
Traditional and Innovative Preaching: Effective Sermon Presentation for Soul- Winning

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Abstract

Various methods of biblical homiletics drawn from the traditional perspective have been in use even in this modern era. But contemporarily, technological evolution has brought many forms of modern approaches which have been adopted by various religious groups to spread their teachings and faith. Presently many preachers and churches are adopting various digital technologies in preaching. These methods of preaching have a lot of impact on contemporary listeners and it has proven effective for preachers in sermon presentation it keeps the listeners more engaged. This study examines the adoption of innovative digital technologies in preaching to determine the effect of this innovation on the sermon as a genre and preaching as a rhetorical practice. The traditional homiletics and innovations in homiletics in particular are key to understanding how and why digital technologies and innovations help to shape or fail to shape a preacher's rhetorical prowess. The articulation of the preacher through the use of technology will aid in reconceiving the sermon as a multimedia genre that integrates digital technologies as an integral part to the sermon, thereby taking advantage of their attention capturing qualities or using digital technologies to improve congregational ethos through accessibility. Technology when rightly and effectively used will help to understand preaching in this increasingly digital culture.

Key Words: Homiletics, Preaching, Media, Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Homiletics is the art and science of preaching homilies. Throughout human history, homiletics has evolved and have employed various ways of communicative discourse. Until these present days, homiletics continues to present us with questions on how it could be a more effective tool in bringing the message to the audience as its communicative style adapts to the times. Homiletics poses a lot of problems that draw our attention. There is a growing shift in homiletics in terms of communication style and discourse of preaching. It is moving from a monologic to a dialogic discourse and from an expository to an interactive style.¹

Certain theories of communication constitute other theories in their meta-discourse and so they become metal models which perhaps can be seen as traditions of communication.² From this, our discussion of the communicative process in biblical preaching can be understood based on these models.

This study looks at traditional homiletics and innovative homiletics in 21st-century biblical preaching and how they can help both the preacher and congregants even outside the congregation.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Homiletics is defined as the art of preaching. The word Homiletics is derived from the Greek words **homileo** and **homilia**, which mean, “to be in company with, i.e. to converse, and communicate.”³ Also, Kneidei says that this word which is in Greek **homiletics** can be translated as ‘conversation’, this

¹ G.G. Ravasco, *Homiletics in the Light of the Seven plus one Communication Traditions*, East Asian Pastoral Review 49 (2012)4 p. 320

² Craig, R. T. (1999). “Communication Theory as a Field.” *Communication Theory* 9, no. 2, p. 119-161

³ Rowlands G. *A Simple Guide to Preaching*, Mimeo: 2010

implies a degree of discussion rather than a one-directional oration.⁴

According to Kohl, homiletics is concerned, not only with preaching but also with communication which is not only talking but also getting other people to listen and hear what one is saying as is stipulated in Mathew 11:15; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; Revelation 2:7,2:11,2:17,2:29,3:6,3:13 and 3:22.⁵

Traditional Preaching. Traditional homiletics is a gift of God's communicated message from generation to generation so that God's people are incorporated in the same unique, identical reality and the original word of God is permanently preserved and presented anew to God's people and above all the message of truth.^{6 7} Traditional homiletics focuses on delivering a biblical message or truth through the sermon presupposes a gap between the preacher and the congregation. In traditional homiletics, the preacher aims to communicate the word of God and tries to persuade the audience to accept the truth contained in the biblical text using one of the types of traditional preaching.

Innovative Preaching. Innovation can be defined as a creation (a new device or process) resulting from study and experimentation or the act of starting something for the first time or introducing something new.⁸

Therefore, innovation in homiletics is an act of creating different means to communicate the word of God due to the changes in

⁴ Kneidei G. *Homiletics* 2010. <https://www.oup.com/us/pdf/rhetoric>.

⁵ Kohl A, *Homiletics: the Art and Science of Preaching*, Faith Bible Baptist Church, Eden:New York, 2001

⁶ Conger Yves, *The meaning of tradition*, New York, 1964.

⁷ <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ctsa/article/download/2558/2195>.

⁸ Advanced English Dictionary, Version : WordNet 3:1
<http://wordnet.princeton.edu>

the contemporary way and present new techniques, approaches, and methods of delivery in biblical preaching.

Narrative Preaching. A narrative sermon tells a biblical story while drawing a biblical conclusion. We can say narrative sermon is the artistic arrangement and telling of the events in such a way that the story could have its ultimate effect, getting people involved and placing their narratives within the context of God's narrative in Jesus Christ.⁹

NARRATIVE PREACHING.

