



Preparing a Sermon

How do I do this?



What's in a name?

Sermon

Homily

Preaching

Proclamation

Teaching

What the sermon is not

Testimony

- ◆ Sharing a personal experience of faith or what God has done for me
- ◆ This is good and valuable. It can be part of a sermon, but it is not a sermon. It is a personal story.
- ◆ A testimony is not the Word of God.



Bible Study



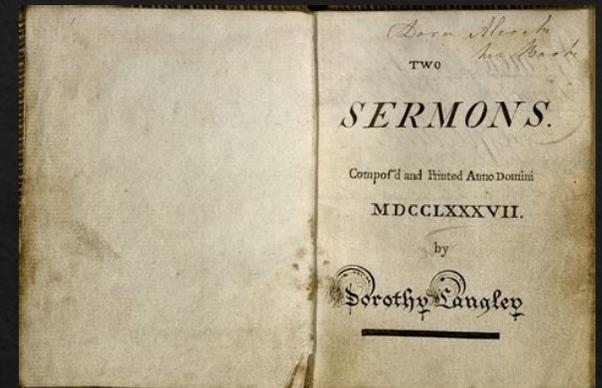
- ◇ The sermon is not simply an explanation of the scriptures.
- ◇ Interpreting scripture is part of a sermon, but it is not a sermon
- ◇ Explanation of scripture can help understanding the text, but it is not proclamation of God's action in the world today.

Exhortation or Motivational Speech

- ◆ Exhortation is the act of strongly encouraging or trying to persuade someone to do something (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/exhortation>)
- ◆ Exhortation is about the person speaking convincing the listener of something. The focus is not the movement of the Holy Spirit through the interaction.



Something written or prepared



- ◇ Your manuscript, notes, preparation, plan or anything written down is NOT a sermon. It is a plan for the sermon, but not a sermon.
- ◇ A sermon is an event of communication. It is something that happens. It occurs as the words are spoken, listeners receive them, and the Holy Spirit works within the interaction.
- ◇ A sermon is an event of the Word of God, bringing forth faith in Christ.

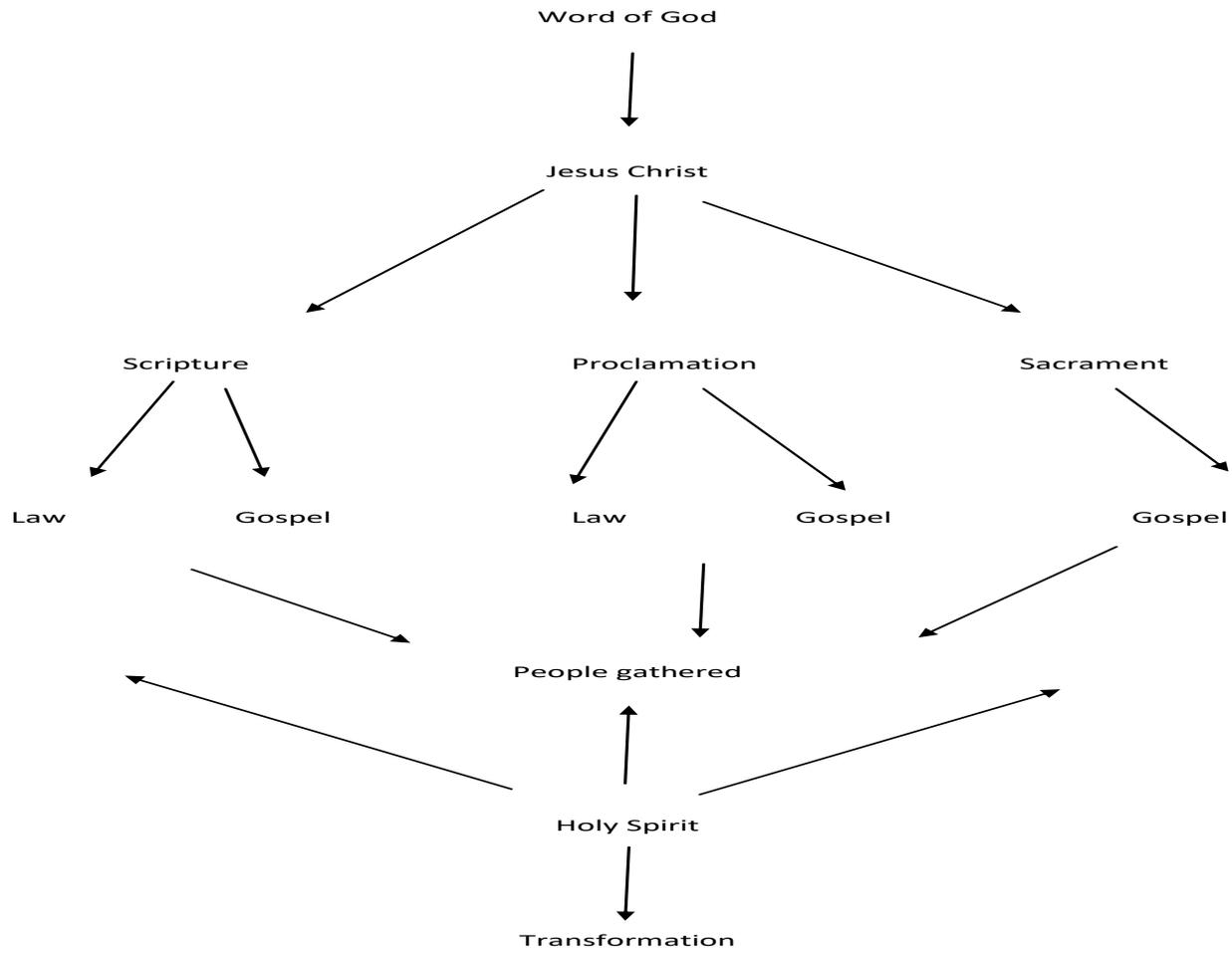
So what is the sermon?

