

**A HOMILETICAL STRATEGY FOR PREACHING ON SUFFERING:  
REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

I, Jima Seo, student number 18392042, hereby declare that this dissertation, “A homiletical strategy for preaching on suffering: Redemptive-historical narrative preaching”, is my original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria’s code of ethics for researchers and the policy guidelines for responsible research.



.....

Jima Seo

April 2021

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All glory to the Triune God. It was the grace of God that made it possible for me to complete my doctoral thesis.

Firstly, I thank God for the grace of saving a sinner like me. Although I was born with a mother's faith, I was a sinner who turned away from God from an early age. I did not believe in God, and I was a sinner who enjoying alcohol and women. However, God has called me as His child and forgave my sin. God has led me until now by the hand of His sovereign grace. I confess that I was able to finish my doctoral program only by the grace of God who saved me who was a sinner.

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“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.” (Rev 7:12)

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to reveal the problems of the Korean church's sermons on suffering, and to present biblical interpretation and effective sermonic form for preaching on suffering. For this purpose, I will analyse preaching on suffering in Korean churches and identified the problems. In particular, I will adopt the Heidelberg method for sermon analysis. I will modify two questions of the Heidelberg method as appropriate for this study: the linguistic, and the homiletical questions. Through this analysis, I will identify the problems of preaching on suffering in Korean churches. After sermon analysis, I will discuss the need for an effective sermon form. The research of sermon form will give justification to consider the effective sermon form for preaching. Also, I will discuss redemptive-historical preaching and narrative preaching that are the foundation of redemptive-historical narrative preaching. Narrative preaching demonstrates that plot in conjunction with movement and continuity is very effective in delivery. The reversal, and recognition of narrative, and the plot of narrative preaching, can be beneficial elements for preaching on suffering. Redemptive-historical preaching concentrates on redemption, which is the purpose of the Bible itself. Redemptive-historical preaching can help to escape from anthropocentric preaching, and exemplary preaching, because it focuses on God's redemptive purpose. Finally, I will propose redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative to preaching on suffering. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching that this study proposes is to interpret the text from the redemptive-historical perspective, and convey the God-centred big idea of the text through the special plot. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching supports the theological position of "*Textus Rex*" which means the text is king. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is based on the text, and extracts the big idea from the text. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is also an effort to take advantage of narrative preaching which focuses on movement and continuity. The plot of narrative preaching is effective because it gives the audience the experience of discovering God in preaching, and it encourages audience participation. For these reasons, redemptive-historical narrative preaching can be evaluated as "theology-based and audience-directed" preaching.

## KEY TERMS

- Heidelberg Method
- Theodicy
- Narrative
- The plot
- περιπέτεια (reversal)
- Traditional Homiletic
- New Homiletic
- Narrative preaching
- Redemptive-historical preaching
- Redemptive-historical narrative preaching
- God-centred big idea

## THESIS SUMMARY

### A HOMILETICAL STRATEGY FOR PREACHING ON SUFFERING: REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING

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Chapter 1, as the introduction to this study, first introduced the background and motivation of the study. Second, the questions I would address in this study were introduced in conjunction with the four essential elements of preaching: God, scripture, the preacher, and the audience. Third, the methodology adopted in this study was addressed. Fourth, I introduced the hypothesis of this study. Fifth, the purpose and limitations of this study are introduced.

In Chapter 2, I analysed preaching on suffering in SKC and identified the problems in that context. First, five preachers were selected for analysis from five different representative denominations in South Korea. Second, I adopted the Heidelberg method for sermon analysis. Third, I identified four problems of preaching on suffering in SKC. The four problems are as follows: the failure of showing God revealed in the text, eisegesis, the absence of effective sermon form, and the absence of audience analysis.

In Chapter 3, various forms of suffering and theodicies related to suffering were examined, and homiletical theodicy was presented. First, I divided suffering into

four categories, according to cause, extent, and theological purpose. Second, I looked at how the arguments of various theodicies related to suffering and evaluated their arguments homiletically. Third, I tried to discern and synthesize the arguments of these theodicies and in the process suggested a homiletical theodicy clarifying how the preacher should deal with preaching on suffering.

In chapter 4, I looked at the need for an effective sermon form, redemptive-historical preaching, and narrative preaching. First, I discussed the fact that form makes an organic combination with content. Second, research on narrative and narrative preaching demonstrates that plot in conjunction with movement and continuity is very effective in delivery. Third, I examined redemptive-historical interpretation, and redemptive-historical preaching. Fourth, I looked at the problems of narrative preaching and redemptive narrative preaching.

In Chapter 5, I proposed redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative. First, I defined redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which interprets the text from a redemptive-historical perspective, discovers the big idea of the text in which God becomes the subject, and conveys it using the plot of the narrative. Second, I discussed the need for redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which is needed for the integration of God-centredness and audience-centredness. In addition, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is needed for the integration of text-centricity and the text's applicability. Third, I explained the advantages of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which helps to unite the faith community and enhance communal practice. Fourth, I suggested the preparation of the redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which begins with the process of interpreting the text. This includes three steps: observation, exegesis, and the God-centred big idea. The second process is the configuration of the plot. This process consists of conflict, complication, theological reversal, resolution, and application. This process is important because it gives movement and continuity to the God-centred big idea so that it can engage the audience in the sermon, providing the audience with experience in God's salvation.



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## **1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUNDS AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1.1 The pastoral background**

During the time I served as a minister in Busan, an unfortunate incident occurred in which the son of an elder died in a traffic accident. The elder was attending a Wednesday sermon with his wife when the accident happened. I also attended this service.

After the funeral, I felt a lot of pressure because I had to preach that Sunday evening at the worship service, at which occasion the elder's family would visit to say thanks for the funeral.

After considerable thought, I decided to preach about divine providence on the basis of the Book of Job with the intention to comfort the family and I prepared the sermon with great zeal. However, despite the long preparation, the reception of the sermon was different to my expectation. They looked disappointed, and I could feel that they were suffering more than before and this because of my sermon, which is to say that my preaching could not comfort them, but rather made them more painful.

This experience on the pulpit was not the first time for me. Despite serving as a preacher at many churches for over more than a decade, whenever I preached about suffering, I always felt that I failed to proclaim the Word of God correctly. Though I studied homiletics for five years, it is not easy for me to escape the following burdensome homiletical questions stemming from the pulpit: How can a preacher comfort the congregation through preaching? What does a preacher need to proclaim in the context of suffering? What biblical answers concerning suffering can preachers offer to the congregation in their sermons? How does a

preacher interpret the text related to suffering, and communicate the main idea to the congregation that is experiencing suffering or trauma?

These questions, however, are not only applicable to me, but to all preachers. It is evident that one of the topics of great interest in congregations is the question of suffering. In other words, the congregation listening to the Word of God in the sermon wants to know the meaning of their suffering, and how to deal with it. Such expectations place tremendous burden on the preacher.

These challenges that pastors face when preaching on suffering is the reason why I felt compelled to investigate this subject. Thus, in this study, I will discuss some current approaches from pastors in Korea who preach about suffering. Subsequently, I will intend to propose alternative homiletical possibilities for preachers to consider when preaching about suffering.

### **1.1.2 The need for the maturity of the faith community**

The other motivation for this study arises from the need for the maturity of the faith community. It is very important for the preacher to understand that preaching itself involves both proclaiming and teaching. These elements need to be incorporated in sermons for the maturity of the faith community. Dodd (1944:7-9) argues that the authors of the New Testament clearly distinguish between preaching and teaching. He emphasises the preaching of “kerygma (κήρυγμα)” based on this argument. Sidney Greidanus (1988:6) observed that Dodd’s argument resulted in serious consequences, resulting in a confrontation between “kerygma (κήρυγμα)” and “didache (διδασχία)”. Contrary to Dodd’s argument, Greidanus (1988:7) claims that preaching needs to contain both elements of proclaiming and teaching. It means that preachers need to proclaim the gospel to the congregation, and at the same time also teach them how to live as a Christian in this world. One of the important goals of preaching is to help the congregation to embody God’s reign in a broken world by establishing a faith community through preaching the Word of God to God’s people (Cho 2012:3). Jeong (2012:6) also emphasises the role of the faith community in relation to the purpose of preaching:

Preaching aims not only the maturity of each individual, but also the maturity of the faith community. The sermon is to make the people of God establish the right relationship with the world in which they live and to play a legitimate role in the society. This ultimately aims to make God's glory appear inside and outside the church.

In particular, in relation to suffering, preachers need to proclaim “kerygma (κήρυγμα)” and teach them “didache (διδασχῆ)” to show how to live as Christians in periods of suffering. This is because these elements play an important role for the maturity of the faith community. For example, through preaching on suffering, preachers can provide the congregation with knowledge of God’s divine attributes or God’s divine providence, and thereby teach them how to live in times of suffering by understanding this knowledge (Cf. Louw 2000:71). In contrast, when preachers misinterpret the will of God concerning suffering or preach without any particular strategy, thus failing to make the Word evident, the congregation may fall prey to “credulity” or “cynicism”. Credulity denies the reality of suffering and seeks superficial happiness, while cynicism denies happiness by highlighting the reality of suffering (Hall 1986:20-35). In conclusion, preaching on suffering has a decisive influence on the believers' understanding of God in relation to suffering, and the way they deal with suffering in their daily lives.

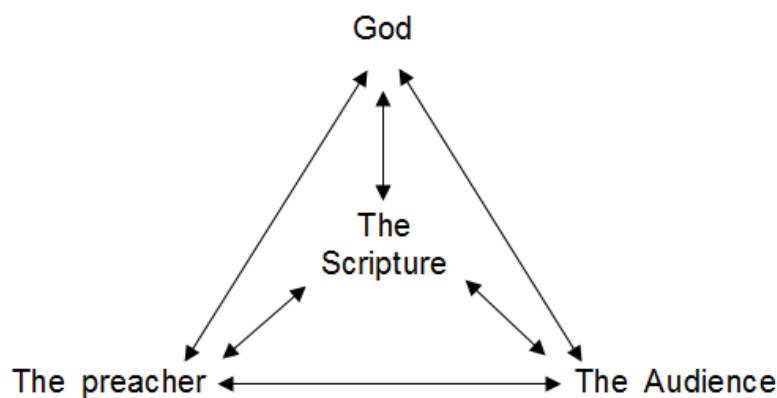
To sum up, preaching on suffering is very important for the maturity of the faith community because it could lead the congregation to find God through suffering, and lead them to become disciples of God who can live abundantly amid suffering.