The entire Bible is largely narrative in form so a narrative sermon restores the narrative tradition of the Bible. This type of preaching brings the audience to be more steadfast to the Word of God because it allows the understanding of the scripture in its terms. Thus, if the narrative form of the Bible is preached, then the relevancy factor of church members will increase.¹⁰ According to Mark Powell, "There is increasing appreciation among scholars today for the ability of stories to engage us and to change the way we perceive ourselves and our world."¹¹

Narration especially connects with the right hemisphere of the brain¹², sealing in, effectively, the cognitive content of the message which is being processed rationally by the left brain.¹³

⁹ Johan Janse van Rensburg, Head of the Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 9300

¹⁰ John C. Cress, *Narrative preaching: a study of contemporary theory and the development and implementation of an integrative model in the walla walla college church*, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2000.

¹¹ Powell, 90

¹² Lewis, "Triple Brain Test," 9.

¹³ Donald Chatfield calls story sermons "left-handed" sermons on the basis that the right hemisphere of the brain governs the motor functions of the left side of the body, including the left hand. "The brain's right-side experiences life by way of story and sense," he observes. Donald F. Chatfield, *Dinner with Jesus and Other Left-handed Story-sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988),

Narrative sermon fixes the message in our mind through the stories for it is easier to retrain stories than oral messages and it is easier also to keep stories in mind for a long time for people like to hear stories more than oral reading¹⁴. So, by using narrative sermons, we can be able to keep most messages of the Bible. The narrative sermon goes back to the source of the message. Narrative preaching, by continually referencing the Story through its myriad of component stories, has the potential to continually transport us back to the source of meaning in our back to where we began the journey¹⁵.

Challenges in narrative preaching

Not all of the scripture is narrative and not all the biblical passages will neatly fit a narrative form of proclamation. The story preaching is a “one-size-fits-all” approach, simply because the narrative is closely attuned to human nature in general, is unwarranted, and may cause the preacher to “narrate over” the heads of some people. By its very nature, as previously pointed out, the narrative is inductive and open-ended. This means that hearers of narrative sermons are invited to “make up their minds” and form their connections for “their story” and the biblical story, rather than having conclusions “spoon-fed” to them by the preacher. ¹⁶Miller identifies the following extremely important dangers and drawbacks inherent in narrative preaching:¹⁷

9. Foundational work in the field of brain physiology and hemispherical function was published in Robert.

¹⁴ John C. Cress, *Narrative preaching: a study of contemporary theory and the development and implementation of an integrative model in the walla walla college church*, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2000.

¹⁵ John C. Cress. 2000.

¹⁶ John C. Cress, *Narrative preaching: a study of contemporary theory and the development and implementation of an integrative model in the walla walla college church*, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2000.

¹⁷ Miller C, *Narrative preaching*. In: M. Duduit, *Handbook of contemporary preaching*. Nashville: Broadman Press.1992. 107-109.

- There is no guarantee that the narrative will cause people to identify correctly with the characters and events of the story.
- Narrative preaching may eventually cause the loss of teaching (*a*) within the church.
- Narrative preaching may amaze, fascinate, and entertain more than it affects change in people's lives.
- The effectiveness of narrative sermons is bound by the creative capabilities of the listeners and is limited by the creative capabilities of the preacher.

Effective Narrative Preaching

Kellerman stresses the danger of moralizing in narrative preaching, whereas the real threat is that the narrator/preacher would allow himself all kinds of literary freedom to make the story more effective¹⁸. Lowry (1980:41), on the contrary, views it as inevitable that the preacher should use artistic freedom when he, for instance, seeks motives for people's actions in Biblical stories. He concludes: The preacher who does not dirty his homiletical hands with the the fact of the deeper and quite fluid complexity of the motive world will not be trusted in the sermon, in a counseling chamber, or the church board meeting¹⁹. Long (1989:67) supports the concept of the narrator's artistic freedom.

He points out that aesthetic writing (and preaching) is not concerned with history or dogma but with the creative and artistic playful use of language²⁰. The exclusive use of the narrative approach may place extra demands on the artistic creativity of the narrator. This might cause non-narrative passages of Scripture to be forced into narrative form, thus

¹⁸ Kellerman J S, *Narrative preaching: Homiletiese ondersoek en beoordeling*. Bloemfontein: University of the Orange Free State. 1990 p.12.

¹⁹ Lowry E. L. *The homiletical plot. The sermon as narrative art form*. Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1980.

²⁰Lowry E L. *The homiletical plot. The sermon as narrative art form*. Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1980. 41.

creating the danger of distorting biblical facts to accommodate artistic creativity²¹. Phillips concludes that non-narrative passages of Scripture require one method of exposition whereas the narrative portions of Scripture require another²².

