

Developing Redemptive Messages

I. Review of Redemptive Principles for Christ-centered Preaching:

A. The necessity of a redemptive focus in all “Christian” preaching:

Expository preaching is committed to revealing what the Word says, and Jesus says the whole Word presents his person *and* work (by disclosing aspects of God’s grace that becomes fully revealed in him).

B. Identification marks of non-redemptive preaching:

1. “Sola Bootstrapsa” Messages
2. The Deadly Be’s (“by themselves”)

Martin Luther, “The Sum of the Christian Life”

It is exceedingly difficult to get into another habit of thinking in which we clearly separate faith and [works of] love.... Even though we are in faith ... the heart is always ready to boast of itself before God and say: "After all, I have preached so long and lived so well and done so much, surely he will take this into account." But it cannot be done. With men you may boast ... But when you come before God, leave all that boasting at home and remember to appeal from justice to grace. [But] let anyone try this and he will see and experience how exceedingly hard and bitter it is for a man, who all his life has been mired in his work righteousness, to pull himself out of it and with all his heart rise up through faith in the one Mediator.

I myself have been preaching and cultivating it (grace) for almost twenty years and still I feel the old clinging dirt of wanting to deal so with God that I may contribute something, so that he will have to give me his grace in exchange for my holiness. Still I cannot get it into my head that I should surrender myself completely to sheer grace; yet [I know that] this is what I should and must do.

C. Distinctives of Christ-centered Preaching (cf., Greidanus, Sola Scriptura)

1. What Christ-centered Preaching is not:

- a. Not _____ Preaching.

Christ-centered preaching does not attempt to make the person of Christ appear in every Old Testament mud puddle and camel track by allegory or analogy – through *paralleling* OT accounts with NT experiences of Jesus (e.g. Rahab’s cloth) or “leapfrogging to Golgotha.”

- b. Not _____ Preaching.

Christ-centered preaching does not negate the necessity of law in believers’ lives, but teaches that our obedience has no power to redeem or grant merit before God. Christ-centered preaching reveals the grace in all Scripture to *motivate* people according to Christ’s precept: “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 12:14; cf. Titus 2:11-12).

C.S. Lewis. *English Literature in the 16th Century*, p. 33.

All the initiative has been on God’s side; all has been free, unbounded grace. And all will continue to be free, unbounded grace Bliss is not for sale, cannot be earned. ‘Works’ have no ‘merit,’ though of course faith, inevitably, even unconsciously, flows

out into works of love at once. He [the Christian] is not saved because he does works of love: he does works of love because he is saved. It is faith alone that has saved him: faith bestowed by sheer gift. From this buoyant humility, this farewell to the self with all its good resolutions, anxiety, scruples, and motive scratchings, all the Protestant doctrines originally sprang.

2. What Redemptive Preaching Is:

Recognition of all Scripture as a _____ revelation of God's redeeming work (i.e., the revelation of grace)

In opposing the fragmentary interpretation which reads the Bible as a collection of biographies, the redemptive-historical side stresses the hermeneutical significance of the unity of redemptive history.... The unity of redemptive history implies the Christocentric nature of every historical text. Redemptive history is the history of Christ: He stands at its center but no less at its beginning and end.... Scripture discloses its historiography right at the beginning. "Gen. 3:15 ... places all subsequent events in the light of the tremendous battle between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between Christ coming into the world and Satan the ruler of this world, and it places all events in the light of the complete victory which the Seed of woman shall attain. In view of this, it is imperative that not one single person be isolated from this history and set apart from this great battle. The place of both opponents and 'co-workers' can only be determined Christologically." (Greidanus, p.135)

[Our goal is *not* to make every passage mention Christ, but to show where every passage stands in relation to the grace ultimately revealed in Christ.]

Genesis 3:15 Interpretive Perspective

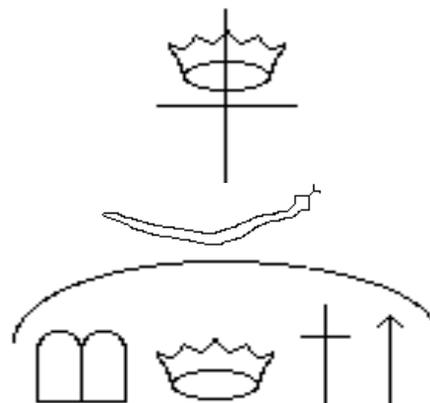
Not This:

reminds me of:



Leapfrogging to the Cross

But This:



Where does this specific passage fit in redemptive history/teaching?

<> "Christian preaching is simply the proclamation of the Divine crusade of redemption, of God's way out of our human predicament [sic F.C.F]." -Simon Blocker, The Secret of Pulpit Power, 1955.

II. A Basic Process for Christ-centered Preaching

3-Step Process for Preaching “Christ” (God’s redeeming work) from every text

1. What is the _____ (the “burden of the text”) that requires God’s intervention and rescue? A true FCF requires a divine solution, and thus exposes the inadequacies of legalistic/moralistic messages.
2. What _____ principles are evident in the text? Examine historical context, genre, narrative features, doctrinal statements, divine actions, surrounding passages, etc. that underscore the necessity and presence of God’s redemptive work (i.e., grace) on behalf of his people.
3. In the light of how these principles fit into the overall plan of redemption, how should we _____ to these principles in our lives?

