

Step right up! Read all about it!

July 13, 2016

Let me take you back to yesteryear. Before the days of neon lights, computer screens and incoming email. Before the days of scrolling marquees and 24-hour news stations. As a matter of fact, let's go all the way back before there was TV at all. It was a time when words weren't a dime a dozen. It was a day when news was delivered on paper in the printed press.



Danny Reeves I want you to imagine a young boy standing with papers in his arms, crying out into the morning air: "Step right up! Read all about it! The news of the day! You can't miss it!" Over the years, those words were heard a thousand times, and the headlines that followed those words were profound: In 1886, the headline would have been "Liberty's great statue!" The people were celebrating the Statue of Liberty as a gift from the French. In 1937, it was "The Hindenburg goes up in flames!" You see, over the years those newspaper boys would have announced the news: "Step right up! Read all about it!"

Really news?

However, today I wonder if those stories are really news. I'm not sure if they are news at all. I mean, they seem like news. We read about them in history, but they aren't really news. They're just the affairs and the history

of men and women and people that occupy our planet.

What is news? Is it the election of presidents and the winning of wars? No, not really. Is it the world's greatest inventions—like antibiotics, the telephone or the internal combustion engine? I submit to you that's not news either.



So, what is news? It's really a good question.

Good news

As a pastor, I have been called to preach the good news of the Gospel. Maybe I can assume "news" involves the things of the church throughout the centuries. Maybe it involves biblical history? Maybe news is when Martin Luther posted his grievances against Roman Catholicism and began the Protestant Reformation? Maybe news is talking about one the greatest revivals ever to sweep our nation, the Great Awakening?

All of that seems like news, but I wonder again: Is it really news?

Now, let me ask a bigger question, my "get to the point" question: How many preachers are actually preaching real news at all?

What's the matter?

Several years ago, I read a book by Tom Long titled *What's the Matter with Preaching Today?* He makes this claim: "The main problem with much of today's preaching is that it is simply not newsworthy. By this, I don't mean that preaching is not newsworthy enough to be on CNN. Rather, I mean that what is often lacking from the proclamation of the 'good news' is a deep sense of the gospel itself as 'news.'"

So what is he saying? He's trying to tell us what news is and what news is not. News, when it comes to preaching, is not telling stories and

entertaining people. News isn't giving a church history lesson. It's not even walking through many of our Bible stories to acclimate people to Bible history. News is "sharing a word that makes a life-changing difference"!

Real news

Let me illustrate this way: Imagine a scientist reading a paper to a convention filled with other scientists. The paper is filled with data and research that would bore us to tears, but the scientists are on edge of their seats. Suddenly, in the midst of reading the paper, a fire alarm goes off! Immediately, the scientist leans into the microphone and says: "Follow me! I know the way out!" Instantly, everyone knows the difference in the words they are hearing. One is a learned paper. The other is a fire alarm. One is simply information, The other is real news.

So, preachers can preach eloquent sermons or really deliver news. And the news our world needs to hear is none other than the emphatic words of Jesus:

- "The time has come!"
- "The kingdom of God is near!"
- "Repent and believe in the good news!"

These three ideas are final-edition news, and they ought to ring from our pulpits every Sunday.

Danny Reeves is second vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of First Baptist Church in Corsicana.