Eslinger warns: Not all Scripture is of a narrative literary form even though it may be possible to speak of the stories that constitute the Story.²³ Narrative preaching does not preclude using historical-critical tools, he also explains in a dialectical fashion that four historical-critical procedures are *not relevant* in narrative preaching, namely:

- Determining the text's "situation-in-life".
- Using the genesis of the text or speculations about its author's intention as a foundation for exegesis. Ellingsen denies that taking the autonomy of the biblical text as a point of departure and bypassing the biblical author's intentions is to divorce Scripture from historical reality²⁴. This approach clearly corresponds with the postmodern concepts of "the death of the author" and "there is nothing outside of the text".
- Projecting dogmatic, confessional, denominational, or personal faith material on a biblical text.
- Regarding the text in a historically referential manner, concerned only

²¹ John C. Cress, *Narrative preaching: a study of contemporary theory and the development and implementation of an integrative model in the walla walla college church*, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2000.

²² Phillips W S. *The Christian preacher as poet: a method for exposition of narrative portions of Scripture based on Aristotle's "Poetics"*. Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1986 p. 3.

²³ Eslinger R LA *new hearing. Living options in homiletic method*. Nashville: Abingdon Press 1987. p.20

²⁴ Ellingsen M. *The integrity of Biblical narrative*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1990

with the political, social, or economic factors of its day²⁵.

RHEMA PREACHING APPROACH

Rhema is the word derived from Greek that describes Scripture, the Word of God which refers to a word that is spoken and means “an utterance.” A rhema is a verse or portion of Scripture that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention with application to a current situation or need for direction. When we say Rhema, we mean the direct spoken word of God. It is the Holy Spirit Who illuminates Scriptures for application in a daily walk with the Lord²⁶.

Rhema is the word of God pronounced directly by Himself or through His Holy Spirit or his servant. This word is given by the power of God to deliver the message of God that the people need at that time. Every word of God is inspired, and “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Timothy 3:16). Rhema can be given through the servant of God used by the Holy Spirit to give information, counseling, and blessings to the people of God.

Disadvantages of the Rhema Approach

Hamon holds that in cases where statements about healing were believed to be rhema but failed it was because the personal conviction of the scriptural truth of divine healing has interfered with receiving actual rhema for the sick individual and this is the main reason so many words were given as a personal prophecy or rhema fail to come to pass... The main problems are mindset, soul blockage, and doctrinal domination that keep us from being Holy Spirit-directed.

²⁵ Janse Van Rensburg J. 2000. 6. *The paradigm shift*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

²⁶ <https://iblp.org/questions/what-rhema#:~:text=The%20second%20primary,with%20the%20Lord.>

A believer wanting to be a conduit for prophecy must also be earnestly and sincerely seeking God about the matter and be wary of their wishful thinking and imagination. ²⁷ The Bible is full of Rhema given to individuals which failed to come to pass. It was not the Rhema of the Lord that failed, but rather the people who heard it failed to understand, interpret, believe, obey, respond, wait upon, or act upon it according to God's will and way. Today many Christians or ministers seek power to operate wonders and they stand under rhema to tell that prophecy comes from God. Others based on their imagination, their dreams without source claimed that they received a rhema. Another thing is that many wonders are performed by Satan to deceive the people even Christians. Citing Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15 and 2 Corinthians 13:1, Hamon said that "the scriptural requirement that everything must be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses before accepting the fact...can be applied to a word of counsel, a word of prophecy, or a rhema word. Just as the general Will of God cannot be established by a single verse, neither can the specific Will of God be established by one prophecy, one Rhema, one counselor, or anything else. God insists that in all serious matters there be at least two and preferably three witnesses before you accept a prophetic word."²⁸

INNOVATIVE PREACHING.

Preaching online is part of innovative homiletics popular known as “online community” and also as a worship community. The preacher prepares his sermon, sets his/her camera to either sit or stand, and presents the message to the audience who are online viewing the live streaming. The structure of sermons is

²⁷ Bill Hamon *Prophets and Personal Prophecy: God's Prophetic Voice Today Volume 1*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.1987

²⁸ Ibid.,.

structured more like a personal journal entry than what one might consider a traditional sermon.²⁹

The Lecture Method. Preaching is live-streamed from the pulpit which is not distinguishable from the usual conventional preaching. A notable difference is the invisibility of the audience but present only in the digital space.³⁰

The Conversation Method. In this type of online preaching, the preacher typically sits behind the table, looking at the camera making the background environment more comfortable. The voice of the preacher is highly pastoral and the speaking style is conversational.³¹

The reporter Method. The preacher stands without a pulpit and the conventional altar is in the background. The background may fit with real-life still cuts, moving images, or church images.³²

The interview Method. The preacher may sit in his/her living room, kitchen, or backyard, of the church and present his/her message.³³

The drama Method. In this style, the preacher performs scriptural drama with necessary moving objects or materials in

²⁹ Brook Louis Connor, *SUNDAY Sermonette: 1st Sunday of Advent*, YouTube video December 3, 2017. <https://youtu.be/zcuf8y8go9Q>.

