



# **EXPOSITORY PREACHING: A MEANS OF RESTORING SUBSTANCE TO XHOSA EVANGELICAL PREACHING IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

**BY**

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## Summary

The primary aim of this study is to attempt to provide a means of restoring evangelical preaching in Xhosa churches. I will attempt to answer the question, How can the evangelical preaching be restored in Xhosa churches in the Western Cape? From personal observation, it is clear that in contemporary Xhosa evangelicalism, preaching is totally misunderstood. To put more bluntly, there are no clear criteria from biblical theology for preaching in Xhosa churches. Indeed so much is happening in the name of preaching that offers no substance whatsoever.

In the first two chapter's of this study, the focus is on the problem that the Xhosa church is experiencing and how preaching is understood and practiced in this community. Chapter three examines the causes of the problem and how to deal with those causes. On a practical note, it is shown that sermon analyses are inevitable for further consideration of the problem. Moreover, the chapter examines various attempts that have been made in response to the problem.

In Chapter four, an investigation of the views of biblical theology on the subject of preaching is carried out. The chapter dwells into what the Bible offers on the subject of preaching and this is meant to serve as a foundation for the restoration of evangelical preaching in Xhosa churches.

In the light of Chapter four, Chapter five argues for expository preaching as a possible means of responding to the crisis which the Xhosa church is experiencing. At the same time chapter five seek to state the case for expository preaching. Finally, Chapter Six provides the most effective material for Xhosa preachers in the process of exploring and constructing expository sermons.

**List of Key Items:**

1. Preaching
2. Expository preaching
3. Substance
4. Evangelical
5. Topical sermon
6. Textual sermon
7. Exegetical idea
8. Main idea
9. Hermeneutics
10. Homiletics

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## Chapter1

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Research problem**

I believe preaching is a critical enterprise and when it is properly done, it changes lives, communities, and countries. Through Christian preaching, justice can be upheld. With regard to modern evangelicalism, the concern in this study is the lack of regard for the preaching of the Word of God. Indeed, in contemporary evangelicalism, preaching is sometimes substituted by many other questionable activities which focus on entertaining people rather than exalting God. In fact, Duncan rightly observes that “there is significant pressure on the preacher to truncate out his message, to entertain, to explore alternative media for the advancement of the gospel, and even to abandon historic modes of proclamation altogether” (2002: vii). In the same vein, Johnston clearly stresses that, “there is much that is done in the name of preaching that is neither biblical nor vital to the survival of Christianity” (1996:3).

On the other hand, Cilliers suggests that there are four kinds of contemporary critique from social sciences. One of these critiques which I found rather interesting is that according to social sciences, the church no longer represents each town or city heart, no longer is respected as an authoritative voice in parliament or as the fountain of all truth under the sun. Preaching is no longer

accepted as obvious (Cilliers 2004). This is so true for most Xhosa churches here in the Western Cape.

## 1.2 Description of the problem

Personal observation shows that in contemporary Xhosa evangelicalism, preaching is no longer the centre of worship, but rather, it has been substituted by other modes of worldly ideas that are empty and without any substance. Indeed, so much is happening in the name of preaching that offers nothing at all. In Xhosa churches, for instance, due to the lack of adequate biblical preaching, the members are theologically sick. Many congregants and even preachers have a wrong view of preaching. I support Forsyth's bold statement in one of his lectures that, "It is, perhaps, an overbold beginning, but I will venture to say that with its preaching Christianity stands and falls" (1964:1).

The current situation is unfortunate for today's preacher because the present generation has a distorted view of preaching. In addition, many Christians view the historical mode of preaching as irrelevant for today's church. The problem is widespread. MacArthur notes that, "in fact, everything seems to be in fashion in the church today except biblical preaching. The new pragmatism sees preaching particularly expository preaching as passe. Plainly declaring the truth of God's Word is regarded as unsophisticated, offensive, and utterly ineffective", (1993: xiv). For instance, the nature and content of Xhosa preaching are motivational at the expense of biblical content.

### 1.3 Motivation for research

The motivation for this subject stems from Horne's observation of his generation, which I believe is true even today. Horne (1975:11-13) notes that:

There is a crisis in the pulpit. It is crucial. It may well be the most serious pulpit crisis in the whole history of the church. This is a sobering fact, and foolish is the preacher who does not take seriously the present crisis of preaching. If the pulpit is to be renewed in our time, the person who occupies it will have more to do with its renewal than anyone else. Preaching is a function of the preacher, and the gospel must be addressed to the world beyond the church. The preacher must help the church to keep its integrity, identity and sense of unique mission, and at the same time to be vitally in touch with the world where its life is set. And he must help its members to grow to Christian maturity. But he must always be aware of the larger world. How will he equip his church so that the laity can carry the gospel into the world? He is confronted with no more serious question than this.

Horne explains that he seeks to offer help over this crisis. He counsels that while preaching in the pulpit during a time of crisis, one need not despair. This is not the first crisis of the pulpit and it will not be the last. Preaching has survived others, and it has resources, if properly used, to survive this one. That is hope. Indeed, preaching can emerge that will be more authentic and compelling than we have known in our time.

On account of the crisis that has been observed in preaching today, I will attempt to study the New Testament in order to compare the early church with the contemporary church. With regard to preaching in the New Testament, the church of Jesus Christ has been facing serious challenges ever since its

beginnings. When we look at its origin from Luke's account in the book of Acts, it can be observed that the church grew in an extra-ordinary manner. The enemy began to attack the Church in various ways from within and without the church. From within, one could notice the presence of hypocrisy as exemplified by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). On the other hand, divisions arose through racial tensions between Hebraic and Grecian Jews (Acts 1:1-7). From the outside, the devil brought heresy and persecution (Acts 7-8). Thus, the devil has strategically attacked the church of Jesus Christ throughout its history, from the apostolic era up to the present.

What then was the apostle's response to this spiritual attack? They remained faithful to the core values of their faith. One such core value was the priority of preaching the Word of God. In the book of Acts, for example, about nineteen biblical messages are recorded; eight by Peter, one by Stephen, one by Philip, and nine by Paul. For Paul, preaching the Word is the heart and soul of the church. To the church in Rome, he wrote: "... faith comes by hearing... the Word". The statement is then followed by some interrogative questions: "How can they believe if there is no preacher? How can he preach if he is not sent?" (Rom 10:13-14). At the same time, Paul remarked that, "God was pleased to save many through what was preached" (1 Cor 1:21). He also urged young Timothy in Ephesus to preach the Word "in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2). Why would Paul urge Timothy to do this? I believe it is because an understanding of the truth of God's Word is indispensable to salvation. We are living in times when biblical preaching is highly resisted but preaching is a central tool which God has

given the church to proclaim His wonderful acts. That is why Dever (2004:39), asserts that, “the first mark of the healthy church is expositional preaching”.

I therefore fully concur with Stitzinger (1992: 36) that expository preaching “begins with an understanding of the revelatory and explanatory preaching recorded in Scripture. Legitimate preaching in the Church Age continues the expository preaching begun in the Bible. History unveils a limited but rich ongoing legacy of biblical expositors up to the present day. These men who poured their lives into expounding Gods Word command careful attention from today's biblical expositors”.

Historically, the Reformation period is believed to be the era of an outpouring of the Spirit of God, because that was when God awoke the church from its slumber. That does not mean God was not working in other eras – indeed, God in his providence has been working right through history up to this present time. However, what amazed church historians about the Reformation era was that during the Reformation; the Bible became everybody's treasure and not only that of the clergy.

Contrary to the Roman Catholicism of the day, the Reformation pioneered several principles such as *soli Deo Gloria*, (glory to God alone), *sola gratia*, (by grace alone) *sola Christos* (Christ alone) and especially *sola Scriptura*, (the Scripture alone). This resulted in the study and teaching of the Word. *Sola Scriptura* meant “the freedom of Scripture to rule as God's word in the church, disentangled from papal and ecclesiastical *magisterium* and tradition”

(Stitzinger1992:47). We cannot speak of the Reformation without mentioning the servants who God used in such an extra-ordinary period.

For instance, Martin Luther strongly believed that, “The word comes first, and with the Word the Spirit breathes upon my heart so that I believe”. Speaking about Luther, it is reported that in 1530 Martin Luther stopped preaching for a time. That is noteworthy because the father of the Protestant Reformation was a tremendously prolific preacher and considered preaching an important part of his ministry. He delivered nearly 200 sermons in 1528 and at least 121 in 1529. But for a while in 1530, he stopped cold. Why? Mueser (1983:27-29) suggests that it was out of disgust and hopelessness. Luther became discouraged because his preaching did not seem to be working. He expected to see lives changed, but he saw little “fruit of the gospel among them”. Luther railed at his congregation late in 1529: “ I am sorry I ever freed you from the tyrants and papists. You ungrateful beasts, you are not worthy of the gospel. If you don’t improve, I will stop preaching rather than cast pearls before swine” (Feltman1996:1). In spite of this temporary disappointment, his efforts to study and expound the Scripture resulted in the Reformation. He later said, “I simply taught, preached, wrote God’s Word: otherwise I did nothing ... The Word did it all” (Stitzinger1992:47-49).

An all-time prolific writer and preacher of God’s Word, John Calvin, also poured out his life to expound the word of God. With regard to faithfulness in the exposition of the word, *“lectio continue”* was his practice in the preaching ministry. He wrote concerning the ministers, “their whole task is limited to the

ministry of God's Word, their whole wisdom to the knowledge of his: their whole eloquence, to its proclamation". The word 'Puritan' was initially a term of abuse; historians used it for those concerned with the further reform of the Elizabethan and Stuart Churches of England because of their particular religious experience and commitment to Reformed theology. The Puritan theology had some formidable expositors such as Richard Stibbes, Thomas Goodwin, and John Owen. More than anything else, Puritans were preachers. Preaching was so central to their worship that many Puritans emphasized it by moving their pulpit, with its open Bible, to the centre of the church to make the pulpit the focus of the church instead of the altar. To Puritans, "true preaching is the exposition of the Word of God. It is not a mere exposition of the dogma or the teaching of the church... Preaching, they said, is the exposition of the Word of God, and therefore it must control everything" (Stitzinger1992: 51).

From the above information, one question arises: What motivated these great men of God to be committed to this ministry of exposition of the Word? I believe the answer is because they were called by God to do so. Consequently, they greatly feared God and were faithful in expounding His Word. It appeared these men were approved by God to "rightly handle" the word of God and they were prepared in season and out of season to do so, just as Paul charged Timothy (2 Tim 2:15; 4:2).

This historical account puts present-day evangelical preachers to shame, who are no longer committed to the exposition of the Word. Many Christians today are

also shallow in their understanding of God. Sadly, this has affected the conduct of many Christians. As a conservative evangelical, I believe that biblical exposition is one of the best means of restoring and nurturing evangelicalism in Xhosa churches. If indeed Scripture is considered God-breathed, then Robinson is right to claim that, “it is true that an expository ministry is the proper response to a God-breathed Scripture” (1980: v-vi). Although that is so true, Liefeld (1984:5) suggests that, “expository preaching is an elusive ideal. Many preachers aspire to it, perhaps a good number feel they have attained to it, and in reality probably few are acknowledged masters”. This appears to be true of many of our contemporary preachers; “few are acknowledged masters” of this ministry and it is a sad situation for evangelicals and especially for the continuation of our true faith. I am aware of the fact that not many present preachers share the same convictions. However, as servants of the Word of God, we are called to “contend for the faith that was once and for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude v3). That can be done effectively through the ministry of faithful exposition of the Word of God.

Unfortunately, for the most part Protestants today have lost their confidence in the effectiveness of the pulpit. While Roman Catholicism appears to be enriching its tradition of church and sacraments by a new appreciation for preaching, Protestantism is impoverishing itself by abandoning the one great asset of its tradition: faith in the proclamation of the biblical message. This loss of belief in the need for preaching and its power has occurred even among those who confess the highest respect for Scripture. Evangelicals who combine a strict view

of the inspiration of the Bible with a low view of preaching it fail to perceive the mysteriously powerful creative nature of the Word of God (Daane 1980:1).

#### **1.4 Aim**

The main aim of this study is to attempt to provide a means of restoring Biblical preaching in Xhosa churches.

#### **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives for this study are:

1. To study and evaluate other means of preaching that has been employed in the past and currently;
2. To study and evaluate the arguments for these other means;
3. To establish the evidence of Scripture for expository preaching as a means to restore preaching in Xhosa churches

#### **1.6 Methodology**

This study of expository preaching will be conducted from the perspective of a conservative evangelical tradition primarily through the analysis of literature to determine and evaluate viewpoints on preaching from the past and the present. A study of available literature, books, journals and audiotapes will be carried out as well as interviews among full-time pastors and church members, which will include the use of questionnaires.

The scope of the research is limited to the Xhosa evangelicals of the Western Cape. Fieldwork will be carried out in Khayelitsha, a suburb of Cape Town. Khayelitsha is a growing community with an annual population of growth of 5, 3%. The estimated population of the township at present is 700,000; about 96; 65% are Xhosa-speaking people (African Leadership 2007:4).

## **1.7 Key words**

In this section, an attempt will be made to define in a concise way the key terms that will be employed in this study. These include preaching, expository, preaching, substance, and evangelical.

### **1.7.1 Preaching defined**

There is no precise definition of the term preaching in both the Old and the New Testaments but the New Testament contains about sixty different terms in Greek which are used to refer to preaching. A close look at some of those words may help us to come up with a definition. One of the most frequently used terms for preaching is the Greek word, *keryssein*, which is translated, “to proclaim” or “to herald”, and occurs more than fifty times in its various inflections. In the Gospels and in Acts it is usually translated “preach”, “preaching” or “preached.” It denotes that the messenger has a message of authority from another. Of course, in the New Testament sense, the messenger has a message from God about Christ, and since the messenger is divinely appointed, the hearers are obligated to hear and obey.

