

EFFECTIVE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD: CONCRETE CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

Acts 2,5-6 talks of the crowd that gathered in Jerusalem for the annual Pentecost feast. It describes them as 'devout men from nations under heaven'. This description could be an exaggeration, but it is a literary way of telling the readers that uncountable number of people went for the feast. The presentation posits species from every continent as present. They did not visit Jerusalem to listen to Peter's preaching about the resurrected Christ. Their visit was an annual pilgrimage for Jewish agricultural feast called 'Pentecost'. Undoubtedly, they were not interested in stories about Christ who as at the period was regarded as an insurrectionist, a brigand and a robber who died infamously. Truly, perception of an unusual sound necessitated their gathering together but staying on to listen to Peter talk about an infamous man and the historical conversion of about three thousand (3000) men (Acts 2,41) invites a sober reflection on the method used by Peter to pass on his message. If the early Christians were able to move the world at a time when Information Technology and pedagogical methods were not so much in vogue, then the method they adopted is worth being studied. The contemporary era is witnessing the decadence of mainline Churches – Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodist, Presbyterianism, Lutheranism etc. On the other hand, Pentecostalism and Eastern Transcendental Meditation have attractions on a geometrical increase. Evidently therefore, the problem is not with man's incredulity or nonacceptance of Christocentric method. The submission of this paper is that the problem lies with our method of presentation. Therefore, this work confines itself in the main to an examination of what used to be the case, a look into the present and a suggestion on the way forward.

EXORDIUM

This paper begins her taunting and thought-provoking investigations into effective preaching with Overman's (1992) description of the method adopted by our primogenitors in the preaching ministry right at the inception of Christianity. According to him, Christianity engaged and

employed the techniques and forms associated with Greek and Roman oratory. Classical rhetoric was a major contributor to the nature and form of Hellenistic Jewish and Christian preaching. Undoubtedly pagan in origin, the classical forms of persuasion and rhetoric, which played such an important role in the Greco-Roman period did indeed influence Christian preaching and were finally adopted by Christians in order that they might speak persuasively to the same world. The point here is clear. Early Christian preachers adopted the popular methods available in their own time and were able to touch many souls and transform the world. Acts 4,13 speaks of Peter and John as *avgra,mmatoi, kai. ivdiw/tai*, yet the same Peter touched souls gathered in the house of Cornelius and even before being baptized, the Holy Spirit came down on them (Acts 10,44-48). The titanic question remains why we preach the same gospel to believers even with our philosophies and theologies with little or no impact? This paper submits that the problem is not with the gospel message but with the method of delivery. We may hold the truth. We may know the truth. We may be convinced that we have the truth. But if we are not able to communicate and convince our sheep on the veracity of our message, then we have failed and risk losing our flock. A priest was going for sick call after Mass. He met a lady on the road with her bible. He was sure the lady attended his Mass that day. Out of curiosity, he stopped to ask her where she was going to. The lady simply retorted that he attended his Mass to receive sacrament but going to where she would listen to the word of God. Statistically, we have more of elderly people in the mainline churches. The mushroom and Pentecostal churches enjoy the patronage of younger generation. Even most of the elderly ones we have are not strongly rooted in their faith. In the Western world where people are said not to go to churches, Pentecostal preachers like Bishop T.D. Jakes, Noel Osteen, Benny Hinn command thousands of followers who sit quietly for hours listening with devotion. In Nigeria, the Redeemed, Mountain of Fire Ministry, Dominion City and a host of others have congregations to compete with. With the trend of events, every good pastor must be concerned and worried. The submission of this paper is that the problem lies with our method of presentation. This is why, this work confines itself in the main to an examination of what used to be the case, a look into the present and a suggestion on the way forward.