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8s70HivIOU&feature=youtu.be>. Accessed April 16, 2023

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pslCh2IP2-E&feature=youtu.be>. Accessed April 16, 2023

³² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo44NzWjp0A&feature=emb_title. Accessed April 16, 2023

³³

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3464&v=OBGNTys_Qsk&feature=emb_title. Accessed April 16, 2023

front of the camera to the target audience because the attention span of the audience is relatively short.³⁴

The Zoom/ Chart Method. This is an informal style of online preaching in its delivery and its content. The key is making the preaching environment as friendly and approachable as possible for listeners.³⁵

The Rock Concert Method. The preacher usually roams around the worship stage. He may decide to begin the sermon from the podium with the bible as the sermon develops to its climax, he or she may engage the listeners by the embodied performance of the preached word physically assertively.³⁶

The Film Method. The preacher does not actually appear in the sermonic film, but sermon viewers only listen to her voice; music—including various songs or a variety of instrumental music—often accompanies the sermon from beginning to end; several preachers can preach a sermon together by their coordinated narrations or each preacher can take turns; finally, the preacher does not have to live near the church or her congregation but can be located anywhere just like the viewers.³⁷

Advantages of Innovative Preaching

a) Sermons can be generated and shared in such a way that the revelations therein are transmitted via a variety of platforms, giving people who are often on the outside of the white mainline mainstream an avenue to be heard and known. The benefit of extended conversation is clear as well. The spiritual revelation shared from the

³⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shBTDPnGPec&feature=emb_title. Accessed April 16, 2023

³⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sN57LlyaLaC8MqRmrQRdeMfPdii0W8M/view?usp=sharing>.

³⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMpzvw4yhB8&feature=emb_title.

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UHgVi86S7c&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1vS1d710MUyqjrWvw1soLSp>

pulpit is not lost to the moment nor is the presence of the preacher lost to a listener who might want further conversation.³⁸

b) People from all over the world can easily get access to download the sermon and engage with it in unknowing ways.³⁹

c) In terms of content the offline context does impact the online preaching content and make it more interesting.

d) It is the way of sharing resources and those who cannot make it can tune in to what you are preaching.⁴⁰

We believe that online preaching is effective, and the advantages show that effective teaching methods are important by training and retraining pastors to engage in this innovative method. Professional instructors are to teach the preachers.

THE BLACK AMERICAN PREACHING

The history of preaching in the African-American community is connected to two contexts: the religious tradition of West Africa and the institution of slavery. As slaves were converted to Christianity, a blending of cultures occurred. Syncretism of Christianity and the slave experience gave birth to a rich new heritage of preaching. Often legally prohibited from learning to read and write, illiterate slaves developed robust oral traditions, passing down spirituals, sermons, and folk tales from

³⁸ Wil Gafney, *The Shadows of Easter*, April 16, 2018.
<https://www.wilgafney.com/2018/04/15/the-shadows-of-easter/>.
Accessed April 8, 2023

³⁹ Tripp Hudgins, *Preaching Online* Anglican Theological Review, 2019
pp.87-88

⁴⁰ Online Sermons Pros and Cons,
<https://www.backyardmissionary.com/online-sermons-pros-and-cons/>.
Accessed April 19, 2023

generation to generation. Without such a rhetorical process, African Americans may not have survived as a people. ⁴¹

The spoken Word in America's Black pulpits has long been esteemed for its persistent calls for justice, church reform, moral and ethical responsibility, and spiritual redemption. Contemporary homiletics have insufficiently attended to theological matters about incarnation and the historical conditioning of culture, and how these matters shape the message of the gospel in different contexts. Black American preaching without congregational response, there can be no genuine black sermon.⁴²

A prominent feature of vernacular sermons and Black preaching tradition:

Call and Response: this is based on African religion and African oral rendition which is based on communal performance.

Tonality and musicality of voice: they use their voice to reflect their preaching. Their preaching is referred to by whites as "sonorous" or "tonal" which reflects the tonal quality of African languages and this brings a cathartic response in the audience.

Repetition: this is another feature of Black American preaching,

We know about Plato, but we want to see Jesus,
We know about Aristotle, but we want to see Jesus
We know about Homer, but we want to see Jesus.

