

# PREACH

the Word

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## A WAY WITH WORDS

Some people just have a way with words. They can turn a phrase to fit any situation, describe a scene so that it draws you in, help you appreciate old truths with new delight, or communicate the main point with a strikingly simple metaphor.

Garrison Keillor, for example, makes you laugh at yourself because of his ability to put Lutheran preachers on the scene. Christian author, Max Lucado, keeps publishing book after book with a cozy style of writing that warms the heart and soothes the mind. Lutheran hymn writers like Martin Franzmann and Jaroslav Vajda can paint a picture in one hymn stanza that it would take others of us a long, long paragraph to portray. (See especially Franzmann's "O Kingly Love," CW 335. Other hymns by these poets are indexed on CW pages 938 and 941.)

That's style. And that's a dangerous topic. Its mere mention can imply that the messenger bears more responsibility for the efficacy of the message than the message itself.

Preachers, therefore, must remember that there's a difference – a big difference – between a treasure and a jar of clay. "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Style never saved anyone. It has never fought off Satan. It does not raise people from the dead. It will not be a prerequisite for heaven. "This all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Then why such a practical focus in this volume of *Preach the Word*? If Lutherans believe that style doesn't save but substance does, let's get our noses into the Bible and do some exegesis.

Lutherans do believe that the gospel is the power of God, and nothing else. Style is not Lord. But it is servant. Martin Luther battled against reason taking control of the Word of God, but his resolution was not to dispense with reason altogether. Rather, to subject it to the Word. Consider the same tactic for style. Lutherans don't turn up our noses at the art of preaching because all that matters is the content of preaching. We just subject the art of preaching to the content. As servant.

Therefore, a "both and" mindset when considering style and substance is much more beneficial than an "either or" that pits each against the other. Fred Craddock states unapologetically that

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## THE WORD FINDS A WAY

In Advent you will announce John the Baptist as the one preparing the way for the Savior. That's the what. The substance. But how is he announced? That's the style.

Look at how the Scriptures announce him! Skim over the first two verses of Luke's third chapter as bare historical

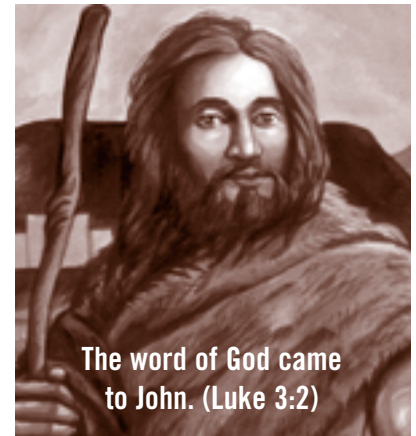
introduction to establish a time reference, and you'll miss the context that accents the main point. Luke names Tiberius, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Annas and Caiaphas as signs of the worst of times. For the Jewish people watching and waiting for the Lord's way to send the promised Savior King, there seems to be no hope. No prophet of God had been on the scene for ages, the religious leaders have abandoned God's calling, and it appears as if the unshakable strength of Roman rule will remain an unchallenged and corrupt empire.

Luke's list of the proud and powerful rulers contrasts sharply with his introduction of John the Baptist – who wears camel's hair and eats locusts in a wilderness wasteland virtually uninhabitable by humans.

This style surrounding the Baptizer, then, helps catch the attention of those hanging their hopes for well-being on the Romans, relying on ecclesiastically vested religious leaders to get them in with God, or assuming that divine help would come from heaven in a great display of human popularity and power. With planned contrast to their false securities, "The word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the desert" (Luke 3:2). The style of John's circumstances and demeanor serves the substance of his appearance and message.

It's not just *that* the Word of God came to John. It's where, when, and how the Word of God came. A way you'd least expect. And most appreciate.

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The word of God came to John. (Luke 3:2)

## DYNAMIC GOSPEL VERBS

When you preach you're not just anchoring the news. From the songs of Moses and Mary in the Scriptures to the announcements of Jeremiah and John the Baptist to the sermons of Peter and Paul – all reporting on God's miraculous, saving activity – believers hear not just "this happened" but "things will be different now!"

A treasure of dynamic verbs awaits you in the Scripture lessons for End Time, Advent and Christmas. This really hits home when you look at the line up and notice the energy of God's saving activity. Check out some of the verbs in the box on this page. Then preach the unique textual color and flavor of those verbs as provided by the living and active Word of God.

### Verbs in End Time, Advent, and Christmas Lessons

#### Saints Triumphant

Protects, delivered, sleep, awake, shine, made perfect, remember no more, dead will hear.

#### Advent 1

Fulfill, sprout, clear the way, make love increase, roaring, faint, pass away, escape.

#### Advent 3

Sing, taken away, never fear, not hang limp, quiet, rejoice, transcends, guard, warned, cut down, baptize, burn up.

#### Christmas Eve

Dawned, increased, born, reign, issued, belonged, appeared, hurried, amazed, treasured.



A complete listing of all Sundays is posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw).

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The word of God still comes in the same way. Not relying on man's great institutions. Not depending on the authority of the visible church. Not targeting only well paid, extremely gifted and finely suited preachers. The Word finds a way to you as it found its way, by the Spirit of God, to John the Baptist.

Be assured, messenger of God, before you prepare the way for people to welcome their Savior – that same Savior has already prepared a way for his Word to come to you. His Word finds and forgives you at the worst of times. It finds you and calls you in an unlikely place. It finds your idiosyncrasies and uses them to fill in gaps where the gifts of others don't quite make their mark.

The kingdom of God is near. The Word finds a way to you ... for you ... through you. God bless your preaching.



## PREACHING BY FRED B. CRADDOCK

### Study Guide #3 - The Formation of a Sermon

Craddock offers over 20 examples of message forms on pp. 170-172. Identify them. Research and discuss any which you don't understand.