Augsburg Confession

◆ Article 7: The Church

“The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.”

(Source: <https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/of-the-church/#ac-vii-0001>)



What makes a sermon a sermon?

- ◆ It is proclamation
- ◆ Specifically, the gospel is announced or proclaimed
- ◆ The radical nature of the gospel is missed if the law is not also proclaimed, therefore the law must also be included.
- ◆ If law and gospel are proclaimed, then that proclamation is the Word of God. It is then a sermon.
- ◆ Proclamation is not preaching the bible, it is proclaiming the Word of God.
- ◆ It is God who does the work, through the Holy Spirit moving within the event of communication

Preaching the Law

- ◆ What is the trouble in this text?
- ◆ In what way do we see God's demands, the failure of humans to live as God's people, or sin appear in this text?
- ◆ In pointing out the trouble, we are pointing to the law found in the text.
- ◆ How does this trouble found in this text relate to our experience in the world today?
- ◆ We – individually, as humans, or creation as a whole – are the subject of the trouble, creating it, experiencing it, suffering because of it
- ◆ Sometimes the trouble is “behind” the text, in the background to the text. This is especially true in epistles.

Preaching the Gospel

- ◆ What grace do we find in this text?
- ◆ How does God act? What does Jesus do? What healing, forgiveness, salvation does God bring about?
- ◆ The grace in the text should respond directly to the trouble in the text.
- ◆ This should lead naturally to the way that God's grace addresses the trouble found in our world today, whether socially or individually.
- ◆ God is always the subject in speaking of grace; we – as individuals, as humanity, as creation – are the object receiving the grace.

Preaching Transformation

- ◆ How does the Holy Spirit empower faithfulness through this text?
- ◆ What are we called to do? What mission does this text send us on? What form of discipleship is opened to us by this text? What does obedience look like?
- ◆ Transformation is what God does through us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit through us that empowers our response to God's grace. It flows from the trouble and the grace, leading us to new faithfulness and action.
- ◆ God is the subject who brings transformation. God's work in the world is the direct object of the transformation. We are a means through which God can work.

Direct vs. Indirect Objects

- ◇ “The teacher gave the students cake.”
- ◇ The indirect object is the students who receive the action. The direct object is the cake given by the teacher. The teacher is the sentence’s subject, creating both the direct and indirect objects.
- ◇ **The object receiving the action of the verb is the direct object.**
- ◇ **The object receiving the direct object is the indirect object.**
- ◇ In the law, we are the subject. In the Gospel, God is the subject. God’s work in the world is the direct object, we are the indirect object.
- ◇ “God gives us healing.”
- ◇ In transformation, we are an adverbial prepositional phrase through which God works.
- ◇ “God brings suffering people healing through our compassion.”

Listening to a Sermon

Law Gospel Transformation

In the Text

- ◇ What *trouble* is found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◇ What corresponding *grace* is found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◇ What corresponding *transformation* is found in the main bible passage addressed?

