

PREACH

the Word

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DELIVERED

"I couldn't deliver it all by myself," the 36-year-old postal worker in Berlin explained to authorities who discovered several thousand undelivered letters in his basement this past July.

Overwhelmed by his job. That was his excuse for the 90 boxes of mail postmarked as early as April but never meeting up with the intended recipients. He insisted, however, that he was only storing the rent checks, the birthday cards, the credit card statements, the wedding invitations, and the business contracts temporarily. With the help of friends he'd be delivering the mail soon.

Preachers can feel like that. Overwhelming responsibilities mean the sermon we dreamed on Monday or Tuesday of delivering on Sunday still sits on the shelf and in its place we delivered something else. Something less.

Coulda wrestled a few more rounds with the original language. Shoulda mined the depths for some proof passages from Scripture and enlightening illustrations from life instead of wading, again, in the shallows of comfortable clichés. Woulda memorized it better but just didn't have the time.

Overwhelmed. Undelivered. Hope to get at it soon.



Beginning with this issue of *Preach the Word* you can find supplemental material posted online at www.wels.net/ptw. Look for this symbol that identifies such material.

If that's all there is to preaching – a vicious cycle of unrealized ideals and undelivered mail – then it wouldn't be very nice of me to fill this newsletter again and again with helps, goals, and ideals for which to strive in our preaching. It would only make things worse. "Here are eighteen ways to write a better introduction, any preacher worth his salt will understand and implement at least fourteen of them by Christmas." No.

Our delivery is different than that of a postal worker or an ambitious member of Toastmasters. We work for Jesus. He makes our preaching not something less, but something more. Our relief from unrealized ideals and undelivered mail is not found in friends or even newsletters like this, but in Jesus.

Take a look again at the undelivered mail of your shelved sermons that coulda, shoulda, woulda. Don't just shrug at the collective bulk, but look more closely. See the delivery dates? November 5,



2006. April 8, 2007. February 17, 2010. The sermons have your name on them, and you recognize the type font which is your personal preference, and the format you always use!

These are your sermons yet to be studied, written, memorized, and delivered. Jesus replaced the undelivered mail of your past with mail yet to be delivered.

Jesus – the Word – delivered your undelivered mail as the perfect Prophet whose message always hit its mark, and always grasped the ideal so perfectly. Jesus – the Word – carried away your overwhelming burden of undelivery as the perfect Priest whose works of service perfectly accomplished what was said he must do for you. Jesus – the Word – now loads your shelves with new and better sermons as the perfect King who provides and guides you with resources like this newsletter.

In the words of Dr. Fred B. Craddock, "Preaching, like singing, begins in the ear, and the one who has heard the word of God's grace can pronounce it properly" (*Preaching*, p. 25).

Jesus delivers. Anyone who speaks on his behalf and with his blessing will deliver too. Welcome to another volume of *Preach the Word*.

Daron Lindemann

LET'S TAKE A WALK TOGETHER

There's diet. There's exercise. Two key components to healthy living and healthy preaching.

And, my, have we feasted! Good feasting, too. This excellent publication has set us a table of rich variety cooked by chefs with a storehouse of recipes and skills. Sometimes it offers so much to digest that we've needed to read a portion of it later as dessert. All of it has been nutritional for healthy preaching, and will, with God's blessing, continue to be.

Therefore, it's a good time to take a walk and add some more exercise to our regimen of preaching. Over the next year our *Preach the Word* workout routine for healthy preaching will take the form of walking through a preaching book by Dr. Fred. B. Craddock entitled, appropriately, *Preaching* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1985). I have found Craddock's insight, as well as his style, helpful as an advanced supplement to the homiletics training I once received at the seminary and regularly read in *Preach the Word*. Consulting with Prof. Richard Gurgel at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, we agreed that Craddock's theology is at times questionable, especially his view of the inspiration of the Scriptures. However, when Craddock's book is read with theological discernment, the gems of homiletical insight that shine throughout make reading his book time well spent for anyone who regularly occupies the pulpit.

Craddock has been recognized by *Newsweek* magazine as one of the top twelve preachers living today. He wrote *Preaching* in 1985 while serving as the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Dr. Craddock has authored other books as well, including *The Pre-Existence of Christ* (1968), *As One Without Authority* (1971, rev. 1974 and 1979), *Overhearing the Gospel* (1978), *The Gospels* (1981), commentaries on John (1982) and Philippians (1984), and a commentary on Luke (1990). He has also contributed to numerous journals and traveled the world giving lectures in many countries.

