



Preparing a Sermon

How do I do this?



What's in a name?

Sermon

Homily

Preaching

Proclamation

Teaching

What the sermon is not

Testimony

- ◇ Sharing a personal experience of faith or what God has done for me
- ◇ This is good and valuable. It can be part of a sermon, but it is not a sermon. It is a personal story.
- ◇ A testimony is not the Word of God.



Bible Study



- ◇ The sermon is not simply an explanation of the scriptures.
- ◇ Interpreting scripture is part of a sermon, but it is not a sermon
- ◇ Explanation of scripture can help understanding the text, but it is not proclamation of God's action in the world today.

Exhortation or Motivational Speech

- ◇ Exhortation is the act of strongly encouraging or trying to persuade someone to do something (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/exhortation>)
- ◇ Exhortation is about the person speaking convincing the listener of something. The focus is not the movement of the Holy Spirit through the interaction.



Something written or prepared



- ◇ Your manuscript, notes, preparation, plan or anything written down is NOT a sermon. It is a plan for the sermon, but not a sermon.
- ◇ A sermon is an event of communication. It is something that happens. It occurs as the words are spoken, listeners receive them, and the Holy Spirit works within the interaction.
- ◇ A sermon is an event of the Word of God, bringing forth faith in Christ.

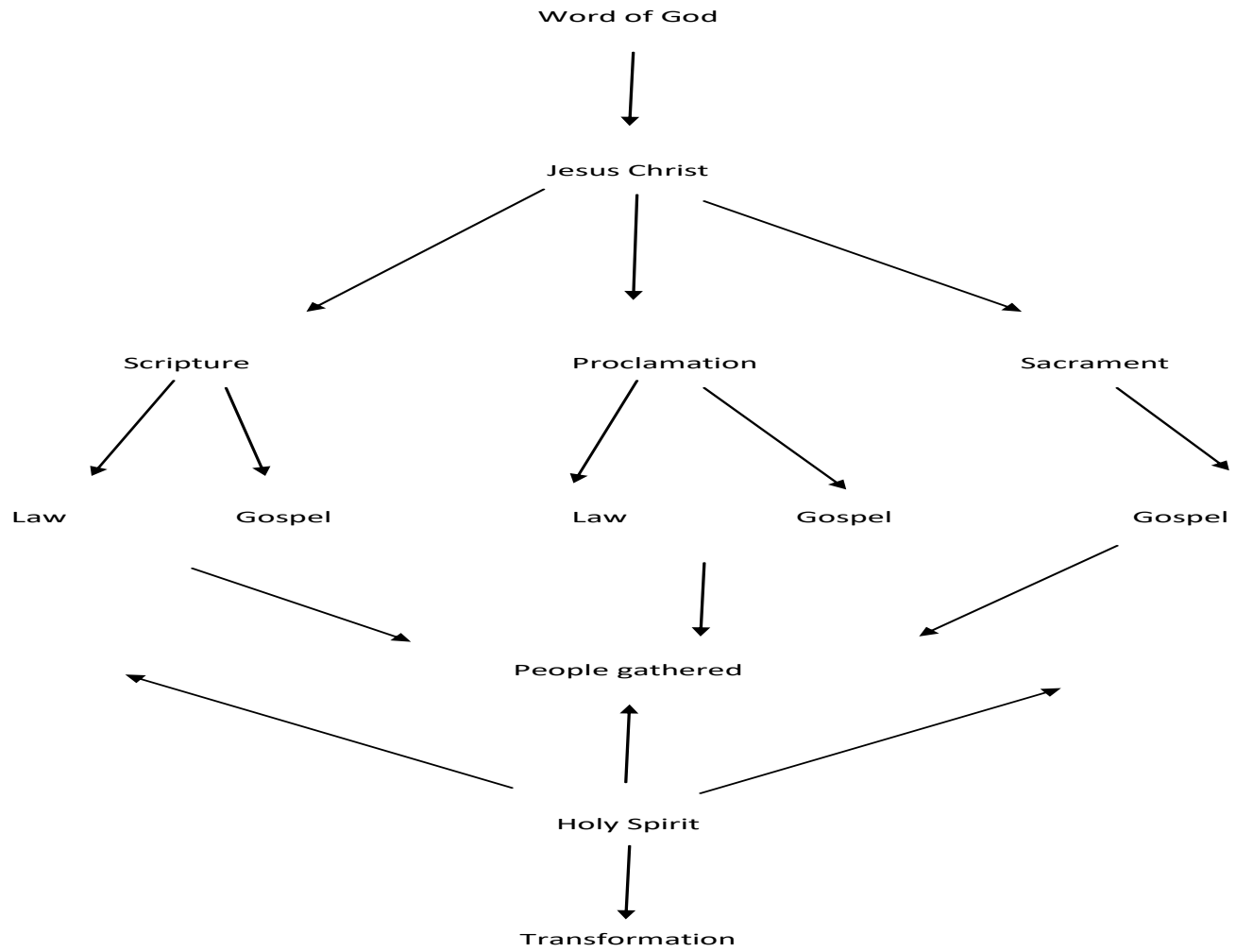
So what is the sermon?

Augsburg Confession

◇ Article 7: The Church

“The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.”

(Source: <https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/of-the-church/#ac-vii-0001>)



What makes a sermon a sermon?

