



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

Preaching the Word (Homiletics)

Lesson #12

D. Preparing to Preach the Word

Here are nine steps you should follow to prepare a good sermon that contains both the Law and the Gospel:

- Step 1: Begin with Prayer
- Step 2: Choose a Text
- Step 3: Study the Text and Context
- Step 4: Look for Law and Gospel
- Step 5: Find the Main Point
- Step 6: Determine the Order of Presentation
- Step 7: Apply the Word to Your Audience
- Step 8: Choose the Right Words
- Step 9: Prepare an Introduction and a Conclusion

We will study each step in detail in the following lessons. As you grow in your experience as a preacher, you may be able to group steps 3-7 together in your study of the text, but as you begin to learn how to prepare a sermon, it is important to take the time to focus on each step individually to learn how to do each step properly. Therefore, you should follow each step carefully and complete each step before moving on to the next one until you are comfortable in doing each step.

Step 1. Begin with Prayer

Let us assume that you have been asked by a group of Christians to preach the Word of God at a Christian service of worship. This is really a call from God Himself, who calls preachers through His Christians. This is a serious responsibility, and you want to accept this call in order to glorify God and help your fellow-Christians. You want to carry out this task to the best of your ability. What is one of the first things you should do? Remember the words of the apostle Paul: **“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God”** (2 Corinthians 3:5). Since God is the One who makes us sufficient to preach the Word of God, you should pray to God to give you the sufficiency to do what you have been asked to do.

Of course, we should pray to God to be with us and help us in every task that we do, but we should pray when we get ready to stand before our fellow-human beings to bring them a word from God. Psalm 119, in particular, can provide words for our prayers as we prepare to preach the Word of God. It is the longest of all the psalms, and every one of its verses refers to the Word of God. Here are a few examples that should help us find the right words and thoughts as we talk to God and ask Him for His help:

- **With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes.** (Psalm 119:10-12)
- **Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.** (Psalm 119:18)
- **Teach me Your statutes. Make me understand the way of Your precepts...Strengthen me according to Your word. Remove from me the way of lying...I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame!** (Psalm 119:26-31)
- **Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments.** (Psalm 119:66)

- **Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.** (Psalm 119:73)
- **Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven...I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life.** (Psalm 119:89, 93)
- **How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.** (Psalm 119:103-105)
- **Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes. I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies.** (Psalm 119:124-125)
- **Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word. Let my supplication come before You; deliver me according to Your word. My lips shall utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes. My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.** (Psalm 119:169-172)

Above all, we want to pray the petition that our Lord taught us: **“Hallowed be Your name”** (Matthew 6:9). This is the way Martin Luther explained how this petition is answered in our preaching: *“Whenever the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God’s children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven! However, whoever teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches profanes the name of God among us. Preserve us from this, heavenly Father!”* (*Book of Concord*, p. 356).

Questions

1. How does God call us to preach His Word?
2. Why is it important to pray to the Lord as we prepare to preach?
3. What are the thoughts that are repeated in these words from Ps. 119?
4. How is God’s name hallowed in our preaching?
5. How might God’s name be profaned in our preaching?