

The Kerygma: 6 Point Summary



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There is an interesting story in Acts 16:16-40. The evangelists Paul and Silas had been unjustly scourged and cast into the deepest depths of a Philippian jail and chained to the wall. Instead of complaining, they sang hymns and praised God while the other prisoners listened. We are told that as they did so there was an earthquake, their chains fell off and the doors of the prison opened. Then we read,

“When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Let us pause there and answer the question

What would you say?



When other groups have been asked this question they have given all sorts of replies such as

- “Believe in God,”
- “Keep the commandments,”
- “Live by your conscience,”
- “Love your neighbor as yourself”
- “Believe that God loves you”
- “Repent of your sins.”



While these answers are true up to a point, it is interesting to note what Paul and Silas actually said,

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved you and your household. They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay.”

When Paul and Silas said, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus,”** we can presume that they would have gone on to explain what they meant.

THE KERYGMA IN SIX POINTS

In this talk we want to suggest that the kerygma can be divided into six basic points. We have borrowed this idea from the John the Baptist Koinonia Community in Belfast. We will firstly mention what the points are and then we will go on to describe each one in more detail.

1. God loves you and wants an intimate relationship with you.

2. All have sinned, and thereby weakened or broken the relationship with God and are in need of salvation

• Jesus died to forgive our sins

1. Repent and believe

• Receive the Holy Spirit and his gifts

• Enter fully into Christian community

Now we will describe each point in a little more detail



1] God loves you

The very first element of the Good News is that God loves you in an unconditional way. As Jesus said on one occasion to his disciples, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” (Jn 15:9).

God’s love for his divine and perfect son is wholly deserved. However, what is truly amazing is the fact that Jesus has the same love for us as creatures, and sinful ones at that. Knowing how important this awareness was, St Paul said, “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:17-19)



2] All have sinned and are in need of salvation

Our sins prevent us from fully experiencing the presence and the love of God. The Greek word for sin literally means “to miss the mark,” such as happens when an arrow fails to hit the target. God expects us to lead holy and loving lives, by obeying the commandments especially the great commandment of loving our neighbours as ourselves. However the good we wish to do, we sometimes fail to do, and the evil we wish to avoid is exactly what we do as a result of either weakness or malice.



That is why St Paul said,

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Rom 3:23-24).

St John added, **“If we claim we have not sinned, we make God out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives”** (1 Jn 1:10).

As a result of sin, Deut 27:26 declares, **“Cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of the law by observing them.”** In other words, you are no longer receptive to blessing. You have chosen to be self-reliant.

3] Jesus died to forgive our sins

When Jesus proclaimed, “Blessed are the poor, the Kingdom of God is yours” (Lk 6:20), he was declaring that through no merit or good work on their part, the curse of sin was being lifted from those who acknowledged their need for the free gift of God’s merciful love which was being poured out upon them free gratis and for nothing. This was made possible because Jesus as our scapegoat took the curse of sin upon himself. As Paul declared, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). The phrase “become the righteousness of God” means to be put in right relationship with God. Paul went on to say, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree”. We are reminded of this amazing truth at every mass we attend. For example, at the consecration of the wine, the priest says, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for many so that sins may be forgiven.”



4] Repent and believe

Many of us find it hard to acknowledge our failings. Pride can make us reluctant to honestly admit our faults without excusing or minimizing them, e.g. by attributing them to impersonal factors such as environmental pressures, unconscious influences, addictive tendencies etc.

But just as bright sunlight reveals dust particles on window sills and table tops, so the light of God's merciful love reveals our lack of mercy and love. Like the Prodigal Son we need to acknowledge our wrongdoing. It is important to trust in the Lord's mercy and not any merit of our own. As St Paul says in Eph 2:8-9,

“God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”



5] Receive the Holy Spirit and his gifts



St Paul wrote, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). This is a command of the Lord. Without the Spirit we can do nothing, but when the Spirit who is the Lord and Giver of Life is active within us, we can do all things. To receive the Holy Spirit and his gifts, we simply need to ask with expectant faith, relying on Jesus’ promise: “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Lk 11:13). As we ask for the Holy Spirit, we should be open to receiving His gifts, those outlined in Isaiah 11:2 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. In Is 11:2 we read, “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.” In 1 Cor 12:8-10 we read, “To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues.” These charismatic gifts are expressions of the love of God and help us to build up a loving Christian community. As par. 12 of the *Constitution on the Church* says, “These charismatic gifts...are to be received with thanksgiving... for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church.”

6] Enter into the Christian community

When people accept the Kerygma they will need to find a group who will support them in their new life of faith e.g. a Prayer Group, Parish Cell or Bible Study Group that meets regularly for prayer and scripture reading. (We will have more to say about this in our final talk). This was the way of life in the early church. As St Luke tells us, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ... And the Lord added to their community daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42,47). Paul calls this community the Body of Christ. We are the gifted members of that Body and Jesus is our head. It is almost impossible to grow to be a true disciple of Christ without the help and nurturance of a loving community, giving us a sense of belonging, building up our faith through teaching and practical support, and thereby helping us to resist the false values of secular society and grow in holiness of life .

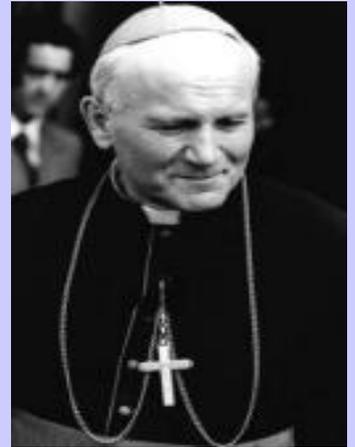


Conclusion

In the light of what has been said, is it any wonder that Pope John Paul II wrote in (*RM* 16),

“The preaching of the early Church was centred on the proclamation of Jesus Christ, with whom the kingdom was identified. Now, as then, there is a need to unite the proclamation of the kingdom of God (the content of Jesus' own kerygma) and the proclamation of the Christ-event (the kerygma of the apostles). The two proclamations are complementary; each throws light on the other.”

Taken together Paul was so right when he said in Rom 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"



Group Work

- 1] Can you recall the six points of the kerygma?
- 2] Why mention point one? Why not overlook it and begin with point two?
- 3] How do you think we can talk about the subject of sin in a world where the sense of sin has already faded?



Final Prayer

•Heavenly Father, I recognize that there is a hierarchy of truth, and that some articles of faith are more foundational than others. Grant me the grace to perceive and understand those truths which underpin the Christian life, so that experiencing their cleansing and liberating power, through the free gift of your Spirit at work within me, I may go on to share them with others with conviction and joy. Amen.