I have prepared study guides for the chapters of *Preaching* to facilitate our work out. Normally in each bimonthly *Preach the Word* publication I will print and/or post online two study guides, one for each month. I have designed the study guides so that you can benefit from this exercise without having to purchase the book, but ... you'll do yourself a favor if you bring with you everything Craddock has to say. Go to Amazon.com where you'll find the book for \$14.28 plus tax and shipping. Better yet, Amazon.com offers free shipping on this particular book if you order two or more. Get together with another preacher. If you're a circuit pastor order a shopping cart of them for the pastors in your circuit.



Exercising
is a lot
more fun
when you're
not doing
it alone.

Ideas for using the book and the study guide.

- Personal growth
- E-mail a friend and work through it long distance with each other
- Discussions each month at circuit meetings, study club, or just getting a few preachers together for breakfast
- Staff meetings in multi-pastor congregations
- Elders or worship committee meetings
- Launch a new "preaching committee" with members who will offer you feedback on your preaching, and begin with the study of this book

I prayerfully hope to engage readers in both personal and group study of preaching. The study guides for Craddock's *Preaching* provide the primary tool for such activity.

The other tool for our work out will be sermons preached by WELS brothers, again printed and/or posted online. I have recently solicited and received over 100 sermons and will publish some of them entirely, a portion of others, theme and parts of others, and maybe only one sentence of some. My intent is to provide this material as a resource for your use, as a model for your growth, and as a tool for group discussion.


What does this all mean? Precisely that each issue of *Preach the Word* will offer readers an opportunity, if they so choose, to discuss the content with other preachers and grow together. After all, exercising is a lot more fun when you're not doing it alone.

PREACHING BY FRED B. CRADDOCK

Study Guide #1 - Convictions about Preaching
Craddock begins by maintaining that “the teaching and learning of preaching goes on, in season and out of season. Tools to aid the process need continually to be devised.” Yet he seemingly stops himself, “But let us not be uncritically enamored of the new ... One becomes a concert pianist not by abandoning the scales but by mastering and repeating that most basic exercise” (p. 14). Which do you believe would help you more right now, learning something new or reviewing the basics? Do you consider a preaching textbook written in 1985 old or new?

“Whoever goes to the Bible in search of *what* to preach but does not linger long enough to learn *how* to preach has left its pages much too soon” (p. 16). What are some benefits in using the Bible as a “how to” guide for preaching? Some caveats?

Explain what Craddock means by “preaching is both learned and given” (p. 17).

 The remainder of Study Guide #1 is posted online at www.wels.net/ptw.

Study Guide #2 - God Breaks the Silence
Proceeding from Silence – “God’s silence is integral to God’s revelation. God does not talk all the time” (p. 53). How does this correspond to our preaching?

Heard in a Whisper – “But God’s self-disclosure has not been obvious to everyone. As far as we know, God has not dipped a finger in a cloud and written across the sky, ‘I love you.’ If God rolled a ball of thunder from east to west, booming unmistakably, ‘I love you,’ then some of us missed it. How, then, has God broken the silence? Not with a shout, but in a whisper; that is to say, in ways not all have heard” (p. 55). Understanding this makes a difference in our preaching in what ways?


Shouted from the Housetops – To “preach in a whisper” (p. 60) is heresy. Why? Relate a historical example.

“One must not forget that there are two kinds of preaching difficult to hear: poor preaching and good preaching” (p. 65). What’s the difference?

 The remainder of Study Guide #2 is posted online at www.wels.net/ptw.

SERMON HELPS

The following material is presented for two purposes, 1) to help you as a resource for sermon preparation in the weeks ahead, and 2) to help you as a model for communicating the Word. Glean what you wish. Repeat whatever is fitting. But whatever you do, be sure to pause, ponder, and listen to the message therein. Remember, preaching begins in the ear.

 A fuller version of these sermon helps is posted online at www.wels.net/ptw.

