



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

Preaching the Word (Homiletics)

Lesson #13

D. Preparing to Preach the Word

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

The Bible is a big book. All of it is the Word of God, but we cannot possibly preach all of it at one time. Therefore, it is necessary that we limit ourselves to one small section of the Bible at a time.

We do not absolutely have to have a Bible text in order to preach the Word of God. There may be times in our lives when we do not have a Bible in our hands but it is necessary for us to speak. In such cases we may have to summarize Bible truths in our own words, but we will always want to mention Jesus Christ, our Lord, and what He has done for us in what we say.

But even Jesus' apostles generally based much of what they said on a text or texts from the Old Testament Scriptures, as we saw in their sermons recorded in the book of Acts. This was true of Peter's sermons and Paul's sermons when they spoke to Jews and God-fearers. When Paul spoke to heathens in Athens, he did not quote any particular Scripture, but he summarized some of God's teaching in his own words, but what Paul said was in full agreement with what the Scriptures say.

Nevertheless, when we are asked to speak God's Word to a group people, it is best if we choose a Bible text from the Old Testament or the New Testament as the main basis or source of what we are going to say.

What kind of text should we choose? When you beginning to preach of God's Word, it is important that you choose texts from Scripture that you, yourself, understand. Perhaps texts that helped you come to faith in Jesus or strengthened your faith in Him. Our choice of texts will depend, in part, on what kind of persons will be in our audience. Are they rich or poor? Are they educated or uneducated? Are they strangers to us, or are we well-acquainted with them? Do we know what kind of message they need to hear? Is there a certain kind of ignorance or problem that they are dealing with? How far have they come in their understanding of the Gospel of Christ? Generally, it is best to speak in such a way that those who understand the least are able to understand what we are saying.

In the beginning, it will probably be best if you pick texts from the New Testament, especially from the four Gospels and the book of Acts. The letters of Paul and Peter are generally harder to understand. They may become easier for you to explain later on after you have had more experience in preaching the Word of God. The letters of John are very deep and profound, but the words he uses are simple for the most part.

When you start to preach, try to choose texts that clearly present the Gospel (the Good News) of Christ.

If you wanted to speak about Jesus' birth and why He came to our world, you could choose as your text Matthew 1:20-25 or selected verses from Luke 2. Matthew 9:1-8 and John 1:25-29 are texts that talk about the forgiveness of sins. You could preach on having faith in Jesus from John 3:14-18. Jesus told many parables to the people of His time to explain a spiritual truth by using examples from daily life. If your audience is made up of persons who grow plants from the ground, you may tell the story of the sower and his seed in Luke 8: 4-15. Texts from the Gospels that give the account of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are always appropriate. The apostle Paul said he preached Christ crucified, and we ought to follow his example.

In addition to the four Gospels, another good source of texts for the beginning preacher is the book of Acts. You could choose the account of Philip and the man from Ethiopia in Acts 8 or the story of the jailer in Philippi in Acts 16. There are three accounts of Paul's conversion in the book of Acts: Acts 9, Acts 22, and Acts 26.

Sometimes a single from the Scriptures may serve as the basis for your sermon, especially single verses from the letters of Paul or Peter. Some verses that would make good sermons are: 1 Timothy 1:15, Ephesians 4:32, and Ephesians 5:2.

A good text on sin and forgiveness is 1 John 1:6-10. If your audience is a bit more advanced in their understanding, you may want to explain a wonderful law and Gospel passage like Romans 3:23-24 or Galatians 2:16 or 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

Questions

1. Why might it be necessary at times to preach the Word without a text?
2. Why is it best always to have a specific Bible text to explain?
3. What can help us find the right text for a certain situation?
4. Why is it usually best to preach on New Testament texts at first?
5. Why is it important to know something about your audience?
6. What should be included in every sermon we preach?
7. Which texts from the ones listed above appeal to you as texts that you would like to use as the basis for sermons you preach.
8. Why is it important to preach the law as well as the Gospel?