[Take truth to struggle.]

III. Finding “Redemptive Principles” in the Text

A. Traditional Approaches Useful for Some Texts:

1. _____ Approaches: (i.e., expounding the text’s direct mention of Christ or his messianic work. E.g., Gospel account, messianic Psalm, epistolary reference, etc.)
2. _____ Approaches: (i.e., Christ’s redemptive work is represented in an Old Testament type. E.g., Exodus, the Temple, David, etc.)

B. Redemptive/Historical Approaches Useful for All Texts: (i.e., identifying where this passage’s events/persons/instruction fit in the overall context of God’s redemptive plan *in order to* proclaim the redemptive/grace principles that provide motivation and enabling for the passage’s imperatives.)

In its context every passage either is (see last page for examples):

- a. _____ of the Work of Christ
- b. _____ for the Work of Christ
- c. _____ of the Work of Christ
- d. _____ of the Work of Christ

C. Macro and Micro Redemptive Interpretative Options:

1. Redemptive-historical: Identifying the place or function of the text in redemptive history [Macro].

Bridges – Events, patterns or persons that advance understanding of God’s redemptive message or means (Adam, Melchizedek, Exodus, sacrifices)

Dead ends – Events, patterns or persons that demonstrate a false hope for redemption (e.g. Law, judges, kings – as an Eastern mode of reasoning)
2. Doctrinal-instruction: Expounding a redemptive doctrine (understanding of grace) that is exemplified, stated or taught in the immediate text [Micro].
3. Literary motif: Explaining how the author uses a literary motif (title, image, pattern, etc.) to prefigure or echo an aspect of Christ’s redeeming work [Micro and Macro] (e.g. Abraham offering his only son and God offering his only Son = Gen. 22 and John 3:16; Moses striking the rock to rescue his people = Num. 14 and I Cor. 10; Zipporah rescuing Moses and God’s “son,” Israel, with blood of her son = Exodus 4 and Heb. 9; Joshua’s conquest and David’s throne from Dan to Beersheba with Christ’s final Journey from Caesarea-Philippi “Gates of Hell” to Cross = Joshua 18-19 and Matt. 16). This is not allegorically turning incidental details into *our* meanings, but showing literary parallels intended by a biblical/canonical Author.
4. Relational-interaction: Identifying redemptive truths (grace principles) expressed in God’s interaction with people or in his representatives’ interactions with people [Micro] (e.g., strength in weakness, faithfulness despite unfaithfulness, provision for need, forgiveness of sin, discipline for correction). **This option is the most frequent/important interpretive tool.**

D. Redemptive “Lenses” to Use in Approaching all Texts:

(Two key questions that are always applicable *and* fair):

What does this text reveal about ...

1. God's nature or attributes which _____ the work of Christ
2. Our nature or attributes which _____ the work of Christ

Note: Revealing aspects of the *necessity and provision* of grace, rather than _____ of Jesus (or some account from his incarnation) is what makes a sermon redemptive. The term “Christ-centered” is synecdoche for all of God’s redeeming work that makes us know and depend upon his grace ultimately provided in Christ. A Christ-centered sermon does not attempt to make Jesus appear where the text does not speak of him, but

rather demonstrates the _____ of the text to his person and/or work. Often biblical texts are not directly revealing the person of Jesus, but are revealing a dimension of God's gracious nature that will be most fully revealed in Christ, and must be grasped by us to know him and to reflect him.

IV. Using Redemptive Lenses to Preach the Whole Bible as Christian Literature

A. Histories (and Biographies)

1. Explain the place of events/persons in the redemptive plan (predictive, preparatory, reflective, resultant); and/or,
2. Expose the grace principles evident in doctrinal statements, literary motifs, or relational interaction (of God or his representatives with his people).
3. Make sure "God is the hero" even when exemplars teach character.
 - ◁ Note how "God as hero" may change wording of main points
 - Not: "Be strong and courageous, so God will help you."
 - But: "Because God is your help, be strong and courageous."

B. Law

1. Show how the law leads to dependence on grace (in Christ - Gal. 3:24)
2. Show how the imperatives are based on the indicatives (e.g. Deut. 5:6)
 - ◁ Note how "imperatives based on indicatives" may change wording
 - Not: "Obey God, so God will treasure you."
 - But: "Because God treasures you, obey Him."

C. Poetry and Wisdom Literature

1. Expose the grace principles evident in doctrinal statements, literary motifs, or relational interaction.
2. Use "Redemptive Lenses" (i.e., What does this reveal about God and ... me?) to expose grace principles.