Another important term is *euangelizesthai*, which means, “to preach good tidings or good news.” Throughout the New Testament, many other words are used to denote the act of “preaching” even though the term “preaching” is not always used. Four such words are *didaskein*, that is, “to import divine truth through teaching”; *dialegesthai*, “to discourse or reason with others with a view to persuasion”; *lalein*, “to talk or to discourse”, and *parakalein*, “to call to one’s side or to admonish”, (Brown, Clinard & Northcutt 1963:4). Another significant word is *martureo*, which means, “to bear witness to facts”. In the Bible, often *martureo* is used to refer to calling on God (or even stones) to bear witness to something. It is about facts and events not about feelings or what happened to one (Olyott 2007:14).

From these various terms, seven important components could be considered in defining the concept of preaching, that is, in line with effective communication (Smit1995:1-4). Smit suggests that in effective communication, firstly, there has to be the sender, in this case, God who has something to say and will do it in the best way he can, in order to minimize misunderstanding. This can only take place effectively when the sender knows the receiver and it is obvious that God does know.

Secondly, the message, in this case His Word, which is said or spoken, must be spoken in such a way that it is understood by the receiving party. Thirdly, there is the channel through which the message is sent, in this case, the preacher who is God’s mouthpiece. Fourthly, the receiver in this context will be the congregation.

They (congregation members) are not passive elements in this process but constitute a working or dynamic part of the process in that they will hopefully listen attentively and intelligently to the message. In the case of the preached Word, the intelligent response should be full submission to the authority of God's Word.

Fifthly, understanding is the goal of every form of communication. We preach so that the people of God can understand God's Word and in so doing they can obey; that should be every preacher's goal. The sixth component deals with interaction and identification in preaching by engaging the listeners, appealing to them holistically so that they can relate to the message that is preached. The last component is the 'feedback', that is, a call to respond, because people must genuinely respond to God's divine message. We must therefore understand preaching in the light of these seven components.

### 1.7.2 Expository preaching

To define ‘expository preaching’, we shall begin by discussing what expository preaching is not. An expository sermon is not just a running commentary on a text on a word-by-word, clause-by-clause or verse-by-verse basis without a unified thought or a clear structure. It is not just the mere imagination of a certain text or passage without thorough exegesis. In other words, there is a need to understand the meaning of the text by applying all necessary hermeneutical principles, not based on what we think the text says but by allowing the passage to speak for itself. At the same time, it is not an over-technical scholarly exegesis that cannot be applied to the congregation. As some homiletics believe, a sermon is only half done if it cannot answer the question “so what?”

MacArthur (1992:10) elaborates on this by stating that: [Expository preaching] “is not a mass of disconnected suggestions and inferences based on the surface meaning of a passage but not sustained by a depth and breadth study of the text. It is not pure exegesis, no matter how scholarly, if it lacks a theme, thesis, outline, and development. It is not a mere structural outline of a passage with a few supporting comments but without other rhetorical and sermonic elements. It is not a topical homily using scattered parts of the passage but omitting discussion of other equally important parts. It is not a chopped-up collection of grammatical findings and quotations from commentaries without a fusing of these elements into a smooth, flowing, interesting, and compelling message”.

By exposition, then, is meant the opening up, (exposing) or the unfolding and explaining of a passage of Scripture. The word comes from two Latin words: “ex” meaning “out” and “pono” to place. Thus, it means to place out, to display, to

exhibit. An “exposition” is a public exhibition of arts and manufacturing. An exposition of a Scripture portion is, therefore, the placing out, or the displaying of the truth contained in the passage selected. The passage usually consists of a paragraph, or a number of verses which combine to present a main thought, or theme. An expository sermon takes the central thought of that portion of Scripture and then seeks to expose, explain and supply it, in the light of its context, in the particular passage.

In the same vein, concerning expository preaching, Gibbs defines it as “the detailed interpretation, logical amplification and practical application of a passage of Scripture”. He also quotes Byington that “an expository sermon is based on a passage of Scripture, which it seeks to illuminate, from which it seeks to draw a concise and comprehensive theme and sermon points, and which applies to the lives of the people. The theme covers all and the points must come out of the message” (1939: 241- 242).

### **1.7.3 Substance**

In talking of substance in this context, the reference is to what Olyott calls “doctrinal substance”. He claims that, “we mean that every sermon we preach should be full of doctrine. It should be rich in theology. The Bible, after all, is a divine revelation. It unveils Him and his expectation of us during our brief lives. Every time the Bible is preached, those who hear it should grow in their understanding of doctrine and duty” (Olyott 2007:53).

#### 1.7.4 Evangelical

The term ‘evangelical’ has its root in a tradition that has a high view of Scripture. It is from the word ‘evangel’; in Greek, ‘euangelion’ (noun), meaning the good news of Jesus. Therefore, evangelical Christians believe that the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is God’s revealed Word to humankind and it sets out what ought to be believed and practised. Based on the Scriptures, evangelicals believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died a substitutionary death for his people and rose again for their justification. It is this view of Scripture which distinguishes evangelicals from “liberals”. The term “evangelical” can be both a noun and an adjective. A person can be an evangelical but a church can also be an evangelical church. The adjective ‘evangelistic’ describes the activity of a people or a church, and corresponds to the verb ‘to evangelize’ and the noun ‘evangelism’. An evangelistic meeting is a meeting where the gospel is preached (Manton 2001:53).

In addition, Ralph and David (1997:239) note that, “evangelical theology in essence stands in the great Christian theological tradition. It is deeply committed to the centrality of the Bible, to its power by the Holy Spirit with special reference to preaching, to its final authority in all matters of interpreting it as naturally as possible and disseminating it widely in the vernacular”. Above all, the conviction that evangelicals hold most dear is that God is revealed in the Bible as light, and having spoken, he is yet speaking. This communication is the essence of the Christian faith as God delights to make him known to us (Vink 1995:121). Surely,

this can only be possible through the expository ministry of the Word of God. The position is affirmed by Packer (1986:2) thus:

"Preaching is of the very essence of the corporate phenomenon called Christianity... by that we mean Christianity, on earth as in heaven, is (echoing 1 John 1:4) fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and the preaching of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit is the activity that (echo Is. 64:1 and Jn 14:21-23) brings the Father and the Son down from heaven to dwell with men".

## Chapter 2

### **2.1 A perspective on Xhosa people in the Western Cape**

The word ‘contextual’ has become a cliché in contemporary church dynamics, particularly in Africa with the dawn of the “African renaissance”. In South Africa in this “new dispensation, theoretically all have the opportunity to get the best out of life” (Pieterse 2001:1-2). It is a consensus among theologians that interpreting the realities of our time is the imperative task of every theologian and preacher.

The question of being “contextual” has become a preoccupation of African scholars, academicians, politicians and theologians. African theology has made new strides and no longer talks of liberation theology but rather a theology of reconstruction. As Pieterse (1995:96) notes with respect to South Africa, “when freedom dawned in 1994 we interpreted this event theologically as a liberating act of God”. Therefore, as part of reconstruction, contextualization is now inevitable. African theologians advocate the need for a contextualized theology, music and liturgics; the same is also imperative for the field of homiletics.

Unlike exegesis, homiletics is not about inquiry but expression. Expression differs from one culture to another; therefore, contextual preaching is imperative just like any other aspect of theology. This is because theology does not operate in a vacuum; it exists and operates for God’s people.

Within the diversity of cultures in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape, there is an ethnic group, which originates from the Eastern Cape - the Xhosas.

They have a strong culture of their own as well as their own way of expressing themselves. They are distinguished from other ethnic groups in this area by their history, language, norms, tradition, life-style and colour. They constitute the majority of black people in the Western Cape. Naturally, their church life is also different from that of any other ethnic group. For instance, their preaching is unique and different. Therefore, for God's word to make an impact on them, the preacher must understand such dynamics. Many preachers come to these people with a narrow understanding of their worldview; hence, their preaching does not impact them.

Another important issue is to note that the Xhosa tradition is dominantly an oral tradition. Consequently, oral tradition influences the preacher from childhood since that was the way information has been passed on from generation to generation. In general, this is done through storytelling. Whereas Western culture promotes rational or logical thinking, being influenced primarily by science and technology and favours the linear form of communication or style, African culture places emphasis on relationships not individualism.

## **2.2 Xhosa preaching defined**

A number of issues need to be considered when seeking to define Xhosa preaching. One of such issues is the history of the Xhosas. Whether it is regarded as good or bad, history has played a vital role in defining the Xhosa of the Western Cape; they are the product of history. Their unique identity and

ethnicity are influenced by history. Like African-American preaching, Xhosa preaching can be defined through a musical analogy. Geoff (1986:1-2) notes that:

"The black sermon is stated in the vernacular, with inflection and timing so musical that many have compared it in style to improvised jazz. Much of the sermon is improvised around a matrix both sacred and profane, and the style is cohesive enough that one can enter virtually any black Baptist, Methodist, or Pentecostal church from coast-to-coast and hear a sermon of similar form. This is assured in part by the congregation, which answers the preacher verbally at every opportunity, creating a call-and-response pattern, which often builds to a frightening intensity. There are essentially two approaches in music - classical and jazz. Classical music has to do with the little dots, circles and lines of Beethoven and Brahms that come to life when a conductor stabs the air with his baton. The sounds that fill the air are not the conductors' or the violinists'. They belong to Beethoven and Brahms. The beauty of a classical musician is to reproduce as faithfully as possible the sound that the great composers had imagined. Only in rare moments and by clearly-marked cadenzas do classical musicians improvise rather than imitate; but jazz is different. The beauty of jazz is in the soul of the musician and in the music being performed. Jazz is improvisational. Just as classical music has developed musical composition into a fine art, so jazz has cultivated musical improvisation into a fine art. The notes that fill the air do not belong to a deceased composer, they issue from the vibrant souls of great performers. As it is with music, so it is with theology. Preaching bears analogy with music in that it can also be approached as formal or dynamic" (Ellis1983158-159).

In particular, Xhosa preaching bears analogy with jazz music. Just as jazz is comprised of rhythm and improvisation, so is Xhosa preaching. Just as the beauty of jazz is found in the soul of the musician, so is Xhosa preaching. Expression is more important to the Xhosa than the content. To put it more bluntly, it is the way of expression and not necessarily what is being expressed,

that is important. Popular preachers among the people are those who have mastered the art of homiletic expression. Sadly, in many cases, the sermons of these preachers lack substance.

### **2.3 Preaching in Xhosa churches in the Western Cape**

How does one preach to the Xhosa congregations in the Western Cape? First, as I have already hinted, the art of expression in Xhosa preaching is significant. However, it cannot be taught, it can only be dynamically “caught”. Often, once this has been “caught”, it is used to manipulate the audience and is sometimes without much substance. It is suggested therefore that once it has been caught, it has to be complemented with substance.

In preparation to preach to the Xhosa, a few other notions must be considered. After the preacher has discovered his thesis through exegesis, he should ask himself the three questions suggested by O'Donovan (1992:7): Firstly, he should ask, “What does the Bible say about the subject?” Secondly, how does the Xhosa culture of the Western Cape relate to what the Bible say on this subject? Thirdly, how can one express the truth of the Bible on this subject in the way that is clearly related to the Xhosa culture?

## 2.4 The nature of Xhosa preaching

At this point, the nature of Xhosa preaching will be considered. To begin with, it should be noted that preaching is a theological enterprise. Black theology rightly teaches that theology cannot be done in a vacuum. It is always done within a particular situation or context. The situation of ‘being black or blackness’ in South Africa is the unavoidable context within which the theological reflection of Black Christians takes place (Boesak 1984:22). This statement therefore applies implicitly to every black ethnic group. The question here is: What makes preaching among the Xhosa to be distinct from among other people?

Firstly three significant aspects determine Xhosa preaching. I have mentioned already that from a biblical perspective, preaching involves three persons namely God, the preacher and the listener. Thus, in considering some of the dynamics that characterize Xhosa preaching, I shall follow the same pattern in line with the perspective of the Xhosa concerning these components of the process of preaching. To begin, I shall examine the Xhosa perspective of who God is. This issue was one of the controversial topics with which Black Theology grappled in the late sixties. The Xhosa believe in a Superior Being, supposedly God. He is the creator, the almighty, the ruler and the source of everything. To some, this God is far and near but to some He is only far. It is believed that He cares for His people; and this is the same God that must be preached. Therefore, the nature of the message is often motivational.

Concerning the preacher and his preaching, the preacher has a high authority in the whole process of preaching, that is, the authority to convince the people of God of his message. As much as that is true, the whole process is not a one-way traffic, it is two-way. By this I mean that in the process, the congregants are actively involved. Perhaps this has its roots and influence in the history and custom of many Black people who love to sing about everything. Mitchell (1979:164) observes that, “there were also highly spontaneous or impromptu songs for various life situations, such as the voicing of grievances”.

Moreover, in many cases, there can be more than one preacher even in the normal Sunday morning service. For that reason, the sermon often becomes irregular, inconsistent and irresponsible, as there can also be too many ideas in one single sermon. Additionally, many preachers are often hypocritical, in the sense that they preach what they do not practice and the congregants are aware of that. Their belief is summarized in their saying, “Don’t look at what I’m doing, only do what I’m saying”. On the other extreme, some others present themselves as what they are not.

Many preachers are also oversensitive to their audience because they may be careful even in their use of language. In many cases, when the preacher rebukes the congregation he does so indirectly. Some people consider this as a form of compromise but in fact, that may not be the case because sometimes this happens when the preacher is aware of his own condition. Therefore, he tries to be respectful to others. Consequently, many sermons lack biblical content.

In addition, in a Xhosa church, the appearance of the preacher is considered important especially in terms of what he wears and how well he can project his voice. Creativity is king in sermon delivery to keep the listeners awake, and enable them to follow and understand the sermon. Long sermons are not tolerated in many mainline churches. African Independent Churches rather have too many preachers and allow them only a little time to comment on a particular verse that has been chosen for a particular service. On the other hand, for Pentecostals, the length of the sermon is immaterial and for this reason, many of their services last long. The emphasis is not on what is preached but on how it is preached, and whether it is less biblical or not, is unimportant.