In our experience

- ◇ What *trouble* is found in our world that matches the *trouble* found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◇ What corresponding *grace* is found in our world that matches the *grace* found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◇ What corresponding *transformation* is found in our world that matches the *transformation* found in the main bible passage addressed?

An Example for this week

Luke 17:11-19

Luke 17:11-19

- ◇ ¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³ they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus’s feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

My preparation:

- ◇ What is the law in this text? *The men had a disease that infectious and so cut off from others. It also made them unclean. After being healed only one thanked Jesus, and that one was a Samaritan. Difference between being made clean and being made well.*
- ◇ What is the gospel in the text? *Jesus heals them with a word. Jesus proclaims to the one who gives thanks that he has been made well.*
- ◇ What is the transformation in this text? *The tenth was moved to joy and thanksgiving – key to not just surviving but fullness of life. It was more than he dared to dream*

My preparation

- ◇ *What is the trouble in our experience? We ask God only for what we want. We are limited by our limited vision and making our goals about ourselves.*
- ◇ *What is the grace in our experience? God gives us what we ask and heals us from what ails us.*
- ◇ *What is the transformation in our experience? God gives us joy and thankfulness, and in that we can live more fully than we could have dreamed – and such thankfulness is infectious in a good way*

Styles of Sermons

Sermons can take many forms

- ◇ 3 point
- ◇ narrative
- ◇ 4 page
- ◇ Chiasmus
- ◇ All forms are acceptable. The preaching of law/gospel is the central concern that is to lie behind the specific form.

A Simple Structure

Law-Gospel-Transformation

Law, Gospel, Transformation

- ◆ Law: Good Friday, tears of sorrow for the way that our sin has separated us from God and left us abandoned
- ◆ Gospel: Easter Sunday, the Good News that Jesus is Lord and that in Christ our sin is forgiven and we are reconnected with God, causing us tears of joy.
- ◆ Transformation: Pentecost, the Holy Spirit entering our lives to give us faith, connection with one another as church, and allowing us to do what would be impossible for us on our own.

A Law-Gospel-Transformation Model

- ◆ 1. What is a trouble found in our world? It might be a personal challenge, a social issue, a congregational issue, or some other challenge.
- ◆ 2. How does the Word of God address this challenge? How does the law show us this problem? How does the gospel bring reveal God's grace in relation to this issue? What is God doing to bring healing to the issue?
- ◆ 3. How does the Holy Spirit enable us to change and call on us to act? How are we part of the way that God changes this world? What role might we have in God's mission?

Behind the hood

- ◆ The preparation for this approach starts in scripture. You must identify the law, gospel, and transformation in the text first.
- ◆ Given that text, how do we see the same problems, sin, brokenness, destructive tendencies, etc. in our lives today or in the world today? Structurally, then, this goes first but in your preparation it comes second.
- ◆ Finally, in what way might God move us forward? How do we love, or what action might we be moved to take? How are we transformed by God?

A possible sermon outline for Sunday

- ◇ 1. What makes us unclean? What cuts us off from other people because we might infect them? Perhaps our grumbling, complaining, wanting things our way.
- ◇ 2. Jesus will give us what we ask for, regardless of our worthiness or our willingness to participate in communal life with others.
- ◇ 3. The Holy Spirit inspires us with thankfulness for what God does in our life, and in that attitude of thankfulness we can become part of the community of saints and positive influences within the life of the church.

Keeping it simple

- ◆ Pick one bible text to be the central one. You might mention other readings, but do not dwell on them. Focus on one text.
- ◆ Use only one image, guiding metaphor, or illustration.
- ◆ At most people are likely to remember one thing about the sermon. If you use ten different images who knows which they will remember? If you stick to one, it is clear which one will be remembered.
- ◆ Stick to one thing that Holy Spirit empowers us to do. Keep it clear.

Small Group: Luke 18:1-8

◇ ¹ Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. ² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. ³ In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my accuser.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’ ” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? ⁸ I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

In the text

- ◆ Trouble: The world is full of injustice and it can feel as if God is not listening
- ◆ Grace: God wishes to respond and give us justice. God has chosen us.
- ◆ Transformation: We can pray and trust God even when the world is disheartening.

In our world

- ◇ What is the corresponding trouble?
- ◇ What is the grace in the world?
- ◇ How might we be transformed?