

RETHINKING CHURCH

SESSION 9 | JULY 30, 2017 | BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE MODERN CHURCH

MODERN REQUIREMENTS OF PREACHING¹

- Be authentic.
 - Transparent
 - Genuine
 - Respectful
- Be relational
 - “The idea is to be non-authoritarian, both by sounding less threatening and by reflecting in our sermons the thoughts and words of our listeners.”
 - “But expository preaching is not an exegetical lecture. It is explaining a text until it comes alive and relevant in the lives of people.”
 - “In the modern era, expository sermons were often strong in explanation and short on application. They spoke to the mind — not the heart or the will. In the postmodern era, application has grown in importance. Explanation is still essential, but application may now take up half or more of a sermon. People are that broken. ”
 - (www.postmodernpreaching.net)
- Be relevant
 - “There comes a point, in the explanation of a passage, when the logic of the text begins to catch fire in the hearts of people. When this happens, they begin sensing the implications for their own lives. God begins speaking to them. You can hear the room grow very still.”
 - “How does the Word speak to the minimum wage earner with a cash-flow problem? To the aging woman who lives far from her children? To the powerful business leader? To the high school girl? Doing good application is revealing God’s character to the world. It is not an exercise in legalism. There are things in the Bible that should not exist today. Who wants to see slavery re-born, or harems? Knowing God, we sense that such monsters from the past should not be allowed to live in the present. Our knowledge of what the living God is like keeps us from being ridiculous in our application.
 - Knowing God also safeguards us from preaching mere morality. We preach mortality, not morality. The Bible is not a book of ethics. Nor is it a how-to-manual. Rather, it is a book of redemption. It depicts our pride, our failure, our fate and our cry for mercy.
 - who already stars in her own soap opera of a life? We create the scenarios and then walk people through them.
 - We mention the tough decisions they face. We remind them of moments of anguish we all encounter. We mention life’s weaknesses and struggles. They imagine themselves looking their colleague in the eye, or meeting their nemesis in the grocery store. But this time, they have the Word speaking to them. As we walk the Word through their lives, God touches their hearts. We borrow pages from the playbooks of their lives so God can re-write those pages.”
 - That means we must be wary of setting behavioral goals for others in our preaching. We cannot tell the Holy Spirit what to do. We can just lead a person into the presence of God and leave the two of them to talk. Someone once observed that many sermons incorrectly conclude with one of four applications: “do more, pray more, give more or love more.” But such mantras are just

¹ This section drawn from: <http://www.ministrytopostmoderns.com/index.php/preaching/213-first-steps-in-postmodern-preaching> (article should be used for research purposes only).

new words from old Pharisees. They just lay obligations on hearts, instead of allowing God to speak grace. Sermons are grace talks

- Application is of the right kind when it enables people to encounter the living God of grace and glory.
- In the modernist era, the purpose of many sermons was to inform the mind. ...In the postmodern era, the purpose of a sermon is to transform a life. But when we prepare our sermons in community, we realize how our sermons can be shaped by the Holy Spirit working through that community. Preparing messages in community begins with our own attitude. Is yours a "top-down ministry," in which all wisdom has to flow from you? Or are you receptive to the Spirit of God speaking from the people you serve?

SOUTHERN BAPTIST PREACHING²

- 35% Expository
 - Historical reality is respected
 - Grammatical structures are reflected
 - Author's intent is exposed
- 14% partially expository
 - The preacher went straight to application but the application was drawn from a proper exegesis of the text.
- 51% allegorical
 - Demeaning grammatical structures
 - Demeaning historical facts
 - Imposing ideas on texts
 - Allowing contemporary culture to control the message

WHAT SHOULD BE THE REAL PURPOSE OF PREACHING?

- **Preach the word** - The *graphe* is inspired (2 Tim 3:16), but the *logos* is preached. Both are reference to scripture, but *graphe* is the printed text, *logos* is the meaning. The preacher can't just communicate the grammar of the text, but must communicate its meaning. However, in doing so, the preacher must always realize that the Scripture cannot mean something that it did not mean for its original audience. it cannot mean one thing to one group and another thing to another group. The words of Scripture have objective meaning.
- The preacher's job is to serve as the teacher, using the Word for... (2 Tim. 3:15-16)
 - doctrine
 - reproof
 - correction
 - instruction in righteousness
- What is being done today in most churches is the propagation of mysticism: "The belief that union with or absorption into the Deity, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender" (the Oxford Dictionary).

² <http://sbcvoices.com/allegory-in-southern-baptist-pulpits-a-pandemic-problem-in-the-sbc/>