## Chapter 3

### **3.1 The cause of the problem**

The aim of this chapter is to state clearly the cause of the problems that the Xhosa church is facing in the area of preaching, in particular, the reasons for poor Xhosa preaching. This problem has been a subject of past inquiries by many theologians, not just in relation to preaching, but also to theology in general. For example, O'Donovan (1992:6-7), inquires into the problems which have been encountered in the past in trying to construct a theology that is both biblical as well as African. He begins by discussing what he believes to be the major problems of the period before 1960. He asserts that very few efforts were made to express Christian theology in terms that were meaningful in the African worldview. Many people found that the presentation of Western issues in theology did not answer their inmost questions or solve some of the spiritual problems related to African cultures. Western methods of thinking and learning were often unsuited to the African way of thinking and learning.

As a result, Christian theology was perceived by many Africans to be Western rather than universal which is what theology truly is. In reaction to Western theology, another problem has developed in recent years. To counteract the failure of Western theology, various statements have been made in the last twenty-five years on how to create a genuine “African Christian theology”. In an effort to consider seriously the traditional African life, some of these statements have attempted to combine the elements of African Traditional Religion with the

teachings of the Bible. This process has resulted in syncretism, which may not be regarded as “biblical theology”.

Indeed, O’Donovan’s observation is one of the major causes of this despicable problem the African church is experiencing today. However, one may ask what the observation has to do with preaching. Since preaching is one of the many aspects under the broad discipline of theology, it is expected that if a problem or misunderstanding arises in theology, in general, it would affect all its other aspects.

It is evident that this historical observation has contributed to the current situation in the Xhosa church in the area of preaching. Additionally, we cannot run away from the fact that in many Xhosa churches, both the preachers and the pew members lack adequate healthy Christian education. The preaching ministry assumes a huge responsibility which calls for adequate training but many preachers are in desperate need of sound training. By adequate training, I mean, training that is both biblical and African at the same time.

As observed in the previous chapters, a clear theological perspective of the theology of preaching is missing as well. A clear perspective is crucial regarding every aspect of theology because the absence of sober theological convictions would reflect in the practice. To be more specific, many contemporary Xhosa preachers are not familiar with their Bibles, a fact that shows that they often do not really have a message to pass on.

The implications of this reality is that many of the so-called “preachers” have no right to be ascribed that name. In other words, they do not seem to be qualified to be preachers of the Word, as it would seem evident that they are not called into the ministry of preaching God’s word. Christian is a calling, a calling to speak for God, and those who practice it, must do so in their own generation and their own times (Stanfield 1967:7).

### **3.2 Attempts in response to the problem**

As earlier observed, some theologians have wondered why Xhosa preaching is without substance. Their concern is not just about the art of acquiring preaching skills but also about the content of the preaching. Consequently, various attempts have been made to find ways of restoring substance to Xhosa preaching. As Beal (1979:7) notes, in the teaching of traditional homiletics and in the practice of black preaching, there must be substance before there can be a sermon. This is true of any work of creation. Before the world was formed, God had to call substance into existence.

The substance of a thing is the material which gives it essence; the matter gives it distinct existence. The substance of a sermon is the material which makes it a sermon or gives it existence. In the teachings of traditional homiletics and in the practice of black preaching, several types of substance combine to make up the sermon. However, for the purpose of this research, we would slightly differ in our conception of “substance”. The focus for us is that which is biblically sound, that is, the content, as opposed to the means of communicating this content.

Indeed, there have been attempts to address this need directly or even indirectly and other means could be considered when trying to develop Xhosa preaching. A few works have been compiled and several workshops have been conducted in the attempt to respond to the situation. Most of these works deal mainly with what I call the activity of preaching, that is, the focus is on the process of delivering the sermon. For example, Mbete's preaching manual, which I consider informative on this subject, particularly in our context, focuses on seven aspects of preaching, aimed at equipping preachers. The study explains how to go about preparing the sermon. The advantage of the work is that it is available in Xhosa.

It can be assumed that the study emanated in response to the problems encountered in Xhosa preaching. Nevertheless, the study appears rather general and does not address core issues in preaching such as the exegesis of the text. Hence, I refer to it as informative, especially for those who have never been opportune to study preaching. Mbete's approach conforms to that of several seminaries, Bible colleges and even many contemporary authors. Therefore, it can be observed that the focus is only on the methodology at the expense of the theology behind the method. The suggestion here is not that method should be ignored altogether but my plea is the implementation of the one in promoting the other. In other words, the methodology should be used clearly with sound biblical theology, which, undoubtedly, is missing in the Xhosa church.

Concerning the attempts made in response to the matter, a few observations from two angles are in order at this point. The approaches to the problem differ

because of different belief systems. While the traditional or mainline churches hold a particular view, the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches adopt another. The African Initiative Churches, on their part, take a cue from the mainline churches regarding the subject of preaching or the way to preach. A traditional church places emphasis on liturgical writings which are regarded as compulsory for worship services. The practice is the reading and recitation of these liturgical works. Although the writings, which are recited by both the minister and congregants, contain theological substance, the problem is that it ends up being just a recitation rather than food for thought.

In terms of preaching in the traditional churches, there is much story-telling with little understanding of the role of correlation on the part of the preacher. A preacher recites personal and often biblical stories or particular verses of Scripture without any regard for the context in many cases. On the other hand, Charismatics and Pentecostals place much emphasis on personal experience, hence, in many of their worship services, much time is devoted to personal testimonies and less to preaching. However, the problem with those experiences is that they are subjective at least and, at times, unrealistic and biblically unsound.

### 3.3 Current practices of preaching in the Xhosa church

The question that we would address here concerns the present state of Xhosa preaching. What kind of preaching is currently in use among the Xhosa churches? Besides conducting seminars, I have visited several churches, listening to different Xhosa preachers in Khayelithsa. Currently, different types of preaching practices are observable within the Xhosa churches. The dominant types, which, of course, may not be consciously recognized by many of the preachers, include topical, textual and narrative sermons.

At this point, it seems appropriate to evaluate critically the major types of sermons observed. If we begin with the topical approach, many homilists agree with at least three major weaknesses in this approach. Firstly, although the topical approach is indispensable at times, it is not advisable for ongoing nurturing of the church because, it often does not bring much success and that is clear from its very nature. In many cases, topical preachers do what is known homiletically as “spring boarding”.

In line with that observation, Johnston (1996:18-19) maintains that in a topical approach, there is a tendency to use Scriptures to support the preacher's ideas rather than preaching primarily the concept of Scriptures. He further notes that, many topical preachers focus on favourite topics and leave other portions of Scriptures unaddressed.

Secondly, topical sermons tend to overlook the broad context of a verse and, therefore, are prone to misinterpretation and misapplication. Thirdly, the approach robs the congregation of a deeper understanding of God's Word. In

other words, it fails to produce adequate substance for the nourishment of the saints.

Regarding textual sermons, Odendaal (2003:4) states that this is one in which the text becomes the theme, and the parts of the text are the divisions of the sermon and are used to suggest the line of thought. In the same note Stanfield asserts that the textual approach must have a text, a subject, and divisions. A textual sermon is one in which both the topic and the development of the division are derived from, and follow the order of the text. Unlike the topical, the textual approach is much preferred because the textual sermon practically has all the advantages of staying with the thought of Scriptures (Stanfeld 1967:35). The young preacher will find it to be a good introduction to expository preaching. It will teach him to come to grips with the Word. It is also a help to the hearer who can then follow the sermon with the Bible, and much of the sermon will not only be remembered at the time of preaching, but in later years, reading the Bible could bring the message back to mind.

However, when this approach is not used carefully, it can easily overlook the large context of the entire book just as the topical sermon does. At the same time, it can end up being a chain of ideas that does no justice to the one single idea the biblical author was communicating, which may cause some of the congregants to be confused as to the teaching of the passage. At times, thorough exegesis can be overlooked by this approach as it may end up assuming the pattern of a running commentary leading easily to a distortion of the text.

### 3.4 Demonstration of the Reality - Sermon Analysis

In order to demonstrate the present situation in the Xhosa church here in the Western Cape, a critical analysis of sermons which were collected from different preachers from different theological traditions will be presented. We hosted a thirty-day seminar in Khayelitsha coupled with an opportunity to teach preaching at Africa Theological College which is also situated in Khayelitsha. All the participants in the seminar were asked to prepare and submit at least three sermons from three different genres. Furthermore, I was able to visit several churches in Khayelitsha to listen to more than 150 sermons during their Sunday services.

Therefore, I selected twenty-five different sermons from different evangelical traditions while keeping in mind the importance of balancing the genres. The method of analyzing sermons which I have found to be detailed and helpful is from Johnston's 1996 doctoral dissertation from the University of South Africa. The method is adopted in this chapter in what follows:

### 3.4.1 Explanation of the Sermon Analysis System used in the questionnaires

#### Text

##### Preliminary statement:

- 1) Is the text comprehensively summarized in an exegetical idea?
- 2) Does the idea reflect a thorough exegetical analysis of the text?
- 3) Does the focus statement reflect interpretation according to the intent of the biblical author?
- 4) Does the focus reflect an attempt to address the needs of a contemporary audience?
- 5) Is there a clear, stated purpose for preaching the sermon?

##### Introduction:

- 6) Does the introduction focus on the text or the first point of the sermon?
- 7) Does the introduction provide a compelling reason to listen to the rest of the sermon?
- 8) Is the introduction interesting and engaging?

##### Body:

- 9) Does the sermon explain the preaching text?
- 10) Does the sermon provide application in terms of what action should be taken?
- 11) Does the sermon provide practical direction as to how the intended action should be taken?

12) Does the structure of the sermon reflect the structure of the text?

## Conclusion

13) Does the conclusion fit the function statement?

14) Does it make a final appeal to action?

## Overall Evaluation

15) Is the sermon contemporarily relevant?

16) Is there any clear transition between points?

17) Does the sermon reflect a dialogical intent?

18) Is the main point clearly established?

19) Are illustrations used at appropriate points?

### A. Text:

One of the problems amongst Xhosa preachers is the failure to choose and adequately break into the main meaning of that text. Most of our preachers can preach a sermon based on one word or just a clause or a part of the sentence. Most of our preachers can preach a sermon based on one word or just a clause or a part of the sentence. The problem is that in most cases they take such words or clauses out of context. In a passage of Scripture no word or clause stands on its own. The danger of this kind of practice is to miss the intended meaning of the original author. Then the preachers end up preaching out from their own imaginations that is, they end up sharing the word of man as opposed to expounding the Word of God.

## B. Preliminary Statement

Is the main point of the sermon comprehensively summarized in an exegetical idea? Due to lack of adequate exegetical skills noted in several of the sermons analyzed, it became evident that preachers often say many things at one time, a chain of ideas which are hard to summarize and unify as a single preliminary statement. Obviously the idea does not reflect a thorough exegetical analysis of the text. As a result, several sermons do not have a focus statement that reflects interpretation according to the intent of the biblical author. Few of the sermons actually stated the key purpose for preaching that particular sermon. Hence many of these sermons jump to address the contemporary needs by using Scripture inappropriately. Thus Richard (1995:20) notes that in reality, the Bible can be made to say almost anything you may want it to say! The critical question is, are you saying what the Bible wanted to say? Every preacher needs to take this statement into serious consideration as we seek to preach God's Word.

## C. Introduction

Stott (1982:244) argues that a good introduction serves two purposes. Firstly it arouses interest, stimulates curiosity, and whets the appetite for more. Secondly, it genuinely 'introduces' the theme by leading the hearers into it. According to Jones (1958:155) the introduction should be designed to draw hearers to the preacher and to his subject.

Many of these sermons take similar forms of introduction which in most cases draws the attention of the congregation. The popular forms are personal

testimonies, storytelling and background issues of the particular books of the Bible. However, in most cases these introductory matters fail to focus on the text or the first point of the sermon altogether. As much as they are good in providing a compelling reason to listen to the rest of the sermon the problem is that the introduction then becomes an independent matter which stands on its own. Consequently, many preachers fail to come back to the text altogether and end up speaking more about themselves rather than expounding the text. Every introduction should have a clear purpose for both the preacher and the congregation. It should never be hastily prepared or indiscriminately tacked on to a message (Mayhue1992:245).

#### D. Body

The body is the heart of the sermon. This is where the preacher must explain the preaching text. At this stage preachers often use cross references interspersed by personal experiences and stories. This practice is assumed to be explaining the text, but sadly it often fails to achieve that goal. In other words what is happening is that most preachers attempt to explain themselves rather than the text itself. In this whole process, the explanation given does not reflect the structure of the text let alone the main thought of the original author. This is done with much exaltation and call to action and how that action can be applied. The form in which this process is practiced is difficult to follow in many cases. However, there are two popular forms that are common to Xhosa preachers. The most popular is storytelling followed by linear form, i.e these sermons tend to develop the body of

the sermon with much storytelling and at the same time some take a point form or sequential form. There are often no clear transitions from one point to another. Even illustrations mostly become irrelevant to the issue at stake.

## **E. Conclusion**

Many students of preaching agree that the conclusion is the most neglected aspect of proclamation. However, just as an athlete needs to finish strongly at the end of a race or game the preacher must be best in the closing minutes (Mayhue1992:251-252). Unfortunately this seems to be a difficult task to many Xhosa preachers, because there is often too much additional material which has nothing to do with the text and the preliminary statement. They conclude with extremely detailed final appeals to action. In most cases these appeals are designed for unbelievers, with little to say to believers.

## **F. Illustrations**

Another important aspect that deserves our serious attention is the use of illustrations. Question 19 asks “are illustrations used at appropriate points?” The table reveals that this has been inadequately achieved. Although these sermons were full of illustrations, in many cases they were not properly related to the main points of the biblical passage on which the sermons were based.

