

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH



# WHAT MAKES A PREACHER POWERFUL?



Pastor Teopanie Parillo

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

[www.ReasonTogether.Church](http://www.ReasonTogether.Church)

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

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**SERMON TRANSCRIPT**

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Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you have been with us many times or this is your first time walking through the doors, we are thankful that you are here.

We especially want to recognize our honored guests.

You are not an interruption to what we are doing today.

You are one of the reasons we are doing it.

Our invitation is simple.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

You do not have to pretend that you already know every answer.

You do not have to be embarrassed by an honest question.

If something in the Bible troubles you, confuses you or challenges something you have always believed, this is a safe place to examine it.

We will not force the Bible to say what we want it to say.

We will ask the Lord to help us understand what He has said.

And from Aloha to Aloha, we want every part of this time together to point us toward Jesus Christ.

Before we begin, let us pray.

Father, thank You for allowing us to gather around Your Word.

Thank You for every person in this room and every burden represented here.

Teach us not to be impressed merely by what people can see.

Teach us to value the work You do in a faithful heart.

Help us to see ourselves honestly.

Where our words and our lives do not agree, bring us to repentance.

Where we feel small, quiet or overlooked, remind us that Your strength is made perfect in weakness.

And above all, let Jesus be lifted up today.

In His name we pray, Amen.

Please turn with me to First Corinthians chapter two.

First Corinthians chapter two, beginning in verse one.

Paul says, ‘And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.’

‘For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.’

‘And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.’

‘And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:’

‘That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.’

Now turn back with me to Proverbs chapter twenty-two and verse one.

‘A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.’

Before we continue, let me say just a word about giving.

At Reason Together Church we do not pass an offering plate.

If you are our guest, you are never expected to give.

If you belong faithfully to another church, please continue to support your home church.

If God leads you to help this ministry, there is a giving box in the back.

Give only as the Lord leads, because God loveth a cheerful giver.

And when our service ends, the Reason Together Cafe is open.

The coffee is free.

The conversations are free.

And there are free refills on conversations.

Money has value.

We work for it.

We need it.

We should handle it honestly and wisely.

But Proverbs tells us that there is something we carry every day that is worth more than silver and gold.

Tonight I want to tell you about the night I lost nearly all the money I had available to me.

And through that loss, God taught me the value of something that could never fit inside a wallet.

A good name.

I want to ask a question tonight.

What makes a preacher powerful?

If we were to close our eyes and picture a powerful preacher, many of us would picture a large man with a commanding presence.

We might picture a deep voice.

We might picture a polished speaker.

We might picture a large church, a beautiful building, a full platform and a crowd hanging on every word.

We have been trained by the world to confuse visibility with power.

We have been trained to think that the loudest person in the room must be the strongest person in the room.

But the preacher I want to introduce you to tonight did not fit that picture at all.

His name is Pastor Teopanie Parillo.

He is Danielin's father.

He is my father-in-law.

And over the years, I had the privilege of living in his home, traveling with him, watching him prepare and training under him.

Pastor Parillo was approximately five feet two inches tall.

He weighed little more than one hundred pounds.

He was mild-mannered.

He was meek.

He spoke quietly.

If you placed him in a crowd, he might physically disappear.

But spiritually, he was one of the most powerful preachers I have ever known.

Not because he had a booming voice.

Not because he had an impressive building.

Not because he was wealthy.

Not because he was building a personal brand.

He was powerful because the Holy Spirit had done a deep work in a faithful man.

And to explain that, I need to tell you about a very long journey.

I was serving on the island of Cebu when I received a message asking whether I would travel to preach at Pastor Parillo's church.

The trip would take nearly twenty-four hours.  
It involved jeepneys, motorcycles, pedal cabs and buses.  
There are places in the Philippines where a journey is never only a journey.  
It is an adventure.  
And it is a reminder that ministry often reaches people far from the places we call convenient.  
By approximately nine o'clock that evening, the bus stopped in front of his church.  
After a few moments of greeting one another, I reached for my wallet.  
It was gone.  
I knew I had possessed it about an hour earlier.  
The wallet contained all the cash I had available for that month.  
It contained my only credit card.  
In American terms, it was only about forty dollars.  
But half of it was a love gift for Pastor Parillo.  
The other half was what I needed to get back across the country.  
You learn quickly that an amount which sounds small in one place can be everything you have in another place.  
I was horrified.  
I began replaying the trip in my mind.  
I had lived overseas long enough to know that an American can sometimes lose a wallet and never see it again.  
I had already begun resigning myself to the loss.  
Pastor Parillo did not resign himself to anything.  
Before I fully understood what was happening, he and an associate were on a motorcycle chasing the bus.  
I was calculating what had been lost.  
Pastor Parillo was doing what he could to recover it.  
While they were gone, I went with the family to their home.  
The house was up a steep hill.  
The smell told me I was close to a pig farm and to an area where fish were being dried.  
When we arrived, my self-pity began to look very different.  
The home was small.