⁴¹ Tim Sensing, *African American Preaching*, <https://www.blogs.acu.edu/sensingt/cool-stuff/african-american-preaching>, Accessed 13/14/2023

⁴² Howard Thurman, *The State of African America Preaching Today*,

Black theme: the sermon reflects the historical development and contemporary issues affecting the African American community. The gospel preached must speak to contemporary people and their need for the black congregation to cling” to old-time

Preaching because they possess “**emotional, superstitions temperament** whose historical roots reach back through the days of slavery to the jungles of Africa” Mitchell, explains “that Black belief system of folk Christianity” that “has kept believers alive and coping-even when in an oppressed condition that would have crushed many.”⁴³

Historical images and historical symbols: it is common to find historical images and symbols as reference points. Walter Simmons Sermonic Prayers Tell them, our Father, that

We train day riding on
Is full of dead man’s bones
Make them know our father,
That the house is on fire⁴⁴

Ebonics language: a language which is black American that is codified, pauses, inflections, cadences

Rhetorical Features: Reference to the train here is a historical marker of the underground train that slaves rode to freedom. Dead man’s bones refer to the Biblical Ezekiel’s dry bones “that rise again.” Images and metaphors are also used to point to the confluence of African American religion with African religions.

MEDIA PREACHING

⁴³ Mitchell, Henry H. *A brief history of Black preaching. Black Preaching USA:* Harper and Rons, 1979.

⁴⁴ Rickford, J.R and Rickford R.J. *Spoken Soul: the story of Black English.* United States: John wiley and sons, Inc. 2000

Media is the vehicle of communication and the preacher is in the business of communication. God revealed himself to Adam, the patriarchs, prophets, Apostles various men of God without intermediaries. Yet God used methods or media to communicate. Face to face with Adam and Eve Gen. 3:8; a form of an Angel for Abraham Gen. 18:1-3; Dreams and visions for Joseph Gen. 37:5; Burning bush for Moses Exo. 3:1-9; voice and dove Matt.3:13-17; tongues for the Apostles Acts 2:3-4. This shows that different methods are used based on the needs of the audience. To effectively communicate the Word of God to everyone, the preacher must be familiar with media. Social media is where most of the congregation lives, it is now the way of life.⁴⁵

Present-day audiences are oriented toward story in sight and sound in addition to verbal instruction. In his perspective, visual support that enhances oral communication could be as natural as appropriate gesturing or could involve more sophisticated graphics like clips from movies. He lists categories of illustrations such as figure of speech, analogy, allegory, fable, parable, historical allusion, biographical incident, personal experience, and anecdote. Any of this can be illustrated through multimedia.⁴⁶ Whether or not a paradigm shift occurs in preaching through its developing convergence with multimedia tools in the near future remains to be seen and depends on whether or not the Academy of Homiletics is willing to partner with theologians and communication scholars to build a convincing case for the need and the way to meet it. Media in its various forms brings both blessings and curses.

⁴⁵ Mike Glenn, *Preaching points: 10 Tips for Using Social Media to Support Preaching Ministry* <https://www.preaching.com/articles/preaching-points-10-tips-for-using-social-media-to-support-your-preaching-ministry/> Accessed on 13/04/2023.

⁴⁶ Ramesh Richard *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Preaching Salvation*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 2005. P. 155.

Christians are called to be in the world while not being conformed to it, but they are also expected to be transformed by the renewing of their minds to the glory of God. Among those called to become all things to all people for the sake of the Gospel and to make the most of every opportunity, Clayton Schmit's words seem reasonable, "Any art or technology...that truly advances the promises of the gospel or successfully draws people into an encounter with God is worth exploiting for the very best reasons".⁴⁷ There is a need to use technology in our sermon delivery but we must be careful to how use it.

Benefits of media preaching

The world is a global village, and the careful study of social media helps the preacher to exegete his audience, how they interact with currents, and how they process the world, this will give him an opportunity when preparing his/her sermon which would be the remedy⁴⁸ of people issues and challenges pointing them to God the sovereign Lord who is control.

PREACHING AND TECHNOLOGY

The move to multimedia to improve communication and engagement may not be unique to preaching and theology. It is the responsibility of the preacher to understand the nature of his audience before adopting any technological gadgets in preaching. A clear understanding of technology is a means to share the gospel in fact as stated above it influences the ethos of the preacher and also the audience.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN PREACHING

⁴⁷ Schmit, C. J. "Technology and Art in Worship and Preaching." *Living Pulpit* 12 (2003): 40-41

⁴⁸ Garrison Griffith, How Social Media Influences Our Preaching, October 26, 2018, <https://preachingsource.com/blog/how-social-media-influences-our-preaching/> Accessed 13/04/2023.

