

Acts 5:42-Acts 6:7

Mercy in the Church

Sermon Outline For Congregation

Preaching and Praying (5:42; 6:2,4,7)

- The task of the church leadership was to preach and teach (in various contexts) and to pray - this is still the priority in the church
- A false dichotomy has us choose between upholding the historic Christian faith and caring for the practical needs of people
- The message of Christianity is news that all people, including (and perhaps especially) the poor, need to hear

Caring (6:1, 3)

- Leaders are chosen to continue the daily distribution of food as needs increased
- I Timothy 5:8 "...if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially members of his household, he has denied the faith..."
- Acts 6 as the start of church leadership appointed to address practical needs within the church

Protecting (6:1)

- A complaint arises because of perceived unfairness
- Leadership is appointed - not just to care, but to rectify a problem
- upholding the rights of people with needs and humbly being the church

Questions for reflection

1. Who do you have a responsibility to care for? What friends, family members, etc. would you see a need to step in to provide help if a need arises?
2. What would the church look like in 100 years if she set aside praying and teaching the Bible in order to mobilize to address practical needs in society? What would the church look like in 100 years if she decided helping with practical needs should never happen?
3. If you have frustrations with your church because you don't believe the church is serving a particular need of yours - what are constructive ways to bring it up so the church can discuss it and deal with it?
4. What needs in the church can you address? Is there someone you should contact to encourage? Do you have something you should share? How can you serve your church family (if you are part of a church community)?
5. How can you deal with feelings of being overwhelmed by the needs around you? How does the grace of Jesus Christ for you inform how you understand yourself, your responsibility to others, etc.? If you are not a Christian, what in the Christian story of Jesus announcing good news for the poor appeals to you, and what puts you off?
6. How can we in the church use the truth of the gospel and prayer to care for people with needs?