It also served as their church on Sunday.

It was smaller than my master bedroom had been in America.

I began to see my missing dollars beside the daily circumstances of the people who were welcoming me into their home.

The money still mattered.

But my attitude needed to change.

I quietly asked the Lord to forgive me for feeling sorry for myself.

And just as I said, 'Amen,' Pastor Parillo arrived with my wallet in his hand.

I was relieved.

I was thankful.

But I also understood that God had already returned something more important than my money.

He had returned my perspective.

Here is what had happened on the bus.

Pastor Parillo had caught up with it.

The driver allowed him to inspect the area where I had been sitting.

He asked whether anyone had found the wallet.

Apparently someone had found it.

Apparently that person had planned to keep it.

But Pastor Parillo began preaching about the thief on the cross.

And the wallet was surrendered.

Now think about that scene.

This was not a large, physically intimidating man threatening a bus full of people.

This was a small, quiet preacher opening his Bible and talking about Jesus.

The article from which this story comes says that Pastor Parillo's reputation preceded him.

People knew who he was.

They had seen him.

They had heard him.

They had watched him live.

And that raises a very important distinction.

Character is who you are.

Reputation is what people believe about you because they have watched who you are.

Witness is what your life teaches people about the Christ you profess.  
Sometimes reputation and character do not agree.  
Jesus spoke to the church at Sardis in Revelation chapter three and said, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.'  
They had a name.  
They had an appearance.  
But Heaven knew the truth beneath the appearance.  
That is why the goal of the Christian life is not to manufacture a good image.  
The goal is to become the kind of person for whom a good name is truthful.  
A good name is not a costume.  
It is a life that agrees with the Gospel.  
Proverbs says that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.  
Ecclesiastes says that a good name is better than precious ointment.  
And that night I learned that money can be valuable, but there are things money cannot buy.  
Money could not buy Pastor Parillo's credibility on that bus.  
A credit card could not buy the trust that had been built through years of faithful service.  
A good name is built slowly.  
It is built by telling the truth when a lie would be easier.  
It is built by keeping promises when no one can force you to keep them.  
It is built by treating people kindly when there is nothing to gain.  
It is built by being the same at home, in church, in traffic, in a store and in a difficult conversation.  
It is built by thousands of ordinary decisions that most people never applaud.  
A good name is the accumulated testimony of thousands of faithful decisions.  
And it can be damaged by a few unfaithful ones.  
Ecclesiastes chapter ten says that dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour.  
In other words, a little folly can spoil a reputation for wisdom and honor.  
That is not a call to fear people's opinions.  
It is a call to take the name of Christ seriously.  
If we say that we belong to Jesus, people will form conclusions about Jesus by watching us.

That does not mean every accusation against a Christian is true.

Jesus was falsely accused.

Paul was falsely accused.

John the Baptist was falsely accused.

A good reputation does not mean universal approval.

It means that when people honestly examine our ordinary conduct, they find a life that does not discredit the Lord we profess.

And this is why First Timothy chapter three matters so much.

Paul says that a bishop must be blameless.

Then he says, 'Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without.'

Blameless does not mean sinless.

If sinless were the qualification, no preacher could ever stand in a pulpit.

Blameless means that no credible pattern of disqualifying conduct can be fastened to the man.

His life must not provide an obvious contradiction to the message he proclaims.

Notice how many qualifications Paul gives are about character rather than appearance.

Vigilant.

Sober.

Of good behavior.

Given to hospitality.

Patient.

Not greedy.

Not a brawler.

Faithful at home.

Holding fast the faithful Word.

God is not impressed with a sermon if the sermon is disconnected from the life of the man preaching it.

That is true for pastors.

And it is true, in another sense, for every believer.

Every one of us has a pulpit.

Your pulpit may be your kitchen table.

It may be your workplace.