1.0 PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD: A BRIEF CLARIFICATION

The Hebrew Bible has few clear references to that which we term 'preaching'. Two activities fall within the category: prophetic proclamation and the teaching of Torah. The word *rvEB*;

containing 'joy' in its root refers to bringing or announcing good news or a message of joy as in 2Sam 4,10; Isa 40,9; 61,1. The other term [r;qE means 'to proclaim or to call' (Jer 11,6; Mic 3,5; Jonah 1,2; 3,2). It can also be rendered 'to read aloud' as in the public reading of the Torah (Neh 8,8-9). In the LXX these two words are translated with *evuaggelizw* and *khrussw*, the two most common terms used for preaching in the NT. Apart from these two terms, there are other terms in the NT which do not directly mean preaching but which reason of context clearly indicate a public telling of the Christian message. The more common among these are: 'to cry out' (Acts 23,6; Rom 9,7); 'to speak' (Rom 15,19; 2Cor 2,12); 'to talk' (Mark 2,2); 'to make known' (Eph 6,19); 'to prophesy' (1Cor 14,1-4; 1Pet 1,10); 'to speak boldly' (Acts 13,46; 18,26); 'to exhort' (Acts 2,40; 15,32); 'to bear witness, to testify' (Acts 24,10; 20,24; John 1,15). The Church is endowed with variety of gifts (1Cor 12,4). Utterance of wisdom or preaching is one these gifts. St. Paul calls it *logoj sofia* and *logoj gnwsewj* (1Cor 12,8). Craddock (1992) indicates that the NT employs a number of nouns to designate that which is preached: *khrigma* (that which is proclaimed) Matt 12,41; Rom 16,25; 1Cor 1,21; Titus 1,3; *euvaggelion* (the good news, the gospel) Matt 4,23; Mark 14,9; Acts 15,7; Rom 15,19; *logoj* (the word) Acts 6,2; 1Tim 5,17; *avkoh* (report, that which is heard) John 12,38; Gal 3,2.5; Rom 10,16. The theology of preaching therefore centres around the theology of the grace of words. Preaching is an act. It is a grace-giving action of speaking in God's name and with God's power to the people of God. It is a special act to be performed not by all but by those who are sent though all baptized are called and sent to be witnesses. Preaching is a specially graced ministerial act in the Church whereby a divinely commissioned preacher speaks the word of God publicly and so moves his hearers to saving acts of faith and love. It is such that during preaching, the human discourse is raised to the status of the word of God so much so that the art of rhetoric with its instructional or pleasurable or persuasive finalities becomes an instrument of the Holy Spirit, so that the discourse is truly sacred discourse and the act of preaching a ministerial action representing and effecting a new coming of Christ and His kingdom. O'shea (1967) notes that preaching is the oral proclamation of the Word of God made by the Church through her ministers to the community of the faithful in such a way as to induce a response to the demands that the Word makes. The preacher confronts the hearer with Christ and demands a response. The sole purpose of preaching is to sanctify and save souls, i.e to move men to know and do what is necessary for salvation, to move them here and now to saving acts of faith, hope and love. Thus, it could be said that the formal cause of preaching is the grace-of-words while the

final cause is to move men through the sacred discourse to cooperate in their own salvation by saving acts of faith, hope and love. The material cause of every preaching is the Word of God, the wonderful works of God, Christ, Christ crucified, the wisdom of the cross, the paschal mystery etc. The principal efficient cause is God through His Holy Spirit. The instrumental efficient cause is the human preacher. This simply means that the instrument for use must be endowed with the prerequisite knowledge and holiness, as well as rhetorical skill as may be needed to communicate the world of God with dignity, clarity, and forcefulness.

