

Sampling Some Sermons

One of the tasks of my job is to preach sermons. I enjoy this ministry. It is both analytical and creative. It involves dwelling upon the deep things of God and his word to us in Scripture, and also upon the deep realities of the people whose faith, community, and lives we share. A preacher must allow the text to preach to himself first, and this is a deepening devotional exercise.

In recent times many of us preachers have had our sermons recorded, turned into mp3s, and placed online. It doesn't make us "internet preachers", but it is the "tape ministry" of a previous decade in current form. It also means that, for better or worse, our homiletical efforts are recorded for posterity.



I've recently had cause to review some of my past and present sermons. It is quite the educational experience! There are times for both cringing ("I said that?!") and delight ("Wow, I'd forgotten about that, that speaks to me now."). I've learned a lot from doing it and thought I'd share some thoughts:

For example:

Here is a very recent sermon from St. David's Cathedral. It is something of a "topical" sermon, as opposed to an strictly "expositional" one. It was part of an advent series on the "Signs of Faith" and drawing on the response of Mary to the announcement of the angel.

<http://briggs.id.au/jour/files/2015/01/20141221SignsOfFaithObedience.mp3>

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Like all Cathedral sermons, it's an "aim for 15-20 minute" timeslot and this went a little over. It is preached from within the confines of rather towering pulpit. There is no data projector or any other easily-appropriated form of visual aide. This means that the structure of the sermon hangs on oral cues. That's something I had to "re-learn" when I came to the Cathedral. Here's another example, more expositional in nature, looking at the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:

<http://briggs.id.au/jour/files/2015/01/20141116Matthew25ReturnOfTheKing.mp3>

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A Cathedral is an interesting place to preach. Sometimes up to 20% of the congregation are only there for one week, being tourists or short-term visitors to the city. There needs to be a balance of speaking to the regular congregation and the awareness of ongoing contact, with ensuring accessibility for those who are only there for the one experience. On some occasions, particularly the big Christmas and Easter services, you have to be almost like a "visiting preacher" and avoid over-familiarity. The next example is from a Christmas midnight service a couple of years ago. It had to be shorter, speak to a very very general audience, and definitely be on message about Jesus:

<http://briggs.id.au/jour/files/2015/01/20121224TheVoiceOfTheAngels.mp3>

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But I have not only preached in a Cathedral. I have also preached in the "rural town" context of North-West Tasmania.

And not in a pulpit, but in a school hall, a surf club room, and sometimes even outside in a park! In this context much longer, meatier "teaching times" were the order of the day.

It was a more intimate setting with more assumed familiarity

of both congregation and preacher. The homiletical structure could be communicated through visual cues on a data projector, and through peripatetic movements and gestures as wireless microphones allow. Here's a typical example from 2009, preached in the West Somerset Primary School hall. The slides that were used are here: pdf

<http://briggs.id.au/jour/files/2015/01/20090913-1Samuel16.mp3>

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