It may be your neighborhood.  
It may be a restaurant where the server remembers how you treated them.  
It may be a grocery store where someone watches how you respond when you are frustrated.  
It may be your social media account.  
It may be a financial decision nobody else knows about.  
We are all preaching something with our lives.  
The question is whether our lives strengthen or weaken the words we speak about Jesus.  
Now, I want to show you where Pastor Parillo's public power had begun.  
That night, I was shown a mat where I would sleep.  
I was grateful there was a fan right beside my pillow.  
In my travels I had learned to live without many comforts I had taken for granted in America.  
But I will confess that I still found it difficult to sleep without a fan.  
I had barely fallen asleep when I heard roosters.  
Lots and lots of roosters.  
They seemed to believe that their calling in life was to make sure I never overslept.  
They did not even have the courtesy to wait until sunrise.  
When I finally could take it no more, I got up and looked outside.  
Pastor Parillo was already awake.  
He was sitting near a fire pit.  
His Bible was open.  
He was reading.  
He was making notes.  
He was preparing several sermons that he would preach that week.  
While I slept, he had been with the Lord.  
And suddenly I understood something.  
The sermon people heard during the day had begun beside a fire before sunrise.  
Public power is often rooted in private faithfulness.  
Jesus rose up a great while before day and went into a solitary place to pray.  
Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.  
Notice the order.

Seek it.

Do it.

Teach it.

Pastor Parillo did not merely prepare messages for other people.

He prepared his heart before God.

A preacher cannot permanently borrow public power to cover a private life that is empty.

At some point, the life will speak.

At some point, the family will speak.

At some point, the people who see us on Monday will speak.

And the question will not be whether we could say the words.

The question will be whether we lived them.

This is where First Corinthians chapter two is so helpful.

Paul says, 'I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.'

Paul was educated.

Paul could reason.

Paul could write.

But he refused to make the power of his ministry rest on his own personality.

He said, 'I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'

He came in weakness, fear and much trembling.

And he preached in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Why?

So that their faith would not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

That is the answer to our question.

A preacher is not powerful because he makes people admire him.

A preacher is powerful when the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring people face to face with Jesus Christ.

Paul says in Second Corinthians chapter four, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

The vessel is not the treasure.

The preacher is not the Gospel.

The servant carries something infinitely greater than himself.

God often chooses vessels the world overlooks.  
Moses said that he was slow of speech.  
Gideon said that his family was poor and he was the least in his father's house.  
Jeremiah said that he was only a child.  
Paul's critics said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible.  
Peter and John were called unlearned and ignorant men.  
But people took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.  
God does not need to make the vessel impressive before He places treasure inside it.  
That should encourage every quiet believer in this room.  
You may not have the personality that gets attention.  
You may not enjoy speaking in front of people.  
You may not have money, title or a platform.  
But if you know Christ, if you walk with Christ and if you are willing to speak when He opens the door, God can use you.  
Quietness is not cowardice.  
Meekness is not weakness.  
Biblical boldness is not the same thing as being loud.  
The next day, Pastor Parillo took me into town.  
We walked up and down the streets.  
He approached strangers.  
He opened his Bible.  
He spoke to them in their language.  
I did not understand every word because several dialects are spoken in that part of the Philippines.  
But I understood what he was doing.  
He was telling people about Jesus.  
He did the same thing in parks.  
He did it at grocery stores.  
He did it beside the road.  
I watched him speak to people on motorcycles beside us at a stoplight.  
He was quiet in manner, but he was bold in witness.

He did not wait for a pulpit to become a preacher.  
He carried his Bible.  
He carried the Gospel.  
And he carried a life that had made people willing to listen.  
Acts chapter four says that people saw the boldness of Peter and John and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.  
That is the secret.  
Not that people notice us.  
That people can tell that we have been with Jesus.  
As we traveled that region, I saw another part of Pastor Parillo's ministry.  
We went up mountains and down into valleys.  
We drove streets and pathways that seemed to go everywhere.  
And repeatedly, people knew him.  
They stopped to talk to him.  
He showed me churches he had started.  
He showed me churches he had turned over to other pastors.  
He showed me places where he was helping others begin new works.  
At that time he had already been a Baptist minister for more than twenty-five years.  
This is another sign of powerful ministry.  
A powerful ministry does not merely gather people around one personality.  
A powerful ministry prepares other faithful people to continue the work.  
Paul told Timothy, 'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'  
One faithful generation prepares another.  
Pastor Parillo did not appear to be trying to keep every church dependent upon him.  
He established.  
He trained.  
He entrusted.  
He released.  
And he continued helping.  
Material wealth becomes smaller when it is divided.