Scholars like Dodd (1937) because of the difficulty at arriving at a specific definition of preaching have tried to differentiate preaching and teaching. The N.T has texts in support of this exercise. Matt 9,35 describes Jesus' ministry as threefold: teaching, preaching, and healing. Paul lists separately the gifts of prophecy and teaching (Rom 12,6-7; Eph 4,11). In Acts 2, following the large ingathering of believer after Peter preached, Luke says that the new believers attended to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2,42). Such sharp distinction may not be maintained contextually because we also see preaching intertwined with teaching eg. The sermon on the mount (Matt 5-7) is a body of teaching (5,2; 7,29) about life and relationships in the kingdom, and yet the audience consisted not only of Jesus' disciples but also of the crowds (5,1; 7,28). In this paper, teaching is to be taken as part of preaching. We shall see more on this later.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Relationship with God is more an encounter than imposition. It is more an experience than sentimental imposition. It has remained a law in the Catholic church that her female members are not encouraged to marry non-Catholics. The fact on the ground is that even with her sanctions, the number of her members derailing in this area is on the geometrical increase. Religious syncretism and participation in the rites of other denominations are not allowed in the Catholic church but we all know that this law is only on paper today as even in the homes of priests and religious, the situation on the ground is indescribable. Even some ordained ministers and religious now champion apostacy. Whereas mainline churches in the Western world have their churches as tourist centres today with scarcely few members attending Sunday Masses, Pastors like Late Billy

Graham, Joel Osteen, Bishop T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, John Hagee, Kenneth Copeland have followers and viewers numbering hundreds of thousands.

In Nigeria, while we are busy struggling for positions of honour, big parishes, cars, oversea trips and studies, Pastor Adeboye of Redeemed Christian church records over 2.5 million adherents; Mountain of Fire Ministry founded by Olukoye Daniel has about 990,000 faithfuls with an auditorium of 550,000 capacity; Living Faith Church of David Oyedepo just completed their auditorium of 250,000 capacity for her 1.5 million members; Kumuyi has about 700,000 registered members; Chris Oyakilome of Christ Embassy enjoys over 1 million ardent followers; Lazarus Muoka of Lord's Chosen has 650,000 notable members and Daystar Christian centre by Sam Adeyemi numbers over 500,000. The statistics above are just registered followers. There are no facts on ground about their sympathizers and observers. Most of these people are fallen or baptized Catholics.

The most worrisome aspect of it now is that non-Christian religions are winning greater converts than Christians today. In the Western world, Asian Transcendental Meditation, Scientology and Islamic religion pose the greatest threat. In Africa, it is Islam and Traditional Religion.

The problem is not far-fetched. A religion that does not address the problem of the people can hardly survive the test of time. People do not find fulfilment again in mainline churches. The reason is poor, unconvincing and unconvicting preaching.

3.0 THEOLOGY OF PREACHING

Let us have a brief look at the Theology and character of preaching.

i. Biblical Basis

Rover (1967) observes that the Scriptures not only tell of the actual content of preaching of Christ, the Apostles, and the prophets, but they provide a considerable body of revealed truths about the preaching act itself. They reveal:

- a. The mystery of preaching, as it is a sharing in the redemptive word and work of Christ
- b. The office of preaching, i.e., its public and ecclesial status

- c. Its institution as a distinct ministry and the relationship of that ministry to the sacramental ministry
- d. The mission or mandate whereby one exercises the ministry of preaching validly in the Church
- e. The characteristic graces attached to this ministry and flowing from it
- f. The unique God given efficacy of the preaching act
- g. The salvific purpose of preaching
- h. The qualities demanded of the dedicated preacher
- i. The qualities needed in the hearer of the word of God, his requisite docility and obedience to the word

We must note that preaching is not a matter of choice or option. It is in fulfilment of a mandate. Matt 28,19 gives the *Mandatum Magnum* thus: *poreuqe,ntej ou=n maqhteu,sate pa,nta ta. e;qnh(bapti,zontej auvtou.j eivj to. o;noma tou/ patro.j kai. tou/ ui`ou/ kai. tou/ a`gi,ou pneu,matoj.* Our predecessors in the ministry saw this as part of parcel of their task. ICor 1,1 for instance begins with the establishment of the identity “Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ”, followed immediately by the specific mandate to preach. ICor 1,17 indicates the value of preaching in the vocation of the Apostle *ouv ga.r avpe,steile,n me Cristo.j bapti,zein avlla. euvaggeli,zesqai* (Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach). The doctrinal content of his preaching is also spelt out, namely, “the message of the Cross” (ICor 1,18), not the wisdom of the world (1,20) for “we preach Christ crucified” (1,23).

