

PREACH

the Word

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according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:1)

ROCK-BOTTOM OF THE REFORMATION

*Our church body struggles to take the Word to the world. What makes it so difficult? In your opinion, what is your church body's special burden? Is it the roles of men and women? Is it fellowship? For five days on the MLC campus this past July, Prof. Arnold Koelpin led 30 pastors in a study of Luther's *Bondage of the Will*.*



How does God's omnipotent will interrelate with our human will that is in bondage to sin and Satan? What is the meaning of sin, without which the "forgiveness of sin" has at best a diminished meaning, if any at all? On the cross, God, as it were, takes our pants down and we stand before him totally and shamefully and uncomfortably exposed, even of those things which we hide from one another. But even there, especially there, the Righteous One entirely covers our shame.

Discussing this basic biblical question intends to assist pastors in preaching sin and grace scripturally and in answering questions of Christian counseling, such as "Pastor, is this or that God's will for my life?"

Questions regarding free will, synergism, decision theology, predestination, hardening, happenings by necessity or choice, Christian freedom, the work of Satan, the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit are interrelated topics, handled in context.

Dr. Luther's titanic debate with the scholar Erasmus gets down to

the basics in Christian faith and life and reflects the ongoing clash between Humanism and the Reformation's biblical theology. When moralist Erasmus meets Luther's Christian saint/sinner, sparks fly that illuminate the Bible Word. The result is Scriptural insight into the nature of man and the nature of God and how the two interact in life—and the confusions between them in "the purpose-driven life."

—from course syllabus of Prof. A. Koelpin

Bondage of the Will would make a fascinating and useful satellite Summer Quarter in your district. Consider it a gift to the people of God who listen to our preaching!

BONDAGE OF THE WILL (Excerpt)

"Is it likely that roaring lion (1 Pe 5:8), that implacable and never-resting foe of the grace of God and of man's salvation, would ever let it come about that man, who is his slave and a part of his kingdom, should strive *toward the good* with any motion or momentum whereby he might escape his tyranny? Will he not rather spur and urge him on both to will and to do with all his powers what is *contrary to grace*? Why, even the righteous, who are led by the Spirit of God, are hard put to resist him and to will and do the good, so savage are his assaults on them.

"You, who imagine the human will as something standing on *neutral ground* and left to its own devices, find it easy to imagine also that there can be an endeavor of the will in either direction, because you think of both God and the devil as a long way off, and as if they were only observers of ... free will; *you do not believe that they are the movers and inciters of a servile will*, and engaged in a most bitter conflict with one another ... For either the kingdom of Satan in man means nothing, and then Christ must be a liar, or else, if his kingdom is as Christ describes it, *free choice must be nothing but a captive beast of burden for Satan*, which can only be set free if the devil is first cast out by the finger of God." (LW vol 33: 236)

INDUCTIVE OR DEDUCTIVE PREACHING?

“If we cling too tightly to five hundred years of homiletic tradition, we may soon find an unbridgeable gulf between the daily involvement, discovery and creativity of our listeners’ experience during the week . . . and the comparatively dull, ho-hum routine of Sunday’s sermonic decrees . . . Jesus, the prophets and apostles preached with an *inductive accent*. But who remembers that the common people heard Jesus gladly when he preached inductively—beginning where they were?”

“Who follows Jesus’ example, refusing to speak without a parable, a story, a comparison? Who analyzes the Sermon on the Mount as an eighteen-minute sermon with dozens of examples, visual images, scores of comparisons, and interest-catching devices as diverse as riddles, sex appeal, and everyday experience?”

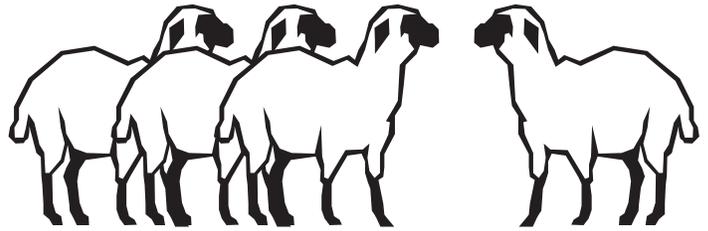
Ralph Lewis (*Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen*)

WAIT! A COUNTERPOINT

I read Lewis’ book years ago and actually tried to be an inductive preacher (I was more a disciple of Fred Craddock of Emory University than of Lewis). I found that I was doing exactly what Phil Hirsch told us not to do: I tried to be someone I’m not (PTW 8.5). I only pray my efforts did not do any lasting damage to the congregations I served.

Since then, I’ve become critical of the inductive method for several reasons. First, its main proponents come from the *historical-critical* conviction and promote the inductive method because they strongly feel that Scripture is only validated by personal experience. The theory goes that after cycling through several experiential stories, the listener is emotionally ready to assent to a biblical premise. This is a trendy form of psychological manipulation—the antithesis of the “rational manipulation” of which they accuse the deductive method. Hence the title of Craddock’s book *As One Without Authority*, implying that the preacher with Scripture alone has no credibility with his flock anymore.