Spiritual influence can become greater when it is shared.  
I thank God that I was able to train under him for several years.  
And I hope that whatever good comes through Reason Together Church will not end with one person either.  
The work belongs to Christ.  
Now let us go back one more time to that bus.  
Why did Pastor Parillo preach about the thief on the cross?  
He could have walked in and said, 'There is a thief on this bus.'  
He could have pointed fingers.  
He could have embarrassed someone publicly.  
But instead, he preached about a guilty thief who met a merciful Savior.  
Luke chapter twenty-three tells us about two thieves crucified beside Jesus.  
One mocked Him.  
The other recognized his own guilt.  
He said, 'We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.'  
He declared that Jesus had done nothing amiss.  
He turned toward Christ and said, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'  
And Jesus said, 'Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'  
That thief could not climb down from the cross and repair everything he had done.  
He could not repay every person he had harmed.  
He could not perform years of good works.  
He could only acknowledge his guilt and trust the King beside him.  
And Jesus saved him by grace.  
The person on the bus had something the thief on the cross no longer had.  
He had the opportunity to return what was not his.  
Returning the wallet did not purchase forgiveness.  
No one is saved by returning a wallet.  
No one is saved by paying a debt.  
No one is saved by cleaning up enough of a past to impress God.  
We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.  
But when grace reaches a guilty conscience, it produces fruit.

Zacchaeus did not buy salvation when he offered restitution.  
Jesus said that salvation had come to his house, and Zacchaeus showed that something inside him had changed.  
Ephesians chapter four says, 'Let him that stole steal no more.'  
Where we can make something right, repentance wants to make it right.  
And this is the beauty of Pastor Parillo's sermon on the bus.  
He did not merely announce that a thief was present.  
He announced that mercy was available to a thief.  
He did not make guilt the final word.  
He made Jesus the final word.  
There were two sermons preached on that bus.  
The first sermon was preached with Pastor Parillo's mouth.  
It was the sermon about the thief on the cross.  
It was about sin.  
It was about judgment.  
It was about repentance.  
It was about mercy.  
It was about Jesus.  
The second sermon was preached with Pastor Parillo's life.  
That sermon had been preached for more than twenty-five years.  
It had been preached in his home.  
It had been preached beside a fire before sunrise.  
It had been preached on roads, in villages, in churches and in conversations with strangers.  
It had been preached by a man who was the same outside the church as he was behind the pulpit.  
His character gave credibility to the messenger.  
His Bible supplied the message.  
The Holy Spirit confronted the conscience.  
And Jesus offered mercy to the sinner.  
By the time Pastor Parillo opened his Bible, his life had already begun preaching.  
Now we need to be careful here.  
A good name is valuable.

But our own reputation must never become our idol.  
Some people live for applause.  
Some people want to be thought of as spiritual.  
Some people protect an image more carefully than they protect their soul.  
Philippians chapter two says that Jesus made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant.  
Galatians chapter one says that if we live primarily to please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ.  
So what is the balance?  
Do not live for your reputation.  
Do not live as though your reputation does not matter.  
Live for Christ.  
Live honestly before Christ.  
Live faithfully before Christ.  
And entrust your name to Him.  
If people praise you, give the glory to God.  
If people falsely accuse you, remain faithful.  
If the Holy Spirit exposes something that truly needs to change, do not defend it.  
Confess it.  
Correct it.  
Repair what can be repaired.  
And let Christ begin building a testimony that is real.  
Pastors need to ask themselves hard questions.  
Am I the same person away from the pulpit?  
Does my family recognize the Christianity I preach?  
Do I prepare only sermons, or do I prepare my heart?  
Am I building Christ's church, or quietly building my own importance?  
Am I training others, or protecting my place?  
But every Christian needs to ask hard questions too.  
What sermon does my conduct preach?  
Does Sunday recognize Monday?

Would people who know me at home take my testimony seriously?  
Would people who have done business with me call me honest?  
Would people who have seen me under pressure say I belong to Jesus?  
Is there something I need to return?  
Is there someone I need to call?  
Is there an apology I need to make?  
Is there a habit I need to stop defending?  
Is there a private place where I need to meet with God before I try to speak for God in public?  
And I especially want to speak to the person who feels too small, too quiet or too ordinary for God to use.  
Pastor Parillo's story is not telling us that every quiet person is automatically powerful.  
It is telling us that God is not limited by the things people use to measure importance.  
God can use a soft-spoken person.  
God can use a person with little money.  
God can use a person serving in a small place.  
God can use a person who has no platform except the one conversation He puts in front of them.  
God does not need celebrity.  
God desires faithfulness.  
And now, before we close, I need to return to the thief beside Jesus.  
Maybe you are listening tonight and you do not have what anyone would call a good reputation.  
Maybe you carry guilt from things you have taken, things you have said, promises you have broken or people you have wounded.  
Maybe you have spent years trying to protect an image while your heart has been far from God.  
Maybe you believe your past has disqualified you forever.  
The thief on the cross had no time to rebuild his name.  
He had no opportunity to prove himself worthy.  
He had no religious achievement to offer.  
He had only guilt honestly admitted and faith directed toward Jesus.  
And Jesus saved him.  
The good news is not that good people earn heaven.  
The good news is that Jesus Christ died for sinners.

