

Theology Breakfast: Spirituality and the word.

What would you say?

You get into a chat with someone beside you at the end of church, someone you know comes to Christ Church regularly. They say they are beginning to feel uncomfortable with the emphasis at church on the Bible. He agrees that 'the bible is important, but it's Jesus that people need not a book – sometimes it feels like we're asking people to worship a book not a person. God can't be contained by a book'

A. Words. Message. Truth.

The importance of the 'gospel message'

Mark 1:15

"God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:36

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel" 2 Timothy 2:8

Acts 15:7

"Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should **hear the word of the gospel and believe**"

Romans 10:14-17

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

16But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"17Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:11

'Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others'

So the kind of words that Luke uses to describe Paul's ministry in Acts: 'reasoning, explaining, proving'

So whatever we should be doing, we must be involved in the persuasive explanation/proclamation of the good news about Jesus.

The current suspicion of words:

"I believe people are saved not by objective truth, but by Jesus. Their faith isn't in their knowledge, but in God." Brian McLaren

B. The Duffer's guide to epistemology

What is it to "know" something, and how is knowledge acquired?

Pre-modern:

Enlightenment and modernity

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)

New ideas about words:

Post-modernism (with some caveats about the word!)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

6)

C. Postmodernism: some pros

1) **We bring more than our backgrounds!**

Romans 1:18-21

2 Corinthians 4: 1-6

2) **Modernism is narrow in the way that people come to know things**

The Big Con:

Rob Bell in Velvet Elvis “faith is a trampoline, and the springs “aren’t God...aren’t Jesus... [they] are statements and beliefs about our faith that help give words to the depths that we are experiencing in our jumping. I would call these the doctrines of our faith.”

Rob Bell in Velvet Elvis “a brick is fixed in size. It can’t flex or change, because if it does, then it can’t fit into the wall. What happens then is that the wall becomes the sum total of the beliefs, and God becomes as big as the wall. But God is bigger than any wall. God is bigger than any religion. God is bigger than any worldview. God is bigger than the Christian faith.”

How to respond?

- 1) Postmodernism is a theory that everyone talks about but no one believes.

- 2) Postmodernism offers a choice we don't need to make

- 3) Finite knowers may know some things without escaping cultural constructs

D. Is there a way to approach Scripture that makes sense of its communication as words?

The reaction against propositional truth

Communication is relational

John 13: 30-31

15: 9-10

Communication within relationships is foundational

If Scripture is relational communication it makes much more sense:

E. SO what's the issue with postmodernism and the Bible?

Deuteronomy 17: 18-20

Joshua 1: 8-10

Psalm 19

D. Where culture kicks in too much:

Modernism:

Post-modernism