Based on the above, a strong motivation for the maturity of faith communities has affected the direction of this study. Therefore, in this study, homiletical examination for the maturity of faith communities with regards to suffering will be carried out, and associated homiletical strategies will be suggested.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN THE STUDY**

When investigating this homiletical study regarding the preaching on suffering, the following homiletical questions arise: What type of suffering would be addressed in preaching? What are the theological perspectives that a preacher needs to understand to help him or her interpret suffering? Which image of God should be proclaimed in preaching on suffering? How do preachers communicate the message to the congregation? What are the proper methods of preaching on suffering to engage the congregation?

To examine these questions in a more comprehensive fashion, it is important to construct a framework which keeps the following aspects of preaching in mind: God, Scripture, the preacher, the audience (Cilliers 2004:22-24; Craddock 1985:22; Long 1989:20-30; Patte 1984:21ff). For sermon analysis, it is necessary to ask questions related to four essential elements of preaching as preaching is the result of the interactions between these elements (Cf. Cilliers 2004:22-37). These elements carry out their unique functions through mutual interaction with the other aspects (Cf. Lee 2002:37), as shown in Figure 1.1 below.



**Figure 1.1 Four essential elements of preaching**

For this reason, I would like to use Rudolf Bohren's three essential questions of sermon analysis as a basis for constructing a framework for analysing the sermons on suffering (Cf. Bohren 1989). Bohren suggested three important questions that should be asked in sermons analysis:



- What impresses us?
- Where does the sermon come from?
- Where is the sermon heading?

The reason I use Bohren's questions is because he offers a comprehensive framework for sermon analysis. This stems from requiring the correlation of four essential elements of preaching (Cho 2012:124-125). I suggest four questions as a framework for sermon analysis based on Bohren's three questions and four elements of preaching:

- How can God be proclaimed in preaching on suffering? The first question is about the attributes of God that preachers predominately proclaim in their preaching on suffering. An analysis of this question may reveal preachers' dogmatic view of God.
- How have the Scriptures been interpreted in preaching on suffering? The second question suggests that the interpretation of suffering should be based on Scripture. An examination of this question may reveal preachers' hermeneutical interpretation of texts regarding suffering.
- How do preachers communicate their teachings regarding suffering? The third question relates to the ways in which the main idea of the text is communicated to the audience. An examination of this question may reveal the preachers' understanding of communication, and show the goal and target that preachers pursue through preaching.
- How does the audience of "Here and Now" link to the people of "Then and There"? The fourth question concerns the theological nature of preaching. An examination of this question may reveal not only preachers' understanding of the audience, but also a theological understanding of preaching and hermeneutics.

By asking comprehensive questions that concern the four essential dimensions of preaching, I would like to analyse preaching on suffering, and expose the

problems of preaching on suffering in Korean churches. These four questions do not only focus on isolated problems, they are related. The methodology and sermon analysis will be discussed in Chapter 2

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

A. G. Van Wyk (1995:85) explained the difference between “method” and “methodology” and tried to offer clear definitions of two terms to avoid confusion:

By and large, a “method” refers to the way or the procedure by which certain aims and objectives are attained. “Methodology”, on the other hand, denotes the scientific study of methods or procedures undertaken in the cause of research.

A relevant methodology could help to develop effective homiletical strategies for preaching in contexts of suffering. Specifically, a practical theological methodology needs to be used since this study falls within the discipline of practical theology. For this reason, this study will follow two methodologies: practical-theological methodology, and empirical study.

#### **1.3.1 Practical-theological Methodology**

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834) had a significant influence on practical theology. Edward Farley, a systematic theologian, evaluated Schleiermacher’s contribution under the influence of the “theological encyclopaedia movement” (1983b:25-26):

It proposes a way of conceiving theological study that justifies its presence in a modern university, retains the independence of fields of scholarship, and founds it in the church and ministry. Schleiermacher, however, divided theology into the following three fields (Dingemans 1996:82):

- Philosophical theology: The root of the theological tree
- Historical theology: The stem or body of the tree

- Practical theology: The crown of the theological tree

This division of theology indicates an order of theologizing: the best way to theologize is to start with philosophical theology, to proceed via historical theology, and to end by applying these theories in practical theology. Schleiermacher presumed that practical theology does not affect philosophical and historical theology but seems to be a kind of “applied theology”. As a result, this “*Theory – Practice*” model dominated most of the theological education in both Europe and North America in the middle decades of the twentieth century (Farley 1983a:159-161). Thus, practical theology was regarded as the discipline that applies doctrine to the pastoral situations (Miller-McLemore 2012:1). This implies that practical theology was narrowed down to a discipline of the church, and ministerial activities. For this reason, Farley argued that Schleiermacher failed to offer a fundamental solution to the disunity of theological disciplines (Farley 1983b:25-26). Campbell (1972:219) also disapproves of it:

Most unfortunate of all, was the total identification of the discipline (practical theology) with church-directed functions of ministry ... this meant that the imprisoning of practical theology in the world of the religiously minded. Since the clergyman had become a kind of chaplain to the godly-minded, his relationship (and the relationship of the church he served) to the world outside became of secondary concern ... This type of definition of the scope of the subject meant that it was quite ill-equipped to cope with the radical questioning of the place of the church in the world.

Since the late 20 century a group of practical theologians, including Craig Dykstra, pointed out that the distinction between theoretical theology and practical theology can no longer be persuasive (Dingemans 1996:83). As a result, some practical theologians began to explore new alternatives to overcome the problem of the dualism of theory and practice.

Don S. Browning refers to the holistic theology that a pastoralist should have, and calls it “fundamental practical theology”. The term “fundamental practical theology”, as referred to by Browning implies that the whole of theology is fundamentally a

practical theology (Browning 1991:8). He tried to integrate descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology into a fundamental practical theology. He argued that in the past practical theology had a linear, and dualistic structure akin to the methodology of “*Theory – Practice*” where practical theology was understood as applied theology, and proposed a new approach of “*Praxis – Theory – Praxis*” model (Osmer 2008:148-149) that has a cyclical structure. This “*Praxis – Theory – Praxis*” model is helpful to engage in critical discussion regarding church practices and possible future approaches. For this reason, practical theologians world-wide are following this model (Dingemans 1996:83):

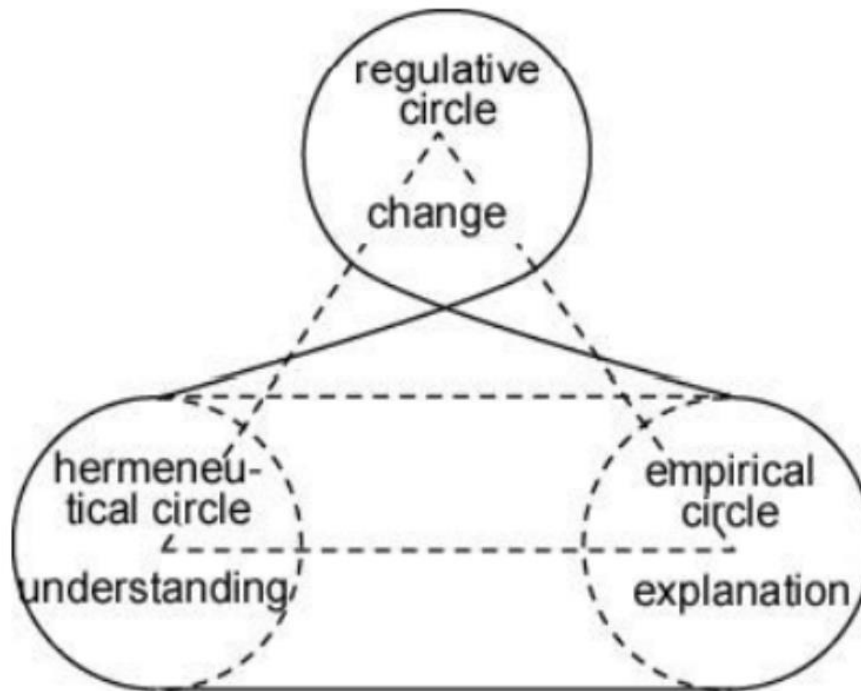
Whereas formerly, practical theologians had first studied the Bible and the doctrine of the church in order to apply the results of their findings to the practice of the church, more recently, under the influence of social studies they have changed their approach: In recent decades, practical theologians world-wide have agreed on starting their investigations in practice itself. Practical theology has become description of and reflection on the self-understanding of a particular religious tradition. This approach moves from practice to theory, then back to practice.

A group of practical theologians, including Gijsbert Dingemans, Gerben Heitink, and Richard R. Osmer, suggested new practical theological methodologies to overcome the separation of theoretical theology and ecclesial practice based on the “*Praxis – Theory – Praxis*” model. Gijsbert Dingemans provides a four-step integrated practical theology methodology (Cf. 1996:92-93):

- An interdisciplinary description of the practice or analysis of the situation: The first step should be the analysis of practice itself. In this step, the methods may be different, either more “empirical” (quantitative or qualitative); derived from social studies (J. A. van der Ven); or more “historical,” “linguistic,” and “hermeneutical,” issuing in a “thick description” (Don S. Browning); or more “ideology-critical,” analysing the powers at work in church, and society (liberation theology and feminist approaches).

- Explanation of the situation: The second step is to seek a critical explanation of the practical situation by drafting a hypothesis that can be verified (or falsified) afterwards, and that will probably lead to new theories or new options. In this step, a hermeneutic of suspicion is introduced to the praxis or situation itself. In other words, the faith tradition, i.e. the essence of Christianity, the primary symbols, themes of proclamation, and the dogmas of tradition, are used as a hermeneutical key to examine the praxis and situation.
- Finding the normativity of praxis: The third step aims to find the normative backgrounds of a tradition or to examine the normative ideas of people. This step helps to remedy the problems behind the practice or situation, and to provide a new direction and vision. Through a normative examination, a way could possibly be found to remedy the problems, and clearly reconstruct the identity and mission of the faith community. Unless the faith tradition is redefined, its present understanding would become an object of idolatry.
- Making suggestions and recommendations: The last step, which could be called the strategic phase, aims at making suggestions and recommendations pertinent to the proposed vision and direction in order to improve and transform the existing phase.

