

What Should The Sermon Be About?

Have you ever attended a church service, but instead of listening to the pastor preach his sermon you constantly looked at your watch and thought to yourself, "When is this sermon going to be over? I have heard this all before. It is so boring. It makes no sense. It doesn't apply to me at all."? Of course, we all have. Now the question is, what should the sermon be about to make it more interesting? In this column entitled, "Questions About Christianity", we are looking at the different parts of a basic Christian liturgical worship service. This month we will learn about the sermon by answering this question, "What should the sermon be about?"

Sermons or homilies have been around in worship services at least since the inception of the Jewish synagogue, which some experts believe occurred around 500 B.C. when the Jews were in exile in Babylon. During Jesus' ministry, he preached many sermons, including his famous Sermon on the Mount. When the Christian church was formed, Christians included sermons in their worship service. When the Christian Church developed the liturgy, they placed the sermon either before or after the Creed. Many of these sermons lasted anywhere from an hour to two hours.

Every pastor's sermon is different. Yes, some are more interesting to listen to than others. However, there are a couple of items every sermon must have. First, every sermon should be based on a lesson from the Bible because it is God's Word. In a basic liturgical worship service, the sermon is usually based on one of the three scripture lessons that are read in the service. Second, every sermon must contain the Law. Even though we do not like pastor's tell us in his sermons about different ways we have sinned against God's Law or the Ten Commandments and we deserve to go to hell for these sins, we need to hear this. We need to hear the Law so we know how we can live better Christian lives. We also need to hear the Law so we never fail to repent of our sins and fall into unbelief. Finally, we need to hear the Law so we understand why we need a Savior to save us from our sins. The third thing every sermon must contain is the Gospel. In every sermon the pastor must tell us about Jesus and what he did to save us from our sins so we can go to heaven. This should also be the focus of every sermon. Fourth, every sermon must apply to people's lives in some way.

Now let's be honest for a moment. Even if every sermon contained these four items, many of us would still be looking at our watches and think the sermon is boring. This is why many pastors include more than these four basic items. Some pastors keep their sermons to about ten minutes. Some include funny stories. Some talk about controversial life topics such as abortion, homosexuality, religious persecution, helping out the poor, and others. Some pastors put sermon information on a video screen or in a handout to help their members follow along better. Some pastors preach their sermons in a lively fashion to help keep people's attention.

Maybe, there are other things you feel your pastor should include in his sermons to make them more interesting. Maybe you have even told him your suggestions. However, what we need to remember is when a pastor writes a sermon, he has to perform a balancing act. If he filled his sermon with lots of funny stories, talked about hot topic issues, made many life applications, and put every other suggestion he received from people into his sermons, then his sermon would easily be an hour to two hours long. If he kept his sermon to ten minutes, he would not be able to preach on the four basic items every sermon must have and include anything else. This may be discouraging to hear, but take comfort in this. As long as your pastor preaches the true Word of God, the Law, the Gospel, and applies God's Word to your lives, your faith will grow and you will live more god-pleasing lives whether you feel edified by the sermon or not because that is what God promises to do for us every time we hear his Word.