Pentecost 13

According to God’s Word, we must disregard the notion that wisdom is some special endowment for gifted, intelligent people only - the CEOs of the world and Yodas of the galaxy. We must abandon our quest for wisdom as if it is a destination, a finish line at some point out there that when we make it we will finally be functional and fulfilled.

Pentecost 15

Anne Landers, in an article from *The Washington Post*, (March 20, 1999) speaks to this self-righteous spirit:

If you can start the day without caffeine, If you can get going without pep pills, If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles, If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it, If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time, If you can overlook it when something goes wrong through no fault of yours and those you love take it out on you ... Then, my friend, you are almost as good as your dog.

Pentecost 16

God has a purpose for making strong hands holding on to idols feeble, firm and flexible knees walking on the wrong path shaky, and hearts relying on one’s own goodness fearful and he accomplished that purpose with Judah.

Pentecost 17

 From the sermon “Determined to Suffer” posted online at www.wels.net/ptw

Imagine that you are a 21-year-old Marine serving in Iraq, eager for a taste of home, so you get on the internet, log onto the website of your hometown newspaper, and discover that your father is leading anti-war demonstrations in the front yard of your home ...

Pentecost 19

 From the sermon “Be a Third-Person Christian” posted online at www.wels.net/ptw

Using the first person (“I” and “me” and “my”) over and over again is just symptomatic of a larger issue - the person is, at best, totally self-involved, and, at worst, arrogant beyond measure ... As you grow in your appreciation of the service that Jesus offered you, *Be a Third-Person Christian*, for the glory of the Redeemer and the benefit of the redeemed.

Reformation

 From the sermon “Reformation Never Ends” posted online at www.wels.net/ptw

The Lord in his grace refuses to let his gospel be silenced and absolutely, positively will not let his work of reformation come to an end. Because the Lord’s love never changes, *Reformation Never Ends*.

CHRISTUS PARADOX

The Scriptures sing expressively with Christological titles, metaphors, and descriptions. Sylvia Dunstan captures more than a handful of these expressions in her choral piece, "Christus Paradox," sung to the tune Picardy (CW 29, "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending"). It has been performed by the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chorus and at the WELS National Worship Conference. As the title implies, Dunstan forces the listener to struggle intellectually and spiritually with the clash of truths we find in our Savior. Ponder these words, and with the Spirit's blessing your faith, your praise, and your preaching will abound with similar confession and expression.

You, Lord, are both Lamb and Shepherd.
You Lord, are both prince and slave.
You, peace-maker and sword-bringer
of the way you took and gave.
You, the everlasting instant;
you, whom we both scorn and crave.

Clothed in light upon the mountain,
stripped of might upon the cross,
Shining in eternal glory,
beggared by a soldier's toss.
You, the everlasting instant;
you, who are both gift and cost.

You, who walk each day beside us,
sit in power at God's side.
You, who preach a way that's narrow,
have a love that reaches wide.
You, the everlasting instant;
you, who are our pilgrim guide.

Worthy is our earthly Jesus!
Worthy is our cosmic Christ!
Worthy your defeat and victory.
Worthy still your peace and strife.
You, the everlasting instant;
you, who are both death and life.

Alleluia! You who are our death and life.

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To order the easy SATB choral arrangement appropriate for Christ the King Sunday or Christmas, contact GIA Publications at www.giamusic.com or 1-800-442-1358, stock number G-5463.

THEMES AND PARTS

The best kind of sermon themes, and their corresponding parts, are textual. That is to say, they bring to mind the text. Furthermore, they drive where the text drives, they paint in the colors the text paints, and they reflect the mood of the text. So textual that dare I say one should be able to read them and determine almost instantly the exact portion of Scripture on which textual themes and parts are based. Here are a few examples. Can you determine the texts?



You can check your accuracy online at www.wels.net/ptw.

Fight with His Might

Why the Reformation Still Matters

Its message is the eternal gospel
Its target is the whole world
Its focus is the final judgment

You Too Can Be a Better Lover

You need to know how dearly you are loved
You need to see an example you can imitate

Better to Be a Heavenly Fool than an Earthly Sage

You Are the Potter, I am the Clay

I'm not beyond the reach of your wrath
I'm never too ruined to be reformed

NEXT ISSUE ...

- "The Formation of a Sermon," and "Suggestions for a Life of Study" from Craddock
- End Times, Advent, and Christmas preaching helps
- More sermons



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