

Where does true faith come from?

- Answer: The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments- *Westminster Catechism Q65*

Two dangers

- 1) forms have spiritual power in themselves
- 2) the work of the Spirit normally works separate from forms
- Instead we need to believe that the sacraments (which are forms) are the normal created means by which the Spirit ministers Christ and of all of his benefits to us

I. The Sacramental Word: Preaching as a Means of Grace

Preaching is more than teaching; it is something through which God brings realities about. It is spiritually creative.

- 1 Peter 1:23 "because you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God."
- Romans 4:17 "As it is written: I have made you the father of many nations— in the presence of the God in whom he believed, the one who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist."

The spreading of the Word of God is used as a way to explain people becoming Christians. This is more than a group of people accepting some teaching but being made into new creations through God's supernatural work.

- Acts 6:7 "So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number"
- Acts 19:20 "In this way the word of the Lord spread and prevailed."

Paul is very clear on how central preaching is.

- Romans 10:14–15 "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a

preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”

Faithful preaching can be seen as inspiration

- Ephesians 2:17 “He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.”
- “When the gospel is preached in the name of God, it is as if God himself spoke in person”- John Leith summarising Calvin
- “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God”- Second Helvetic Confession

Because of the above, the power of preaching lies in the power of the Word ultimately rather than the power of the preacher.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:5 “our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit,”

II. The Sacraments

Baptism

- Matthew 28:19 “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

The Lord's Supper

- Matthew 26:26–29 “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take and eat it; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.””

Sign vs Reality

- Sign: the act of getting baptised or eating bread/drinking wine
- Reality: Christ and his benefits

Roman Catholic Interpretations of The Lord's Supper

- Confuse sign and reality by saying that the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes his blood
- ex opere operato- by the doing of it, it is done

- Aquinas: the sacraments make people holy

Anabaptist Interpretations

- Baptism and the supper as seen as disciplines
- The supper becomes about remembering Christ's death- memorialism

Reformation Interpretations

- the signs are not separated from the realities they signify
- Luther
- Calvin

What do preaching and the Lord's Supper become without a sacramental understanding?

Whereas according to scripture sacraments are more closely linked to spiritual blessings

- 1 Corinthians 10:16 "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?"
- Romans 4:11 "And Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also."