He was buried.

He rose again.

And He calls guilty people to turn from sin and trust Him.

You cannot save yourself by repairing enough of your past.

But when Christ saves you, He begins changing the direction of your future.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you may do that today.

You can speak to Him from your heart.

You can pray something like this.

Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner.

I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and rose again.

I cannot save myself.

I turn from my sin and place my faith in You.

Please forgive me, save me and make me the person You created me to be.

Help me to live a life that honors Your name.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Father, thank You for the grace that saves guilty people.

Thank You for the example of faithful servants who show us what Your grace can produce over a lifetime.

Make us people of truth.

Make us people of private devotion.

Make us people whose lives support the message of Christ.

Give courage to the quiet believer.

Give repentance to the compromised believer.

Give hope to the guilty sinner.

And make our lives point people toward Jesus.

In His name, Amen.

Amen.

I once thought the great story was that my wallet had been recovered.

But the money was eventually spent.

The credit card eventually expired.

The wallet eventually wore out.

What has endured is the lesson of a faithful servant who was small in stature, quiet in speech, limited in possessions and rich in credibility.

Before asking whether people know our names, let us ask whether our lives honor the name of Jesus.

Before asking whether we have influence, let us ask where our influence is leading people.

Before asking whether we can preach, let us ask whether we are willing to live the sermon.

Pastor Teopanie Parillo did not need a commanding voice to preach a powerful sermon.

By the time he opened his Bible on that bus, his life had already begun preaching.

Aloha Nui Loa.

**BIBLICAL COMMENTARY**

# **WHAT MAKES A PREACHER POWERFUL?**

*Pastor Teopanie Parillo*

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 | Proverbs 22:1 | 1 Timothy 3:1–7 | Luke 23:39–43

**Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley**

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[www.ReasonTogether.Church](http://www.ReasonTogether.Church)

*“Come now, and let us reason together” • Isaiah 1:18*

## Commentary in Brief

The story of Pastor Teopanie Parillo begins with a lost wallet, but its real question is deeper: What gives a Gospel messenger spiritual weight? The magazine account presents a quiet and physically unimpressive pastor whose community knew him, trusted him and listened when he opened his Bible. His reputation did not replace the Gospel. It gave credibility to the messenger, while the Gospel of the repentant thief gave a guilty person a way toward mercy.

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” First Corinthians 2:4, KJV

CENTRAL CONCLUSION: Spiritual power is not personal spectacle. It is the Holy Spirit using Biblical truth through a servant whose private life, public conduct and spoken message agree. A good name is valuable, but it is not an idol. It is the public fruit of a character formed before God.

This study guards against two opposite errors. One error treats preaching as performance and assumes that human charisma proves spiritual authority. The other error despises character because only the message matters. Scripture refuses both. The message is Christ crucified. The messenger must not contradict the message he bears.

## The Question Behind the Study

The public question, “What makes a preacher powerful?” naturally reaches beyond preachers. Every believer makes claims about Christ with words, habits, decisions and relationships. A pastor may stand behind a pulpit for forty minutes each week. A family, a workplace and a neighborhood observe the other one hundred sixty-seven hours. This is why the Bible speaks so seriously about a good name, honest conduct and a good report among those outside the church. The magazine story must not be reduced to “God returned my wallet.” God was kind to return it. Yet the deeper lesson arose from Pastor Parillo’s accumulated credibility. When he entered the bus, people already knew the kind of man he was. By the time he opened his Bible, his life had already begun preaching.

GOVERNING TENSION: We must not live for our own reputation, yet we must never live as though reputation does not matter. The Christian lives for Christ, and a good name grows as the truthful consequence of that life.

## 1. The Power of the Gospel Is Not the Power of a Personality

### Read the Whole Paragraph: First Corinthians 2:1–5

Paul begins with deliberate weakness. He did not arrive in Corinth presenting himself as the polished answer to Corinth's appetite for eloquence, philosophy and public display. He did not rest his authority upon rhetorical brilliance. He declared the testimony of God and determined to center his preaching upon "Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

This does not mean Paul lacked education, intelligence or skill. His letters demonstrate careful reasoning, Scripture knowledge and pastoral precision. The issue is foundation. Paul would not allow the Corinthians to place their faith in him, his methods or his eloquence. Their faith had to rest in God's power.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." First Corinthians 2:2, KJV

The immediate context is important. Corinth was becoming divided around admired leaders. Some claimed Paul, some Apollos and some Cephas. Paul answers the temptation to personality-cult Christianity by directing attention to the crucified Christ. A ministry that makes the preacher unforgettable but leaves Christ secondary has already lost the apostolic pattern.