From ICor 1,1-2,7 we can come up with few salient points about the preacher and his preaching:

- a. It is part and parcel of our vocation as priests (ICor 1,1.17)
- b. Preaching is as important as dissemination of the Sacraments (ICor 1,17)
- c. The preacher preaches efficaciously with the power of God (ICor 1,18; ITim 4,11-13; 2Tim 4,2). Time for preaching is not time for praise singing and fund raising.
- d. A preacher does not rely on human power and wisdom (ICor 2,1: *Kavgw. evlqw.n pro.j u`ma/j(avdelfoi,(h=lqon ouv kaqV u`peroch.n lo,gou h' sofı,aj katagge,llwn u`mi/n to.*

musth, rion tou/ qeou/ My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power). The pulpit is not for politics, citing of literary works and manifestation of our intellectual ingenuity except when done to communicate the message of the gospel. It is not even the time to show how powerful you are as a priest like yelling at the people and threatening to curse them with your priestly anointing!

- e. Effective preaching is not on the persuasive words of wisdom but in the demonstration of spirit and power (ICor 2,4)
- f. God is the author and owner of the ministry. He is also the author of its expected fruit, which is faith, a faith that rests not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God (ICor 2,5).
- g. The object or content of this ministry is the very mystery of the Divine Being and the divine action, “the wisdom of God, mysterious, hidden, which God foreordained before the world unto our glory” (ICor 2,7). The last phrase gives the purpose or effect of preaching, viz., the salvation and glorification of the elect.

In the words of Rover (1967), “it is clear from this magisterial text of the Apostle that sacred preaching is at the same time mystery, magistracy, and ministry, the very mystery of God and His ways communicated to men through a preacher exercising this ministry efficaciously in the Church under the living impulse of the Spirit”.

ii. *Meaning and Character*

An elaboration of the biblical basis of preaching reveals the principal notion that the Word of God is both a ‘word’ and a ‘thing’. From its Hebrew etymology *hwhy rb"D>*, signifies both word and thing, word and event, both utterance and vital effect of utterance. Preaching the word means both utterance and God-given effect of utterance. It is a saving utterance. It is God’s word as saving event here and now. God’s saving action is not man-dependent. Thus, if our preaching is laddened with philosophical quotations, quotations of literary geniuses and intellectual jingoisms and news, it will surely be an utterance but of no God-given effect.

Thus, a preaching is characteristically, kerygmatic in that it elicits faith because it is a direct proclamation of Christ or his kingdom with the aim of evoking an assent in faith to Christ and his coming. It involves the proclamation of the saving event of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus with a call to conversion (cf. Peter's preaching in Acts 2,14-38). The bible says that those who received his word were baptized. The word is meant to take root in souls and bring about conversion or change of heart, a *metanoia* differentiated from *metamelomai*, and of course desire to receive the sacraments. The fruit of the word continues even after the preaching (Acts 2,42). The need for continuity in the Christian life calls for the second phase in the work of preaching, namely, *didsaskalia* (teaching).

Preaching is doctrinal. In the doctrinal instruction, the believer is further instructed in the Christian faith, introduced to other sacraments and brought to Christian maturity. 1Tim 1,10 calls this instruction, 'sound doctrine' or 'good doctrine' in 1Tim 4,6. It is a doctrine according to the gospel (1Tim 1,11). By reason of the content and continued commitment it evokes, the doctrine shares in the force of the Word of God. It is still part of the preaching of God's word, an efficacious call to further commitment and deeper communion in faith with the divine. Both *kerygma* and *didache* are 'the word of truth' (2Cor 6,7), 'the word of faith' (Rom 10,8), 'the word of grace' (Acts 20,32), 'the word of life' (Phil 2,16). Both are the word of Christ (Col 3,16).