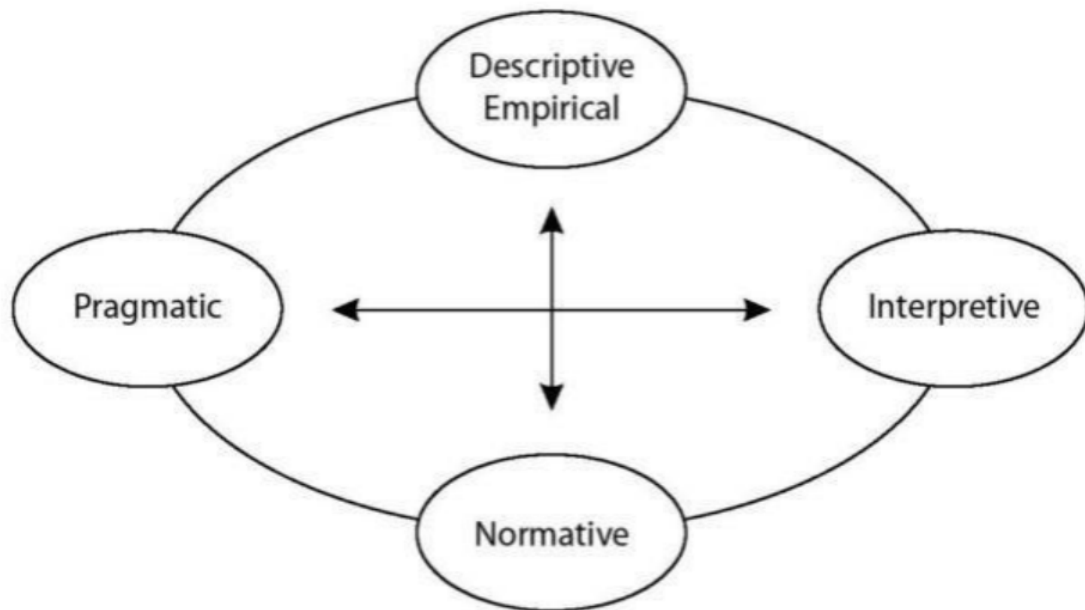
Gerben Heitink suggests practical theological methodology as the ecclesial praxis of the church that is conducted at the interlinking of three concentric circles: the hermeneutical circle, as the interpretation that is typical of human sciences; the empirical circle, as the testing circle that is typical of natural sciences; and the regulative circle, which is typical of the methodology in practical thinking (Heitink 1999a:165). The three concentric circles are illustrated in Figure 1.2 below.



**Figure 1.2 Heitink's methodology of practical theology (Heitink 1999:165)**

The three circles that Heitink suggested correspond to the distinctive goals of the discipline: the interpretation of human action in the light of the Christian tradition (the hermeneutical perspective), the analysis of human action with regard to its factuality and potentiality (the empirical perspective), and the development of action models and action strategies for the various domains of action (the strategic perspective).

Richard R. Osmer (2008:4-28) proposes practical theological methodology consisting of four tasks in *Practical theology: an introduction*, as shown in Figure 1.3 below.



**Figure 1.3 Osmer's methodology of practical theology**

1) The descriptive-empirical study/task: "What is going on?" This task has to do with describing what is happening in the field. This step provides helpful information, and identifies the current situation to discern patterns or dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.

2) The interpretive study/task: "Why is this going on?" This task is to interpret, analyse, and evaluate the information gathered to understand why a particular pattern or dynamics occur in the field.

3) The normative study/task: "What ought to be going on?" This task is to use theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from "good practice".

4) The pragmatic study/task: "How might we respond?" This task is to determine strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable, and entering into reflective conversation with the "talk back" emerging when they are

enacted.

I would like to develop this study based on Richard R. Osmer's practical theological methodology. The reason why I chose Richard Osmer's methodology is that preaching on suffering is used within the framework of four tasks as presented by Osmer. His practical approach will help me understand the realities of preaching on suffering in Korean churches.

Preaching on suffering carries out both an interpretative task, and a normative task, paying attention to the proclamation of Word of God to the congregation based on the interpretation of the text. Preaching on suffering also carries out a descriptive-empirical task in the sense that it is written with the faith community's special context, events, and people in mind. In addition, with the audience in mind, it carries out a pragmatic task in the sense that various efforts are mobilized to help the audience feel, think, and act (Osmer 2008:4-28).

Therefore, in this study I will try to understanding preaching on suffering in Korean churches, and seek homiletical alternative with the use of Osmer's methodology. In the descriptive-empirical task, I shall describe the practical situation of preaching on suffering in Korean churches, and identify the main problems of preaching on suffering. In the interpretive task, I shall analyse preaching on suffering, and identify the cause of the problem, discussing various theodicies regarding suffering. In the normative task, I shall discuss redemptive-historical preaching, redemptive-historical interpretation, and sermonic forms. In the pragmatic task, I shall propose, as my hypothesis, the redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative, and show the preparation steps and method of redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

### **1.3.2 Empirical study**

This study also will follow empirical study to narrow the scope of this study, which would entail analysing the sermons of five specific preachers (Jeong-hyun Oh, Seok-jeon Yoon, Sam-hwan Kim, Hong-do Kim, Young-hoon Lee) representing



Korean churches, and also analyse representative preaching on suffering they preached, as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Five specific preachers for the sermon analysis**

Name	Title of sermon book	Denomination	Name of church
Jeong-hyun Oh	Care: solid beyond the time of suffering	The general assembly of Presbyterian church in Korea	Sarang church
Seok-jeon Yoon	The bread of life for the occasion of the soul	The Korea Baptist convention	Yonsei central church
Sam-hwan Kim	Path to faith in Jesus Christ	The Presbyterian church of Korea (Tonghap)	Myungsung church
Hong-do Kim	The pillar of fire	The Korean methodist church	Kumnan methodist church
Young-hoon Lee	I have seen your tears	The assembly of God of Korea	Yoido full gospel church

I selected two criteria to discuss each preacher's sermon. The first criterion requires that the selected preachers are actively involved in Korean churches. Furthermore, they must be senior pastors who represent their particular denominations in South Korea - each ministering to the largest church in their respective denominations. They must also be renowned for the influence they

have on the community through Christian television and radio. Focus will be placed on their individual methods of preaching on suffering.

The second criterion is to explore how each sermon reveals the various aspects of the four essential elements of preaching on suffering. Each sermon's interactive aspects and functions will be identified and explained. In Chapter 2, I will elaborate further on each preacher's biographical profile, as well as their respective theological hermeneutics.

#### **1.4 WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The hypothesis of this study intends to show that redemptive-historical narrative preaching can be a homiletical alternative to the preaching on suffering in Korean churches. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching represents the redemptive history of God in the text through a rhetorical strategy structure called a plot of reversal (Lee 2015b:129-103). This strategic structure could evoke the congregation's awareness of God in their suffering, and God's redemption of suffering. In other words, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is a homiletical alternative that can interpret suffering from the perspective of God's redeeming providence, and effectively preach on suffering through the form of narrative.

#### **1.5 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

There are four objectives of this study:

- The first objective is to identify the problems of preaching on suffering in South Korea. For this reason, I shall limit the scope of the research to five representative denominations of Korean churches (conservative Presbyterian church, Baptist church, liberal Presbyterian church, methodist church, Pentecostal church). I will then present a critical analysis of the hermeneutics on suffering in accordance with the homiletical questions I present.

- The second objective of this study is to provide strategies for the interpretation of suffering. I shall explore various forms of suffering and how churches and theologians have interpreted suffering. In addition, I shall discuss theological perspectives for the interpretation of suffering.
- The third objective is to suggest a homiletical strategy for preaching on suffering. To accomplish this, I shall examine sermonic forms of preaching on suffering. I shall also investigate the audience's reaction in the attempt to propose a more relevant preaching approach on the subject of suffering.
- The final objective of this study is to contribute to the rediscovery of the preaching on suffering. Through this study, preachers may acquire the importance of preaching on suffering, and possibly be able to prepare sermons using the new framework.

## 1.6 DELIMITATIONS

Firstly, regarding the sermon analysis, all sermon scripts will be selected from the sermon books of selected preachers to assure analytical accuracy. The translations of the sermon scripts will be added as an appendix at the end of the study. However, these sermon scripts have a Korean-based context, and they also contain some terms used in Korean churches, for example; Early morning prayer, prayer of agreement (corporate prayer), Overnight prayer meeting, etc. For this reason, I shall at times translate Korean script to English<sup>1</sup>. It is important to note that the translation might not convey the accurate meaning. The challenge of translating from Korean to English is that it might have an influence on the accuracy of sermon analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bible verses quoted by the preacher will be attached to the appendix using the New International Version (NIV). The reason for using the NIV in this study is that Korean churches mainly use the NIV more than King James Version, except for Baptist churches. The reason for this is theological extremism. See the following website: <http://www.hdjongkyo.co.kr/news/view.html?section=22&category=1004&item=&no=14759>, viewed in August 2019.

Secondly, concerning theoretical development, I will propose a homiletical strategy for preaching on suffering. My suggestions should not be viewed as the only alternative, but rather as a proposed alternative.

In order to observe the primary focus of this study, I will primarily focus on homiletics and theology related to preaching on suffering. This study will rely on the interpretations of various literary sources regarding suffering, and sermonic methods. Various other academic disciplines, such as hermeneutics, communication theory, narrative theory, etc., will also be brought into the conversation with regards to their relevance to preaching on suffering.

## **1.7 ABBREVIATIONS**

SKC: South Korea churches

GAPC: The general assembly of Presbyterian church in Korea (Hapdong)

PCK Tonghap: The Presbyterian church of Korea (Tonghap)

PCK Kosin: The Presbyterian church in Korea (Kosin)

PGAK: The Presbyterian general assembly of Korea (Baekseok)

PCK Hapshin: The Korean Presbyterian church (Hapshin)

PCK Kijang: The Presbyterian church in the republic of Korea (Kijang)

KBC: The Korea Baptist convention

KMC: The Korean Methodist church

AGK: The assembly of God of Korea

KEHC: Korea Evangelical Holiness church

EMP: Early morning prayer

OPMF: Overnight prayer meeting in Friday

APS: Afternoon praise and worship service

## **1.8 RESEARCH STRUCTURE**

To ensure a well-structured research report in which the content flows in a logical order, the chapters have been outlined as follows:

Chapter 1, as an introduction to this dissertation, will introduce backgrounds and motivation, research questions to be asked, methodology, and the aims of this research. Practical-theological methodology will also be discussed in more detail.

Chapter 2, as the descriptive-empirical task, will focus on the analysis of preaching on suffering in Korean churches, and examines the main problems, and causes in preaching on suffering. In this chapter, I will select five sermon scripts of preachers who represent the largest denominations in Korean churches. I will rely on the Heidelberg Method for sermon analysis.

Chapter 3, as the interpretive task, will investigate various theodicies affecting preaching on suffering. In this chapter, I will classify and discuss various forms of suffering. Here I will investigate how historical theology has interpreted suffering. After examining these theodicies, I will suggest a “Homiletical Theodicy” by presenting the appropriate interpretations for preaching on suffering.