Pastor Parillo's story becomes an unusually vivid illustration. The magazine introduces him after describing the usual picture of a powerful preacher, then notes that he did not fit it. He was small, quiet and humble. Yet God used him. His appearance did not prevent the Spirit from making Christ known.

WORD OF CAUTION: Weakness is not automatically spirituality. A quiet personality can be fearful, unprepared or self-protective. Paul's point is that weakness surrendered to Christ does not prevent God's power. The issue is not whether the vessel looks impressive. The issue is whether the treasure within it is Christ.

## Earthen Vessels

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Second Corinthians 4:7, KJV

The image is deliberately humbling. An earthen vessel is ordinary, fragile and replaceable. The treasure is not ordinary. The treasure is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God often works through servants whose weakness makes the source of power clearer.

Moses objected that he was not eloquent. Gideon considered himself the least in a weak family. Jeremiah believed he was too young. Paul’s opponents said his bodily presence was weak. Yet God’s repeated answer was not, “You have underestimated your own greatness.” His answer was, “I will be with thee.”

This is a needed word for the person who believes he or she is too quiet, too old, too young, too poor, too unknown or too ordinary to serve Christ. God is not seeking a celebrity before He can call a servant. He seeks faithfulness, dependence and obedience.

## 2. A Good Name Is Wealth That Money Cannot Buy

### Proverbs 22:1

“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” Proverbs 22:1, KJV

Proverbs does not deny the practical value of money. The lost wallet in the magazine account contained what Dr. Hawksley needed for travel and his only credit card. The loss was real. The verse teaches comparison, not contempt for material needs. When forced to choose, an honorable name is more desirable because it carries a kind of wealth gold cannot create.

The Hebrew idea of a name includes more than a label. A name is bound up with the remembered identity and reputation of a person. It is what becomes attached to someone as others observe conduct over time. That is why a good name cannot be bought, announced or manufactured quickly. It is built slowly through repeated truthful choices.

“A good name is better than precious ointment.” Ecclesiastes 7:1, KJV

Precious ointment was costly, pleasant and socially valuable. Yet it could be spoiled. Ecclesiastes 10:1 adds that dead flies can cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour. The image explains why integrity must be guarded. A pattern of folly can damage a reputation for wisdom and honor.

A good name is not a costume. It is the accumulated public memory of a life that agrees with the truth.

### Character, Reputation and Witness

Character is who a person actually is before God. Reputation is what others have come to believe after observing that person. Witness is the spiritual message communicated by the connection, or disconnection, between a person's profession and behavior.

These categories must not be collapsed. Some people have stronger reputations than character. Jesus rebuked Sardis because it had "a name that thou livest, and art dead." Others may have changed by God's grace but still carry an old reputation that takes time to overcome. The Gospel therefore saves us from both hypocrisy and despair.

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Revelation 3:1, KJV

Pastor Parillo's power was not that he had skillfully managed a religious image. The article repeatedly places private and public life beside one another. He was studying before sunrise. He was serving in a small home. He was walking streets with a Bible. He was known in the community. He was, in Dr. Hawksley's words, the same person outside church as behind the pulpit.

## 3. The Pastor Must Have a Good Report Outside the Church

### First Timothy 3:1–7

When Paul describes an overseer, he begins not with voice, physical presence, organizational ability or the size of a ministry. He begins with character. The bishop must be blameless, sober, of good behavior, hospitable, patient, not greedy, not quarrelsome and faithful in his household. He must also be apt to teach and hold to the truth.

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” First Timothy 3:7, KJV

“Blameless” does not mean sinless. No person other than Christ could meet that standard. It does not mean that everyone will approve. Paul himself suffered lies, opposition and slander. It means that a valid, persistent and disqualifying moral charge cannot rightly be established against the pastor. His conduct does not hand opponents a legitimate contradiction to his message.

The phrase “them which are without” protects the church from evaluating leaders only through internal affection. People outside the congregation see a person in commerce, traffic, family life, conflict and temptation. They know whether a Christian pays bills, keeps promises, tells the truth, speaks kindly and treats those with less power honorably.

