Preaching and Spiritual Leadership

The Seven-step Interpretive Process Form for Sermon #2

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Stage I: The First Naiveté (the Premodern)

1. **Prayerful Preparation**. Preaching begins with prayerful preparation. Through prayer, the preacher invokes the Holy Spirit to be present and work with her throughout the whole process of interpretation.

Write down your prayers: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Text Selection**. A biblical text(s) can be selected at least by one of the following methods:
	1. lectio continua
	2. a lectionary
	3. a local church calendar
	4. a preacher’s choice of text

What is the general topic that you intend to address in your Sermon #2? Once you determined the topic, you need to research it in depth and width, and then, specify your topic to be relevant to your listeners’ spiritual lives. For example, if prayer is the general topic, you need to narrow it down by focusing on the relationship between faith and prayer or on the impact of prayer on healing, etc.

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You are free to choose a text(s) in relation to your topic. What is the text you chose for your topical sermon? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In what sense is the text appropriate to preach on your topic?

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When selecting the text, consider it in a larger context. What are the previous and later paragraphs of the text about?

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The selected text needs to either be translated from the original language or be compared with more than two modern translations, in order to arrive at the most accurate translation and make a smooth reading. What kind of translations did you refer to? What are differences among them?

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1. **Attentive Reading (Intuitive Imagination)**. After determining the text, the preacher reads it from the heart, without any aid of commentaries or books written about the text.

Read the whole text slowly, aloud, and repeatedly until the whole text is engraved in your mind and heart (you may use the method of *Lectio Divina*). Do not concentrate too much on single words or sentences within the text. Instead, read it comprehensively and meditatively.

Write down or draw any words, images, pictures, and symbols inspired from your imaginative and meditative listening to the text. You may compose a song or write a poem, a story, or a prayer, too. How does it relate to your topic?

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What are your questions or concerns about the text? Do you have any grammatical, philological, literary, or historical questions about the text?

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Stage II: Historical Criticism (the Modern)

1. **Critical Understanding (Historical Imagination)**. In this stage, the preacher deepens her understanding of the text with the help of critical studies. Biblical dictionaries, commentaries, and other theological books help us read the text as “the other” and stretch our imagination by providing background knowledge and information about the socio-cultural context of the original audience, the author’s intention, some images, metaphors, stories, historical events, doctrines, and theological terms in the text.

What kind of biblical resources or commentaries did you refer to? You are required to use at least two of the resources that are listed in the “Bible Commentaries and Other Preaching Resources” posted in Canvas, in addition to your own choices.

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How did the commentaries and other resources help you understand the text? If the preacher had specific questions or concerns about the text on Step 3, now it is time to seek appropriate answers through the resources:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Stage III: The Second Naveté (the Postmodern)

1. **Sensitive Listening (Empathetic Imagination)**. Not all the knowledge and information about the text or every insight and imaginative idea gained on Steps 3 and 4 are useful for creating a sermon, for the sermon is supposed to target on a particular congregation’s spirituality that is situated in its particular socio-cultural and existential context. Thus, it is important for the preacher to listen to the daily lives of the congregation with pastoral sensitivity.

Who are your listeners? What are the characteristics of your congregation as a group (race, gender, class, age, geographical location, theological orientation, etc.)?

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How do you describe the larger world to which your congregation belongs (a “glocal” context)?

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What is the situation of your listeners in relation to your topic? In other words, what are their opinions on the topic? Why do they think so?

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In your congregational context, how could the text be read? Can you imagine your listeners’ facial expressions or other bodily reactions to what the text imply?

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1. **Dynamic Interaction (Analogical Imagination)**. Dynamic interaction or the to-and-fro movement between the world of the text and that of the listeners is supposed to be done from the beginning of the interpretive process. On this step, however, the preacher narrows the gap between the text and the context and focuses on a specific theological theme or image among many insights and ideas that the preacher has gained from the previous steps.

What would be the major image, scene, story, or word that analogically connect the world of the text and the world of the listeners in relation to the topic? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. **Theological Reflection**. Retell the text from a particular point of view of the congregation and clarify the center of gravity of the text. The center of gravity of the text will be **the focus of the sermon, that is, the central idea or unifying theme of the sermon (“what the sermon aims to say”).**  Once the unified theme is determined, the preacher needs to reflect on that at a deeper level by **referring to some theological resources**.

When the focus of the sermon relates to a particular experience of the congregation and is reflected in a certain theological perspective, the function of the sermon is determined. **The function of the sermon means “what the sermon aims to do.”**  In other words, what does the preacher expect to happen to her listeners at personal and/or communal levels as the impact of her preaching? Comforting? Challenging? Teaching? Encouraging? Change the way of thinking? Proposing a new identity of and a vision for the community?

After clarifying the focus and function of the sermon, articulate each of them in a sentence.

What is your focus statement? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your function statement? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What would be your image as a spiritual leader to fulfill the function of your sermon?

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*The process of the seven steps is not linear but in a spiral order. Some steps need to be visited again and again until the preacher creates a new meaning of the text relevant to her particular congregation.*