## G. Overall evaluation Comment

An overall assessment of the analyses would bring to the fore a number of issues. We have mentioned earlier that in Xhosa preaching, focus is mainly on the style, that is, the way the message is delivered. It is true that Xhosa preachers employ good rhetoric and are well-skilled in the art of persuasion. Although that is important, often, it is overly done to the extent that it is considered more important than the message that is being communicated! By this, we mean an absence of other adequate components that are necessary for preaching, such as an adequate skill of interpretation or a clear hermeneutical approach for adequately interpreting the text. It is disturbing that these features are missing in Xhosa preaching today as the seminars have shown.

As Stewart (1984:13) maintains, “Accurate hermeneutics in preaching determines the true effectiveness of the proclamation of God’s Word”. However, in many of the messages that were listened to and analyzed, the situation is different. The Xhosa church is therefore facing a serious threat since many preachers impose their own views on the text as opposed to expounding the text, by revealing what is hidden. On the other hand, we must not overlook the fact that many of these preachers are personally utterly dependent on God; they do not depend on certain skills but on God himself. This does not mean that we devalue the indispensability of necessary preaching skills that one can acquire but the inadequacy of certain interpretation skills sadly often causes Xhosa preaching to be without biblical substance.

In addition, many of the preachers do not have clear systematized theological convictions, that is, concerning the theology of preaching. Consequently, when one listens to some of their preaching, one can pick up many contradictory statements. Sermons are often structurally irregular, being insensitive to the structure of the text. The sermons do not reflect the dialogical intent of the text and the flow of thought of the author. In other words, most of the sermons miss the intended meaning of the author. They are “seeker-sensitive” in nature but are not expository so that they are often without substance.

## **Chapter4**

### **4.1 Introduction**

A conservative evangelical approach to and philosophy of ministry always begins and ends with the question of what the Bible has to say about any particular issue. This ought to be true in all Christian circles, in particular, among evangelicals. Lloyd-Jones (1971:10) rightly asks that, “In a world which seems either unwilling or unable to listen, how can we be persuaded to go on preaching and to learn to do so effectively? The essential secret is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions”. This means that our theology must inform our methodology. It is my contention that without a sound theological basis for preaching, the study of the discipline degenerates into a discussion of techniques that are devoid of ultimate purpose. In the same vein, Johnston (1996:10) remarks that, “A preacher may be able to explain how he preaches but if he has a very difficult time justifying his activity, he has no authority for his communication.” This view is the motive and the goal behind the present chapter.

This chapter could be regarded as the centre of this thesis as it seeks to provide a theological point for Xhosa preachers. Having demonstrated in the previous chapter the problems that the Xhosa church is facing, in this chapter, I shall provide a theological base for preaching. The aim of the sermon analysis conducted earlier is to show the issues that led to the conclusions on the subject of preaching from a theological point of view. At the same time, this chapter

seeks to give hope to Xhosa preachers. The theological base will be covered under four sub-headings below.

#### **4.2 What is the biblical precedent for preaching?**

Scripture is our only authority. There can be only one ultimate authority. God is this one ultimate and final authority. God has revealed His mind and will in the Scriptures, and thus the Scriptures are the ultimate and final authority. MacArthur (2003:21) rightly notes that a Christian worldview begins with the conviction that God himself has spoken in the Scriptures. As Christians, we are committed to the Bible as the inerrant and authoritative Word of God. We believe it is reliable from cover to cover, in its every jot and tittle (Matt 5:18). Scripture, therefore, is the standard by which we must test all other truth-claims. Unless that axiom dominates our perspective, we cannot legitimately claim to have embraced a Christian worldview. When we begin with the right view of the Scriptures, the Bible itself then ought to shape the totality of what we believe.

Unfortunately, many so-called Christians today seem to imagine that the Bible is either not modern enough or sophisticated enough to equip people to live in the twenty-first century. On that point, based on the interviews conducted earlier (see previous chapter), it has been observed that 80% of the Xhosa preachers in the Western Cape seem to have a high view of Scripture. The preachers who were interviewed gave correct answers to the questions asked in relation to their view of Scripture. However, the reality or the practice may be another story altogether because when the researcher listened to their preaching, the preaching

contradicted their answers. At this point, therefore, our interest is to appeal to Scripture to find out what it offers on the subject of preaching. Again, the question at hand is, 'Is there any mandate from the Scriptures for preaching?'

Mayhue (1992:7) stresses that, "The Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation provide many examples and exhortations to preach the truth in fulfillment of God's will. As a reminder of the apostolic legacy and a reaffirmation of the scriptural authority for Bible-based preaching five significant mandates are representative of the larger number of passages". If we consider the Lord of the church himself as he began His public ministry, Mark records that during Jesus' Galilean ministry, his first task was the proclamation of the good news. "The time has come, he said repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). This is the same Jesus who claims that Scripture testify of him (John 5:35). He had such confidence in the Scriptures to the point that he viewed Scripture as never wrong (Matt 22:29).

Similarly, the Christian preacher is expected to follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus. As heralds, preachers must speak for God. At the same time, preachers must see themselves as Christ's servants entrusted by God with His precious Word. Their stewardship of the word requires that they serve others, and preach Christ, not self (1 Cor 4:1, 2 Cor 4:5). In addition, the preacher is God's appointed representative to people with respect to salvation, reconciliation, and imploring them to receive Christ. What others see of Christ they would see in the preacher (2 Cor 5:18-20). However, it seems that in every quarter of the evangelical

movement today, the Scriptures are being set aside in favour of novel philosophies, scientific theories, experimental behavioural and counselling techniques, political correctness, and other similar fads of modern opinion.

#### **4.3 The purpose and motives for preaching**

The question of aim is one of the most important factors with which the preacher must be concerned. If a minister wishes to make everything clear in his sermon, he must feel sure about his goal and have a definite sense of direction (1965:1). Sadly, there is a growing sense of ennui today toward public teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Uniformly, most public agents abhor the very idea of granting freedom of speech to the Gospel; yet, 70% of the South African population is said to esteem this Gospel and its values. However, one should ask two vital questions. Firstly, how can we keep up with the spread of the Gospel? The answer is obvious; it is through preaching. The second question is a follow-up to the previous one: What is the purpose of preaching?

The answer to this question is the concern of this section. I believe the purpose of preaching should be understood in the same way as the purpose of the church. Horne (1975:23) asserts that during a time of crisis in the pulpit, the preacher must be sure of the focus of his preaching. The focus of preaching is God's redemptive action for human beings in Jesus Christ. On this point, Stewart (1946:69) admonishes; "Therefore settle it within your souls that, whatever else you may do or leave undone you will preach in season and out of season God's redemptive deed in Christ". Haselden (1963:67) has reminded us that the Gospel

we were appointed to preach is a blunt unapologetic claim that Jesus Christ is the light of the world - timeless, universal, final, and sufficient. Further, Paul the greatest of preachers, declared that, “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Mock (1989:17-18) explains that the motive for preaching God’s Word is that the Word contains God’s impartial, eternal standard of truth (Ps 119:89-91,160). The Bible is the objective truth by which everything else must be measured. It reveals what is right and what is wrong. The Word constitutes a guide for our lives (Ps 119:105). The Bible provides both general direction and specific guidance as we live one day at a time. God’s Word comforts, teaches and encourages us (Rom 15:4). What we learn from God’s Word enables us to endure life’s difficulties and not lose hope. God’s word causes us to be equipped as servants of God; the Bible is our basic equipment and training tool (2 Tim 3:16-17).

However, expository preachers and the people who sit before them each week are convinced that the Scriptures can be mined to extract God’s wisdom and power for daily living. Poor preaching may cast some occasional doubt, but preaching that truly reveals what the Bible means has kept this conviction alive for a hundred generations. The goal of the expository preachers is to keep this faith alive by demonstrating week after week, what the Word of God says about the daily concern they and their listeners face. This goal reminds us that most people do not want or need a lecture on Bible facts; they want and need a sermon that demonstrates how the information in the Bible applies to their lives. Expository preaching does not merely obligate preachers to explain what the

Bible says, it obligates them to explain what the Bible means in the lives of people today (Chapell 1994:77-78). Perry (1965:1) gives a good summary of the purpose of preaching. He assert that some of the general aims include the formulation of true character, the relating of preaching to everyday life, the regulating of conduct, the promotion of knowledge, clarifying to man that which he ought to be, and the providing of spiritual instruction. Evangelization, proclamation of the Gospel, inspiration, edification and sanctification challenge the preacher as worthy aims.

#### **4.4 Qualifications for preaching**

The great Apostle Paul gave the young Timothy this solemn charge, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Speaking of himself to the Corinthians, he declared, “Rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways, we do not use deception nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor 4:2). Furthermore, he reminded them of his ministry while he was among them; “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power”. His message and preaching was not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power (1 Cor 1:17; 2:4). Again, he admonished the Corinthians to avoid going beyond what is written (1 Cor 4:6).

Based on these words, it is needful to take preaching seriously; and because it is a demanding and great task, it is pertinent to ask the question: Who is qualified to preach? James 3:1 gives a solemn warning: “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly”. These words seem to suggest that the task of preaching is not for everyone but for those who are called to it. At the same time, the statement seems to suggest that there is a temptation to seek or to be given the task of teaching whereas one may not qualify for the task. In other words, it seems evident that there is a restriction to this task.

If we take into consideration the confusion that appears to characterize today's evangelicalism, it is disturbing to note that the task of preaching is taken lightly. The preaching ministry, as we can observe from the Scriptures, is not for every regenerate member of the local church but for those who by divine calling have been appointed to carry out the responsibility. This issue needs to be addressed in the church, because there is the notion that everyone has a right to preach. This is not to suggest that not all have the right to witness about our risen Lord; witnessing is every believer's responsibility (Mat 28:19-20, Act 1:8). However, preaching is a calling and ministry.

#### 4.4.1 The New Testament position

If we begin by taking a cue from the ministry of Jesus Christ, it can be observed that he started out by appointing the Twelve to be with him so that they could learn from his teachings and the way he lived among them. Some significant lessons can be identified from Jesus' ministry in the Gospels. Firstly, early in his ministry, Jesus appointed the Twelve who later became apostles. The question is why did Jesus do that? In his great wisdom, Christ had to appoint the men before they could perform their task because the task was the Lord's not theirs. We must take note also that after he appointed these men, Jesus equipped them for the task of preaching the gospel.

Consequently, before his ascension he commanded his disciples to go and preach the Good News to all nations and to the ends of the world. It would then be a contradiction in terms if one claimed to be a preacher of Christ and one had not been appointed by the Lord of the harvest. Specifically then, one has to be regenerated before he can be a preacher.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Xhosa church is currently experiencing a catastrophe as hundreds of its so-called preachers have never experienced the regenerating power of the Spirit of God. To these unregenerate ministers, preaching is merely a profession or means of livelihood. However, a preacher must love the Lord Jesus; the love of Christ must be the constraining motive for all his service. To preach from a sense of duty, while necessary, is not enough.

Only as the love of Christ is the impelling motive shall one's preaching be worth anything (Gibbs 1939:29-33).

Preaching is set apart for those who sense the compelling power of God and call into this ministry. As the apostle Paul exclaimed, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). To a preacher, the conviction should be that preaching is the supreme means of nurturing the church. In other words, if a person does not share that same conviction, probably, preaching is not for him. Indeed, preaching is for those who are sent by God. Paul inquired, "How can they preach if they are not sent?" (Rom 10:14).

The called preacher aims at maintaining spiritual fitness. He never ceases to be a student of the Word. He is always soaked in the Word because he believes that his calling is primarily to preach the Word. He does not study the Scriptures to get sermons but first, he seeks to feed himself. He does this prayerfully with utter dependency on God. The truth is, if one fails to do that, his preaching will be a snare and he could lose the goal of preaching altogether. Therefore, it is paramount for the preacher to watch over his life and doctrine continually and very closely. The benefit of that, according to Paul, is that he will save both himself and his hearers (2 Tm 4:16).

Secondly, another important lesson from Christ is that, having appointed the apostles, he thoroughly equipped them for the work of service. He spent time with them so that they could learn from him. We need to consider Christ's strategy as he taught his disciples. His lifestyle and the words of his mouth were

inseparable. A typical follower of Christ's example was the Apostle Paul who provided an account of his experience after his Damascus encounter. After his conversion, he went into Arabia and later to Damascus. Then, after three years, he went to Jerusalem to be acquainted with Peter and the other apostles (Gal 1:17-18). It seems that he was being prepared by the Holy Spirit through all that process. The record in Acts 9:10 show that Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. It is believed that he was being prepared for the course of the Gospel. If this kind of preparation was important for the Lord's apostles, should it not be equally important even now?

Although the methodology may be different, the purpose should be the same, that is, to equip preachers for their task is indispensable. For example, in our days, God in his divine providence has provided means to equip preachers through what is known as formal training, which is a response to the failure of the church in carrying out her ministry. Why is formal theological biblical education necessary? Gibbs asserts there is a tendency on the part of some unthinking believers to deprecate scholarship but, surely, the Lord has given His people brains in order that they might use them for Him.

Regeneration does not rob a believer of his intelligence but enlightens, ennobles and empowers him for the purpose intended in the beginning - the glory of God. Our intellect was not given to us to be deprecated or allowed to depreciate but to be developed for Him. It is important that preachers keep developing, but being conscious of the fact that he must not leave the congregants behind. On this

point, Beeke (2003: Audio) counsels that a preacher must have at least one Sunday school class to teach whilst being involved in the academic world in order to be acquainted with current trends and developments.

## Chapter 5

### **5.1 Introduction**

The present chapter attempts to state the case for expository preaching. Although a vast amount of material has been written on the subject, I believe also that many people are not much acquainted with this vast material on expository preaching. This chapter, therefore, seeks to help those who still entertain certain misconceptions about expository preaching, especially, those from among my African brethren in the Gospel of Christ.

#### **5.2.1 Strengths of expository preaching**

It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching (Stott 1982:125). Having said that, it is necessary to take a close look at what may be problematic with other primary types of preaching such as topical or textual. A topical sermon is one in which the main divisions are derived from a topic, independently of the text, whereas a textual sermon is one in which the main divisions are derived from a text consisting of a brief portion of Scripture. Each of these divisions is then used as a line of suggestion, and the text provides the theme of the sermon (Braga 1981:35).

