasta.



*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty
soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

“He is precious.”

1 Peter 2:7

As all the rivers run into the sea, so all delights centre in our Beloved. The glances of his eyes outshine the sun: the beauties of his face are fairer than the choicest flowers: no fragrance is like the breath of his mouth. Gems of the mine, and pearls from the sea, are worthless things when measured by his preciousness. Peter tells us that Jesus is precious, but he did not and could not tell us *how* precious, nor could any

of us compute the value of God’s unspeakable gift. Words cannot set forth the preciousness of the Lord Jesus to his people, nor fully tell how essential he is to their satisfaction and happiness. Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty a sore famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining, but Christ had hidden himself, and all the world was black to you; or it was night, and since the bright and morning star was gone, no other star could yield you so much as a ray of light. What a howling wilderness is this world without our Lord! If once he hideth himself from us, withered are the flowers of our garden; our pleasant fruits decay; the birds suspend their songs, and a tempest overturns our hopes. All earth’s candles cannot make daylight if the Sun of Righteousness be eclipsed. He is the soul of our soul, the light of our light, the life of our life. Dear reader, what wouldst thou do in the world without him, when thou wakest up and lookest forward to the day’s battle? What wouldst thou do at night, when thou comest home jaded and weary, if there were no door of fellowship between thee and Christ? Blessed be his name, he will not suffer us to try our lot without him, for Jesus never forsakes his own. Yet, let the thought of *what life would be without him* enhance his preciousness.

Evening, March 1st, C.H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded...

hearers who delude themselves.”

James describes it graphically: James 1:23 *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.*

The effectual doer of the word stores away the word he has heard in his mind, and he recalls it for the purpose of practicing it. He is searching his life for opportunities to apply what he has learned, and he does so deliberately. If the pastor preaches a message on “Loving Your Enemies,” then he begins considering who his enemies might be, and how he can love them in practical ways. If the sermon was about “Trusting God in Times of Sorrow,” he ponders the sorrows of his life, and how he has responded in the past to such afflictions. He considers how he can “count it all

joy” when he faces trials in his life.

Actively applying God’s word to our everyday lives is very hard work – often because it challenges us to change from our old, sinful patterns of conduct and attitude, and to embrace more righteous alternatives. We are embracing the ministry of God’s word in “teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness.” It does that work – that sometimes painful work – in our hearts and lives.

I see this in my own life – the need as a man, a pastor, a husband, a father, to practice what I preach. If I don’t apply my own preaching in my own life, how can I realistically expect the congregation to do the same? And I will confess – it is hard. Not impossible, but never easy. Yet I am comforted in this sweet verse: Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*