Chapter 4, as the normative task, will look at narrative preaching and redemptive preaching before proposing the redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative to preaching on suffering. Firstly, I will review various sermon forms. Secondly, I will explain narrative, and narrative preaching. Thirdly, I will discuss redemptive-historical interpretation, and redemptive-historical preaching.

Chapter 5, as the pragmatic task, will suggest redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical strategy of preaching on suffering. In this chapter, I will explore how the plot of narrative preaching, and a redemptive-historical approach can be applied, and expanded from an integrated perspective. I will then propose redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative to preaching on suffering. I will then present steps that may assist in the preparation of preaching on suffering. I will conclude to illustrate the proposed practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

Chapter 6, as a conclusion to this dissertation, will finish this study by reviewing and summarizing the study and suggesting another direction for homiletics in the future.

## **2. CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS OF PREACHING ON SUFFERING IN SKC**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on the descriptive-empirical task as proposed by Richard Osmer in *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (2008). Emphasis will be placed on the analysis, and the challenges one faces when preaching on suffering in SKC.

I will explain the reason for selecting the particular Korean preachers (Jeong-hyun Oh, Seok-jeon Yoon, Sam-hwan Kim, Hong-do Kim, Young-hoon Lee) and their sermons more elaborately. A brief biography of each preacher, and the history of the churches they served, or are serving, will be attached and explained.<sup>2</sup> I will then introduce the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis to analyse the five Korean preachers' sermons. To conclude, I will identify and explain the challenges experienced when preaching on suffering.

### **2.2 SELECTING THE RELEVANT PREACHERS AND SERMONS**

There are many preachers in SKC who have preached on suffering. However, to analyse, and identify possible uncertainties regarding the preaching on suffering, I will focus only on the selected preachers as mentioned in 1.3.2. I chose the preachers on the ground that they are all prominent figures from different denominations of the SKC. Focus will be placed specifically on their teachings on suffering.

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<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the study is not to examine the lives of the selected preachers. Thus, I will only briefly introduce their biographies and pastoral backgrounds. The reason I feel this information is relevant is because the sermon cannot be written without considering the influences of these factors on the pastor's hermeneutical approach.

The SKC can be categorized into three categories: The evangelical and conservative Presbyterian churches, the Liberal churches, and the Pentecostal church (Cf. Yoo 1988:3-4). The table below indicates the size of each denomination (Cf. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism 2018:108-118).

**Table 2.1: Major Protestant denominations in SKC<sup>3</sup>**

Denomination		Theological tendency	Members	Representative churches
Presbyterian	PCK Tonghap	Moderate	2,789,102	Jooan church, Myungsung church, Onnuri church
	GAPC	Conservative	2,764,428	Sarang church, Woori church, Sooyoungro church
	PGAK	Conservative	1,403,273	Haeoreum church, Dongtan sarang church, Daejeon glory church
	PCK Kosin	Conservative	473,497	Bethel church, Podowon church, Samil church
	PCK Hapshin	Conservative	151,516	Hosanna church, Nampho church
	PCK Kijang	Liberal	300,000	Antioch church, Hyanglin church, Kyungdong church
KBC		Conservative	801,437	Yonsei central church, Jiguchon church, Gangnam central Baptist church
KMC		Liberal	1,334,178	Kumnan methodist church, Kwanglim church
AGK		Conservative	1,036,425	Yoido full gospel church, Grace and truth church
KEHC		Conservative	355,222	Sungnak holiness church, Namgunsan church,

<sup>3</sup> The survey conducted in 2018 by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism did not count the number of KEHCs and AGKs. Therefore, this study uses the latest figures listed on the websites of the KEHC and AGK. Cf. <http://www.pgak.net>; <http://www.kehc.org> viewed in August 2019.



The aim of this study is to select a preacher who reflects the reality of preaching on suffering. As can be found in the table above, the largest denominations in SKC, which exceed 500,000 people, are PCK Tonghap, GAPC, PGAK, KBC, KMC, and AGK. However, the theological tendency of GAPC and PGAK are similar, and PGAK has recently increased significantly in numbers due to the integration of two denominations. For this reason, among the Presbyterian denominations, PCK Tonghap and GAPC were selected for sermon analysis, excluding PGAK. Thus, in this study, I will analyse five representative preachers from the selected denominations. These five selected preachers served at the largest church in each denomination (PCK Tonghap, GAPC, KBC, KMC, AGK), and their sermons still have a great influence on SKC. Therefore, by analysing each preacher's sermon, we can see that theological perspectives on suffering existed in Korean churches, and we can identify unique interpretations, and applications related to suffering depending on denomination.

Another reason for selecting the specific sermons is because they could reveal the various aspects of four essential elements of preaching on suffering. As Cilliers (2004:29-33) explained, "Preaching takes place when God's voice is heard through the voice of the text, in the voice of the time (congregational context), through the (unique) voice of the preacher. When these four voices become one voice, then the sermon is indeed *viva vox evangelii* (the living voice of the gospel)." Therefore, the purpose of sermon analysis, it is important to select sermons that involve, and reveal important aspects of these four essential elements in preaching on suffering.

For sermon analysis, sermon scripts will be selected from the sermon books of preachers. I selected sermons that include all four elements, and these scripts will enhance the analytical accuracy of the four essential elements.

### **2.3 THE HEIDELBERG METHOD OF SERMON ANALYSIS**

As mentioned earlier, I will rely on the Heidelberg method for sermon analysis. Rudolf Bohren and Gerd Debus developed the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. This particular method is considered to be a helpful tool for sermon analysis. Cilliers (2006:8-9) explains this method as follows:

Rudolf Bohren and the German author, Gerd Debus, developed it at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. This method gained international recognition at a symposium on preaching research that was held from 8 to 12 September 1986 in Heidelberg. It developed from the close reading of literally thousands of sermons and takes as its point of departure the right and power of a congregation (as ecclesia complete) to corroborate critically the preaching taking place in its midst. The objective is for the method to act as an aid for this congregational assessment of preaching ... It is a method that grew from a sensitivity to the history of preaching, but also a passion to move closer to the practice of preaching, and as such it represents an integrated practical theology in its own right ... [More] it offers the possibility to critically interpret the sermons ideologically.

The Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis has been proven to be effective. The advantage of this method is that it has the potential to reveal the preacher's homiletical perspectives. It also identifies problems and contradictions that may appear in the sermon. Also, it reflects on the ideology of preachers, and discusses contemporary preaching trends.<sup>4</sup> Cilliers (2006:8-11) explains:

The method wants to contribute to the theological and empirical evaluation of preaching and to be used to supplement methods that place a greater emphasis on an investigation into the communicative working of preaching. Formally, the methodology consists of a number of analytical and synthesizing steps. On the one hand, the text of the sermon is examined *in extenso* - its content is investigated linguistically (regarding words, sentences, paragraphs) so that the superficial structure becomes clear. On

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<sup>4</sup> Texts are a "living phenomenon" with many facets, making it necessary to recognize that this method cannot exclude subjectivity (Cilliers 2006:10).

the other hand, the mutual relations between the linguistic contents are determined in order to allow the basic motives of the sermon to be revealed. These motives together form the depth structure of the sermon. The Heidelberg method of sermon analysis seeks to reveal the explicit and implicit signs of language in sermons. In the process, not only does the method interrogate the sermon text about what it says, but also about what is not said, what is excluded, pushed aside, transferred and even denied by what was said.

The Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis consists of basic homiletical and linguistic questions. Through linguistic questions, we might discover the message the preacher wants to convey. Subsequently, through homiletical questions, we might identify a scripturally dependable message that God is trying to communicate. If different thoughts are discovered between the homiletical and linguistic questions, it can be argued that the preacher does not correctly convey what the text intends to communicate. According to Cilliers (2013:4), this can be seen as an intra-textual approach which intends to interpret the Word of God in. Simply put, it asks: to what extent does the preached Word articulate the Word of God? Or in the definition of Bullinger: Is the preached Word of God indeed the Word of God (*Praedicatio Verbi Dei Est Verbum Dei*)<sup>5</sup>?

The main reason for using this method is that both the insignificant and the profounder structure of the text will emerge. Thus, the sermon can be analysed in its entirety. The second reason is that the Heidelberg method helps to examine the four essential elements of preaching by asking homiletical questions. In other words, the Heidelberg method could enable us to answer some of the critical questions related to the four essential elements of preaching as described in section 1.2. For this reason, I will amalgamate these four essential elements with

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<sup>5</sup> “*Praedicatio Verbi Dei Est Verbum Dei*” is one of the important Reformed homiletical principles. It means that “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God”. This declaration comes from the *Second Helvetic Confession* (Muller 1985:237). This Confession was written by Heinrich Bullinger in 1562 and the original title was *Confessio et Expositio Simplex Orthodoxae Fidei* (Muller 2003: 71; Schaff 1919:233).

the Heidelberg method of sermon analysis, and alter the criteria for analysis and interpretation according to this study's research question.

### 2.3.1 Linguistic questions

We can formulate six questions based on six linguistic signals<sup>6</sup> of the sermon as bellow:

- What is the introduction of the sermon? The introduction of the sermon is very important because it serves as a guide to provide the sermon's clues to the audience, and determines the course of the sermon (Seo 2015:74). Through examining the introduction, we can identify what the preacher describes as the sermon's intention or goal is.
- What is the conclusion of the sermon? In the conclusion of the sermon, the preacher accomplishes the sermon's purpose, and invites the congregation to make a decision of obedience (Seo 2015:76). This question shows us the message that the preacher wants to convey through the sermon.
- What is the form of the sermon? The preacher is supposed to reveal the main idea through a particular sermonic form. In other words, the sermonic form used in preaching can be described as a means of conveying the main idea. Therefore, this question can indicate a preacher's specific delivery, nuance and rhetorical strategy.
- What conditional sentences are included in the sermon? The preacher often attempts to convey his ideas to the audience through conditional sentences. In this process, the preacher may approach the audience through true hypothesis or argument but in some cases he cannot provide biblical answer

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<sup>6</sup> The six signals are as follows: the introduction, the conclusion, form, conditional sentences, emphases, and negations. The way in which words constructed the sermon reveals the sermon's form and outline, We can use these to discern the explicit and implicit signs of language in the sermon (Cilliers 2006:11).

by approaching through false hypotheses or arguments. Therefore, by examining the conditional statements in the sermon, we can identify whether the preacher's hypothesis or argument is true or not.

- Where, and what is a logical interruption or irritation? Sometimes, the preacher intentionally adds uncertain information or a rumour to the sermon to substantiate his theological view without solid evidence. By asking this question, we can identify an incorrect logic or theological problem that the preacher holds.
- What is the negation of a preacher? A dualistic method (e.g. light and darkness, true and false, good and evil) is often used in preaching to deliver a sermon's message. This means that the preacher supports one side by identifying another side's problem (Park 2010:20). By posing a negation, we can identify the preacher's theological view and personal background because the preacher, by necessity, reflects his theological view, and personal background through negation.