Preaching ought to be homiletic. Etymologically, homily is from Greek *homilein* meaning being together, communion, social intercourse. It connotes the nuance of meeting of minds and hearts. O'shea (1967) defines homily as a familiar discourse made by a pastor of souls to the people confided to his care, a conversational discourse that is given during liturgical action upon a text suggested by the liturgy. Homily signifies artless discourse used to explain the scriptural readings at divine services. It is any sermon to the congregation in connection with the breaking of bread. The Constitution on the Liturgy of Vat. II defines it as a pastoral reflection on the liturgical texts made near the end of the liturgy of the word. Vat. II sees it as a grace-giving event because it is truly part of the liturgical service; again, it draws its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources and finally because it is vital continuation of the work of the original *kerygma*. Léon-Dufour (2004) summarizes a three-fold character of Christian preaching, namely, call to conversion and proclamation of an event and presentation of an event. It includes announcing the event of salvation and exhortation of believers.

4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Sermons are intended to be spoken and heard. Some sermons have been preserved exactly as preached. Some of such sermons have been published. Unfortunately, there is no documentation of the verbatim recordings of preaching in the early church. Accounts of the sermons of Christ recorded in the bible are only extracts and redactions of the substance of his preaching. Let us have a look at its practice the history of Christianity.

i. *Apostolic times*

The preachers of the apostolic age were the apostles and those appointed by them to be in charge of the Christian communities. Until expulsion from the synagogue (John 9,22), believers in Christ formed part of the congregation that gathered every sabbath to listen to the Word. Most probably therefore, the Apostles footnoted Christ's practice of preaching in the synagogue after the reading of the sabbath pericope (Luke 4,14-22). We have examples of such procedure in Acts 7,4-5; 9,20; 10,42; 13,16-41. While there are records of believers gathering for the breaking of bread, there is no surviving records of preaching on such occasions. The records of seven (7) discourses by Peter (Acts 1,16-23; 2,14-37; 3,12-26; 5,29-32; 10,34-44; 11,4-18; 15,7-11) and six (6) by Paul (Acts 13,16-41; 14,15-18; 17,22-32; 20,17-36; 22,1-22; 26,2-23) are only "missionary sermons" for prospective converts as reported by a Christian writer around the end of the 1st century (Dressler, 1967). They do not however yield a direct evidence of the sermons preached in the early Christian community. Peter's discourse delivered to the crowd after the healing of the cripple (Acts 3,12-26) and Paul's address on the Areopagus (Acts 17,22-33) show structural parallels (Norden, 1956).

iii. *Subapostolic and Patristic times*

There are evidences that sermons were part of liturgical services at the era. Irenaeus mentions the discourses that Polycarp gave to the people in Smyrna (Eusebius, 1998). The discourses of Irenaeus himself were also collected (ibid. 5.26). Justin the Martyr in his *Apologia* 1.67 says that the Christians gathered on Sundays and that the memoirs of the Apostles and writings of the Prophets were read after which the president of the celebration gave the admonition and invited members to imitate the noble men. In his *Apologeticum*, Tertullian relates that the faithful met for prayer and reading of the scripture followed by admonitions to encourage them in the practice of

the teachings. In Asia Minor, there is a record of the sermon by Melito, Bishop of Sardis in Lydia on the Passion of Christ. In fact, the second *Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, c. 150, is a Christian sermon read to the assembled Christian community. Talking about the activities of Origen in Palestine, Eusebius (1998: 6.19) has this to say:

And although he had not yet received the presbyterate, the bishops there requested him to discourse and expound the divine Scriptures publicly in the church. That this is so is clear from what Alexander, the bishop of Jerusalem, and Theocristus, the hishop of Caesarea, write with reference to Demetrius. They make their defense somewhat as follows: And he added to his letter that such a thing had never been heard of, nor taken place hitherto, that laymen should preach in the presence of bishops, though I do not know how he comes to say what is evidently not true. For instance, where there are found persons suited to help the brethren, they are also invited to preach to the people by the holy bishops, as, for example, in Laranda Euelpis by Neon, and in Iconium Paulinus by Celsus, and in Syannada Theodore by Atticus, our blessed brother bishops. And it is likely that this thing happens in other places also without our knowing it.

Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzus became popular for their funeral orations. John Chrysostom was a renowned preacher in Antioch and Constantinople. His homilies were described as exegetical, dogmatic, and polemical. Amphilochius of Iconium delighted in presenting scriptural personages and engaged in dialogue in his sermons. Hilary of Poitiers was described as the ‘Rhone of Latin eloquence’ for his sermons.

iv. *6th - 9th centuries*

Preaching in the church was given a remarkable attention in the year AD 529. In that year, the second canon of the council of Vaison presided over by Bishop Caesarius of Arles (a fiery preacher) officially granted priests the right to preach for the edification of all the churches and the benefit of the all the people. Preaching no longer remained the monopoly of the bishops. In cases where a priest is unavailable or incapacitated because of ill-health, patristic homilies were mandated to be read to the people.

Pope St. Gregory 1 authored 40 homilies composed c. 590 and 591, of which 20 were read in the Pope’s presence by the Secretary and the rest preached by the Pope himself. These homilies were

considered model homilies and were read widely in the middle ages. In the third section of his *Liber regulae pastoralis*, Gregory gives practical directives for preaching. Other notable preachers of this period include: Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, Fulgence, Bishop of Ruspe, Martin of Braga, author of the famous sermon *De correctione rusticorum*.

Bede of the 8th century preached on the gospel pericopes with notable indebtedness to the homilies of Gregory and Jerome. *Admonitio generalis* published in this period encouraged priests to priests to preach according to scriptures and that they did not fabricate teachings of their own. The document gave a summary of sermon materials.

Collections of homilies by Alcuin, Rabanus Maurus and Haymo of Auxerre aided preaching in the 9th century. The third council of Tours and the second council of Reims decreed that Bishops must have homilies containing necessary admonitions for the instruction of the people. Translations of the homilies were mandated to enable all understand it. Can 15 of the council of Reims permitted homilies in the vernacular so that all may understand.

v. *Medieval Times*

With the legislation permitting use of vernacular in preaching, the Crusades, the flowering of Scholasticism and the emergence of the mendicant orders influenced preaching in the Western rite. Connors (1967) describes this period as a highly creative period in the history of homiletic theory. In this period, sermons to the clergy were in Latin while those of the laity were in vernacular. By the 12th century, the dialectic and logic of scholasticism were applied to sermons. The preacher came up with the theme, then he proceeds to the definition, division, and distinction, citing numerous passages from the scriptures and the Fathers and adding arguments from reason to prove his point.

Since many clerics were not very proficient in letters, unauthorized preachers and laymen always came up to preach to cover up for this deficiency. Among these were *Humiliati* and *Waldenses*. Their lack of training landed them in doctrinal error. Alexander III thus forbade them from preaching. Lucius III eventually excommunicated them for disobedience to the prohibition.

The founding of Dominicans and Franciscans met with the challenges of unlettered priests. Many of them distinguished themselves with the academic form of preaching. In 1312 at the council of Vienne, they were granted the permission to have open and street preaching.

vi. *The Reformation*

With the Reformation, the sermon became the focal point of the revised divine worship. Homilies were based on the literal meaning of Scripture. The sermon was the living voice of the gospel, and Christ spoke in the preacher's words. The Council of Trent in her *Decretum super lectione et praedicatione* declared that it was the duty of bishops, archbishops, primates, and other prelates to preach the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastors must preach themselves or through suitable priests, at least on all Sundays and solemn feast days. To be sure orthodoxy was maintained, Trent decreed that seminaries be established to train priests. This period saw great preachers as Charles Borromeo, John of Avila, Louis of Granada, Joseph of Leonessa, Lawrence of Brindisis, Robert Bellarmine, Procopius of Templin, and Paolo Segneri.

