

275 *Preaching(?) the good news*

I think we established last time^[274] that ‘evangelism’¹ is a (relatively) modern and unbiblical concept, but ‘Brian’ responded, ‘Yes, but we’re definitely told to preach the gospel.’ OK, but what does ‘preach’ mean? Words change their meaning over the years; here’s OED:

Deliver a sermon or religious address to an assembled group of people, typically in church
– *Publicly proclaim or teach (a religious message or belief)*
– *Earnestly advocate (a belief or course of action)*
– *Give moral advice to someone in a pompously self-righteous way*

Should we all deliver sermons, or publicly proclaim?! Here’s a quick summary of ‘preach’:

Matthew/Mark say Jesus ‘preached repentance’ (metanoia, mind-changing, rethinking).

Luke (for Gentiles, cf. Mt/Mk for Jews) has Jesus ‘preaching the gospel (of the kingdom)’.

(Interestingly, John has no preaching at all – more about how Jesus related to individuals.)

In Acts, they ‘preached the good news (of the kingdom), or ‘preached the word (of God)’.

The epistles talk about preaching ‘Christ (crucified)’ and ‘the gospel (of God/Christ)’.

Could we see it as just ‘communicating the good news about Jesus’? Yes, but we’ve thought before about people’s very different versions of what constitutes ‘good news’. So, with no time spent on theological accuracy, here’s my rough summary of what I **now** try to communicate, alongside what I **used to** communicate. I’ve chosen the headings ‘witness’ and ‘evangelism’ as they describe what I try to do (or not do).

¹ That is to say, the biblical ‘evangelist’ is **not** someone who ‘seeks to convert others to the Christian faith, especially by public preaching’.

	Witness	Evangelism
Contact, then...	inclusion	persuasion
	community and sharing	top-down telling, individualistic (me and my salvation)
	love and acceptance, whatever your view	the Bible sets the standard of right and wrong
If you doubt...	that's fine; we all have doubts	you can't be a full member
Underlying theology	God's loving acceptance, but, realistically...	We are rejected by God unless...
	...we need God's help to live as God wants, so the cross provides the way and the power (expiation of the stain of sin), then...	...we accept that God punished Jesus instead of us; believe that, and you're forgiven (propitiation of God's anger), then...
	...we work hard to live a life of service, in gratitude, in the power of the Holy Spirit.	...we work hard to live a life of service, in gratitude, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Other issues	sounds a bit vague and wishy-washy	crime-and-punishment based
What if they refuse to believe?	they are still welcome, on their own terms	we preached the gospel, they rejected it, that's their fault
'Justification by faith'?	trusting in Jesus, whose death washes away our sin / gives us power to overcome it	trusting in Jesus, so his death protects us from the wrath of God
Hell?	our life is sustained by God's love, so if we finally reject that love, we will cease to exist	God's punishment will rest upon us (for ever?), since we refused to accept Jesus' sacrificial death
Judgment?	restoration – finally setting things right	retribution – people finally getting what they deserve

Sorry if this is too polarised; I'm just trying to contrast 'what we've always been taught'.

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