Would Jesus preach digitally if He is here today? Absolutely yes! When Jesus calls the first disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:12-23, he uses language to which they can relate. He does not say, “Follow me and I will make you great preachers, able to proclaim the kingdom of heaven to all.” If he had, would Peter, Andrew, James, and John have been so quick to leave their nets and their families? Instead, Jesus uses language that resonates with them and their skill set: “Follow me and I will make you fishers for people.

People who know how to fish use different kinds of bait to attract different kinds of fish. “We must provide a large variety of baits owing to the varieties of fish.” Preaching calls for variety that corresponds to the variegation in the listening community.⁴⁹

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 stresses the importance of the message to the audience. The biblical concepts must be relatable to the language of the audience in an easy way that they will understand. Therefore, this shows that preachers though located firmly in the digital culture, are tasked with translating biblical truths into words and methods that are meaningful to their listeners.

CHALLENGES OF PREACHING IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

D. A. Carson in his work “The Challenges of the 21st-century Pulpit”⁵⁰ highlighted the following challenges facing the pulpit in the 21st century:

1. **The preparation and the qualification** of the preacher is fundamental as seen in 1 Timothy 3:1-7). A preacher must not

⁴⁹ Joseph R. Jeter Jr. and Ronald J. Allen, *One Gospel, Many Ears: Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002) p. 6.

⁵⁰ D.A. Carson, *Challenges for the Twenty-first-century Pulpit*, https://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/carson/2007_challenges_of_the_21st-century_pulpit.pdf

Retrieved 07:13 PM 18/03/2023.

be a novice, or a recent convert but must be able to teach (2 Timothy 4:1-5) and must be able to communicate. Equipping preachers with the minimal biblically stipulated qualifications for pastoral office.

2. **An adequate grasp of what preaching is** highly pivotal, preaching is not a subset of public oratory, or explanation of the bible but being faithful and knowing the revelatory impact and power of God through preaching. The passionate commitment to make the Word of God wound and heal, sing, and sting the hearts of the listeners. The preacher must study the people, and culture, to whom he ministers to.²³

3. **A Firm and Growing Grasp of Scripture to strike the balance** in helping believers to be equipped to read the scripture intelligently and comprehensively through historical theology, biblical theology, and systematic theology and a deep commitment to making the important things the important things, to making the central things the central things.

Though it is based on geographical and cultural location, he further itemized six 21st-century pulpit challenges:

1. **Multiculturalism:** this calls the preacher to understand the diversity in the congregation, the empirical and pluralism, and these will allow the preacher to prepare more on these challenges.

2. **Rising Biblical Illiteracy:** A preacher is not writing fresh data on the blank hard drives of their minds; he/she is required to help them erase certain files and parts of files that clash irremediably with the truth of Scripture that we are trying to write onto their minds. The Bibles are available the pastors are plenty but only a few understand this.

3. **Shifting epistemology:** The moderns are fixated on certainty, infatuated with propositions, arrogant and intolerant, and blind to ambiguities and artistry of life

while postmodernism recognizes the relativity of all truth claims, tolerance, and cultural sensitivity. This shift affects the preacher to discuss sin where “right” and “wrong” are perceived as transcultural categories, good is disgusting, and evil is celebrated. From this perspective, narrative preaching is needed we believe because it will be more open and an inductive approach may be quite better. Faith seems to be a “subjective” and religious choice.

4. **Integration:** at this time when internet porn outsells cigarettes, booze, and hard drugs combined, the digital world overtakes human intimacy, globalization, etc, the preacher is not authorized to duck such important issues but to be expositors of the Words of God.

There is a need to speed up the pace of change, to adopt and adapt, and to communicate the truth as the primary task given to us. The preacher must study the scripture, fervently pray, meditate, and practice the Word. The preacher must be armed with the knowledge of analyzing books, films, and short videos and understand that 80-90% of his congregation spends their time on the internet. Modeling and mentoring must be inculcated. Attend sound preaching workshops, mutual and healthy criticism of the sermon outlines is essential.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL AGE

The digital age changes the way we access information and even how we process data. Yet preaching remains a spoken message delivered by a single speaker. Technology changes how we do things, there is a shift in patterns of thinking from “primary oral” cultures to the “literate” cultures of the written word.⁵¹ The oral/aural/visual-based society of pre-printing press days gave way to the text-based society that flourished after the mid-

⁵¹ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen & Co., 1982), p. 35-36.

fifteenth-century invention of the moveable type printing press made printed books widely accessible.⁵²

The preacher ought to understand the generational gap: the “digital natives” (Gen X and Millennial) who have never known a world without digital media, “digital immigrants” (the boomers who learned to navigate the digital world), then the “analog” those who do not use digital media. Research shows that while the brains of digital immigrants will develop some of the same neural pathways as digital natives over time, this category will not have similar development.⁵³ Now, how do you preach in a way that connects all these groups if found in your church? The preacher aims to move all the members to reach out to all of them. Preaching today necessitates more than PowerPoint projection because sometimes if not most, the “Analog natives” object to it while the “digital natives are way beyond PowerPoint.

THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE PREACHER

Artificial intelligence is advancing rapidly and faster than most of us are expecting speed for example Chat GPT. The question remains, what are the implications for preachers? Is AI a threat? Or an opportunity? Will it not hinder the preacher from doing the real work of coming before God?

ADVANTAGE

The primary advantage of AI is, that it searches for information arranges sermons fast, and serves as research assistance.

DISADVANTAGES

⁵² Clay Shirky, “Means,” in *The Digital Divide: Arguments for and Against Facebook, Google, Texting and the Age of Social Networking*, Kindle e-book (New York: The Penguin Group, 2011).

⁵³ Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan, *IBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind*, Harper Collins e-books (New York:Harper Collins, 2008). Chapter 1, “Your Brain on Google.”

1. It will hinder Preachers from working hard in preparation: going to the text week after week and coming up with a powerful word that is relevant to your congregation is what makes pastoring so unique and valuable. The hard work is part of the journey, it grows you as a follower of Jesus, it grows your prayer life and total dependence on God. But AI can write your sermon within minutes
2. It can intellectually be Dishonest: as long as the internet is around, preachers have been downloading sermons, using it, and passing them off as their own. Passing off other people's insights or AI-generated insights as your own is a form of theft.
3. Only your ideas will resonate with your audience because there is originality, not a script written by AI.
4. There is a lack of authority as you did not prepare the sermon and there is no proper preparation, no mastery no idea.

PREACHING AS PUBLIC SPEAKING

There is a strong connection between preaching and rhetoric, Church fathers such as St. Augustine called directly for the use of secular rhetorical strategies in service of the mission of the church.⁵⁴ Christian preachers appropriated rhetorical devices, such as exemplum, maxim, catalog of virtues and vices, dialogue, and diatribe, which were commonly associated with both philosophers and moralists. This is aimed at developing a relationship between speaker and hearer that would create an opportunity for persuasion and, perhaps, conversion.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ George Kennedy, 1999, p.182

⁵⁵ Osborn 1999

Sermons seem to be an oral genre presented, in a worship setting and even in practice.

Preaching as noted separates in itself from classical categories such as judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. Published sermon manuscripts are used⁵⁶ for a long period, preachers used annotations with extra notes or commentary. Alison maintains that, despite a purely oral genre, digital technology continues to challenge that genre and as a result, sermons are digitally remediated and remixed.⁵⁷

Therefore, in this century preachers can remediate texts, music, television clips, films, photographs, and digital graphics.⁵⁸ But the preacher must be careful as not all graphic or video clips should be remediated they must be within the context of the sermon and also something that can positively affect the sermon presentation.

ORAL SERMON

An oral, rhetorical practice, born from the oral, rhetorical traditions of Greece and Rome. These traditions were instrumental in situating the sermon as an oral genre. The sermon, then, becomes not simply a communication of that truth, but a manifestation of it. Thus, the oral nature of the sermon is a necessity for it to bring hearers to faith, but how preachers communicate their messages orally—the rhetorical strategies they employ—and what hearers respond to is dependent on local context.⁵⁹

PERSUASION IN THE SERMON

⁵⁶ Alison C. White 2013

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8

Homiletic is rhetorical⁶⁰ and characterizes its plausibility and appeal through informed judgment, the power of words, and improvability of practice⁶¹ this shows that the preachers' message must be in the language of the audience this must be intentional.

The cybernetic Tradition relates to the preacher, the sermon, and the audience. When homiletics is seen in terms of the circularity of its process and feedback, it is seen in the light of the cybernetic tradition.⁶²

The Semiotic tradition emphasizes that homiletic has two parts, the **exegesis** (extensive and critical interpretation of a text to draw meaning from it) **and the** hermeneutics (is application of the text into life situations).

The phenomenological tradition anchors the personal experiences, and the story of an individual, giving room for interaction with the audience in their thoughts with the message.

The socio-cultural tradition as there is a shift from monologic to dialogic is an act of connecting with the audience⁶³ essentially the use of language and understanding of the sermon is pivotal. If preachers are to get their message across and have a dialogic discourse with the intended audience, then understanding the nuances of the audience's language and its culture is of prime importance.

