The Interpretive Process Form

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sermon #: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Text: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Two questions are fundamental in the process of biblical interpretation for preaching: what the text says and what the text meant. This *says-meant* way of addressing a text can be developed with increasing complexity as the preacher intentionally explores a text's structure, genre, literary and historical settings, and its various intentions in those settings (“what it meant”). The discipline of listening to the text can be enhanced as the preacher becomes aware of the influence of social and cognitive locations of his or her listeners. That means, the interpretive process for preaching involves listening to the congregation in order to create a relevant meaning (“what it says”) for contemporary listeners.

The Revised Common Lectionary provides four biblical texts for each Sunday and a special liturgical day (refer to Class Notes #1). The preacher needs to read the four texts carefully and have an idea of how to use them effectively in a liturgy. Once the sermonic text(s) is selected out of the four texts, it is necessary to be interpreted through three stages—listening to the text with imagination, understanding the text in its literary and historical settings, and appropriating the text in a particular preaching context. These three stages are not in a linear order but move as a spiral until the preacher gains a relevant meaning for the congregation:

1. Listening to the text with imagination: Making personal connections through meditation and prayer.

1) How does the text begin?

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2) How does the text unfold?

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3) How does the text conclude?

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4) You are encouraged to read the text in its original language (Greek or Hebrew), or refer to different versions, in addition to the NRSV which is the standard version in academia and mainstream churches. Compare them and summarize differences you found in them.

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5) Read the text many times in various ways (e.g., silent reading, *lectio divina*, reading aloud, dramatized reading, etc.). Stay with the text for a while in prayer or meditation.

6) What are your initial impressions and feelings about the text? Do any specific images or thoughts in the text reside in your mind?

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7) Do you remember any stories, songs, words, pictures, movies, rituals, or your personal (or communal) experiences in relation to the text? How do they connect with the text in your imagination? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8) Do you have any questions about the text?

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9) What is your initial hunch about what the text meant in its literary setting and/or in its historical situation? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Understanding the text in its literary and historical settings: Critical reading of the text through commentaries, dictionaries, and other biblical resources (refer to the “Biblical Tools” posted on the home page of Canvas).

1) Are there any connecting or contrasting words, parallel phrases, or speeches in the text? How do they function in organizing the parts of the text into a pattern? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) What periscopes come immediately before and after the text? How do they influence understanding the text? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) If your text is from one of the four Gospels, do other Gospels have similar texts? What are differences and similarities between your text and those in other Gospels? What are the theological distinctiveness of your text, compared with other Gospel texts?

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4) What do commentaries say about the original audience, the historical situation, and the author’s intention of the text? What commentaries or other resources did you refer to? You are supposed to refer to at least two of the resources listed on the “Biblical Tools.”

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5) Did the commentaries and other resources provide you with answers to the questions you raised in Stage 1? How did those resources help you understand the text? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Appropriating the text in a particular preaching context: Constructing a theological meaning through pastoral sensibility.

1. Who are your listeners? Describe your congregation’s social location, racial, cultural and denominational identities, and theological orientation. In addition, describe the larger context that your congregation belongs to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How could your listeners react to the text in their particular life situations? What kind of questions and concerns might they raise from the text? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you think the text says to your listeners in relation to the particular liturgical season? Why do you think it is the word of God for/to them?

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1. Write the “focus statement” (“what the sermon says”) in 1-2 sentences: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5) Write the “function statement” (what the sermon aims to do, e.g., teaching, encouraging, comforting, etc.) in 1-2 sentences: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_