His approach proceeds from the assumption that our flocks are as weary and wary of what is said from the pulpit as consumers are of telemarketers at dinnertime. Craddock, Lewis, et al, connect with my flesh in an unwholesome way: they fear monger. “The people in my pews don’t care about what God says. So I need to ease them into accepting the verities of Scripture which are so offensive when spoken in propositional statements.” (Compare with Jesus: “*I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. . .*”). The fact of the matter is that no human experience can prepare a person for the crucifixion that is repentance. No preaching style can raise a man to life by sparing him from death.



Secondly, I’m not so sure that Lewis has the right to pigeon-hole Jesus as an inductive preacher any more than one can call Jesus a deductive preacher. Jesus probably did not even put the “Sermon on the Mount” in his file-folder labeled *Sermons*. When Lewis stokes our insecurity by saying that bold, propositional statements up front are going to create a disconnect, I beg to differ. The baptized know the Shepherd’s voice and they delight in it. In fact, the congregation of saints does not find it onerous to speak with such doctrinal precision and boldness in their corporate confessions. (That is not to mention that the changeless Scriptures themselves were given by God and proved themselves, over the millennia, to be both transcultural and countercultural).

With the pandemic clamor to market the Gospel in a way that will “grow the church,” there is a distinct possibility that these same inductive-only people presume that the baptized aren’t the object of preaching any more. They assert that we ought to be preaching only to the unbeliever who might possibly wander in during divine worship. To make sure they come back next week, we need to coax them onto their own cross. . . or save the cross for a later date. In doing this, both believer and pagan are denied remedy. This is pastoral neglect. Or, to use medical parlance: malpractice.

I challenge you to read the sample sermons of inductive gurus with a Christocentric eye. *Doxology*, by Craddock, is a masterpiece of inductive preaching. But, as one of my homiletical friends once commented, “*Doxology* brought me no closer to Christ.” You can go over the sermon examples in Lewis’ book with a divining rod and not find a drop of the Theology of the Cross. Ask a brother for his best inductive sermons. You will probably sense the inner conflict between, “Thus saith the LORD,” and the current spin on “being all things to all men.” Likely, most of these sermons are deductive with a lot of illustrations thrown in.

OK, so “abusus non tollit usum;” I agree. I will listen to your inductive sermon with Lutheran ears. But I have been dragged, kicking and screaming, into the camp of the convinced that this whole inductive vs. deductive debate is little more than Ponce de Leon searching for the Fountain of Homiletical Youth.

I have only twenty minutes each Sunday to help my people find the cross in the text. So I must abide by the economy of “Stand up. Speak up. Shut up.” Whatever you wish to call it, I can do no better than to speak as Christ and the apostles spoke—as my God-given gifts permit.

— an email from Pastor Wayne Laitinen

THREE FROM WALTHER

- 1 "... according to God's Word not a drop of evangelical consolation is to be brought to those who are living securely in their sins. On the other hand, to the brokenhearted not a syllable containing a threat or a rebuke is to be addressed, but only promises conveying consolation and grace, forgiveness of sin and righteousness, life and salvation." (102)
- 2 "The Law tells us what to do, but it does not enable us to comply with its commands; it rather causes us to become more unwilling to keep the Law. Let the Law once force its way into a person's heart, and that heart will strain with all its force against God. The person will become furious at God for asking such impossible things of him. Yea, he will curse God in his heart. He would slay God if he could. He would thrust God from his throne if that were possible. The effect of preaching the Law, then, is to increase the lust for sinning." (14)
- 3 "We are told in this thesis that Law and Gospel are confounded and perverted for the hearers of the Word, not only when the Law predominates in the preaching, but also when Law and Gospel, as a rule, are equally balanced ..." (403)

THE STEWARDSHIP NOTE IN YOUR PREACHING

When September begins, you and I will be two thirds of the way through our ministry in 2005. Are you aware of exactly what mission offering your congregational treasurer has mailed in? It really happens that a pastor thinks one thing while the treasurer thinks another. Months may go by without a mission offering check sent.

Everybody is talking about money being tight. Walk into one of your neighborhood food stores and hear the shelves groaning. Look at a restaurant parking lot on Friday night. What we take for granted!

And think what we consider necessities: movie and sports channels, cell phone, sports stadiums and internet leagues, magazines, hotels, exercise clubs, music CDs, wine and beer, vacations.

Surely there is a way for pastors to address both the comfort-loving Old Sinner ... as well as the discouraged and timid New Man. Speak the truth in love!



PREACHING THAT GRABS THE HEART

is the wonderful name of a book by Ernst R. Wendland. He lives and works in south-central Africa. The reader catches in Dr. Wendland's careful writing his love for languages and for the science of learning, but most of all, his patient love for the souls of his Zambian and Malawian people.