- ◇ It is proclamation
- ◇ Specifically, the gospel is announced or proclaimed
- ◇ The radical nature of the gospel is missed if the law is not also proclaimed, therefore the law must also be included.
- ◇ If law and gospel are proclaimed, then that proclamation is the Word of God. It is then a sermon.
- ◇ Proclamation is not preaching the bible, it is proclaiming the Word of God.
- ◇ It is God who does the work, through the Holy Spirit moving within the event of communication

Preaching the Law

- ◇ What is the trouble in this text?
- ◇ In what way do we see God's demands, the failure of humans to live as God's people, or sin appear in this text?
- ◇ In pointing out the trouble, we are pointing to the law found in the text.
- ◇ How does this trouble found in this text relate to our experience in the world today?
- ◇ We – individually, as humans, or creation as a whole – are the subject of the trouble, creating it, experiencing it, suffering because of it
- ◇ Sometimes the trouble is “behind” the text, in the background to the text. This is especially true in epistles.

Preaching the Gospel

- ◇ What grace do we find in this text?
- ◇ How does God act? What does Jesus do? What healing, forgiveness, salvation does God bring about?
- ◇ The grace in the text should respond directly to the trouble in the text.
- ◇ This should lead naturally to the way that God's grace addresses the trouble found in our world today, whether socially or individually.
- ◇ God is always the subject in speaking of grace; we – as individuals, as humanity, as creation – are the object receiving the grace.

Preaching Transformation

- ◇ How does the Holy Spirit empower faithfulness through this text?
- ◇ What are we called to do? What mission does this text send us on? What form of discipleship is opened to us by this text? What does obedience look like?
- ◇ Transformation is what God does through us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit through us that empowers our response to God's grace. It flows from the trouble and the grace, leading us to new faithfulness and action.
- ◇ God is the subject who brings transformation. God's work in the world is the direct object of the transformation. We are the indirect object through whom the transformation comes.

Listening to a Sermon

Law Gospel Transformation

In the Text

- ◆ What *trouble* is found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◆ What *corresponding grace* is found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◆ What *corresponding transformation* is found in the main bible passage addressed?

In our experience

- ◆ What *trouble* is found in our world that matches the *trouble* found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◆ What *corresponding grace* is found in our world that matches the *grace* found in the main bible passage addressed?
- ◆ What *corresponding transformation* is found in our world that matches the *transformation* found in the main bible passage addressed?

An Example

Mark 10:17-31

◇ ¹⁷As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” ²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

²⁸Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” ²⁹Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

My preparation:

- ◇ What is the law in this text? The man grieves because Jesus told him to sell all that he owns and give the proceeds to the poor. It is impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven
- ◇ What is the gospel in the text? God makes all things possible
- ◇ What is the transformation in this text? God has empowered Peter and the disciples to leave everything and follow Jesus, for the sake of the good news.

My preparation

- ◇ What is the trouble in our experience? We hold onto things that prevent us from participating in the kingdom of heaven.
- ◇ What is the grace in our experience? God allows us to do the impossible and let go of what we are holding onto so that we might follow Jesus
- ◇ What is the transformation in our experience? Through the Holy Spirit we, like Peter and the apostles, can give ourselves over to Christ completely and follow him passionately, giving up what we once thought was essential.

Styles of Sermons

Sermons can take many forms

- ◇ 3 point
- ◇ narrative
- ◇ 4 page
- ◇ Chiasmus
- ◇ All forms are acceptable. The preaching of law/gospel is the central concern that is to lie behind the specific form.

A Simple Structure

Law-Gospel-Transformation

A Law-Gospel-Transformation Model

- ◇ 1. What is a trouble found in our world? It might be a personal challenge, a social issue, a congregational issue, or some other challenge.
- ◇ 2. How does the Word of God address this challenge? How does the law show us this problem? How does the gospel bring reveal God's grace in relation to this issue? What is God doing to bring healing to the issue?
- ◇ 3. How does the Holy Spirit enable us to change and call on us to act? How are we part of the way that God changes this world? What role might we have in God's mission?

Behind the hood

- ◇ The preparation for this approach starts in scripture. You must identify the law, gospel, and transformation in the text first.
- ◇ Given that text, how do we see the same problems, sin, brokenness, destructive tendencies, etc. in our lives today or in the world today? Structurally, then, this goes first but in your preparation it comes second.
- ◇ Finally, in what way might God move us forward? How do we love, or what action might we be moved to take? How are we transformed by God?

A possible sermon outline for Sunday

- ◇ 1. What is it that we hold onto that prevents us from following Jesus fully? Perhaps possessions or wealth. Perhaps it is time commitments and distractions. Maybe our time choices make us always feel rushed but we don't want to miss out on the things we think we have to do
- ◇ 2. Jesus told the man that he could not fully follow as long as he was so concerned about his possessions. Yet God can enable even the reach to let go of what they are holding onto and follow
- ◇ 3. Peter and the disciples were enabled to give themselves to following Christ. We too are empowered by the Spirit to open our hands and reach out in love for others rather than holding onto our choices so tightly.

Keeping it simple

- ◇ Pick one bible text to be the central one. You might mention other readings, but do not dwell on them. Focus on one text.
- ◇ Use only one image, guiding metaphor, or illustration.
- ◇ At most people are likely to remember one thing about the sermon. If you use ten different images who knows which they will remember? If you stick to one, it is clear which one will be remembered.
- ◇ Stick to one thing that Holy Spirit empowers us to do. Keep it clear.

Mark 10:46-52

◇ ⁴⁶As [Jesus] and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” ⁵²Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

In the text

- ◇ Trouble: Bartimaeus sits by the roadside as a beggar.
- ◇ Grace: Jesus says for Bartimaeus to come to Jesus. Jesus asks what Bartimaeus wants.
- ◇ Transformation: Bartimaeus is made well through his faith.

In our world

- ◇ What is the corresponding trouble?
- ◇ What is the grace in the world?
- ◇ How might we be transformed?