Although the importance of the above principal types cannot be denied, it is also true that a preacher cannot fully depend on them. For instance, one problematic issue with topical preaching is that it is rather subjective by nature because it always seeks to support the preacher's ideas, instead of allowing the Scripture to speak for itself. Consequently, the preacher faces the danger of distorting the

Word of God. There are great chances that the preacher can take verses out of the original context and use them to support his views. Again, the topical approach may exalt the messenger rather than the message. It sometimes leaves the audience with great amazement and appreciation of the preacher as well as dependency on the messenger's intelligence rather than God's Word. Truly, one cannot solely depend on these primary approaches, especially for the ongoing ministry of feeding the flock of Christ.

At this point, it is useful to pay careful attention to the strengths of expository preaching. Firstly, it highly values the Holy Scriptures; therefore, God is glorified. This is what the preaching must aim at. Expository preaching, expressing exactly the will of the Sovereign One, allows God to speak, not mere humans (MacArthur 1992: xv). Another important aspect of expository preaching is that it teaches God's Word in the setting chosen by the Holy Spirit. Every Bible student knows that context is important. But context is difficult to observe and reproduce for the congregation unless we are giving a thorough exposition. There is of course a danger in extracting principles or in quoting verses apart from their context to support my points ("proof texting"), deriving what is sometimes called a "timeless truth" or a principle, "principalizing" is an important way of applying Scripture to our current situation. Therefore while "principalizing" and "prooftexting" are, when properly used, valid methodologies, giving an exposition of a single passage is a more sure way than a topical message to present Scripture in accordance with its contextual intention (Liefeld1984:7-8).

Odendaal (2003:5) attests that one of the greatest advantages of expository preaching is that it forces the preacher to preach with his finger on the text. It limits him to stay within the boundaries of what the Bible, as a whole, teaches. It provides an opportunity for speaking on many passages of Scripture which would otherwise be neglected. There are quite a number of passages in the Bible that receive very little attention but by means of this method of preaching, these little known truths will be given their rightful place, and it will be demonstrated that “all Scripture” is essential to furnish fully the man of God (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Furthermore, the method also makes for variety in the ministry of the word, which means that there will be a change of diet. It will deliver the preacher from the common fault of harping on one string or of overemphasizing one line of teaching to the exclusion of other truths which are equally needed. Another interesting point mentioned by Odendaal is that expository preaching enables the preacher to deal with current evils. Evil practices, which would otherwise seem to be too personal, or even impertinent to the audience, can be reproved in this way. Solomon knew what he was talking about when he declared that there was “no new thing under the sun” (Ecc 1:9-10). The method will deliver the preacher from the tendency towards a fanciful use, or abuse of isolated texts. The texts could then be seen in their proper setting and their real meaning discovered, appreciated and expounded to the hearers. The method furnishes the preacher with enough material for a lifetime of preaching. He will discover that there is “bread enough to eat and to spare” for all who come for sustenance as well as a superabundance of Scriptural material for preaching (Gibbs 1939:224).

In addition, Thomas (2002:84-93) points out that the subject of expository preaching introduces the congregation to the whole Bible. It is not a ‘picking a text here and picking a text there’ kind of preaching. Expository preaching ensures that all areas of the Scriptures are covered. When the preacher has a real desire to declare the whole counsel of God nothing more will assist him in achieving that than expository preaching. It cultivates a sound Bible-reading habit among Church members because it helps them understand the whole message of the Scripture. Disciplined expository preaching removes the fear of being accused of conspiracy. It aids the preacher to plan and prepare ahead. The true Biblical preacher’s desire, in the final analysis, should be to unpack the Bible’s message in such a way that the hearers will sense the presence of God in their midst.

Expository preaching is an excellent means of evangelism. Many wrongly think that until a person becomes a believer he or she should be given a heavy dose of the gospel and the gospel only. To teach anything else may seem to be casting pearls before swine. This is an extremely short-sighted viewpoint. The more a person knows about Christian doctrine and life at the time of conversion the further ahead he or she will be in the early days of Christian life (Liefeld1984:13).

### **5.2.2 Weaknesses of expository preaching**

One's immediate reaction is to ask whether it is possible to accomplish all the aforementioned benefits. It is good to know that the danger does not primarily lie with the method but with those using the method. If the preacher in the pulpit is not passionate about God's Glory and God's Word, people will criticize the method instead of the person (Odendaal 2003:6).

Gibbs (1939:244) believes that one of the chief dangers of expository sermons is that they may easily degenerate into a collection of little and disconnected sermonettes, which are not related to the central theme. In this type of sermon, unity should be the key aim. In other words, each sermon should be a complete wheel in itself. It should not consist of a collection of separate spokes with no hub to bind them together and give completeness to the whole sermon. The sermon must not become involved or have "wheels within wheels" but must form one wheel.

### **5.3 The relevance of expository preaching**

One of the charges made against the pulpit is that it is irrelevant. Lay people, especially, see this as a part of the pulpit crisis of our time. They say frequently that the preacher answers questions they do not ask, preaches about abstract truths while they wrestle with concrete problems, talks about a spiritual reality that seems far removed from the earthly and mundane settings of their lives, and uses language that is difficult to understand (Horne 1975:47).

Vink (1995:117) rightly observes that the church today is facing the challenge of seeking relevance in an age of technology and civilization in which relevance is highly esteemed. Indeed, it is precisely at this point that preaching is generally considered outdated, both in practice and content. This idea of relevance is the result of rapid change in all spheres of life. The recent past was referred to as modern, but now we are in a post-modern era, and soon something new will emerge.

Consequently, in Christendom today, many have no respect for the ministry of preaching due to this dubious notion of relevance and because of this worldview, many of the messages preached largely express the opinions, traditions and ideologies of people. They promote the worldview of success measured by numbers, size, and appearance; they promise health, wealth and material prosperity; suggest non-biblical solutions such as secular psychology for spiritual problems; and manipulate response through appeals, showmanship and clever speech (Mock 1989:17 -18).

Can preaching therefore be always relevant? What kind of preaching do we envisage? We believe that the answer lies in expository preaching, as it focuses on nothing else but the Word of God. The idea here is that the Word of God is always relevant but it is necessary to explain it in a way that people can understand and can strive to be obedient to the word.

#### 5.4 The role of the Spirit of God in expository preaching

To some people, the role of the Spirit of God is obvious and it does not require any further discussion because in examining preaching, it is assumed that, God, through the third person of the Holy trinity, is fully involved. However, to others this can be regarded as an unnecessary discourse. Azurdia (1998:11-13) observes that one of the perils that preachers face is the problem of hyper-intellectualism, that is, the constant danger of lapsing into a purely cerebral form of proclamation, which falls exclusively upon the intellect.

Azurdia (1998:11-13) appears to assume that the problem is a universal one. He quotes Packer (1990:289) who notes that the churches of the West are currently in confusion, not knowing how to make preaching spiritually significant for the modern congregation; they tend to treat the problem as primarily one of designing appropriate techniques. This shows that we must stop hesitating in dealing with the matter, which appears to be an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed. In interviews conducted among preachers, both within the laity and the clergy, it is observed that the issue of the role of the Spirit needs to be addressed. There are extremists on both sides of the matter; whereas one disregards the role of the Spirit, the other uses the Holy Spirit as the reason not to spend time in preparation.

For instance, one preacher remarked that (on interview), “*For preaching, I fully depend on the Holy Spirit to give me a message from God so that I can deliver the message to the people of God without any hassle or fear*”. He went on to say

that, there was a time in his ministry when he relied on preparation but he experienced a lot of problems and he has, therefore, lately concluded that it is just a waste of time and a dry exercise that lacks faith in the Spirit of God. What he does now to get the message is to depend on prayer and his daily reading of the Bible. He further admits that, most of the time, he goes to church not knowing what to preach but, in all such instances, God grants him a message to deliver to the people. He does not at all value preparation and as a result, he views those who engage in it as unspiritual and lacking faith. However, this preacher is not alone, many share similar convictions but they may not be as open as this man was.

However, on the other side of the line are those who fall into the trap of spending endless hours looking at all means and skills of communication to communicate the message well and clearly without depending on the Holy Spirit. When the Word of God is proclaimed in this manner, that is, because of someone's hard work of mere collection of information and delivery to the people of God, the outcome is a dry theological speech, which has no inherent power. Unfortunately, this is the practice of many black South African preachers, as some seem to strive to impress people so that they can gain popularity and big crowds. It goes without saying that a spirit-filled preparation is the bedrock of every true expository sermon. A spirit-filled sermon can be regarded as one that is accompanied by much prayer and good conduct of the preacher. In other words, what is needed is a bridge in the gap between the two extreme positions. Therefore, what is called for, at this point, is balance, including a sense of

responsibility to the true teachings of the Bible even if sometimes they seem to make no sense.

We shall here attempt a closer look at the big question, what role does the Spirit of God play in the process of the exposition of his Word? A response to this question may necessitate an inquiry into what the goal of preaching is in the Bible. Preaching is ordained by God so that the Word might be proclaimed and those who listen or hear, in return, would believe and obey this Word. Scripture is clear that no one is able to do this unless he has been quickened by the Spirit of God. By nature, humankind is insensitive to the things of God, because they are spiritual matters which cannot be understood by the carnal mind. The only person to help people in this state is the third person of the Holy Trinity. We see in John 16:5 that even from conversion to sanctification and to glorification, we depend on the work of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to understand properly God's objective revelation in Scripture apart from the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. Illumination is not equated with either revelation or inspiration. It communicates no new divine truth, but rather enables us to comprehend God's truth in the final and complete revelation of it in Scripture. No clear understanding of Scripture leading to powerful preaching is possible without the Spirit's work of illumination (MacArthur 1992:102).

In fact, Whitesell cited by (Bauman1972:282) provides us with this remarkable thought concerning preaching elements where the Holy Spirit is involve: He can guide us in choosing the right Scripture passages for each occasion, guides us in the selection of books to buy and use in studying the Bible, give us illumination

and insight in studying the passage, aid our memory to recall parallel passages and fitting illustrations give us joy in concentrating on the text and the strength to push through the writing and verbalizing of the sermon, inspire us with new thoughts during delivery and cause us to omit less appropriate ones. He can unify the audience, create attentiveness open hearts, and apply the Word in both expected and unexpected ways. The Holy Spirit can convict, convert, comfort, inspire, reprove, correct, and conduct in righteousness. He can fix the Word in the minds and memories of heaven so that it becomes fruitful like the seed on good soil. How foolish to try to prepare sermons and preach them apart from the power of the Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit there is no true learning of divine things from Scripture and supposedly “spiritual” things not founded on the Word are godless flights of fancy (Parcker1984:240).

## **5.5 Expository preaching and the congregation**

In times of crisis, in the pulpit, the preacher can easily become confused, overly anxious, and depressed about preaching. He may be tempted to leave the pulpit to do something else which he believes will put him more vitally in touch with people and his world. However, he needs to realize that preaching, even during a pulpit crisis, is the most viable thing the church does (Horne 1975:71). In this section, the emphasis is on the role of preaching within the local church. As new trends have invaded the evangelical church, the role of preaching has become highly misunderstood. These new trends include the seeker-sensitive style of worship which is designed to entertain people rather than giving God the full glory

he deserves. To understand the role of preaching in the local church, it may be necessary to ask, why is there a church gathering in the first place? The answer to this question can help us to understand the reason for preaching and its role in the local church.

We shall therefore consider what the New Testament has to say about the purpose of the church's gathering. The choice of the New Testament is simple; that is where the purpose of church gatherings is clearly explained. A theme that runs through the whole Bible is the idea of God seeking his people to worship him. This then becomes a non-negotiable purpose of the church of God and it can be found in Pauline theology and other New Testament writings. The well-being of the church was dear to Paul's heart, and he used many images to describe the church. In his letter to Timothy, he described the church as "the pillar and the foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). That brings us to a point where we can ask the question, how can that truth be known? In this context, the answer is that it can only be done through the preaching of the Word. This brings us back to our main concern, Paul's understanding of the purpose of believers' gatherings.

O'Brien (129-130:1993) suggests at least three points as the purpose of the gathered church. Firstly, instead of the language of worship, Paul regularly uses the terminology of building or edification to indicate the purpose and function of Christian gatherings (1 Cor 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26; 1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:11-16). Edification (*oikodome*), which refers to the growth and progress of believers, is

not to be interpreted individualistically. The focus of attention here is on the ministries of the word (Eph 2:20-22), which are to “equip the saints for works of service for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). The ultimate goal of the gathering is to prepare believers for full maturity when they meet their Lord (Eph 4:13). Of primary importance in the process of building up God’s people is the regular and systematic exposition of the Scriptures together with the teaching of “sound doctrine” by those equipped and appointed for the task (1 Tim 4:6, 11, 13, 5:17; 2 Tim 2:1-2, 14-15, 4:1-5; Tit 1:9). Secondly, when New Testament believers met with one another and shared a whole range of ministries of the word in the congregation so that the body of Christ was edified, they met with Christ himself. As the members sang psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in their hearts and thus fulfilled the apostolic injunction to let the word of Christ dwell among them richly (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19-20), so Christ himself was present in their midst. This took place when the Scriptures were formally expounded and taught or when believers informally exhorted one another in the congregation to live out their obedience to the gospel.

Thirdly, central to Christian gathering was the concern to proclaim and apply the truths of the gospel to stimulate and maintain saving faith. Prayers and praises were clearly part of “the worship of God” as faith responses to the Gospel. Nevertheless, even these were to be expressed in the church in a way that would build up the congregation. The fact remains that, in the contemporary church, Christians do not view the purpose of the gathered church in this way and that has led to the downgrading of contemporary preaching, since preaching is the

means which God has ordained for the purpose of the gathered church. Therefore, due to this misunderstanding some engage themselves in the preaching ministry for wrong motives. What Paul observed in his time is still present in our era. He noted that, it is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry but others out of goodwill. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition and not sincerely (Phlp 1:15-17).

