

# **Brooks encourages Texas Baptists simply to proclaim Jesus**

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WACO—Duane Brooks summed up the role of Texas Baptists—pastors and laity alike—in two simple words: proclaim Jesus.

Brooks, pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston, delivered the keynote sermon at the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting, basing his message on Colossians 1:24-29.

In that passage, the Apostle Paul breaks the ministry down into the simplest terms. “God has chosen to make known this mystery: Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

## **Growing to conform to Christ’s image**

While the work of ministry can be complex and multi-faceted, Brooks said, at the heart is simply the need to introduce nonbelievers to the person of Jesus Christ and let Christ do the transformational work in lives.

“My work—and pastors, your work—is to nurture a culture of Christiformity in the church. That’s more than the truncated gospel that gives you fire insurance getting you into heaven and out of hell,” Brooks said. “Paul wasn’t giving us a formula but a force. Salvation is richer and more profound than the single metaphor of justification.

“We get a chance to lead people not only into a relationship with Jesus but also to grow them up so they mysteriously somehow match the head of the church, who is Jesus Christ.”

Brooks pointed out Paul wrote these words in prison, as he encouraged believers to stay focused on their task and keep in mind the big picture. Paul was “rejoicing in that suffering” and “strenuously contending with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me,” knowing his task was ultimately simple, he writes in Colossians. Brooks drew the same parallel.

He said while the Scripture provides a map for ministry—preaching, praying and having a ministry of presence to the people—the simple focus is on the first.

“We proclaim Christ as the only hope of glory to the people in our world. We proclaim that so we may present them wholly mature in Christ,” he said. “Hope is a confident expectation. It’s stored up in heaven for you, and no one can ever take it away.”

## **Personal but not in isolation**

Brooks also encouraged fellow pastors not to live in isolation.

“Christ in you is plural. Our salvation has always been personal but has never been individual. We have to preach this as we proclaim too,” Brooks said. “Paul realizes he is not alone, even in prison. He mentions all the others with him who were also proclaiming the gospel.

“Paul was not alone and neither are we. Pastors are some of the loneliest people I know, and I wonder if some of it is self-imposed. Are we so insular and isolated that we forget we have friends and brothers?”

Along that vein, he quoted Walter Winchell’s platitude, “A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.” He challenged pastors to find that friend in their life and consider for whom they are filling that role.

Referencing a recent blog he read, Brooks noted the author was lamenting

the decline in church attendance and activity. The solution, he concluded, was much the same message of Paul's passage.

"We've tried everything else, but when the church discovers Jesus again, the world will find the church," he said. "Jesus Christ is the only thing we have to offer to the world, and the good news is that is all the world needs.

"So we proclaim him. Why? For no less reason that we might present everyone perfect in Christ. The gospel must be more than a transaction; it must be a transformation. The gospel has always been that. Sometimes we admonish, sometimes we teach, but our goal is always to proclaim."

Brooks wrapped up his message by quoting a portion of S.M. Lockridge's famous "That's my King!" [sermon](#), describing the many attributes of Jesus.

"You can't outlive him, and you can't live without him. The Pharisees couldn't stand him, but they found out they couldn't stop him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in him. Death couldn't handle him, and the grave couldn't hold him," Brooks quoted.

"We proclaim him. And why do we proclaim him? So we may present everyone fully mature in him."

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