Roughly half the paperback's 300 pages are African sermons, never intended for American audiences. The first half of Dr. Wendland's book, however, may serve some among us preachers who would appreciate an overview of *rhetoric* (persuasion). No longer is rhetoric a word commonly heard in our college or seminary classrooms. In 2005 we have our English classes and Composition courses, perhaps a semester of Logic; at Seminary comes the new chapter of life involving a Homiletics class and professor.

Rhetoric might seem a bit of a puzzle to us Lutheran preachers. On the one hand, we believe in the bondage of the will. Humans on their own and at their best are spiritually dead, hostile to God, and ignorant in spiritual matters. All the persuasion in the world will accomplish as much lasting good as CPR on a dead body.

On the other hand, we have been called as ambassadors for Christ; the Holy Spirit opens our lips to speak his praise to other people. Communication is both a science and an art. So we struggle to be clear, to be kind, to be confessional, to capture the other person's thoughts and make them obedient to Christ. Could there be a different goal for any Lutheran preacher than, in E.R. Wendland's words, "preaching that grabs the heart"?

The author includes insightful chapters called "The Inductive Art of Participatory Preaching" and "Induction – Some Pros and Cons."

The book (about \$15) is printed and shipped from Africa. <wendland@zamnet.zm>

REFORMATION BEGINS IN THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Nothing else you do is as important as your morning time with Word & Prayer. This will be a struggle each day, alarming in that it doesn't get easier. Your old Adam loves comfort ("Don't get up so early!") and loves to be entertained ("I'll just flip on the computer to see the sports scores, the Dow, etc."). He doesn't like to be hitched to the plow and walk the rows of chapter and verse. He smells his death there.



"Only when we are completely alone with God do all the masks fall away, do we become utterly honest, stripped to our real and ultimate aims and ambitions. This is the hinterland out of which comes whatever richness there may be in a man's ministry. Out of these times of study, meditation, and prayer, of fruitful solitariness, come the best of our testimony and we can say to our hearers, 'I delivered to you that which I also received.'" James Manz, (*Devotional Use of the Bible*, CTM, July '62).

Out of quiet hours in your study come the godly self-confidence to lead worship with spark, humility to do the dirty jobs, and pity for souls which makes evangelists of us all. The price you pay in your study brings confidence that you are actually prepared in season and out of season. It also brings a never-ending source of sermon illustrations.

One of our guys emailed during PTW's volume 8: "I am grateful for the encouragement, especially in the area of devotional life. I've been through some difficult times in my ... years here. If it wasn't for my morning time spent in the Word and prayer, I'm certain I wouldn't be in the ministry. The trials and troubles would have eaten me alive. [Then] as things get better, the flesh wants to tell you that you don't need that daily devotional time as often."

Your God has dignified you by drafting and training you as an officer in his army. Now he has placed you at a certain spot on the field of battle. *When I am afraid, I will trust in you* (Ps 56).

Pastor Tom Jeske
Omaha, Nebraska

YOU CAN PRINT THAT

- 1 "In the *Table Talk* we find many examples of how Luther thought about parental love. In 1531, as he played with baby Martin, he asked himself what the baby had done, that [the father] loved him so much. 'You poop, pee, and fill the house with your crying, so why should I care for you?' He answers himself: 'Because [the infant] is still so helpless. Is it possible that God feels the same way about us? It became easier to believe in justification without works.'"

Birgit Stolt (*The Positive God-the-Father Image of the Older Luther*), abridged by James Kiecker in *Luther Digest*, vol 12, 2004.

- 2 "Preaching is a kind of dramatic presentation. ... If we are preaching the centralities of the Christian faith and really believe what we say, we cannot play it cool ... There is an urgent need on the part of many of us to recover our sense of the drama of the gospel, to feel it ourselves, and not to be afraid to let others see how we feel."

Ian Pitt-Watson (*A Primer for Preachers*)

- 3 "I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame."
Job (29:15)

- 4 "The afflicted person says: '... Damnation threatens me like an arrow in flight unless you show me what kind of shield I can hold up against it.'

The comforter says: 'You should not see your death in your body but in Christ, the conqueror of death ... You should not see your sin on your conscience but on Christ, the Lamb of God ... You should not see hell and the anxiety of everlasting damnation coming to you, but to Christ, who on the cross took upon himself the anxiety of damnation and conquered it ... You should not see the Law as being against yourself, but as it has been fulfilled by Christ, and was nailed with him to the cross.'

Johann Gerhard (*Manual of Comfort*),
tr. by John Drickamer, Christian News.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? If you have any questions or comments about *Preach the Word*, feel free to contact this year's editor directly at tomjeske@phonet.com

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Preach the Word is published bimonthly by the WELS Commission on Worship
2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398 414/256-3265
<BGerlach@sab.wels.net> <www.wels.net/worship>

Pastor Thomas Jeske, editor <tomjeske@phonet.com>
Wayne A. Laitinen, managing editor <laitinen@newulmtel.net>