

“Evaluation of Sermon presented by Terence.”

The sermon began with a scripture reading from the gospel according to John, chapter 20. The text was effectively read by a woman sitting outside under an umbrella. The skies were grey and raindrops were creating patterns in puddles of water.

This reading tied in effectively with the opening story of the sermon. Two scenes were set side by side in this story. One was of tall, glass skyscrapers reflecting rays of bright sunshine. Above the skies were deep blue and below the streets were quiet. The city was a picture of peace. The other scene was of tall skyscrapers showing their age, peeling paint and rusted exterior beams. Above, lightning flashed across dark, grey skies and below streets tumbled and foamed with traffic and hurried pedestrians avoiding the driving rain. On a street corner, sheltered under an umbrella was a young mother holding her three children close. They were a picture of peace surrounded by turbulence.

Terence made it clear that the peace the text refers to and the peace he is going to talk about is an inner peace. It is an inner peace that calms the spirit in midst of turbulence, pain and disappointment. This clarification at the beginning of the message was helpful because often peace is associated with the absence of conflict or war. This was well done.

After the introductory story, Terence effectively portrayed the context of the text, highlighting the cause of their fear. The text says the disciples are afraid of the religious leaders. Terence adds that they are afraid of how Jesus will respond to their betrayal. They anticipate anger and disappointment. This would have been an opportune time for Terence to allude to fears that his listeners experience in their lives, in this way ushering them into the locked room with the disciples.

Terence moves into the next scene with a nice choice of words. He writes, “In the middle of the tidal wave of fear, Jesus appears to them in the locked room.” Nicely done. He writes that rather than come to admonish them, Jesus comes because he loves them. He points out that they were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Terence effectively brings his listeners into the room with Jesus. When listening, we felt like we were in the room with Jesus and his disciples. The scene concludes with Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit into the disciples, what Terence refers to as one of the most beautiful scenes in scriptures.

Using a creation text, words from an old confession, a text in Galatians, the epistle of Peter, a quote from Cyril Alexandra and concluding with a quote from Lloyd Ogilvie, he succinctly and clearly explains what it means to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit. As he talks about this, he gently challenges his listeners, asking if the Holy Spirit is living in them. He concluded this section with a personal illustration. This illustration clearly shows what change occurs when the Holy Spirit dwells in a person. This illustration worked well, keeping the listener’s attention and clarifying what he was trying to communicate. He ended with helpful, clearly presented applications. This too was well done.

There are some things that we are asking you to think about. Maybe we have a point, maybe not; but we are asking you to consider them. In the sermon you say that Jesus did not search out his disciples to reprimand them. He searched them out because he loves them. There is little doubt that Jesus loves them, but the text suggests that Jesus searched them out for a different reason. After showing his wounds and his disciples rejoicing, Jesus says, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Jesus searches them out to send them on mission. This is a sending scene. We’re wondering how allowing this theme, relating it to receiving

the Holy Spirit, offering forgiveness of sins to the world and relating this to a peace that provides calm in the presence of storms and pain might have shaped your message a bit differently. Think about it.

In the sermon you say that the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. You quote verse 20, which clearly states that they were. Then you say that you think they were not overjoyed, but about halfway there. Though you refer to a verse from the gospel according to Luke to back up your opinion, this confuses your listeners. This is John's story. We encourage you to accept how the author tells his story.

With respect to breathing life into those who are in Christ, you ask "Today do you live as though you have the life of God in you?" This question is followed by something that you are convinced of. You say, "I'm convinced that as Christians we simply forget or don't understand what it means to live with the peace and presence of Christ living inside of us." This statement needs some clarification.

We assume that your preaching context includes people who are not sure of why they are there, people who are curious about this Jesus guy and mature Christians. You give one line to those who do not yet know the inner peace of Jesus. You say "If you're exploring things of faith, you simply invite the peace of Jesus into your heart, mind and soul. Pray...." Then you address those who are mature Christians. Maybe you could have spent a bit more time with those who do not know inner peace, so that your listeners who are in that situation know that you understand them.

To date, we have never evaluated a perfect sermon. We were both blessed participating in Village Church's worship service and listening to Terence's sermon. The sermon was clear, it flowed well and held our attention. He presented it with confidence using suitable contemporary language and appropriate variation in tone and speed of delivery. Based on his sermons, without any hesitation, we recommend that Terence be accepted for ordination in the Christian Reformed Church.

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