Preaching did not emerge from the church's experimentation with communication techniques. The church does not preach because preaching is thought to be a good idea or an effective technique. The sermon has not earned its place in Christian worship by proving its utility in comparison with other means of communication or aspects of worship. Rather, we preach because we have been commanded to preach. Preaching is a commission, a "charge". The church cannot but preach lest it deny its own identity and abdicate its ordained purpose (Mohler1992:13-14). Consequently, in the light of this it seem very clear that one of the most practical ways of ensuring that we keep in steps with the Biblical view of the purpose and role of preaching. The faithful, systematic expository ministry is the way.

## **Chapter 6**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to provide material for Xhosa preachers that would encourage them to be thorough expositors of God's Word. In essence, the idea is to suggest some ways in which Xhosa preachers can arrive at sound biblical messages. This is due to the observation from the field research that expository preaching is a foreign concept and practice to a majority of the preachers; a fact admitted by the participants in the seminars that we conducted. Therefore, this chapter seeks to provide the solution to this problem. It has been clearly shown through the Scriptures that expository preaching is indispensable for the recovery of Xhosa preaching. In the same vein, we shall attempt to determine the solution to the problem also through the Scriptures, and this will be done in the following sections.

### **6.2 Towards a recovery of Xhosa preaching**

The issue we have just briefly mentioned forces us to consider ways to understand the message of the Bible because it may not be possible to obtain a biblical message without adequate means for digging the truth of God's word. Indeed, Klein (1993:4) is right to claim that at times even the most straightforward communication is not so straightforward. Furthermore, he asserts that correctly understanding Scripture is an arduous and often puzzling task and rightly so. He, therefore, proceeds to give a clear example to motivate his point. He states that,

to understand a father's statement to his daughter, "You will be home by midnight, won't you?" will probably require decoding various clues beyond the simple meanings of individual words. To determine whether this is an inquiry, an assumption, or a command will require a careful analysis of the entire situation. How much more complicated this task is when one seeks to decode an ancient text written by people in centuries past especially if we consider the great distance of time and culture between them and us.

On that note, it is clear that adequate interpretation is paramount to sound preaching. At the same time, we need to take note of Klein's warning and advice that, to avoid interpretation that is arbitrary, erroneous, or that simply suits personal whim, the reader needs rules or principles for guidance. A deliberate attempt to interpret based on sensible and agreed-upon principles becomes the best guarantee that an interpretation will be accurate.

The expositor who represents God fills roles comparable to those of explorers, detectives, historians, trackers and prospectors. He needs the perspective of one who wants to do his best possible work in meeting this variety of challenges by analyzing his text before preaching. He also must utilize sound principles of hermeneutics such as scrutinizing the relevant context, watching for significant grammatical constructions, studying broader usages of the words in his text, learning to distinguish literal and figurative language, making allowance for progressive revelation, incorporating insights gained from other pertinent passages and wisely using information on the customs of biblical times.

Implementation of these and other important principles will ensure that the expositor accurately represents the truth of God's Word (Rosscup 1992:119).

As an evangelical church, our tradition has been to use a "literal" (but not "literalist"), historical-grammatical approach. Of course, the subject of interpretation is broad enough to require several months of exposition. The suggestions here should therefore be considered as the basic level to help preachers and their congregants alike. It is a basic aid to acquiring the basic skills for understanding the Bible. With that understanding, a number of preliminary matters need to be considered in the process of getting the message of the Bible.

Mock (1989:28-30) counsels that one must pray for wisdom and guidance for God to show what Scripture to work on in view of the needs of the church or audience. Addressing the preacher in the second person, he counsels that as an expositor, you need to read the entire book of the Bible which you choose to use before you teach. Make sure you understand the basic theme and purpose of the book. Read the passage repeatedly until you know it quite well, then, meditate on the truths taught. Read verses or chapters which come before and after the passage you select to establish the context. Use a concordance, index to notes, index to subjects, and topical, cross-reference system and study notes. Study the passage carefully using the three steps of exegesis suggested in another course manual by Mock (1989:34-79) and explained below.

### i. Observe the text

The first step proposed by Mock is to observe the text. The significant questions to ask is what does the text say and what do I see? These questions help us to understand what to look for as one observes the text. Three key thoughts are suggested. First, pay careful attention to the text. Second, observe what is there and what is not there. Read carefully, prayerfully, repeatedly, purposefully and inquisitively. Third, be accurate. Common mistakes to avoid in observation is failing to see all the details, seeing what is not in the text, not observing accurately, reaching the wrong conclusion and assuming you already know what it says. Ask the right questions about the text. Who is talking or who is being talked about? What is the subject or topic being discussed, what comes before and what follows after? Where, when and why is the activity or discussion taking place? How do the people involved respond?

As you examine the text, look for key words and key phrases in the text and determine whether the word or phrase is literal or figurative. Take a close look at the grammatical forms; is it a noun, verb or preposition? At the same time, note the gender, number and tense. Determine what the key word means in context and consider how the passage is constructed or arranged. Some passages stand alone while others are related to what comes before and after and are part of a section or passage. Sometimes the text will use as its structure contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, questions, repetition, cause and effect. Try to discern the underlying tone, mood or spirit of the passage and the emotional response

which it causes. See if you can determine the literary form, that is, the type of literature you are dealing with because different types of literature require different approaches.

## ii. Interpret the text

The second step is to aim at determining the single meaning of the passage at the time it was originally written. Some of the key questions that may be asked are as follows. What does it mean? What is the significance of the passage? Why was it included? What is the purpose of the passage? How did the original author intend the words to be understood? How does it fit with the rest of the Scriptures? Effective interpretation demands that we consider that the circumstances under which the Bible was written are different from ours historically, geographically, and culturally - the language and writing are from different authors, while the readers, the purpose and occasion are also different.

Subsequently, general rules of adequate interpretation are recommended thus: First, interpret Scriptures literally, taking words, phrases and sentences in their usual, normal, natural, customary sense. Two types of literal interpretation exist, that is, plain literal normal, non-figurative language and figurative literal language which uses figures of speech or symbolic words but still conveys a clear idea, concept, truth or meaning. The opposite of interpreting Scriptures literally is called allegorizing or spiritualizing, which looks for secret or hidden meaning often unrelated to the true meaning of the passage. Second, interpret each verse

or passage in its context, noting its location in Scriptures; what precedes it; what follows it, and how it is related to other portions of Scriptures.

The third rule is to interpret each verse or passage in view of its historical and cultural setting or background. Some aspects of or practices in Scriptures are culture-bound and not applicable today whereas other aspects are still to be followed. Every cultural practice and tradition must be measured against the teaching of God's word (Mk 2:18-21). Fourth, interpret each verse or passage based on its literary form. Fifth, interpret each verse or passage in view of related or similar passages in the same or other books of the Bible. The Bible does not contradict itself. Choose a simple natural meaning over a more complex one. The New Testament helps us to understand the Old Testament and vice versa. Interpret unclear or ambiguous passages in view of plain, clear and central ones. When the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, it may not be exact. Different accounts of the same incident are most likely complimentary not contradictory. The fact that we do not have a complete explanation does not mean there is not one. Sixth, test any proposed interpretation to determine its theological consistency. Certain types of Biblical literature require special rules of interpretation, for example, parables, proverbs and poetry.

### **iii. Application**

It is a waste of time to read and study the Scriptures without any intention to obey it. Studying the Word of God is not the goal but only the means to the goal of becoming mature in Christ. The key questions in James 1:22-25, and in Luke

6:46-49 are, what shall I do? How does this work? How can I put this into practice? State the teaching of a passage in the form of a timeless principle or truth which is relevant to your current needs or your church's needs, in a way that is consistent with God's Word and is general but clear enough to be followed.

Another challenge that an expositor faces is how to bridge the gap when the exegetical work is done. Hardy (2003:1) affirms that the greatest task of the preacher is to get himself out of the text. Preaching an expository sermon involves more than merely repeating the technical results of one's Bible study. True expository preaching involves transforming technical details into principles or doctrines so that the expositor preaches theologically with appropriate applications. This discussion focuses on how to bridge the gap from exegesis to a Bible exposition (MacArthur 1992:288).

To bridge the gap, one could follow the three steps suggested by Hardy (2003:1ff). First, determine a propositional statement, which is a single sentence that functions as the hinge between the introduction and the body of the message. It is a statement of the objective of the sermon and not a restatement of the title. It transfers attention to the body. It is a simple sentence stating the theme to be amplified, explained or approved. The theme is the overall subject (e.g. faith); the proposition limits and gives aim to the theme (e.g. three aspects of faith). When it comes to the actual organization of the sermon, the propositional statement is the most important feature. It can be expressed in more than one way.

For example, we can have a statement such as “In this passage we shall examine four characteristics of a man of integrity that would help us understand what it means to be a man after God’s own heart.” Otherwise, one could have a question such as, “What are some reasons for trusting God when you are in the midst of a trial?” It is also possible to have an exhortation such as, “As we study this passage, commit yourself to following these four steps to resolving conflict in your marriage;” or an exclamation, “What a joy it is to contemplate the three proofs of God’s sovereignty that we find in this passage!” It should be expressed as concisely and clearly as possible and should contain a “key word,” a plural noun, for example, ‘four characteristics,’ ‘some reasons,’ ‘three facts’, ‘six ingredients’, ‘three elements,’ etc.

Second, construct an appropriate outline. The outline is a valuable help to the listener. There is more than one possible homiletical outline and it should reflect syntactical analysis. Do not force an outline upon a text. Each main point should serve a specific purpose - to fulfil the proposition. Be careful to ensure that outline points are not too complicated. Major points need to be clear and any subordinate points should relate to the main point; too many sub-points are cumbersome. The use of parallelism is important.

Third, maintaining a logical thought ensures that the structure of your message is not obscured enabling the audience to identify and follow the movement from one major outline point to the next.

## 6.2 Core elements of expository preaching

We have arrived at the crucial point in our discourse when we are compelled to ask the question: How can one know that one has attained to expository preaching? What are the core-values that are needed to be an effective expositor? What is the yardstick for measuring the success of an expositional message?

By way of responding to these questions, some suggestions are offered here. To begin, it is important to note that many expositors of God's Word warn of the dangers of expository preaching. Odendaal (2003:6), one of the editors of "*Preaching and Preachers*" deals with this subject thoroughly. He asserts that the danger lies not in the method but with the man using the method. If the man in the pulpit is passionate about God's glory and God's Word, people would criticize the method instead of the man.

At least one essential core value is worth mentioning here since the values separate effective expository preaching from the ineffective. It is important that the sermon be properly connected and it has to be engaging. However, expository preaching has been accused of failing to engage with and answering some of the questions of the people. As noted by Pickett (2007), preachers often use "expository" approaches to hide from interaction with real life problems and issues. Odendaal (2003:6) asserts that preachers are often accused of answering questions that the people never asked instead of giving them the truth of God that will transform their lives. Furthermore, he refers to the notion of

dullness. In talking about dullness, he warns that it is easier to use a fire extinguisher on someone who is on fire than to warm up a corpse. The preacher should therefore avoid the accusation of being lifeless, pointless and meaningless in the delivery of the message by working on the delivery and personally “getting into” the sermon.

Some solutions to the problems inherent in expository preaching are suggested by Johnston (1996:22-27) and are highlighted below:

**a. Relevance**

Whenever one addresses the issue of relevance, the question that arises is, “relevant to whom?” The obvious answer in this context of preaching is the audience to whom the sermon is being preached. Only if the preacher preaches to himself is the sermon primarily relevant to him. Liefeld (1984:8-) notes the importance of relevance in expository preaching; the sermon must be relevant to the listeners and not just be a mere exegetical lecture. Exegetical lectures on Sunday morning are a poor way to communicate even cognitive information. Sermons are relevant when the preacher integrates biblical truth with real life situations. In the same vein, Odendaal (2003:6) relies on Vine’s claims that, when people leave Sunday worship, they must not ask, “so what?” but rather say, “Lord I will”.

Several models for connecting the sermon with the audience have been suggested. Long (1989:42-43) views a preacher as one who approaches the

Bible on behalf of the congregation in order to obtain a message and report back to the people. Similarly, Chapel (2001:77) stresses that expository preachers and the people who sit before them each week are convinced that the Scriptures can be mined to extract God's wisdom and power for daily living. Therefore, the goal of expository preachers is to keep this faith alive by demonstrating, week after week, what the Word of God says about the daily concerns they and their listeners face. In this model, the audience plays a critical role since the preacher is studying and preaching on their behalf. A more popular model has been suggested by Liefeld (1984:23-24). He views the role of the preacher as building a bridge between the ancient Roman world and the modern audience.

Good expository preaching does this provided the preacher is aware of the two cultures and the two horizons. Expositors must do their homework by learning all they can of the background and conceptual framework of the passage, even a brief look at a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia can provide valuable insights, taking into account the level of biblical knowledge, experience with Christianity and the evangelical subculture, educational level and socio-cultural environment of the congregation and carefully taking the congregation into the life situation of the passage at hand before abstracting principles. Unless the audience is given full consideration, the resulting sermon will be an exegetical lecture without application, and unless the text is given full consideration, the resulting sermon will be a relevant religious speech without authoritative biblical substance. However, once a bridge is constructed, the timeless truth of Scriptures makes an impact on the listener and the experience.

Although it is imperative that expository sermons be relevant, it is possible for preacher to shrink back from addressing unsavoury parts of the text in an effort to connect better with the audience. A great deal of evasive preaching is done in the name of relevance. Carson (2005:404) gives six reasons for doing expository preaching and one of these affirms that expository preaching should meet the need for relevance without letting the clamour for relevance dictate the message. All true preaching is properly applied.