Putting the Form on Paper - On pp. 189-192 Craddock warns about writing the sermon too early. List his stated concerns.



The remainder of Study Guide #3 is posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw).

### Study Guide #4 - The Life of Study

"What minister has not experienced a desk becoming an altar?" Craddock asks in this chapter that any preacher will find as edifying as it is encouraging (p. 70). In the opening paragraph of the chapter on p. 69 he distinguishes between what two kinds of study? What is the predictable result if preachers don't keep this in mind?

Discuss the following barriers to a healthy life of study (pp. 71-75), then mark them in order as to which you believe creates the most difficult barrier to study (1) and which is most easily overcome (10). Before you mark the list, however, you must add another barrier from your personal experience not yet listed.


- \_\_\_\_\_ the congregation
- \_\_\_\_\_ culture/society
- \_\_\_\_\_ ministers themselves
- \_\_\_\_\_ seminary experience
- \_\_\_\_\_ transition from school to parish
- \_\_\_\_\_ ability to select quality reading materials
- \_\_\_\_\_ pain and fear
- \_\_\_\_\_ myth of experience as the better teacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ premium placed on undisciplined impulse and immediate sensation
- \_\_\_\_\_ other:



The remainder of Study Guide #4 is posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://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](http://www.wels.net/ptw).

### End Time General

 From the sermon *"Heaven is a Happy Place"* posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw)

Some of the misconceptions people have is they think, "Won't it make me sad if Uncle Louie isn't in heaven with me?" Or, "Is everyone on Judgment Day going to find out what a weasel I was? I'm going to be so ashamed." God is giving us some happy news. *"The former things will not be remembered ..."*

### Last Judgment

 From the sermon *"A Striking Symbol of the Savior: The Sun"* posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw)

In 1903 Danish physician Niels Finsen was awarded the Nobel Prize for medicine in recognition of his success in treating tuberculosis of the skin with ultraviolet radiation ... Ultraviolet waves in sunlight can kill bacteria, and so medical professionals like Finsen began using sunlight therapy to treat skin diseases ... Bottom line: in the right hands, sunlight is a medicine.

### Thanksgiving

 From the sermon *"Thanking Jesus is Trusting Jesus"* posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw)

From start to finish the gospel of Luke revolves around thanks and praise. The announcements and arrivals of babies John and Jesus in Luke 1 and 2 cause Mary to praise God, Elizabeth and Zechariah to thank God, the shepherds to return glorifying God, and Simeon and Anna to marvel at God ... What we learn from God's Word this Thanksgiving Day is that true gratefulness in all circumstances only happens as a result of true faith – believing that the promises of God pertain to my blessings as well as my troubles.

### Christ the King

 From the sermon *"Glory to the King of Kings"* posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw)

A lone voice sounding forth from the lonely island of Patmos nineteen centuries ago is in fact the eternal, powerful, grace-filled voice of God reaching your ears today. It carries a message that pierces through whatever pessimism you may have and destroys whatever despair you may feel, telling you that there is nothing, no hardship so horrible, no trial so terrible, nothing in all the world that can ruin your life or shake your soul, because the living Lord Jesus Christ is your Savior-King.

### Advent 2 and 3

John the Baptist came dressing like yesterday and speaking like tomorrow.

### Advent 4

 From the sermon *"Back to Bethlehem"* posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw)

Bethlehem had already given Israel the greatest king she had ever had – King David.

### Christmas Day

But look! There's someone on the mountains with beautiful feet. He has the most beautiful of all. They were tiny once; the eternal Son of God entered the womb of virgin and was born on earth in weakness. His feet grew: no "terrible two's," no smart-mouthed 10-year-old, no troublesome teenage years. For his feet always walked the path of righteousness.



### Christmas Day

 From the sermon *"The Eternal Word is Our Greatest Christmas Gift"* posted online at [www.wels.net/ptw](http://www.wels.net/ptw)

Did you ever open presents with your family and discover that one of the gifts didn't have a nametag or label. Everyone wondered, "Whose gift is this?" God did not leave off the nametag when he gave us our greatest Christmas gift. He made sure we know for whom his gift is intended.

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when studying a sermon text, we improve our preaching when we let the exegesis tell us both *what* the Word of God is saying in the text and *how* the Word of God is saying it.

Study the Lord. Study the servant. Preach them both as they appear in Scripture. That's textual, biblical preaching. With style.

Study Guide #3, "The Formation of the Sermon," and Study Guide #4, "Suggestions for a Life of Study" appear in this issue and offer valuable insight based on the corresponding chapters in Craddock's book. If you haven't yet purchased the book, go to Amazon.com and get yours. It provides a welcome refresher course in preaching whether part of personal or group study.





## O KINGLY LOVE, THAT FAITHFULLY

Text: Martin Franzmann, 1907-76

Tune: Richard W. Hillert, b.1923

Text, Tune, Setting © 1969 Concordia Publishing House

*Christian Worship:* Hymn 335

*Lutheran Worship:* Hymn 346

### NEXT ISSUE ...

- "Study Your Listeners" and "Listen to the Text" from Craddock
- Epiphany and Missions/Evangelism preaching helps
- New features for a new year

*Daron Lindemann*

## THEMES AND PARTS

The best kind of sermon themes, and their corresponding parts, are textual. 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](http://www.wels.net/ptw).

### *The Status of a Saint*

Distressed on earth  
Delivered with judgment  
Displayed in glory

### *Marvel at the Miracles of Christmas*

The humble birth  
The glorious baby  
The gracious Savior  
I believe them

### *The Eternal God and the Length of Our Days*

The eternal God limits the length of our days in his judgment  
The eternal God blesses the length of our days with his salvation



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