

Preaching Dates

Sunday 8 March 2020

David Andrew (am) at
Church of the Good Shepherd, Tillycoultry
Ian Barr (am) at Johnstone Baptist Church
Glen Cartwright (am) at Fusion,
Newton Mearns Baptist Church
Gordon Dickey (am) at
Kelso Baptist Church
Jonathan Groves (am) with Praise
Ijalasi, visiting from the Kerusso Trust's
Malawian partner J-Life ministries, preaching
and Kerusso presentation Woodmansterne
Baptist Church, Surrey
Willie Henry (am) at
Vale of Leven Baptist Church
Charles Sommerville (am) at
Cumbernauld Baptist Church

Frances Bloomfield (pm) leading a joint
church event in Giffnock, the first of a series
of Lent Studies

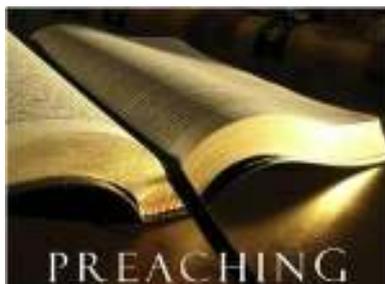
Jonathan Groves (pm) with Praise
Ijalasi visiting from the Kerusso Trust's
Malawian partner J-Life ministries at
Wallingford Baptist Church.

Dawn Martindale (pm) at
Rosyth Baptist Church.

Charles Sommerville (pm) at
Dawson Mission, Falkirk
Hugh Tannock (pm) at
Drumchapel Baptist Church

Matthew Edmonds (am + pm)
at Helensburgh Baptist Church

Jim McNulty (am + pm) at the Anglican
Church of St James in Fuerteventura



“Exegete the Text and Exegete the Congregation”

By Jonathan Groves

As Lay Preachers, we have to open up and apply the teaching of the Bible in a variety of church settings. Often this may be as an itinerant visitor to a fellowship. A month ago when I was in Malawi, I had the privilege to preach in a large church in a close-packed township of Blantyre city. Even to get a vehicle along the narrow muddy passageways to the church was a challenge. Every seat in the church building was filled with 300+ men, women and youth from the local houses. The vibrant congregation overflowed onto the veranda outside.

Last weekend I had opportunity to preach in a rural church of 20-30 people in the UK. Many of the congregation were older, but there were also a few younger families and one or two new converts. How this faithful family of believers longed for the Lord to bring a Malawi-style revival to fill all the many empty seats!

I decided to preach from the same narrative Bible passage (Luke 5:1-11) in both locations. What were my reflections on this experience? I had done my exegesis of the text beforehand, finding meaning for the original hearers. Yet in common with so many visiting Lay Preachers, there was need to think on my feet and rely on the Spirit to help bring to life the distinctive lessons of application.

In my sermons, I sought to draw out the meaning from the Biblical narrative verse by verse and then posed the following three questions:

- *What is your view of Jesus?* Is He just a compelling preacher like to the crowd on the lakeshore? Is He Lord over every aspect of your daily working life as Peter came to realise – whatever that life specifically looks like?
- *What is your view of yourself?* Does this vision of Jesus is the Holy Lord over everything cause you to fall at His feet as a poor sinner seeking refuge?
- *What difference does this make in your life?* For Peter, it meant leaving his fishing business and joining Jesus' fishing business. What difference will this make to your life?

In both contexts, some of the application was common to all of humanity. But it was especially in this third question that the distinctive applications to life in the Malawian township and in the UK village seemed most markedly to diverge. Differences of cultural norms and community morality, poverty and wealth, health and sickness, education and opportunity all came into play in proclaiming Christ's call to radical discipleship.

As I reflected on the similarities and differences in the sermon I preached in two such diverse places, never before had the saying “*exegete the text and exegete the congregation*” seemed so relevant to me as a lay preacher.