D. Prophecies and Apocalyptic Literature

1. Explain statements about the person and work of the coming Messiah
2. Explain the statements of God's disciplining and restorative grace

E. Gospels

1. Explain the person, work and demands of the Incarnate Lord
2. Show why: "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (Jn. 14:15); and, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

F. Epistles

1. Expose the grace principles evident in doctrinal statements, literary motifs, or relational interaction.
2. Show how the imperatives are based on the indicatives (in context)

◁> For more detail see G. Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Literature* and S. DeGraaf, *Promise and Deliverance*.

V. Using Redemptive Lenses to Preach Biblical Narratives

A. Use Exegetical/Systematic Skills to Explain Text and Obedience Required

B. Use Redemptive “Lenses” to Identify Grace Principles

- Ask, “What does this text reveal about God’s provision ... and human need?”
- Identify the Grace Principles (or Patterns) Evident in *this* Text

(God is the _____ of the text. Unfold the story of his rescue.)

1. Deliverance before obedience (indicative before imperative)
2. Love before and beyond performance
3. Mercy for the Guilty
4. Strength for the Weak
5. Covenant Love for the Unlovely and Undeserving
6. Provision for the Needy
7. Warning for Errant
8. Punishment for Enemies
9. Discipline (Redeeming) for the Wayward
10. Other?

- Motivate Obedience Required by this Text with its _____ Principles
Remember: Application’s Four Questions: What, Where, *Why* and How

C. Use Homiletical Principles to Organize the Narrative’s Features

1. “Principle-ize” main points and subpoints (i.e. identify the truth principles that are supported by the text’s features and facts. Do not state text facts as main points or subpoints that will leave you with no truth to illustrate or apply.)

Not this (restatement of text facts = merely describing the text):

1. Israel Confronted Jericho
2. Israel Marched Around Jericho
3. The Walls of Jericho Tumbled Down

But this (formulation of biblical principles = actually developing the truth):

1. Faithfulness Requires Facing God’s Enemies
2. Faithfulness Requires Obeying God’s Word
3. Faithfulness Results in Witnessing God’s Faithfulness

2. Use text facts to support (i.e., prove) the main- and sub-point “principles.”

DIDACTIC PASSAGES:

The raw material available to support truth claims or applications:

- a. Stated Truths
- b. Propositional Development
- c. Thought flow

<>Here you exegete thought

NARRATIVE PASSAGES:

The raw material available to support truth claims or applications:

- a. Stated and Exhibited Truths
- b. Dialogue or Narrator Commentary
- c. Character Development and/or Descriptions
- d. Context, Culture, and Setting
- e. Plot Flow and/or Narrative Actions
- f. Story Patterns

◊ Here you exegete actions, events, dialogue, etc.

3. Remember Legitimate Expository Options:

- a. Exploding a verse or _____ a passage are both legitimate homiletical movements that may affect how an outline is formed. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus explodes the implications of Prov. 30:8-9; but, in Matt. 12:38-41, he summarizes four chapters of Jonah in four verses.
- b. There is _____ as high an obligation to cite verses, as to cite passage content, when preaching from a narrative passage.

4. Don't Fear "Miracle" Passages, but Remember their Redemptive Purposes

- a. Show how the miracle demonstrates divine _____, or a divine representative's _____, rather than promising a "repeat."
- b. Remember long periods of no miracles even in Scripture. Thus, if God is not always promising a miracle, should we?

◊ By proclaiming the "principles" of the narrative, the preacher takes "truth to struggle" and, thus, fulfills the purpose of a biblical message. From the beginning we learned that preaching was both about "what is true" and "what to do." Now we are seeing that "what is true" is not simply a doctrinal truth to know or a duty to do, but also the redemptive motive and means for God's people to glorify and enjoy him. Most preachers believe that the main goal of a sermon is to tell people what to believe (doctrine) or what to do (obedience), but the greater goal is hope (in him). Only by discerning the grace evident in the text do we provide the hope that makes truth meaningful and obedience possible.

Examples:**-Predictive of the Work of Christ**

(Prophecies, Messianic Psalms, O.T. sacraments)

-Preparatory for the Work of Christ

Gal. 3:24 - The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Also, Gal. 2:6-9)

Rom. 4:23-25 - Now it was not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone that it (i.e., righteousness) was imputed to him. But for us also, if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification.

-Reflective of : (the most common tool of "redemptive" messages)**1. God's nature, or attributes, which provide the work of Christ ***

Rom. 15:4 - Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Old Testament Narratives reveal God's justice, deliverance, sure promise, mercy, etc. Genealogies show faithfulness and grace.

2. Our nature or attributes which require the work of Christ *

Mark 7:6 (Jesus said) Well has Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

1 Cor. 10:5,6 (speaking of wilderness wanderings of Israel) Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted . . . (leading to vs. 13).

◁ Note the poverty of truly good O.T. Patriarches. Almost every O.T. saint is terribly flawed to show us everyone's need of a Redeemer.

* May be historical conclusion or logical assumption, stated or implied.

-Resultant of the Work of Christ

Rom. 8:1,2 - There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Phi. 1:12, 13 - Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work (completed action) in you to will and to do his good purpose.

Heb. 4:14-16 - Seeing that we have such a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession . . . Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.