### **2.3.2 Homiletical questions**

The basic homiletical questions are designed to identify the four essential elements of preaching. By identifying these elements of preaching, we can see what God wants to say to His people through text. There are four basic homiletical questions (Cf. Cilliers 2006:11; Park 2010:20-21):

- Which God is at issue here? What are this God's characteristics, and how does God behave? God reveals Himself directly or indirectly in the biblical text. In other words, God reveals His characteristics and behaviour to His people through the text. By asking this question, we can identify what the text says about God, and how the text illustrates God in suffering.
- How is the biblical text included in the sermon? Thus, what does the text say about suffering? "Preaching is a word of God only insofar as it begins with

and interprets a scriptural text” (Buttrick 1994:24). Every sermon should be based on the biblical text, and the preacher has a responsibility to interpret the text correctly. However, it is possible that the preacher misinterprets the Word of God and distorts what the text intended to say. By asking this question, we can see the main idea or theological principle that the text intends to deliver and whether the preacher is correctly interpreting the text.

- What kind of congregation does the sermon appeal, and apply to? The congregation that lives in faith always faces various sufferings. It is for this reason that the preacher needs to convey comforting messages to those who suffer. In this sense, a preacher could be called a mediator of God’s comfort (Aden and Hughes 2002:139). However, to convey such a message, the preacher must have an accurate understanding of the needs and situations of the congregation. If the sermon is given without considering the needs of the congregation, the sermon may have no relevance to the congregation. For this reason, this question is helpful to answer the needs of the congregation, and it shows whether a preacher applies his message appropriately to serve the needs of the congregation.
- How does the preacher function in the sermon? “Each pastor has a unique image of God that reflects his/her own experience of God and what God means to the preacher personally” (Louw 1998:330). This means that the preacher’s image of God will subsequently reflect in the sermon, which in turn will have an inevitable effect on the faith community. However, it is also important to know that these images are based on the homiletical perspective of the preacher’s understanding of the congregation. By raising this question, we can identify the image of a preacher that a preacher has in mind as well as his theological perspective of the congregation.

### **2.3.3 Revised questions for sermon analysis**

As mentioned earlier, the Heidelberg method for sermon analysis will be utilised to analyse preaching of suffering in the SKC. However, for an understanding of

SKC's preaching on suffering, it is important to establish relevant homiletical questions related to the subject of the study. The advantage of the Heidelberg method is that it can be used efficiently by omitting or combining one or two questions (Park 2012:142-143). For this reason, instead of directly using the Heidelberg method, I would like to revise it for the purpose of this study.

First, the linguistic questions have been replaced by questions appropriate to the study as shown in the Table 2.2. What I would like to establish through the revised questions is to establish what the preacher wants to say about suffering. To establish this, I will examine the preacher's theology regarding suffering as revealed through the sermon. For this purpose, Questions (4) and (5) will be grouped together and will be presented as a revised question (4). Question (6) is focuses on the preacher's theological view or personal background. This is omitted because the preacher's theological view can be examined in Question (4), and personal backgrounds will be discussed in the biographies of the selected preachers.

**Table 2.2: Revised linguistic questions for the sermon analysis**

Linguistic questions	
Before the change (six questions)	After the change (four questions)
(1) What is the introduction of the sermon? (2) What is the conclusion of the sermon? (3) What is the form of the sermon? (4) What conditional sentences are included in the sermon? (5) Where, and what is a logical interruption or irritation to you? (6) What is the negation of a preacher?	(1) What is the introduction of the sermon? (2) What is the conclusion of the sermon? (3) What is the form of the sermon? (4) What is the hypothesis or argument for suffering used in this sermon?

Secondly, the homiletical questions have been replaced by questions appropriate to the study as shown in Table 2.3. The intended purpose of the revised linguistic questions is to attempt to determine what God wants to say about suffering. To establish this, I merged the four essential elements of preaching with the Heidelberg method of sermon analysis and accustomed the criteria for analysis, and interpretation in accordance to the research question.

The revised question (1) is helpful to compare the image of God as shown in the text in comparison to the image of God as portrayed by the preacher. This question serves to show whether the sermon articulates accurately how the text expresses God in suffering. The revised question (2) is related to the interpretation of the text, and it could show us what the text says. In other words, it can be used to confirm whether the interpretation of the text is correct. The revised question (3) is related to the congregation. This question shows the preacher's homiletical perspective of the audience. The revised question (4) helps to examine the image the preacher is attempting to portray the sermon. This question can show the image that the preacher holds as well as the preacher's homiletical understanding.

**Table 2.3: Revised homiletical questions for the sermon analysis**

Homiletical questions	
Before the change	After the change
(1) Which God is referred to? (2) How is the biblical text included in the sermon? (3) What kind of congregation does the sermon appeal? (4) What is the role of the preacher in the sermon?	(1) Which God is revealed in the sermon? (2) How does the sermon interpret the text? How does the sermon interpret the suffering in the text? (3) How is the audience described in the sermon? How does the preacher approach the congregation who is suffering? (4) What image of the preacher can be found in the sermon?



## 2.4 ANALYSIS OF PREACHING ON SUFFERING IN SKC

The following table provides the titles and biblical texts of selected sermon scripts for sermon analysis.

**Table 2.4: The titles and biblical texts of selected sermons scripts (Kim 1998; Kim 2010; Yoon 2013; Lee 2016; Oh 2016)**

Preacher	Title of sermon	Text
Jeong-hyun Oh	The new nature of overcoming suffering - Joy	1 Peter 1:8-12
Seok-jeon Yoon	Jesus solves your despair	Luke 7:11-17
Sam-hwan Kim	Follow until the end. You will receive a response.	Matthew 15:21-28
Hong-do Kim	The cry out of Bartimaeus	Mark 10:46-52
Young-hoon Lee	Our praise and prayer in times of suffering	Mark 14:26

### 2.4.1 Analysis of Jeong-hyun Oh's preaching on suffering

### 2.4.1.1 Biographical profile

The first preacher selected for analysis is Jeong-hyun Oh who served at Sarang church<sup>7</sup> in Seoul. He was born in 1956 as the son of a pastor who was serving a small church in the countryside. He was greatly influenced by his grandfather, and father from an early age. His grandfather was an elder who served the church as a Sunday school teacher for 40 years. His father, Sang-jin Oh, served a church for 43 years (Oh 1997:20-23).

After graduating from high school, he went to Seoul to study. While studying at Soongsil University, he served as a leader in the youth group of the Naesudong church (1979-1982). After completing his studies at Soongsil University, he decided to go to the United States. There he studied his master's degree (MDiv) at Talbot Theological Seminary (1982-1984) and was ordained a pastor at the High Desert Korean church in Victorville, California. He later studied his master's degree (Th.M.) at Calvin Seminary (1985-1986). Following the suggestion of pastor Han-hum Oak, he established the Southern California Love church for American immigrants at 1998 and served there until August 2003.

While serving the church, he obtained his doctoral degree (PhD) in 1998 from Potchefstroom University (now the North-West University, NWU). His dissertation was titled: "Disciple Making Preaching in the Light of the New Testament: An Exegetic — Homiletical Study". In September 2003, he succeeded pastor Han-hum Oak and has been serving as the second senior pastor of the Sarang

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<sup>7</sup> Sarang church is a Presbyterian church in Seoul, Korea with over 80,000 members. Sarang, one of several megachurches in Korea, was founded in 1978 by pastor Han-hum Oak. Sarang church is also a representative church of GPAC. An important feature of the Sarang church is its discipline training, in which the philosophy of "one person as a disciple of Christ" is observed. The person who comes to mind when it comes to "Sarang church" is pastor Ok Han-heum, who founded the church. He is the person who spread discipleship training in SKC, leaving a meaningful mark on SKC. When he served Sarang Church, even though it was a large church, there were no ethical or moral problems, and it was highly praised for trying to raise each believers as true disciples of Jesus. In a recent poll, Han-hum Oak ranked first in the survey of theological students (Reformedlifetheology 2012:5-15).

church.<sup>8</sup> He had a remarkable influence as a pastor representing the conservative Presbyterian churches in South Korea, and his sermons and books gained much popularity from the public.

However, Jeong-hyun Oh has been criticised for various reasons. In 2012, his academic falsification, and plagiarism of a doctoral dissertation caused great concern for the SKC. The church coordinated an internal fact-finding committee to examine his suspicious educational background. The committee found that he was untruthful regarding his academic background, and that some of his qualifications were fallacious. They also confirmed that he plagiarized Michael Wilkins' book "Following the Master" in the process of obtaining a doctorate of philosophy from Potchefstroom University.<sup>9</sup>

Excessive expansion of the church has also given rise to great criticism from society. When pastor Oak served at Sarang church, though it was a large church, it was regarded as a respectable church. However, pastor Oh built a new church, which cost 170 million dollars despite opposition from the council of the church and criticism of society.<sup>10</sup> This caused the church to be divided in two groups – one supporting the pastor, and the other opposing the pastor – a feud that still continues to this day. As a result, these problems caused an enormous uproar in Korean churches which subsequently paced the credibility of the SKC under question.

#### **2.4.1.2 Linguistic questions**

(1) What is the introduction of the sermon?

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sarang.org/gongji/uri3.htm> viewed in August 2019.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2013/08/316\\_141332.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2013/08/316_141332.html) viewed in August 2019.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/art/2011/04/135\\_59372.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/art/2011/04/135_59372.html) viewed in August 2019.

In the introduction of the sermon, pastor Jeong-hyun Oh tries to explain the mystery of the rebirth. He says that we were born again in spirit and explains rebirth by referring to the story of Nicodemus. He explains that we cannot be born again by ourselves, and that rebirth is only possible through the Holy Spirit. He explains that we cannot be born again by ourselves, and that rebirth is only possible through the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Oh also says that we already have the strength to overcome difficulties because we were born again. He claims that born-again Christian has been given the power to overcome suffering. Through his argument we may identify the purpose of the sermon: We are born again and have the strength to overcome suffering.

(2) What is the conclusion of the sermon?

In the conclusion, pastor Jeong-hyun Oh says, it is natural that believers will suffer in this world. However, he argues that the ultimate victory belongs to the believer. He tries to prove that suffering is natural in the lives of believers, using the case of a missionary who was martyred. He claims that a missionary was already rewarded for serving the Lord with joy, and that similarly believers can also cover up all their problems with joy. From this, it is apparent that the preacher wants to ensure the congregation that born-again believers have the power to overcome suffering.

(3) What is the form of the sermon?