### b. Clear Structure

Any form of communication that has no clear structure has no clear goal. By clear structure, is meant a clear logical flow of thoughts. This is because evasive communication tends to irritate the audience. A look through the Bible shows that Biblical authors communicated their messages in a way that shows a clear logical flow of thoughts. As many homiletics concur, one of the strengths of topical preaching often mentioned is unity, since the sermon is usually based on a given theme (Duduit 1992:85). By contrast, expository preaching is accused of sometimes lacking unity. True expository preaching therefore has to reflect this aspect.

A clear structure is composed of three significant parts. The introduction serves as the opening for the subject matter, and the preacher needs to present its topic well at this stage in order to win and capture the attention of the audience. The body, by nature, seeks to explain, discuss or argue the case for any idea that is communicated. It is in the body that the message is defended. This part has its

auxiliaries to support and develop the message. They act as transitions for joining the points, thoughts, headings and subheadings. It is advised that sometimes the preacher should ask rhetorical, interrogative questions and stress key phrases with consistency. This helps the listeners to be mentally engaged in the sermon.

### c. Memorableness

Johnston rightly suggests the idea that a sermon ought to be memorable and his view deserves to be quoted fully here. He notes that, “though many homiletics contend that it is not critical that sermons be memorable as long as they have impact at the time they are preached, James 1:22-25 says “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man, who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it he will be blessed in what he does,” leads one in another direction. According to James, there is a definite connection between remembering what one has heard from the word and obeying the word. Therefore, a sermon’s ability to be remembered is critical to its being applied in the lives of hearers.

Obviously, if one cannot recall what the Word calls one to do, one cannot effectively use it as a matter of practice. In the same way, when a person hears a sermon, past and present experiences are the only experiences he or she can

use to apply that sermon. Since the hearer is yet to experience the future, the message of that sermon may be directly relevant to what he or she will experience in the coming hours, days, weeks or months. If the message that was heard cannot be remembered, it will be difficult to make an effective application. Given the fact that expository sermons need to be memorable, the quality of relevance and unity become all the more important. The more relevant and unified the sermon the more easily it is both remembered and applied. In addition, word pictures are indispensable for making a biblical message memorable. By word picture, we mean any word, phrase, story, analogy, illustration, metaphor, figure of speech, trope, allegory, graphic quotation, historical reference, cross-reference, or comparison used to help the listener see, imagine, experience, sense, understand, remember and / or relate to abstract facts (Hughes 2001:33).

### **6.3 The construction of expository preaching**

To compose expository preaching is very crucial and needs special attention. This is not an obvious matter because not many preachers are able to compose sound expository preaching. Admittedly, expository preaching has suffered severely in the pulpit of preachers claiming to be its friends; yet not all expository preaching necessarily qualifies as either “expository” or “preaching”. Any manufacturer may paste the label “expository” on whatever sermon he pleases, and no one will correct him. In spite of the damage done by impostors, genuine

expository preaching has behind it the power of the living God (Robinson 1980:19).

Robinson rightly claims that expository preaching, at its core, is more a philosophy than a method. Whether or not a man can be called an expositor starts with his purpose and with his honest answer to the question: “Do you, as a preacher endeavour to bend your thought to Scriptures or do you use the Scriptures to support your thought?” This is not the same question as, “Is what you are preaching orthodox or evangelical?” nor is it the same as, “do you hold a high view of the Bible or believe it to be the infallible Word of God?” As important as these questions may appear in other circumstances, a passing grade in systematic theology does not qualify an individual as an expositor of the Bible. Theology may protect us from evils lurking in atomistic, nearsighted interpretations, but at the same time, it may blindfold us from seeing the text.

On the one hand, an expositor approaches his Bible with a childlike attitude to hear again the story. He does not come to argue, to prove a point or even to find a sermon. Hence, Robinson concludes that in our approach to the Bible, we should be not concerned primarily with what individual words mean but with what the biblical writer meant through his use of words. In other words, we do not understand the concepts of a passage merely because we analyze its separate words. A word-by-word grammatical analysis can be as pointless and boring as reading a dictionary. If an expositor aims to understand the Bible and to communicate its message, this must be done on the level of ideas. That is

exactly the interest of this section, that is, how ideas are constructed as the substance of expository preaching. The idea is derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical and literary study of a passage in its context. This deals, first, with how the preacher comes to the message and, second, with how it is communicated.

Students of public preaching have argued for centuries that effective communication demands a single theme. Rhetoricians hold to this so strongly that virtually every textbook devotes some space to the treatment of this principle. Homiletics join their voices to insist that a sermon, like any good speech, embodies a single, all-encompassing concept. What do we mean by idea? The word idea is adapted into English from the Greek word, *eido*, which means, “to see” and, therefore, “to know”. An idea sometimes enables us to see what was previously unclear.

Having said all that, we shall now consider the construction or formation of ideas. Robinson (1980:39-41) again offers some suggestions in this regard. He notes that, “When reduced to its basic structure, an idea consists of only two essential elements: a subject and a complement. When we talk about the subject of an idea, we mean the complete, definite answer to the question, “What am I talking about?” The subject is being used here in a technical sense. For example, the subject as it is used in homiletics is not the same thing as a subject in grammar. A grammatical subject is often a single word. The subject of a sermon idea can never be only one word since it calls for the precise, full answer to the question:

“What am I talking about?” While single words such as discipleship, witnessing, worship, grief or love may masquerade as subjects, they are too vague to be viable.”

A subject cannot stand alone. By itself, it is incomplete, and, therefore, it needs a complement. The complement completes the subject by answering the question, “What am I saying about what I am talking about?” A subject without a complement dangles as an open-ended phrase. Complements without subjects resemble motor parts not attached to a car. An idea emerges only when the complement is joined to a definite subject. Finding the subject and complement does not start when the expository preacher begins the construction of the sermon. He pursues the subject and complement when he studies his Bible. Since each paragraph, section, or subsection of Scriptures contains an idea, exegetes do not understand a passage until they can state precisely its subject and complement. While other questions emerge in the struggle to understand the meaning of a biblical writer, the two questions, “What is the author talking about?” and “What are they saying about what they are talking about?” are fundamental.

Maekwart (1985:131-132) notes the preacher needs to take seriously the form of the message. If there is no concern for form and style, the result is often boredom. A preacher may have many powerful ideas left unheard because of a boring form. The form of the thought affects attitudes, impulse and feelings which shape the mind and inner imaginations of the heart. So much is happening at one time in the mind of the hearer: thoughts, musings, and wanderings. Hearing is a

complex phenomenon and the form of speech helps the listeners to actually hear the words. The form enables a person to comprehend, absorb and respond but that person must first listen.

Another significant part of the formation of expository sermons is constructive style in communicating the idea. Preaching is done entirely by speaking. This means that, as a preacher, if you do not use an oral style, you are certain to do it badly (Olyott 2003:1-2). This constructive style has two components, that is, the sermon itself and the expositor. We shall consider the sermon first.

### **6.3.1 The sermon**

The sermon has special ingredients that accompany it and each is very important. Firstly, the structure of the sermon has three aspects as in any form of communication. There is the introduction, the body and the conclusion. The expositor, having done with the exegesis and worked out a way to find the single idea, has to communicate that single idea. The expositor now has the task of introducing that single idea. Thereafter, reasoning, arguing or defending this particular single idea and, lastly, constructively conclude the discourse. This structure helps the preacher to remember and know what to say; at the same time, it helps the listener to understand constructively the content of what has been said. In essence, he/she must be convinced by the single idea; he/she must buy the idea at the end of the sermon. At this point, the expositor nails the main thought of the entire sermon.

### 6.3.2 The expositor

The expositor's goal is to be clearly understood so that those who are confronted by the truth of God's word may be convinced and obey that truth. Therefore, preachers must be clear, plain and simple because our Lord communicated his message that way, so we ought to do the same (Olyott 2003:2). The expositor should take a cue from the Lord as the prince of preachers. It could prove useful, at this point, to examine the greatest sermon He ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). Olyott (2003:4ff) has a wonderful chapter on this issue which explains the way Jesus preached throughout most of the sermon. The three-stranded plait was never broken. The strands were inextricably woven together and it is difficult to separate them, and often almost impossible to distinguish them. The divine way of teaching orally is to state, illustrate and apply. However, the question is, how does our Lord state? How does he illustrate? How does he apply? The answers to these questions shall be considered in the remaining sections.

### 6.3.3 How does our Lord state?

Firstly, our Lord makes statements in ordinary words. The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon of ordinary words, not academic words, not literary words, not technical words, not sophisticated words, not words used only by a certain sector of society and not 'olde worlde' words. It is made up of ordinary words used by ordinary people in ordinary life. Using language that is more difficult may be the right thing to do in certain situations, but it is not the right thing to do in preaching.

Preaching is done in an oral style. It aims at being understood. If, occasionally, it has to use unusual words, it explains them. Preachers who do not use everyday words throughout their message are not yet ministering like their Master.

Secondly, Jesus makes His statements in many short sentences. How does the Sermon on the Mount begin? For example, Matthew 5:1-10 shows that it opens with a burst of short sentences. After that, one can put down one's finger almost anywhere in the Sermon and will find again and again that there are many short sentences as in Matthew 5:14, 48; 6:21, 33; 7:1, 16. Who can forget such sentences as these? We come across them throughout the Sermon. These short sentences are both striking and memorable. Once we hear them, we find them unforgettable. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Sermon is made up of only short sentences; it contains quite a few long sentences as well. For example, Matthew 5:19 is a long sentence, but it is also an easy one. We could say the same thing about Matthew 6:6. This sentence is longer in print than it seems in speech. In other words, the written sentence is long but it does not sound long. This is because it is broken up into shorter 'sound bites' as it is spoken. This is an important point to note when developing an oral style. Further, Matthew 7:24-25 is a particularly long sentence. The sentence is long but it is not complicated.

Thirdly, the Lord's Sermon contains many 'rhetorical questions' (although that is not a term used by ordinary people in everyday life!) In this Sermon, such questions are found in Matthew 5:13, 46, (twice), 47 (twice); 6:25, 26, 27, 28, 30,

31 (three times); 7:3, 4, 9, 10, 16, 22. What happens when a preacher asks a question? What is happening to you as a reader while I ask this question? The answer is that you try to answer it! This happens whether you reply aloud or not. How many questions are there in the Sermon on the Mount? There are nineteen - fifteen of our Lord's and four more in the narrative.

Fourthly, if we go back to the beginning of the Sermon in Matthew 5:1-12, the opening statement in the verses from the Lord's mouth is 'Blessed...' How does chapter 5 continue? Six times we hear the same refrain, 'You have heard that it was said... but I say to you...' (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). There is also repetition in chapter 6. How many times are charitable deeds mentioned in 6:1-4? Our Lord went on to say, 'When you pray...' repeatedly (6:5-7). What happens in chapter 7? Repetition is one of God's ways of teaching people. Do you know what one of God's ways of teaching people is? It is repetition!

Fifthly, the Beatitudes are made up of a series of contrasts (5:1-12). The six-fold refrain of chapter 5 is also a six-fold contrast (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). There is a similar pattern in the Lord's teaching on charitable deeds, on prayer and on fasting. His main lesson is the same all the way through; it is not that way, it is this way (6:2, 5, 16). For example, where is treasure to be stored? The answer is, not on earth but in heaven (6:19-20). Ministering like the master, therefore, is not just a question of teaching the truth. The truth must be taught in open contrast to error. It is not enough to point to the right road, we must also tell our hearers what the wrong road looks like and where it leads. Such an approach is always

arresting; it makes the truth clear and delivers the audience from boredom as our Lord's original hearers quickly found out.

Sixthly, in his teaching, our Lord uses mostly the active voice. This is a point we should notice but on which we should not insist. After all, our Lord sometimes uses the passive voice. Several examples of the passive voice are found in chapter 5 alone (cf. 5:21 and all the verses which echo it). However, our Lord most often would use the active voice. His language is direct.

#### **6.3.4 How does our Lord illustrate?**

The use of the word illustration does not refer to stories. By illustration, we mean the language that can be seen. From the beginning to the end, Jesus puts eyes into people's ears. It is common knowledge that most of our Lord's public teaching was done in parables; those are stories which we love, and value and remember easily. However, the Sermon on the Mount is not a series of parables. What sort of things does our Lord refer to when he illustrates? The answer is simple; the reference is to what you see and what you experience in your everyday life at home or in church, and in everyday objects and events.

#### **6.3.5 How does our Lord apply?**

In the Sermon on the Mount, where does the application begin? It starts with the very first word of Jesus, 'Then he opened his mouth and taught them saying: "*Blessed...*"' The moment the word comes out of his lips, you find yourself asking a whole series of questions. Who is this person on whom God smiles? Who is it



that enjoys his favour and blessing? What is the secret of such happiness? The application has begun! There are four points that are particularly striking here. We shall examine them in turn. Our Lord makes his applications in many different ways. Sometimes he makes applications through statements. Some applications are cast as imperatives; they are commands or instructions. In other instances, he makes applications by asking questions (Matt 5:46-47).

## 6.4 Conclusion

The prophetic words of Amos accurately describe the current situation in many Xhosa churches; there is "... a famine of hearing the words of the Lord" (Am 8:11). Many sermons are being preached but most of those sermons are more of merely human words than God's Word. Recently, the pulpit has become the storehouse for self-exhibition where preachers promote their own eloquence, story-telling skills and relate an endless series of personal experiences, which without God, none of them could have lived to tell. A sphere of confusion has clouded our way of presenting the Gospel of Christ especially among the so-called new apostles, prophets and bishops who profess to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Rarely does one find a preacher who dwells on the Scriptures and exposes its meaning; rather, one finds much self-promotion, and talks on wealth, prosperity and health. The concern is how long this disguise under the name of Christianity will continue within the Xhosa churches.

The church is the body of Christ, regardless of its culture, management style and situation; it must enforce the sound principles of God's Word and communicate that fact to its members. God has promised to bless His Word, not ours. Therefore, if we take away the Word of God from our churches, then we deny the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work within our churches. God desires to bless the Xhosa Church but due to a lack of interest, ignorance and partial obedience, the people miss the blessings of God. There is no better time than this to introduce sound Biblical doctrine and the true living Word of God within the Xhosa Church.

