

Union Grove Christian Church Happenings

An Occasional Newsletter from the Union Grove Christian Church, Eheart, Virginia

February 2015

A Good Sermon

Recently I listened to a sermon preached by a friend of mine and thought, “That was a good sermon.” That got me thinking — what exactly is a “good sermon?” On a practical level, what does that phrase mean? So, in no particular order, here are my thoughts on the matter.

- **ENGAGE.** This means a sermon should be interesting in some way and keep one's attention; a good sermon should ‘engage’ people. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” One of the main purposes of a Bible discourse is to help people grow in faith. But, if their minds are not engaged then such growth is impossible. Honestly, one of my biggest fears is that I will look out at our congregation some Sunday morning and see everyone asleep!
- **ELEMENTS.** For a sermon to be “good” the elements or content of the message must be Biblical. It is God’s Word that is inspired. I love classical literature, works by such authors as Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Theodore Dreiser, Earnest Hemingway, etc.; their writings may be inspiring, but they are not inspired. A good sermon should be filled with Bible elements, for such content is essential to nourish the soul.
- **EXHORT.** If a sermon does not exhort the listener in some way, can it properly be called “good?” This exhortation could be to believe something — perhaps a better understanding of the resurrection, or exactly how God saves a sinner by grace, God’s providential control, etc. The exhortation could be to some type of behavior — what God expects from us as we live out our daily lives. Either way a good sermon leaves people with something to do.
- **EQUIP.** Similar to exhortation, a good sermon will equip the hearer. This could fall into the realm of providing the tools necessary so the hearer can defend the basic tenets of Christianity. Again, this could instruct the listener as to what God expects from him or her — equipping us to live our lives at work, play, with family, in finances, etc.
- **EXALT.** Finally, a good sermon should always exalt both God and the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter how magnificently composed and presented a sermon may be, if it does not exalt God I don’t think it can be sincerely called “good.”



I can't say that I do this each and every time I preach, but I can say that I strive to do just that. My goal each and every Sunday is to present the Bible and the God of the Bible in an engaging and effective manner so that we do indeed, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Feel free to let me know how I’m doing. I’d love the feedback.

Proud to be your preacher,
John

Our Republic *Depends* on Christianity?

Dave Miller, Ph. D.

Much disagreement exists regarding the foundations of civil government and the perpetuation of civilization and society. The current “politically correct” viewpoint insists that the strength of America lies in its pluralism — the acceptance and celebration of differing religions, ideologies, and philosophies. The widespread attempt to sanitize American schools, courts, and government by eradicating all references to God, Christ, and the Bible are a manifestation of this belief. The thought is that the stability and continuance of the nation lies in its willingness to embrace diversity, toleration, and acceptance. In stark contrast, the architects of American civilization stated just the opposite.

Jedidiah Morse was born in Woodstock, Connecticut on August 23, 1761, the son of a Congregationalist minister. After being home-schooled, he graduated from Yale in 1783 — the



year the Revolutionary War ended. Morse published the first American textbook on geography, *Geography Made Easy*, in 1784. His work in that field earned for him the title “Father of American Geography.” His works

were adopted widely in schools, colleges, and libraries and were used in thousands of homes. His eldest son, Samuel F.B. Morse, became a famous inventor, even developing the Morse Code (“Morse, Jedidiah,” 2007).

In an election sermon given at Charlestown, Massachusetts on April 25, 1799, the American patriot offered the following chilling warning — an observation not unlike many of the Founders:

To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of

that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom, and approximate the miseries of complete despotism. All efforts to destroy the foundations of our holy religion, ultimately tend to the subversion also of our political freedom and happiness. **Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them** (1799, p.9, emp. added).

If Morse was correct, America is in a dire predicament — literally teetering on the brink of national disaster and destruction. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” (Psalm 33:12).

REFERENCES

Morse, Jedidiah (1799), *A Sermon, Exhibiting the Present Dangers and Consequent Duties of the Citizens of the United States of America* (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin), [On-line]: URL:<http://www.archive.org/details/sermonexhibiting00morsrich>.

“Morse, Jedidiah” (2007), *Encyclopedia Britannica*, [On-line]: URL:<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9053833>

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Editorial comment — the above article is not included in our newsletter to arouse any “doom and gloom,” or “woe is America,” or any similar sentiment. Our purpose was simply to put forth another example of an early American leader who espoused the idea that Christianity was not only important, but was in reality the bedrock upon which the country was founded. As you are well aware, this plain concept delineated by the Founders is under direct assault in our country today.

So, rather than discourage, the article was intended to motivate us to stay true to the foundational doctrines of Christianity and to continue to live by and seek to spread the good news of Christ — the gospel of peace.