



Looking Out My Window, February 11, 2022

I have hammered out my approach to preaching and my convictions about preaching over the more than ½ century since my first primitive attempt as a Baptist kid of 16. Several people have modeled for me what good preaching looks and sounds like over the years, and their examples have been formative. My profound indebtedness to them and to my seminary teachers can't be measured.

You have been so kind and so affirming each week, even when I've occasionally tried to do too much in a homily and gone beyond my own self-imposed time limits. In response, I want to share with you my thoughts about preaching and something of my approach. You have to suffer what I inflict on you; I hope you may find that more bearable if you know a bit about what lies behind those few minutes each week.

If you asked me to define preaching, I would go first to a quote from Phillips Brooks, Episcopal bishop of the 19th. Century—"truth mediated through personality." I've not been able to parse the source of this quote but share it with you because it has given me clarity. Preaching differs from normal speech-making in that the central concern is to share some aspect of the Good News about Jesus Christ and to ask for a response from the hearers.

For me, the the homily proclaims the good News about Jesus and invites people into a relationship with him through faith. But, it also resides at the center of the spiritual formation of Christians. Everyone is together in that moment in worship. Episcopal churches often lack adequate ongoing Christian formation. So, the homily constitutes that one moment when we all gather around a biblical text. As a teacher, the homily normally involves a teaching component—a focus on some aspect of biblical, theological, and spiritual truth. Because this moment in worship is so profound, the preacher must be fully prepared and have done some holy sweating over what he or she will say. Lack of preparation is just bad stewardship.

Yet, preaching goes beyond mere teaching because it does seek the transformation of the hearers and asks for some sort of response to the Gospel each time. More on this next week.

God's peace

David+

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