



## The Sermon



St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11-16, that the Church receives gifts from her ascended Lord: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastor/Teachers. You have heard readings from the Prophets (Old Testament), Apostles (Epistle) and Evangelists (Gospel); now you hear from your very own “pastor and teacher” in the sermon.

But as the Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists’ together work toward *“building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,”* your pastor and teacher does the same! He is to attend to preaching—not of his own word or ideas, but attending to *“the gift that is in [him] by the laying on of hands,”* taking *“heed to [him]self and [his] teaching...for by doing so [he] will save both [him]self and [his] hearers”* (1 Tim 4:13-16).

The pastor and teacher is charged with teaching the *“whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27), which means that he must not incessantly harp on his pet themes. Therefore, the arrangement of the liturgical year, with assigned readings, from which the sermon is to be developed, helps the pastor in covering this *“whole counsel.”* At the same time, it is not enough to just make sure everything is said at some point. The preacher must *“rightly divide the Word of Truth”* (2 Tim 2:15), or give to God’s servants *“the proper food at the right time”* (Luke 12:42) and so prove a faithful and wise steward.

This idea of *“rightly dividing”* God’s Word or *“giving the proper food at the right time”* suggests that preaching is concerned with Law and Gospel. This is not to say that each sermon must have a two part outline! However, within each sermon, Law and Gospel are the forces at work, and should be clearly identifiable. Each sermon needs to preach the Law. Sinners, such as us, need to hear God’s Law, to rebuke our sin, to identify our sins and wickedness, and to correct our self-righteous notions of what God would have us do. The Law preached must cut us to the heart, bringing us to repentance (Acts 2:37).



## Catechetical Kernel



Then the Gospel must flow forth, that sweet Word which, unlike the Law, “*is the power of God for salvation*” (Rom 1:16)—the Good News that, for Christ’s sake, on account of His death for us, and as assured by His resurrection, God forgives us our sins and gives us life and salvation. The Law is necessary, or the Gospel will be lost or ignored; yet, the preaching of the Gospel is the ultimate aim and charge of the Christian preacher (Mark 16:15). Law and Gospel make a sermon! Without them, it’s just empty, vain talk!

*“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).*

*The Peace of the Lord be with you,*

*Pastor Jeff Patterson* ✝