This sermon uses a semi-inductive form, which consists of an "induction-deduction" combination (Cf. Robinson 2014:126). In the beginning of the sermon, pastor Oh uses an inductive form, starting with the discussion of the rebirth of believers, expanding his explanation gradually to the new life of rebirth. From mid-sermon, he uses a deductive strategy. He explains the main idea and then substantiates it through examples. Emphasis is placed on the mid-sermon where the congregation is reminded that the joy of rebirth with overcome suffering.

(4) What is the hypothesis or argument for suffering used in this sermon?

The hypothesis that pastor Oh poses is that born-again Christians already possess the joy to overcome suffering. He sees this joy as a heavenly gift, and reassures the faithful not to fear death once they are reborn. He refers to 1 Peter 1:8-9 to support his argument.

### **2.4.1.3 Homiletical questions**

(1) Which God is revealed in the sermon?

It is important to explore which image of God is revealed in the text. As stated in 1 Peter 1:9, God gives the salvation to the souls of the faithful. As shown in the text, salvation is possible only by the grace of God. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, it is written that the prophets and the angels were eager to find out more about this gift. By referring to this, Peter's intention is to show the grace of God by emphasising the greatness of salvation. Thus, the God revealed in 1 Peter 1:8-12 is the sovereign God who gives salvation to the faithful.

The image of God shown in the sermon is a God who gives joy to the faithful. In the beginning of the sermon, pastor Oh argues that God is the only means to rebirth. He says that God is the only one who can save us, but this assertion is only used for supporting the reason why joy was given to the faithful. Therefore, the image of God, which is emphasised throughout the sermon, is God who gives joy. As a result, we see pastor Oh distorting the image of God that the text intended to reveal.

(2) How does the sermon interpret the text? How does the sermon interpret suffering in the text?

The Apostle Peter explains salvation in 1 Peter chapter 1. In 1 Peter 1:1-2, he introduces the believers as "strangers", but proclaims that they are people chosen by the work of redemption through the Trinity. Believers' salvation is only achieved

through their knowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, through ones obedience to Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling of his blood. 1 Peter 1:3-12 are long hymns that elaborate on salvation. 1 Peter 1:3-5 praise the redemptive work of God the Father. 1 Peter 1:6-9 praise the Holy Spirit's work of sanctifying the saints in their daily lives. 1 Peter 1:10-12 describe the work of the Son, Jesus Christ. It is evident that the text places great value on salvation (Calvin 1980:355-359).

However, the sermon tries to focus on Joy from rebirth based on 1 Peter 1:8-9. No interpretation of these verses can be found in the sermon. In addition, there are no interpretations of 1 Peter 1:10-12. For these reasons, we see that pastor Oh claims joy only because the word "joy" is written in 1 Peter 1:8. To sum up, pastor Oh is attempting an atomistic interpretation (Cf. Greidanus 2001:63-64) to illustrate his claim in the sermon.

The suffering that is referred to in the text is the suffering of Christ, as shown in 1 Peter 1:11. Christ suffered for our salvation, and the Holy Spirit revealed the suffering of Christ to the prophets. Pastor Oh makes no mention of this suffering in his sermon. He rather refers to the sufferings that believers endeavour while on earth. Pastor Oh uses vocabulary with different meanings to that of the text. In other words, it is not biblical, although it appears biblical. Thus, it seems that his sermon misinterprets the text.

(3) How is the audience described in the sermon? How does the preacher approach the congregation which suffers in the sermon?

Pastor Oh considers believers as born again Christians. On the other hand, he defines believers as strangers. According to his arguments, suffering is natural when living as a stranger. It is also evident that no empathy is shown for the suffering of the believers. On the contrary, pastor Oh tries to convince the audience to rejoice. This creates the impression that pastor Oh regards the audience as Christians who must overcome suffering. As a result, we see that his theological perspective is that the audience is only a receiver of the message.

(4) What image of the preacher can be found in the sermon?

In his own story, pastor Oh introduces himself as a man who is not afraid of death because he believes in Jesus. Although his interpretation is not from the text, he wants to prove, and support his main idea of the sermon from his own experience. For this reason, the image he is trying to project in the sermon is that of a witness (Cf. Long 1989:35-37).

## **2.4.2 Analysis of Seok-jeon Yoon's preaching on suffering**

### **2.4.2.1 Biographical profile**

Seok-jeon Yoon was born a Christian in Puyo, South Chungchong Province in 1949. He served in the church since he was young. He was reborn in the fullness of the Holy Spirit when he was in elementary school. He worked at a trading company until he was 38 years old. However he was always sceptical about his life, and agonized over the meaning of life. According to his testimony, God then called him as a minister, and Yoon decided to be a pastor. Later, he studied his master's degree (MDiv) at Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary. On March 15, 1986, he started his first church, Yonsei central church<sup>11</sup>, with 20 members. In the first two years, he devoted all his time to his ministry. By August 2000, the congregation grew to 27 136 members. Currently the congregation is estimated to have 40 000 (Hwang 2000:413-414).

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<sup>11</sup> The Yonsei central church is located in Guro-gu, Seoul, and is one of the largest churches in the KBC. The Yonsei central church's central message is: "Let's encompass the world by the gospel". On March 15, 1986, the church was established at 337-1, Yeonhui-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul. The church moved to Gung-dong, Guro-gu, Seoul in 2002. Its largest chapel in the East, Gung-dong chapel, was built on May 5, 2005. Yonsei central church's Gung-dong chapel has 15,000 seats, and is larger than the Yoido full gospel church. Yonsei central church holds protracted meetings in large cities in Korea, and conducts military evangelization as well as overseas missionary activities. In particular, the HuinDolsan Retreat, a prayer center, belonging to the Yonsei central church that regularly hosts protracted meetings and seminars for pastors, elders, deacons, and a youth. Cf. <http://www.grandculture.net/> viewed in September 2019.

However, there are many who criticize pastor Yoon. Firstly, he is suspected of being a heretic. Hapshin found that pastor Yoon's sermons revealed that he might have been challenged with hermeneutics, and referred to him as being heretical<sup>12</sup>. He is also suspected of having a theological understanding similar to pastor Ki-dong Kim of Seongrak church that is known for his Berea demonology<sup>13</sup>. Secondly, Yoon proudly emphasises the absolute authority of the pastor, and the total obedience of the church members. For example, In Yonsei central church, there are no elections of elders. All elders are being appointed by pastor Yoon. He says, "The minister shall command from the pulpit, and the church shall obey it at all times" (Yoon 2013:112). He even testifies that he uses violence against church members and considers it justifiable. "I beat the calf when the young women in the church wore short skirts", "Did I only hit them one or two times? No. I often hit them to the point of almost falling down" (Yoon 2013:86; 281). He also finds himself under public scrutiny for hereditary pastorship succession. On November 18, 2018, the church decided to designate Dae-gon Yoon, pastor Yoon's son, as senior pastor. The executive committee announced the result without a vote.<sup>14</sup> This action resulted in tremendous criticism from the media. It was argued that this decision was driven by power and wealth. Consequently, many South Korean Protestants are concerned for the continuation of the SKC.

#### 2.4.2.2 Linguistic questions

(1) What is the introduction of the sermon?

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.amennews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=221> viewed in September 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Pastor Yoon is a graduate of Berea International Theological Seminary, run by Kim Ki-dong. The points of this demonology are that (1) the world is filled with evil spirits, causing people various temptations and diseases; (2) the realm of such spirits not only affect on disbelievers but also on believers; (3) their identity is the spirit of the disbelievers; and (4) these spiritss can be driven out in the name of Jesus through trained exorcists(Do 1990:67-68).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.newsjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=221051> viewed in September 2019.



Pastor Yoon begins his sermon by presenting God as love. He defines God's love as completely different from earthly love. He views God's love as the only means to human's happiness. He says that people cannot find happiness in this world, and that there is no happiness in this world. He portrays those who believe in Jesus as being blessed.

Pastor Yoon says that when believers enter the kingdom of God, all pain ceases, and eternal happiness begins. According to him, those who do not believe in Jesus will go to hell. For these reasons, pastor Yoon portrays those who believe in Jesus as being blessed.

(2) What is the conclusion of the sermon?

In conclusion, pastor Yoon voices that believers should enjoy happiness. He argues that believers are capable of exercising happiness, and that it is possible only by faith.

(3) What is the form of the sermon?

The form used in this sermon is deductive. After talking about happiness, pastor Yoon explains happiness through the following three points. In the first point, he explains that the kingdom of God is the best happiness of a believer. The second point is about the freedom that is gained from believing in Jesus. He argues that this freedom is the greatest happiness on earth. The last point postulates that the believer's power, as given by God, can give happiness to their lives.

(4) What is the hypothesis or argument for suffering used in this sermon?

In the sermon, pastor Yoon presents two theological hypotheses regarding suffering. Firstly, he poses the dichotomous idea that suffering stems from believing or denying Jesus. According to his argument, believers suffer economic and environmental difficulties because they do not know the value of happiness that is gained from believing in Jesus. Secondly, he cites "The Generational

Curses.”<sup>15</sup> He expresses this pain in the word “destiny”. He claims that illness and suffering are due to ancestors. Third, he argues that we have the key to solve suffering. In this sermon, the need of “solving sufferings with faith” is repeated. It is observed that his soteriology is based on Pelagianism, and emphasises that one’s faith is the solution of all suffering

### 2.4.2.3 Homiletical questions

(1) Which God is revealed in the sermon?

In the text Jesus brings the widow's son back to life. What we should pay attention to in the text is that Jesus did not cure her son because of what the widow had done. The text tells us in Luke 7:13: “he had compassion on her.” The text also states in Luke 7:16: “God has come to help His people.” The text shows us that God loves and cares for His people.

The image of God that pastor Yoon wants to portray in the sermon is God who gives happiness. He says that “no misfortune, no sorrow, no happiness can take away the happiness that God has given me.”

(2) How does the sermon interpret the text? How does the sermon interpret the suffering in the text?

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<sup>15</sup> Generational Curses is a concept first posited in 1972 by Dr. Kenneth McAll, an American psychiatrist, and was considered a theological theory in 1986 by J. Hampsch. Later, Marilyn Hickey propogated this idea in *Break the generation curse*. Pastor Yoon-ho Lee translated her book, and became widely known in Korea. Though a subject of controversy, this belief is quite popular among Korean believers. This phenomenon is due to the deeply embedded shamanistic world view of Koreans (Kim 1999:124-126). Several professors pointed out the challenges of biblical interpretations and theology regarding this topic (Oh 1999:116-131; Jeong 1999:132-151; Kim 1999:124-137; Lee 2000:186-217; Kim 2005:79-87). PCK Kosin, PCK Hapshin, PCL Tonghap defined this theory as being dangerous and claim that it stands in contradiction to the Bible. Those who believed in this theory were banned to participate in their assemblies. Cf. <https://www.newsjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=195174> viewed in September 2019.