The Socio-psychological tradition: If preachers want to influence the audience successfully, they must first figure out

⁶⁰ G.G. Ravasco, Homiletics in the Light of the Seven plus one
Communication Traditions, *East Asian Pastoral Review* 49 (2012)4 p.
320

⁶¹ Craig 1999

⁶² Ravasco 321

⁶³ Ibid.,

the audience's latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and non-commitment so that they can create a persuasive message.

The Critical tradition: The preaching must strive for action preferably in assistance to those oppressed or in need (spiritual, moral, physical).

The Pragmatic tradition: Christian homiletics can never be based on the philosophy of pragmatism because the subject matter (message preached) in Christian homiletics deals with "Truth".⁶⁴

The preacher is persuaded by appeals to **logos, pathos, and ethos** in the most literal sense, in the words from biblical texts. This is because the preacher is a rhetor, crafting and delivering a message, he or she is not necessarily the only speaker or voice the audience must consider, the bible must speak to the hearts of the audience. Since persuasion is an act, not only of the preacher speaking but also of God. So what is the role of the preacher/rhetor in the sermon? In some ways, this belief seems to let the preacher off the hook, as he/she is not ultimately responsible for whether or not the hearers are persuaded by the message. But in actuality, he/she is still responsible—as a trained theologian, and as the mouthpiece of God, so to speak—to provide the best possible channel through which God can work.⁶⁵ The three-pillar theory in rhetoric must be armed by the preacher in persuasion when preaching. Logos as one of the pillars proves deductively through reason a point in a sermon. The second is the *ethos* which holds that the preacher must be credible in terms of perceived intelligence, virtuous character, and goodwill. The final one is *pathos* where feeling must be drawn out by the sermon from the audience.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Rascova 322-324

⁶⁵ Ibid., 11

⁶⁶ Dlugan, Andrew, "Six Minutes. Ethos, Pathos, Logos: Three Pillars of Public Speaking." Retrieved from <http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/ethos-pathos-logos/> 2010 (accessed 22 March, 2023)pp. 320-321

PREACHING TO THE POSTMODERN WORLD

Postmodernity possesses the following characteristics such as: 1) biblically uninformed, 2) spiritual, 3) anti-institutional, 4) pluralistic, 5) pragmatic, 6) relational, and 7) experiential. To reach out to postmodernity the preacher should make the postmodern aware of the larger biblical narrative before offering the solution of Jesus; preach towards facilitating an encounter with God; preach messages that address the inadequacies of pluralism, expose the exclusivity in other religions, and highlight the inclusiveness of the cross; the preacher should identify and preach on (while understanding the limits of doing so) pragmatic issues such as finances, health, marriage, and parenting; and to preach to those who value experience, the preacher should create a great experience that goes beyond preaching and may include elements such as worship, lighting, imagery, prayer, and communion. Furthermore, Altrick suggests using imaginative language, exegeting images even over and above words, the use of inductive preaching, and sharing personal testimonies.

Johnston examines the postmodern audience, coming to many of the same conclusions talks about postmoderns as being biblically clueless, up on spirituality while down on religion, wanting to belong before they believe, and pluralistic. He offers seven suggestions for a renewed homiletic. They are as follows: 1) Take a Dialogical Approach (which uses the Socratic method of questioning) 2) Use Inductive Preaching 3) Use Storytelling 4) Use Audiovisuals, Drama, and Art 5) Use Humor 6) Become a Good Listener 7) Make Your Delivery Crisp and Clear. This is better helps preachers better understand the postmodern mindset.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

⁶⁷ Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 13

The central idea in preaching delivery is using the oral delivery method. But as time changes, and the evolution of technology there is a shift in relying solely on oral methods of sermon delivery hence the need for innovation in homiletics. One method cannot fit all in the public delivery of sermons as there are different groups that the preacher may face such as the digital natives, the digital immigrants, and the analog natives.

The preacher must understand his audience and their classes to prepare his/her sermon in such a way that would be effective and inclusive to all the above mentioned classes. As there is a gap between the bible and the postmodern audience, the preacher ought to adapt and adopt methods (essentially technology) to reach out to the modern audience with the gospel standing as an authority in both preaching and exemplary life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective preaching should consider the dominant cultural background of the audience, the prevalent setting of the environment, and the preacher's teaching experience. Search for online teaching and preaching classes, the preacher should read more books about public preaching and effective audience management and teaching. The preacher should take time to listen to preached sermons. For the sake of effective communication, regular reflection and tone and diction practice should be regularly done.

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