The community’s recognition of Pastor Parillo makes this verse tangible. His ministry did not begin when he entered the church building. It had been observed on roads, in markets, homes, parks and ordinary encounters. His name had acquired meaning because people had watched his life.

### The Same Principle in Other Texts

- Acts 6:3 requires men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. Reputation, Spirit-filled life and practical wisdom belong together.
- Acts 16:2 says Timothy was well reported of by the brethren. Before Timothy’s wider ministry, a local testimony had already formed.
- Third John 12 says Demetrius had a good report of all men and of the truth itself. The phrase is remarkable: people and truth agreed in their testimony.
- Titus 2:7–8 requires the teacher to show himself a pattern of good works so that an opponent has no evil thing to say.
- First Peter 5:3 forbids lordship over the flock and calls elders to be examples.

## 4. The Private Life Under the Public Sermon

### The Fire Before Sunrise

One of the most revealing scenes in the magazine has no crowd, no music and no public invitation. After a difficult night on a mat, interrupted by roosters that seemed determined to announce morning ahead of schedule, Dr. Hawksley arose and found Pastor Parillo already seated near a fire pit. His Bible was open. He was making notes for sermons he would preach that week.

The point is not that a particular hour makes a person spiritual. Some serve God faithfully at dawn, some in the night watches and some amid schedules that make either impossible. The point is that the man who spoke publicly had first met with God privately. The message was being prepared before the audience arrived.

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” Ezra 7:10, KJV

Ezra gives the proper order: seek, do, teach. The teacher does not merely collect material. He prepares his heart to receive and obey the Word. A sermon can be technically correct while the preacher is spiritually careless. Scripture demands both doctrine and self-watch.

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.” First Timothy 4:16, KJV

The sermon people hear during the day is often being formed long before daylight, when only God sees the servant’s Bible, prayer, repentance and preparation.

## 5. Meekness and Boldness Belong Together

### Quiet Does Not Mean Cowardly

The article’s description of Pastor Parillo refuses an easy stereotype. He was quiet and humble, yet he was bold enough to approach strangers with the Gospel. He carried his Bible and spoke to people in streets, parks, stores and beside the road. His quiet manner did not make him passive. His humility did not prevent courage.

Biblical boldness is not verbal force. It is the settled willingness to obey God and speak truth when fear would prefer silence. Meekness is not weakness. It is strength under God's rule. A meek person need not dominate others to be courageous before them.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John...they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13, KJV

Peter and John did not obtain authority from social credentials. Their boldness was inseparable from their relationship with Jesus and the Spirit's filling. John the Baptist offers another parallel. Herod knew that John was a just and holy man, yet John still spoke directly about the king's sin. True boldness combines moral credibility with truthful speech.

This is especially encouraging for believers who do not have a dramatic personality. God can use an ordinary conversation, a faithful answer, an offered prayer, a Bible study, a compassionate act or a moment of truthful witness. The question is not whether we can imitate every evangelist's method. The question is whether we are available when Christ opens a door.

## 6. Ministry Is Powerful When It Multiplies

### From Church Planter to Trainer

Pastor Parillo's work was not limited to one congregation. The article reports that he had started many churches, helped others begin new ones and shown Dr. Hawksley congregations entrusted to other preachers. This is not merely evidence of activity. It illustrates a ministry that points beyond its own personality.

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Second Timothy 2:2, KJV

The verse contains four generations: Paul, Timothy, faithful men and those they will teach. Mature ministry does not gather all dependence around one gifted person. It equips others to carry the work forward. In Acts, Paul and Barnabas strengthened disciples and appointed elders. Titus was left in Crete to set things in order and appoint elders in every city.

The contrast is searching. A ministry built around a personality must keep that personality central. A ministry built upon Christ can establish, train, entrust and release. The pastor remains accountable, but he does not treat others' maturity as a threat to his importance.

Material wealth becomes smaller when it is divided. Spiritual influence can become greater when it is shared.

## 7. The Thief on the Cross: Grace That Faces Guilt

### Why the Bus Sermon Matters

The most striking detail in the wallet story is not simply that Pastor Parillo asked for the wallet. He began preaching about the thief on the cross. That Gospel account names guilt without making guilt the final word. It tells of a condemned man who honestly recognized his sin, turned toward Jesus and received mercy.

“And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Luke 23:41, KJV

The repentant thief did not defend himself. He acknowledged that his punishment was just. He confessed Christ’s innocence. He addressed Jesus as Lord and King. Then he asked to be remembered. Jesus did not tell him to earn paradise. He promised, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The thief on the cross could not climb down and repay the people he had wronged. The person on the bus still had the opportunity to return what was not his. The return of the wallet did not purchase salvation. It was a fitting response available to someone whose conscience had been confronted by truth.