The text attempts to convey that suffering an inevitable part of our lives, and that it saddens God when we suffer. Although the text does not explain the meaning of suffering, when reflecting on Jesus' grief regarding our suffering, we can only assume how God feels when we suffer. To sum up, through the narrative of the widow and her son, the text intends to show that God is grieving when we suffer.

Pastor places emphasis on the fact that only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can solve spiritual death. However, he attempts to make an atomistic interpretation to prove his argument. He ignores the other elements of the text, and focuses on the "power of Jesus" which is one element of the text.

(3) How is the audience described in the sermon? How does the preacher approach the congregation who is suffered in the sermon?

Pastor Yoon says believers are not experiencing eternal happiness because of their suffering. He urges believers to overcome suffering with faith. Rather than sympathizing with the suffering of the audience, he blames the audience for their lack of faith. Instead of understanding the audience who suffers, he reproaches the audience. These prove that pastor Yoon sees the audience as merely the receiver of the message.

(4) What image of the preacher can be found in the sermon?

Pastor Yoon's image is similar to a herald. In the sermon, he repeatedly emphasises that believers must enjoy the happiness of God. There is no illustration of this in his sermon, and the structure of the sermon is simply composed of explanations and applications. Although it is not faithful to the text, he quotes several biblical passages that support his ideas, arguing that his ideas are the will of God. It can be assumed that as a herald, he believes the message should be conveyed clearly.

### **2.4.3 Analysis of Sam-hwan Kim's preaching on suffering**

### 2.4.3.1 Biographical profile

Sam-hwan Kim was born in Yeongyang, North Gyeongsang Province, in 1945. His father, the eldest grandson of the head family, forced him to obey the strict laws of the head family. His mother accepted the gospel early in her life and attended a church ten miles away, raising her son in a devoted life of prayer. His father's stubbornness resulted in many religious persecutions. However, these constant persecutions only strengthened his faith. Since the age of 17, he served in the church as the bellboy of the EMP. In 1974 he graduated from Pierson Theological Seminary (currently Pyeongtaek University), and in 1978 he graduated from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary.<sup>16</sup>

Pastor Kim began his pastoral ministry at the age of 20. He served in four churches, Hunggu church, Woljeon church, Pungbuk church, and Marin church before he accepted pastorship in the Myungsung church. He often mentions that the sermons he experienced in these churches were very difficult (Kim 1997:90).

In 1980, pastor Kim established Myungsung church<sup>17</sup> with about 20 devotees in a shopping district in Myeongil-dong, Guangdong-gu. It has since grown to be one of

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<sup>16</sup> This is a reference to the pastoral story of pastor Sam-hwan Kim's Web site, which is linked to the Myungsung church's Internet homepage. <http://www.msch.or.kr/> viewed in October 2019.

<sup>17</sup> The name of Myungsung church comes from "bright (Myung)" and "sound (Sung)", which means "to spread the Word of God in Myeongil-dong". Due to the continued growth since 1980, the new building was built on July 6, 1983. In October 1987, the existing church was demolished, and a new church of 8600 m<sup>2</sup> was erected to accommodate the larger congregation. On April 16, 1989, a new church building was built, and the number of registered members surpassed 10,000. In 2008, the number of registered members reached nearly 100,000. In August 2009, "the House of Bethlehem" was torn down and re-built to build a new church, which was completed in December 2011 (Hwang 2009:5). Myungsung church is famous for its early morning prayer. The Myungsung church has created a great demand for early morning prayer in the SKC, and recently hosted a total of five special morning prayer sessions. Currently, there are five special dawn prayer meetings, with about 7,000 people attending the first meeting, 10,000 people the second meeting, and about 44,000 people attending the third, fourth and fifth meetings. <http://kidogkongbo.com/1460> viewed in October 2019. The church also has established mission centers and dormitories throughout the country to help the children of pastors and missionaries to

the largest churches in Korea with almost 100,000 congregants. Pastor Kim received the 3rd Korea Christian Mission Award in 1992, as elected by the World Evangelization Central Council. In 2001, he was awarded “the Cultural Medal”. He has also been nominated as one of the “30 Korean Christian New Leaders” in 2002, and one of the “100 Korean Christians of Holy Spirit” in 2004 (Kim 2006:189-190).

However, Sam-hwan Kim has faced some criticism regarding his ministry. First, he was accused of embezzlement of funds. In 2014, suspicion rose that the 100 billion won (approximately 83 million dollars) slush funds might have been the reason for elder Park’s, the finance director of Myungsung church, suicide. It was alleged the he could not cope with the burden of managing these funds. Pastor Kim sued a reporter, and a media company for defamation charges. During the trial it was confirmed that Sam-hwan Kim's borrowed-name account existed and that 80 billion won (approximately 67 million dollars) had been embezzled over 12 years.<sup>18</sup>

Second, Sam-hwan Kim has been at the centre of controversy over the church’s hereditary succession since 2015. On November 12, 2017, the church designated Ha-na Kim, the son of pastor Kim, as its senior pastor. The media accused Kim Sam-hwan of illegal conduct. There are also groups such as SEVAN who are waging a movement against illegal succession.<sup>19</sup>

#### **2.4.3.2 Linguistic questions**

(1) What is the introduction of the sermon?

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continue their studies. There are missional, educational, medical and various other activities that the Myungsung church is envolved with, both locally and abroad.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201701131165044210> viewed in October 2019.

<sup>19</sup> [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?artid=201910060917031&code=960206](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201910060917031&code=960206) viewed in October 2019.

Pastor Kim begins his sermon by introducing famous historical dramas in Korea. Pastor Kim makes reference to Emperor Gojong's case to try to prove that no one can escape suffering in life. He elaborates that Emperor Gojong, the king of the Joseon Dynasty, had always been in suffering due to the conflict between his father and his wife. Pastor Kim asks believers what they would do if they were in a similar situation. He continues by asking the following questions encourage sympathy: "How should we live in this world?", "How should we respond when something is difficult?"

(2) What is the conclusion of the sermon?

In the conclusion of the sermon, pastor Kim introduces an illustration of a missionary who caught a big fish for his cancer-suffering wife. He appeals that we should do our best to catch and eat the fish like this missionary without sitting still or being discouraged. He claims that Christianity is a religion moving forward, and when believers walk with faith, all curses and demons go away, and blessings enter their lives.

The idea that sufferings are solved when the believer merely persists in faith is repeated throughout the sermon. The message that the preacher wants to convey is that believers can overcome suffering when they pursue their faith diligently.

(3) What is the form of the sermon?

The sermonic form used here is a semi-inductive form. In the beginning of the sermon, pastor Kim uses an inductive form. In the introduction, pastor Kim starts by introducing dramas, and asking questions. Then he presents the central idea in an inductive way based on the text's story. The focus of the sermon is to "follow the Lord but follow until the end." After arguing the main concept of the sermon, he continues to the mid-sermon where he uses a deductive form that encourages, and convinces the audience by means of arguments, illustrations, and explanations. He divides the sermon in three parts through which he explains the crux of the sermon. Firstly, he explains the importance of keeping the Sunday

sacred. Secondly, he urges the congregation to avoid temptation by faith. Thirdly, he emphasises the importance of participating in worship.

(4) What is the hypothesis or argument for suffering used in this sermon?

Kim's argument is that suffering can be overcome when a believer lives boldly by faith to the end. In other words, he argues that suffering can be solved by the believer's faith. According to Kim, it is a sign of weakness to lose faith when suffering. The faithful must instead repel all curses and demons, and be blessed by God.

### **2.4.3.3 Homiletical questions**

(1) Which God is revealed in the sermon?

The image of God revealed in the text is that of one who tests the faith of the believers. Jesus did not heal the daughter of the woman who came to him, and explained the reasoning for doing so. However, the text shows that Jesus deliberately continues to talk to her to encourage her faith. In other words, Jesus tested the woman's faith, and refers her situation to teach that faith is available to all, not just for the elected (Osborne 2008:92).

The sermon shows two images of God. The first image of God is a God who bestows grace and blessing upon believers through suffering. He explains that biblical figures never received unworthy grace, and that they have all received God's blessing, and grace through difficult trials. Through various illustrations, he attempts to show that suffering bestowed to the faithful actually serves to bless them, and to reveal God's grace.

The second image of God is God who loves the participation of believers in worship. Pastor Kim says that God blesses those who come to church, and those who observe the Sunday to be sacred. He emphasises the importance of early

morning prayer, and argues that God gives health and well-being to those who participate in this custom.

(2) How does the sermon interpret the text? How does the sermon interpret suffering in the text?

In the biblical text, responding to the woman's supplication, Christ did not respond. He regarded her as a nuisance. However, her faith compelled her to proceed. Jesus referred to this incident to teach the Jews that faith is more important than any earthly regard (Osborne 2008:79-80).

However, pastor Kim is distorting the text's intentions for his own purposes. He speaks of the importance of faith, but misinterprets the intention of the text. He presents faith as a means to be blessed. Through many illustrations, he emphasises that only those who plead before God by faith can be blessed. The reason for this interpretation is that he does not focus on Jesus, but rather on the woman. The text intentionally shows Jesus' unusual behaviour, but pastor Kim overlooks it, and focuses only on the woman's actions and words for his own purposes.

(3) How is the audience described in the sermon? How does the preacher approach the suffering congregation in the sermon?

In the sermon, pastor Kim first describes believers as those who are tired and distressed by sin. However, there is no mentioning of the feelings of the suffering audience. Second, the audience is depicted as selectors who must choose between the two options. He accentuates that faith is up to believers. He relies on illustrations to prove that faith is important. His theological perspective toward the audience is that it is only a receiver of the message.

(4) What image of the preacher can be found in the sermon?

Pastor Kim's image is like that of a witness. A witness testifies to events, and the event to which the preacher testifies is the encounter between God and us (Long



1989:48). In the sermon, he tries to portray God through various illustrations. In particular, he shares his past with the audience. Although his interpretation is distorted for his own purpose, he uses his experiences to construct a more persuasive argument.

## **2.4.4 Analysis of Hong-do Kim's preaching on suffering**

### **2.4.4.1 Biographical profile**

Hong-do Kim was born on February 6, 1938 to a Christian family in North Korea. His family moved to South Korea as refugees during the Korean War. He graduated from the Methodist Theological University and served as associate pastor of Gwanhuimun church from 1967 to 1971. He joined Kumnan church<sup>20</sup> in 1971, and served there as a senior pastor until 2008. Pastor Kim has led, and developed the church for 36 years.