Lloyd-Jones (1989: vii) is right to state, "I am profoundly convinced that the greatest need of the Church today is a return to expository preaching."

This study has focused on expository preaching as a means of restoring substance in Xhosa evangelical churches of the Western Cape. It has been shown that preaching is a high calling which is vital for the building up of the church. Lischer (1981:20) affirms that preaching is the first and last expression of theology. Likewise, Rexroat (1992:171) notes that preaching is the presentation of the living Word (Jesus Christ) as revelation in the written Word (Scripture) by the spoken Word (the sermon). However, as Luccock (1928:23) asserts, the fact remains that there are three kinds of preachers - the ones to whom you cannot listen, the ones to whom you can listen and the ones to whom you must listen. This implies that as preachers our task is to make Jesus live in the minds and hearts of people by making them listen.

The most important aspect of expository preaching is that it conveys the biblical revelation of God and His will. Given the subjectivity of the preacher, the limitations of the human mind, the effect of sin on even our best thoughts and the devastating effect of subjectivism on modern theology; it is more likely than not that, a sermon will contain some errors of fact or judgment. Therefore, the closer we stay to God's revealed Word, the less prone to error we become. In other words, the closer we keep to Scripture in its own context, the less likely we are to err and the surer the declaration of God's truth becomes.

Expository preaching can serve as an important protection against the improper interpretation of Scriptures. For a number of reasons such as a preacher's poor biblical training, faulty hermeneutics and just plain laziness (to say nothing of deliberate distortion), many congregations today are subjected to fanciful and invalid interpretations of the text (Liefeld1984:7-9).

#### **6.4.1 The Way forward for Xhosa speaking Churches**

In the light of the preceding analysis and conclusion, several suggestions may be made regarding the process of insuring that the ongoing practice of expository preaching becomes a pre-eminent practice among Xhosa preachers. In fact, this research has shown that what Xhosa preachers need is instruction. It is proposed that instruction must be carried out in two ways - formally and informally. In the formal instruction, continuous seminars, workshops and class sessions have been proposed. The medium of this instruction should be Xhosa.

In the light of these things, Makalima has proposed some wonderful insights in the interviews as a way forward in restoring Xhosa preaching especially with regard to the office of the preacher. The commonest office in Xhosa-speaking churches, the office of *Umshumayeli*. *Umshumayeli* is a Xhosa word that can be translated as 'preacher'. However, in Xhosa-speaking churches, the use of the word '*umshumayeli*' has quite a different connotation from the use of the word 'preacher' in many English speaking churches. In Xhosa-speaking churches, *umshumayeli* designates a 'lay preacher', distinct from '*umfundisi*' (i.e. 'teacher'), which is a reference to the ordained/trained minister. It is noteworthy that both

the *umshumayeli* and the *umfundisi* are often used interchangeably in many English-speaking churches to designate a singular office of a minister/pastor and not two offices as in the Xhosa churches. Although the office of the *umshumayeli* is regarded as inferior to that of the *umfundisi* in Xhosa ecclesiological practice, the *umshumayeli* exerts greater influence than the *umfundisi*. However, it appears that Xhosa-speaking churches are established and maintained through the humble means of the ministry of the *umshumayeli*. Unlike the *umfundisi*, who is usually considered a sojourner (*unothwal' impahlana*) among the people, the *umshumayeli* is considered as one of the people (*umhlali*).

As such, the ministry of the *umshumayeli* is much more welcomed by the community than the *umfundisi* who could just be visiting the community church as a minister for a period hardly exceeding three years. Even when a congregation has the privilege of having the *umfundisi* for a short while, the *umshumayeli* does the bulk of the preaching both inside and outside the church. To be noted also is that there are usually at least ten *abashumayeli* per *umfundisi*. This is true of the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational Xhosa-speaking churches alike.

Though the influence of the *umshumayeli* is far reaching, very little attention is given to the training of the *umshumayeli* in some of the churches and formal theological training institutions. Any church or formal theological training institution that is concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of Xhosa-speaking churches must deliberately and strategically give attention to the training of the *abashumayeli*, and that, without losing sight of training the *umfundisi*. The need

for training the *umfundisi* is already widely taken into account. The point here is that this consideration be extended to cater for the practical needs of the office of the *umshumayeli*. Sadly, the neglect of *umshumayeli* has cost the Xhosa churches their doctrinal stability.

Since the primary function of the *umshumayeli* is preaching the word, and not really leadership, administration or teaching, a compact course in the basic theory and practice of expository preaching would be a breath of fresh air in the pulpit ministry of most Xhosa-speaking churches. The expository preaching course should at least be composed of five modules, that is, Old Testament Survey; New Testament Survey; Biblical Interpretation; Christian Doctrine; and Theory and Practice of Expository Preaching. These modules need to be carefully selected with a target that best corresponds to the needs of the *umshumayeli*.

Additionally, concerning informal instruction, it is suggested that the preacher needs a great deal of exposure to practice the ministry of expository preaching faithfully. Therefore, this can be done by involving the preachers in activities relating to expository preaching such as conferences and seminars; for some people learn more easily through experience. Johnston's (1996:169) final recommendation is that some time should be allocated to the instructor to preach an expository sermon, probably early in the seminar, as an example of effective expository preaching. Such an example would undoubtedly be of benefit to the



students, as it would balance the theology and theory of method contained in the rest of the seminar.

## 6.5.2 Appendices

### 1. Seminar material

The procedure which was followed during the thirty days' seminar held in Khayelitsha Cape Town in June 2007 and the division of our material are as follows: The first six days focussed on trying to understand and formulate the biblical theology of preaching followed by another six days in which we contrasted the history of preaching in the Apostolic era, the Reformation period and the Puritan age with modern Xhosa preaching. The goal of the contrast was not just to compare the preaching then with ours today, but also to draw some principles that can help to inform our practice today. Another six days was dedicated to studying different types of sermons and this was followed by a critical evaluation of these sermon types.

After a careful consideration of the various types of sermons, we proposed that expository sermons seem to be more advantageous than others for the restoration of substance to preaching in Xhosa churches. However, it became clear also that the other types of sermons are necessary for various occasions. Consequently, we dedicated the rest of the days to the art and craft of expository sermons. Each candidate had to prepare three sermons. Each of the three candidates was then asked to preach at least two sermons for a maximum of twenty minutes each during the course of the seminar. During the preaching opportunities, the facilitator [researcher] was busy evaluating the preachers and later shared with them his findings and proposed helpful suggestions. After every

lecture the candidates were given the materials for the specific topic of the day.

The evaluation form contained the questionnaire referred to in Chapter 3. The assessment system that was used is as follows:

1. No Achievement 0-29%
2. Elementary Achievement 30-39%
3. Adequate Achievement 40-49%
4. Moderate Achievement 50-59%
5. Substantial Achievement 60-69%
6. Meritorious Achievement 70-79%
7. Outstanding Achievement 80-99%

## **2. Summary of Sermons Evaluated during the Seminar and Separately by the Researcher**

Final Score for the Sermons:

Table A:

Preliminary Statement	1
Introduction	2
Body	3
Conclusion	2
Overall evaluation	2

Table B:

Preliminary Statement	5
Introduction	4
Body	5
Conclusion	5

Table A represents the final score for all the sermons that were evaluated before the preachers participated in the seminar. First, sermons by participants were compared with the 150 sermons that the researcher had listened to, and even though the contexts were different (i.e. classroom preaching versus church service setting), the average score in both cases was three (3) points. The result leads to the initial observation that although the nature or atmosphere of contexts may vary, for the two groups of preachers, their initial ability to prepare an expository sermon is similar. Initially, both groups appeared to demonstrate relatively equal abilities. However, the averages for the two groups indicate that the levels of initial ability are somewhat low. The average scores by both groups are below the average achievable points per sermon.

A careful assessment of both cases shows exactly where the initial sermons were lacking. The preliminary observations show a prevalence of ineffectiveness. The score for the first five questions was between two and three (2-3) points (i.e. for both classroom preaching and church sermons), which indicates that the sermons were ineffective. Of the 150 sermons which were examined, 70% of them were below average. It may be the case that the preachers did attempt to study the text but failed to compress their observations into one single idea that was interpreted and preached with purpose. It is evident that if a preacher has no specific purpose in mind, he cannot design his conclusion to fit that purpose.

Even though the results show that there is definitely room for improvement regarding the exegetical work, as Questions 9 and 13 additionally indicate, the greater shortcoming seems to lie in the inability to compress the text into a single, relevant idea that is preached with purpose. Such shortcoming tends to produce sermons that are essentially running commentaries on the text. This observation is further confirmed by the score to Question 18: Is the main point clearly established? The score of two (2) points, which is clearly below average, was due to so much incoherence in the sermons of most of the preachers leading to much confusion on the part of the audience.

As we finally observed, the main problems relate to the preliminary statement, the introduction to the sermon, the application of the sermon, the conclusion and the use of illustrations. These are the major areas of ineffectiveness and account for the respective scores of three (3) points. This observation leads to the belief that these preachers viewed expository preaching as running commentaries on the text. The sermons were devoid of a unifying idea that was extracted from the text and adequately introduced, applied, illustrated and concluded. Therefore, we can infer from the data that preachers in many Xhosa churches find it difficult to preach effective expository sermons.

However, those who attended the seminars disclosed that there is urgent need for instructions for Xhosa preachers because their experiences show that after the seminars, they are now better able to prepare an expository sermon. Table B shows clear evidence that Xhosa preachers need instruction. The two sermons

below represent samples from the sermons of participants: the one before instruction and the other after instruction.

Preacher A: Before instruction

Text: John 15:1-10

Title: The Vine and the Branches

Theme: The vine and the branches that bear fruit

Introduction

At the start of life, we are young, beautiful or handsome, energetic, brave, and most of all, very talented in many ways. But the truth is that as we grow old, we begin to lose much of what we had, that is, our beauty, energy etc. This is the time that one must stop to ponder and accept the fact that things aren't the same. There are hundreds of cases to show that one can end up wasting his or her life. So, what can we do to avoid wasting our lives?

I am reminded of two friends who went to Johannesburg to seek opportunities for a job. They were both from the Eastern Cape, the Transkei. Fortunately, the opportunity came and they both worked in the mine industry. But one of them wasted all his earnings; he never visited home, never sent anything to his family. He became a heavy drunkard. Unfortunately, one night, he was attacked and was seriously injured to the point that he could no longer walk. He was forced to return home in a wheelchair. The moral of the story is that he wasted his life

while he had the opportunity to develop it and be of good help to his family.

Beware, so you do not turn out to be like this young man!

Let us again read together John 15:1-10:

Consider the following points:

Firstly, Jesus says, “I am the true vine” what does that mean? If a person desires to be useful in this life, he or she needs to come to the true vine, that is, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Jesus is not alone. He has the Father as the gardener. Every vine is in serious danger if it has no gardener. Look at what the gardener does: He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit and prunes every branch that bears fruit to bear more.

Thirdly, we are the branches. But according to this passage there are two kinds of branches. There are those that bear no fruit and those which bear fruit. The question is what kind of branch are you?

Jesus says, “You are already clean because of the word, I have spoken to you”, because of the teaching I gave you, you are ready to bear fruit. Verse 4 is important. There Jesus seems to be saying, ‘learn from me, stay in my way and obey my words so that you can see the results of what you’re doing; you can only produce results if you remain in me (Jesus). You cannot achieve your goals

without having Jesus in your life. You will never fulfil your plans if you don't have Jesus in your life.

Again, in verse 5, Jesus repeats himself to emphasize that He alone is the pillar of our lives. We depend on him for every success in this life. Consider Verse 7; here we see the promise: ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. In verse 8, we see that, to glorify God is the only goal of life. As a student of Christ, you must show that neither Paul nor the preacher is your teacher but the Son of God.

Verse 9: God's love for us is demonstrated in that he gave His only Son to die for us. Jesus also drank the cup that nobody has drunk and nobody will ever drink for us to show his love for us. Now He says, remain in my love; do not stray away from my teaching; stay with me; remain in me.

Verse 10: You listen to what I have taught you and do teach and you will be my friend; you will be in my heart. Jesus obeyed his father; he listened to his teaching and what his father taught him.

### Conclusion

We must aim at being useful, not at wasting time in this life. We have come to Jesus who is the true vine. All of our success or progress in this life is found in Christ. Remember, obedience is better than sacrifice. Let us then obey Christ the only mediator between God and man. If we don't bear fruit, He will cut us off from the vine. But if we bear fruit, He will prune us to bear more. What do you want for yourself - the cutting off for destruction or the pruning for more fruit? All is in your

hands; it's up to you. Remember the story I told you at the beginning of the two good friends. Try not to waste your life. May God bless you all Amen.

Preacher A: After instruction

Text: Rom 1:16-17

Subject: Why must every believer not be ashamed to spread the gospel?

Introduction

Let's consider the context, in which we find these two verses, that is, vv16-17. Paul is the author of the book of Romans as we read in 1:1. The letter was addressed to the church in Rome (Rom 1:7). It seems that Paul had tried several times to visit these beloved brothers in Rome (Rom 1:13) but did not have that opportunity. As we know, Paul had a missionary heart; he believed very strongly that "he was under obligation to preach to both Jews and Gentiles, wise and the fools". Hence, he wanted to visit Rome on his way to Spain. It is in that context that he uttered these verses, which motivate believers to spread the gospel.

Here we find two reasons why believers must not be ashamed to spread the gospel. In other words, our main idea is twofold.

Main idea:

Firstly, every believer must not be ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation for both Jews and Gentiles (v16).

- What is the gospel?
- Argument on the controversy between Jews and Gentiles

Secondly, every believer mustn't be ashamed of the gospel because in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed and is by faith in the Lord Jesus (v17).

- What is righteousness?
- What is faith?

### Conclusion

As a Christian church, one of the greatest tasks we have is to spread the gospel to the whole world. Let us be motivated again by this wonderful message from the Apostle Paul. Let us stop being selfish; the world needs to hear this message. Amen!

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