### Zacchaeus and the Fruit of Repentance

Luke 19 provides the clearest companion story. Zacchaeus offered generosity and restitution after meeting Jesus. Christ did not say that Zacchaeus had purchased salvation. He declared that salvation had come to his house. The changed relationship to money displayed the fruit of grace. “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour...that he may have to give to him that needeth.” Ephesians 4:28, KJV

Where restitution is possible, repentance seeks to make matters right. Where restitution is impossible, repentance still turns from sin and begins a new path. The Gospel does not require a

sinner to repair everything before coming to Christ. It does require the saved sinner not to make peace with what Christ calls sin.

Pastor Parillo did not merely announce that a thief was present. He announced that mercy was available to a thief.

## 8. Two Sermons on One Bus

The bus scene allows the study to gather every major thread into one moment. Pastor Parillo preached a sermon with his mouth. He opened the Bible and spoke about Christ's mercy toward a guilty thief. But he also preached a sermon with his life. That sermon had been preached for decades in the community before the bus ever stopped.

- His private Bible study said that he believed God's Word mattered.
- His small home and faithful service said that ministry was not a path to personal luxury.
- His street evangelism said that the Gospel belonged outside the church building.
- His church planting said that he wanted the work to outlive his own presence.
- His public consistency said that the message spoken from the pulpit was not a performance.
- His quiet courage on the bus said that truth and mercy could confront sin without demeaning the sinner.

His character gave credibility to the messenger. His Bible supplied the message. The Holy Spirit confronted the conscience. Christ offered mercy to the sinner. This is the appropriate order. A good reputation may open an ear. It cannot regenerate a heart. A preacher may point. Only Jesus saves.

## 9. Avoiding Two Serious Errors

### Image Management

The first error is living for the appearance of goodness. This produces carefully protected reputations without true character. It fears discovery more than it fears sin. It uses religious

language to control perception. Sardis stands as the warning: a church can have a living name while being spiritually dead.

The remedy is not to stop caring about reputation. The remedy is to bring the hidden life under the rule of Christ. A good name must be the fruit of faithfulness, never the substitute for it.

### Carelessness About Witness

The second error says, “Only God knows my heart, so it does not matter what my conduct communicates.” Scripture will not allow that conclusion. Jesus tells His disciples to let their light shine before men. Peter calls believers to honest conduct among the Gentiles. Paul requires a good report from those outside the church.

The Christian cannot control every rumor, false accusation or hostile interpretation. But he can avoid needless offense, dishonesty, hypocrisy, greed and cruelty. We cannot make everyone approve. We can seek, by grace, to give no legitimate cause for the Gospel to be despised.

Do not live for your reputation. Do not live as though your reputation does not matter. Live for Christ, and entrust your name to Him.

## 10. A Personal Examination

This study is not principally asking, “Can I preach like Pastor Parillo?” It is asking, “What is my life preaching already?” The answer may be different for a pastor, a parent, a teenager, a retired person, a business owner or a new believer. But the call to sincerity is universal.

- Would my family say that I am the same person at home as I am at church?
- Would people who have handled money with me call me honest?
- Would people who have seen me frustrated say that I represent Christ well?
- Am I preparing only words for public use, or am I allowing God’s Word to search my heart?
- Do I seek an impressive reputation, or a truthful one?
- Am I willing to speak of Christ in the ordinary opportunities God gives me?
- Is there something I need to return, confess, correct or repair?

- Have I trusted Christ Himself, or only tried to look like a religious person?

The deepest question remains salvation. A clean public image cannot erase guilt. A respected name cannot enter heaven for us. The thief beside Jesus reminds every sinner that grace is not earned by a repaired reputation. Christ died for sinners, rose again and receives all who turn to Him in faith. Then, by grace, He begins forming a life that honors His name.

## Final Commentary Conclusion

Pastor Teopanie Parillo did not need a commanding voice to preach a powerful sermon. His life had prepared the ground for the words he spoke. The value of his good name was not that it made him important. Its value was that it removed an unnecessary obstacle from the Gospel and directed attention toward Jesus.

The study therefore ends where Paul began. The faith of God's people must not rest in the wisdom, style or fame of a preacher. It must rest in the power of God. Yet God is pleased to use servants who seek the Word, do the Word, teach the Word and live faithfully before those who watch. By the time Pastor Parillo opened his Bible on that bus, his life had already begun preaching.