

The primacy of Preaching without the exclusion of caring for the church

Acts 6:1-7
3rd Jan 2015

SUMMARY

In the first week of June we began this church plant and we decided what better place to start our preaching, than in the book of Acts which speaks of the beginnings of the early church.

What we have uncovered so far from the very beginning of Acts is a flowing narrative; the book begins with Jesus giving the last commands to His disciples before HIS ascension into glory and His disciples stepping out into the world.

And the Apostles after **being arrested and beaten for preaching leave rejoicing** that they were counted **worthy to suffer dishonour for the name of Jesus...**

And now we enter our passage;

TEXT

Up to this point **we have seen** how the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus was being threatened **from outside** the church...The rulers, elders, scribes, captain of the Temple, the Pharisees, The Sadducees, the whole Sanhedrin...has been trying to stop the preaching of the gospel...

Now we are exposed to the ugly truth that the preaching of the Gospel can even be threatened **from inside the church...**

Let me show you the scene as we introduce the problem then the solution.

So this is what is happening; verse;

Acts 6:1

1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number

[So the church is growing, more and more people are coming to the household of Christ]

a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

...The church is growing, more and more people are being united with different backgrounds...and division arises! **One group is being overlooked**, while another group **is being favoured**...

So is this all of the problem? Well, no? The next verse elaborates on the affects of this division...

Acts 6:2

2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that **we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables**.

The serving of tables, means the care of the needy, the support of the church members whether it is through money or food.

There's the issue...some of the needy people are being neglected by the church and **grumbings** are starting with the people of God, which is causing division and **threatening the preaching of the gospel!**

Because if the apostles have to look after **the day-to-day well-being of the people of the church** [and the church keeps growing] – they will be overwhelmed but how much to do, that they will neglect the most important aspect to their calling; **the preaching of the Word of God!**

For the **importance to the growth** of the church lies in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus!

Romans 1:16–17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,

Preaching the gospel is what is what has been emphasised all the way to this point. Look at how the last first of chapter 5 ends, then our passage begins and ends;

Acts 5:42

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease **teaching and preaching** [not just general theology but] that **the Christ is Jesus**.

Acts 6:1

1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number,

[There is growth through the preaching of Jesus as the Christ – then we have our problem that threatens the preaching which is resolved – then]

Acts 6:7

7 And the **word of God continued to increase**, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Providence, when it comes to salvation, your task and mine; is to avoid being distracted from preaching the gospel of Jesus – **to open the door to the Lion's cage and then get out of the way**.

But at the same time that we focus our efforts on preaching the gospel we cannot neglect the people who are added to the church...and **hence the solution**;

Acts 6:3

3... pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, **whom we will appoint to this duty**.

Now **I am not saying** that we should not help anyone outside these church grounds. I am not saying that! **What I am saying**, is that your blessings and your love must **begin inside the family of**

God and when you see that you have more to give, while meeting the needs of those in the household of faith, then go outside the church.

Galatians 6:10

10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and **ESPECIALLY** to those who are of the household of faith.

Your hearts should be set to do good **especially** to those in household of faith. If you do not have your heart set to care for those around you in Providence – you are not doing the will of your Heavenly Father.

Please Providence let us not be like the narrow-minded, the ones that constantly look for loop holes in God's word...Do not read this verse as though the emphasis **is on everyone**...

As though it reads something like;

So then, as we have opportunity, **LET US DO GOOD TO EVERYONE, AND if you have any leftovers give to those of the household of faith....**

Do not read this verse that way...Do not sin by twisting God's Word to say something it does not say...it says...

let us do good to everyone, and **ESPECIALLY** to those who are of the household of faith.

Why what is so important about doing good to the household of faith...?

There **are many reasons** as to why, but I would like to give you **two reasons**, then **what I consider one of the most**, if not the most important reason, why we should look after those in Providence before we head out **to care for the needy of this world**;

Allow me to bring a few passages together that show what Jesus thought about His disciples.

REASON #1

If we neglect even the smallest gesture to one of Jesus' disciples we forfeit blessings and reward...

In Matt 10, Jesus speaks to His disciples encouraging them in verse 40, that when they go out...whoever receives them receives Jesus, and whoever receives Jesus, receives the Father...

Matthew 10:42

42 And whoever gives one of **these little ones** even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Jesus says that even the smallest gesture...like a glass of water, some comforting words, a warm hug...towards a disciple of Jesus will be **rewarded by our King**.

Jesus desires to reward you and I for even the smallest gesture of goodwill to His disciples...why would we want to reject God's blessings?

REASON #2

Jesus considers **His disciples, all who do God's will as the measure of His true family**, rather than genetics! And so should we...

Jesus made this very point;

Mark 3:33–35

33 [Jesus said], "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!

35 For **whoever does the will of God**, he is my brother and sister and mother."

This is shocking!! Because let me ask you; is your unbelieving family closer to you than these brother and sisters? It should give

us pause because **Jesus is redefining family** before your very ears!!

MAIN REASON

But the main reason, if not the most important reason why we should care first and foremost for those in the household of faith...

In Mathew 25 Jesus speaks about the final judgment. He says that when He comes in glory the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate people one from another as sheep from goats...

Bear in mind we have just seen how Jesus accepts His disciples as His true brothers and sisters...And the He says this;

Matthew 25:31–46

34 ... 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

35 **For** I was hungry and you gave me food, **I was** thirsty and you gave me drink, **I was** a stranger and you welcomed me,

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see **you** hungry and feed **you**, or thirsty and give **you** drink?

40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, **as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.**'

Think about it Providence – How you treat one another is how you treat your King, your Lord, your God – **let that sink in**. How you care for the least of Jesus' brothers shows **what you think of Jesus!**

We **mistreat or neglect** even the least within the church body, and Jesus says we do it to Him! This is so **comforting** and yet so **convicting!**

Later as we progress in this wonderful book of Acts we will see Jesus make a grander statement than this one, one that should bring solidarity to all of us here at Providence...

When Saul, before he became the Apostle Paul was persecuting Christians looking to put them to death Acts 9 begins this way;

Acts 9:1–5

1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,

3...went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.

4 And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, **why are you persecuting me?**”

5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.**”

Jesus identifies Himself very closely to His disciples...to persecute the disciples of Jesus is to persecute Jesus...

To neglect the needy of the church is to neglect your King?

What is your new Years Resolution? Will it be to join me to pray together more...Or could it be that the Lord is calling you to be one that looks after His own...?

Amen