vii. *Vatican II on The Preaching of the Word*

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy not only enjoined the homily upon those who have the care of souls, but it also restated and amplified the traditional concept of what a homily is. Never before in any official document has there been so clear a statement of the nature and aim of the homily. The homily according to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy n. 52 is "an exposition of the mysteries of faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life expounded from the sacred text read in the liturgy during the liturgical assembly." It goes further to decree that the homily is "to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself. In fact, at those Masses which are celebrated on Sundays and holidays of obligation, with the people assisting, it should not be omitted except for a serious reason." In n. 35 of the same document, the Fathers of the Council insists that:

The ministry of preaching is to be fulfilled most faithfully and carefully. The sermon, moreover, should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, for it is the proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, which is the mystery of Christ ever made present active in us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.

Preaching is therefore not a familiar chat about anything at all, it is nothing less than the proclamation of the Word of God, the design of God, the plan of God for the world's salvation as it was realized in Christ.

5.0 SUGGESTED STEPS TO EFFECTIVE PREACHING

We shall divide this into two parts: Christ technique and other systems' techniques.

a. Christ Technique

There is no doubt that Christ is God. It is also indubitable that he is man. If Jesus could move the mountain to get Jewish followers at a time when strict adherence to Judaism was the order of the day, he must have adopted some very useful techniques. Our preaching is about Christ. Our success depends on him. He is a seasoned teacher and leader of all times. Some of his techniques include:

Story telling

Jesus always used familiar stories to drive home his point. The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15,12-32 is an example. Mark 4,13-32 is another example.

Question/Midwifery Method

Matt 16,26 "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?"

Shock/hyperbole

Jesus' would not surely mean that people have to pluck off their eyes or cut their hands in Matt 5,29-30 or else his followers would be all amputees. The hyperbolic nature of his words shows the seriousness of the message.

Memorable sayings

It is not every time that long sermons help. Jesus at times gives simple but memorable sayings to preach. Example is 'judge not that you will not be judged' in Luke 6,37-38a.

Repetition

He repeated his message about his passion and death many times: Mark 8,31; 9,31; 10,3-34.

Object lessons

Jesus taught his apostles the meaning of service and selfless love by washing of their feet in John 13,3-17.

b. Other System's Techniques

We can learn something from great orators.

1. Take time to prepare
2. Walk your talk
3. Preach the truth (1Thes 2,13)
4. Meet felt need
5. Exalt Christ only
6. Keep learning
7. Communicate clearly
8. Apply the message
9. Keep practicing
10. Be bold. This comes from apostolic investiture (Acts 2,29)
11. Speak with passion and confidence (1Thes 2,2; Phil 1,20)
12. Avoid attacking people from the pulpit
13. Make recourse to commentaries
14. Concretise your homilies
15. Be aware of your audience and make the homily meaningful to them

6.0 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

We have failed to let people experience God through us. It is no longer ‘God says’, but ‘Father says’. ‘Mgbada dara ibi bu uru di nta’. Our failure has given room for every Tom, Dick and Harry to sift people away like wheat. Our separated brethren have discovered the secret used by Christ. They may not have the truth, but they have the power of oratory. The Word of God is an oracle. Oracle is prophetic and comes convincingly like a thunderbolt. Self-made pastors have it. They know how to use it. They have applied it effectively. The result is the geometrical increase in the

number of adherents. Catholics have it. We do not even know what we have talk more knowing how to use or apply it. The effect is loss of members, war, bickering and jealousies. The Word of God is alive and active. Any church with a dead, unconvincing and unconvicting sermon dies gradually by frustration as her members fease out in doubts and in search of truth.

A sound preaching must be kerygmatic, didactic and homiletic. These three are the tripod upon which the Word of God stands. The preacher will lose followers if his preaching is not kerygmatic as faith will scarcely be elicited. The initial faith will not be rooted unless footed with doctrinal instructions oiled by homilies. The preaching is aimed to serve as link between the liturgy of the word and the Eucharist. It prepares the faithful for a fruitful celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is not possible unless the Word is explained and applied, and this is the meaning of an effective homily.

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