

“I’m A Poor Preacher” By Paul R. Blake

A preacher took his car to the local mechanic who was also a member of the church where the evangelist ministered. The mechanic told the preacher that his car would need a valve job and would cost plenty. To which the preacher replied: “Go easy on me when you write the bill; I’m a poor preacher.” The mechanic quickly responded: “I know; I heard you preach last Sunday.”

I never cease to be amused by this joke and tell it every opportunity I get. We all have our favorite preacher joke, just like we have favorite political jokes, favorite practical jokes, and favorite knock-knock jokes. Perhaps all of us know a preacher that we would classify as “poor” or “boring” or “just not very interesting.” There are some preachers that I would drive a hundred miles to hear in a meeting, and there are some that I do not go to hear unless I have had a few cups of strong coffee. But upon what criteria do we judge a preacher as excellent or poor? Is an excellent preacher one who, as Ezekiel writes, “as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument” (33:32)?

I know of several preachers who could be professional entertainers with very little effort. In fact, I have been very entertained by their preaching when visiting at their meetings. Yet while I left those meetings entertained, I wondered if I had been edified. I am not indicting dynamic preaching; I am criticizing showmanship for showmanship’s sake. Again, what standard do we use in judging the quality of the sermons that are preached?

Noah preached 120 years without a single convert beyond his own family. By today’s fashionable qualifications for a preacher, Noah would be classified as an abject failure. Elijah’s message was even less popular. Israel’s royal family put a contract out on his life. The apostle Paul’s preaching style was judged by the critics: “his bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible” (2Cor. 10:10). Instead, we must judge a sermon based on New Testament standards: is it truth and is it clear and understandable?

Often, churches are judged the same way, too. If a congregation is a fun-loving group, if it has lots of activities for the young, if they have a well-known preacher, if they have several wise old elders, if they have a nice building, if everyone gets along just swell, and if they have a large membership, then it must be a good church. Based on these criteria, the church at Philippi would have been a failure. They started out with only two families. The church at Corinth would have been a failure; they had several problems. The churches of Macedonia would have been failures; they were poor and probably couldn’t afford comfortable settings. Most of the New Testament churches would be failures if judged by today’s standards; but, when judged by the Lord’s ideals, they were faithful and sound, holding forth the banner of truth. The same is true today. The peripherals have nothing to do with what makes up a good, sound church. If the church is composed of people who love God, love truth, love each other, and love the lost, then it is a good, sound congregation. “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

Worst Day Ever? By Chanie Gorkin

Today was the absolute worst day ever
And don’t try to convince me that
There’s something good in every day
Because, when you take a closer look,
This world is a pretty evil place.
Even if

Some goodness does shine through once in a while
Satisfaction and happiness don't last.
And it's not true that
It's all in the mind and heart
Because
True happiness can be attained
Only if one's surroundings are good
It's not true that good exists
I'm sure you can agree that
The reality
Creates
My attitude
It's all beyond my control
And you'll never in a million years hear me say
Today was a very good day

Now read it from bottom to top, the other way,
And see what I really feel about my day.

The Thunderclap of God

“But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isa. 66:2).

“We need to repent of the haughty way in which we sometimes stand in judgment upon Scripture, and must learn to sit humbly under its judgment instead. If we come to Scripture with our minds made up, expecting to hear from it only an echo of our own thoughts and never the thunderclap of God's, then indeed He will not speak to us and we shall only be confirmed in our own prejudices. We must allow the Word of God to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency, and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behavior.” (John Scott)

Some Things are More Important

“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!” (2Tim. 4:16-18).

During Socrates' trial, the jury asked how it was that the philosopher Socrates could be so willing to pursue his exploration of truth even when his very life was threatened. Socrates explained that some things were of more importance than life and death. Here follows his defense as written in Plato's Apologia:

“Someone will say: ‘And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end?’ To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken; a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he doing right or wrong -- acting the part of a good man or of a bad... For wherever a man's place is, whether the place he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying.”

A Moments Wisdom

- The longest days of your life will be those you begin with a grouchy mood.
- A man who lives right has more power in his silence than another has by his words.
- A good way to save face is to keep the lower half shut.
- Big doesn't necessarily mean better; sunflowers aren't better than violets.
- Show how strong you really are by not pointing out how weak the other person is.
- Character is made by what you stand for; reputation is made by what you fall for.
- Few things are more dangerous to a person's soul than to have nothing to do and plenty of time in which to do it.
- You are not dressed for the day until you wear a smile.
- A clergyman was once asked whether the members of his church were united. He replied they were perfectly united – frozen together. (Old Farmer's Almanac, 1865)