The church has approximately 130,000 registered church members and is currently the largest Methodist church in the world. From 1996 to 1998, Hong-do Kim served as the head of the Christian Korean Methodist Council, and was the president of the National Council of churches in Korea. He was also the chairman of the Aftercare Council of World churches, the president of the ACTS University

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<sup>20</sup> Kumnan church is a Protestant church which belongs to KMC. It is located in Mangwoobondong, Jungnang-gu, Seoul. Kumnan church, managed by faculty members and students, led by Ewha Womans University President Kim Hwal-ran, began its first service in 1957 in a tent church at Kumnan Dongsan Mountain in Guri, Guri-myeon, Gyeonggi-do. The name Kumnan church is named after Kim's first letter, Kim, and the last, Ran. Later, in March 1971, Kim Hong-do began to serve as the fourth senior pastor. The church began to grow rapidly. During his ministry, he rebuilt the church three times, and currently has about 130,000 registered church members. It is the world's largest Methodist church, the seventh largest Protestant churches in the world, and the third largest of the Korean protestant churches in South Korea. [http://www.kumnan.org/page\\_yATy81](http://www.kumnan.org/page_yATy81) visited Oct in 2019.

of theological Seminary, and the chairman of the Korea-U.S. Council of Christian pastors.<sup>21</sup>

However, he caused many social and personal controversies. Most importantly, he was criticised for pursuing nepotistic pastorship. He spent large amounts of money to justify his hereditary pastorship succession through full-page advertisements in newspapers. For this he was greatly criticized by the public. His actions resulted in tremendous criticism of Protestantism.<sup>22</sup> He was also convicted by the judiciary on charges of embezzlement and breach of trust.<sup>23</sup> In particular, he made controversial remarks using radical words, and inculcating political inclinations to his followers. In 2008, he was charged for supporting a particular candidate in the 18th presidential election, and on October 23, 2011, he was accused of violating the Public Official Election Act by making slanderous remarks against the Seoul mayoral candidate.<sup>24</sup>

#### 2.4.4.2 Linguistic questions

(1) What is the introduction of the sermon?

Pastor Kim begins his sermon with an illustration of a pastor he knows. Kim links the sermon to the story of Bartimaeus. He shares the narrative of a first-class soldier visiting the division commander without despair amid an unjust situation. He says that Bartimaeus' story is "a thousand, ten thousand times greater" than the illustration. As he tells the story of Bartimaeus, he points out that Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus. He focuses on the conversation between Bartimaeus and Jesus, and emphasises the word "faith". Therefore, through the introduction, we

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.kumnan.org/> viewed in October 2019.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.dangdangnews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=5337> viewed in October 2019.

<sup>23</sup> <http://news.mk.co.kr/newsRead.php?year=2014&no=1274903> viewed in October 2019.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/View/at\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0001738773](http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0001738773) viewed in October 2019.

can guess that pastor Kim intends to show to the audience that strong faith overcomes suffering.

(2) What is the conclusion of the sermon?

The conclusion of the sermon is very short. Pastor Kim urges the audience to cry out like Bartimaeus. He says we can call Jesus in our homes, businesses, and country to solve our problems.

(3) What is the form of the sermon?

The sermon form used here is an inductive form. The sermon consists of 2 main points, each consisting of 2 and 4 sub-points. In the first main point, pastor Kim claims that the difficulty is an opportunity to meet God. He insists that believers must cry out to God. He stresses the importance of crying out to God through four sub-points.

(4) What is the hypothesis or argument for suffering used in this sermon?

Pastor Kim claims that suffering causes the faithful to cry out to God. Pastor Kim says that Bartimaeus's blindness caused him to cry out. Additionally, pastor Kim argues that God grants blessings to believers when they cry out to God. Kim places special emphasis on the importance of prayer. He says that a church that keeps on praying can receive great blessings from God.

#### **2.4.4.3 Homiletical questions**

(1) Which God is revealed in the sermon?

The text shows God's coming to fulfil the gospel. Jesus devoted his time and attention to some of the poorest people in Israel. By healing the blind, Jesus revealed that he was truly the son of David, anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel to the poor, and open the eyes of the blind (Evans 2002:297). The text

shows that Bartimaeus repeatedly called Jesus “the son of David”, leading the reader to confirm Jesus as David's son. Therefore, the image of God revealed in the text is God who came to the earth to fulfil the gospel.

The image of God revealed in the sermon, is God who responds to prayer. The preacher emphasises that God answers the prayers of believers, quoting John 14:13-14. He also claims that when we pray earnestly, we can accomplish the impossible. Thus, pastor Kim focuses on the visual image of the text.

(2) How does the sermon interpret the text? How does the sermon interpret the suffering in the text?

In the text, the blind man shouts “Son of David” to Jesus. Then Jesus heals him and tells the blind that “your faith has healed you”. It means that Jesus considers the blind man’s faith as his confession that Jesus is the Son of David. Thus, the blind man believes that Jesus is the Messiah (Calvin 1982:220).

In his sermon, pastor Kim refers to the blind man’s faith while elaborating on the situation facing him. However, he focuses on the blind man's actions rather than his beliefs because the main idea of the sermon is to cry out to Jesus. Therefore, he does not deal with the identity of Jesus Christ at all. To sum up, the correct interpretation is not made, and atomistic interpretation is performed.

(3) How is the audience described in the sermon? How does the preacher approach the suffering congregation in the sermon?

Throughout the sermon, the audience is described as believers who must pray. There is no description of the situation or feelings of the audience. There is also no communication between the preacher and the audience, only an approach to the audience through explanation and application. The sermon presents the story of Joshua and Elijah as illustrations for the purpose of application. Therefore, pastor Kim’s theological perspective on the audience is that the audience is only a receiver of the message.

(4) What image of the preacher can be found in the sermon?

The image pastor Kim attempts to project is that of a herald. In the sermon, he proclaims repeatedly that believers must cry out to Jesus. The structure of the sermon is merely composed of explanations, and applications. Although it is not faithful to the text, he quotes several biblical figures that support his ideas to proclaim that his ideas are the will of God.

## **2.4.5 Analysis of Young-hoon Lee's preaching on suffering**

### **2.4.5.1 Biographical profile**

Pastor Young-hoon Lee was born in Seoul in 1954. He was the second of the four children of Elder Kyoung-sun Lee who served as the Presbyterian President of the Yoido full gospel church. Born in the fourth generation of a Christian family, he attended Yoido full gospel church. From an early age, he found himself deeply enrooted in the Pentecostal theology. Pastor Lee established an ecumenical theological foundation at Yonsei theological seminary. He then built a vast theological literacy in Pentecostal theology at Hanse University, and a conservative Reformed theology at the Westminster School of Theology.

Through his Ph.D. in religious philosophy at Temple University, he showed an integrated insight that balances progress and conservatism, theology and philosophy, theory and practice. Pastor Lee ministered at the Full Gospel First church in Washington, full gospel Tokyo church in Japan, and Na Sung full gospel church in Los Angeles, USA. He also served as Dean of the Tokyo full gospel theological seminary, director of the institute for full gospel education, director of the institute for international theological studies, professor of theology at Hanse University, and president of Bethesda University. He also contributed significantly

to the theology of the pastoral philosophy of Dr Yong-gi Cho of Yoido full gospel church<sup>25</sup> (Choi 2017:217).

Recognized for his international sense, administrative skills, solid theological foundation, and abundant experiences of pastoral ministry, pastor Lee became the second senior pastor of the Yoido full gospel church in 2008. Since then, he has registered he has registered Yoido full gospel church as a foundation supervised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. He spent one-third of his church budget on social services, relief, and missionary work. He established a sound Christian reputation for restoring the church reputation by bringing transparency to the church's budget (Choi 2017:217-218).

#### **2.4.5.2 Linguistic questions**

(1) What is the introduction of the sermon?

Pastor Lee introduces the concept of praise in the introduction. He says that praise is one of the privileges and blessings that God has given to Christians. When we praise the Lord, he comforts, encourages, and gives us peace, drawing us closer to Him. According to Lee, praise is the means to overcome suffering.

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<sup>25</sup> Yoido full gospel church was started in 1958 by pastor Yong-gi Cho as a tent church in Seodaemun-gu. In 1973, it later moved to Yoido, and in 1984 it was renamed Yoido Full Gospel church. Pastor Cho built a new church building in Yoido where nothing existed at that time despite the opposition. The church grew rapidly and in 1980 it hosted more than 100,000. It has 780,000 members and is one of the largest churches in the world. The church sends missionaries all over the world, and has branch churches throughout the country. The influence of the Yoido full gospel church in Korean society has long been beyond the level of a single church. The church's growth process is an example of the growth of Protestantism in Korea (Lee 2018:214). The main doctrine of the Yoido full gospel church is the doctrine of triple blessings. This is a doctrine based on 1 John 1: 2, which states that if a man believes in God, and is saved, salvation occurs in three areas. The first realm of salvation is the spiritual part, which corresponds to "your soul is getting along well". The second realm of salvation is life's blessing, which corresponds to "all may go well with you". The third realm of salvation is holistic treatment, which corresponds to "you may enjoy good health". To be saved, therefore, involves change in all three areas of "soul", "life", and "health" (Cho 2002:68).

(2) What is the conclusion of the sermon?

There is no particular conclusion in this sermon. Each point has a short application at the end relating to its content. For example, in the last - point, pastor Lee encourages his listeners to turn their faces to the wall, and pray to the Lord like King Hezekiah. He is convinced that when we pray, the walls of despair, sorrow, and disease will fall, becoming walls of hope, joy, and health. He exhorts the audience to come to the Lord with praise, prayer, and thanksgiving. By exploring each- point, it is notable that the preacher wants believers to praise the Lord, and to pray through suffering.

(3) What is the form of the sermon?

The sermon takes on an inductive form. In the introduction, pastor Lee briefly introduces praise as the subject of the sermon. He explains praise as follows. The first point is that God is with us when we praise. The second point is that God wants us to praise Him. The third point is that we have to praise God in times of suffering.

(4) What is the hypothesis or argument for suffering used in this sermon?

The argument in the sermon is that praise can solve suffering. Throughout the sermon, pastor Lee repeatedly emphasises the blessings, power, and miracles of praise. He tries to support his argument by quoting illustrations from the Bible. The main content of illustrations is that the biblical figures try to praise amid suffering through which they receive blessings or miracles from God.

#### **2.4.5.3 Homiletical questions**

(1) Which God is revealed in the sermon?

The image of God revealed in the text is God who prepares for the accomplishment of the covenant. Mark 14: 12-26 records the last supper of Jesus and His disciples. In Mark 14:27-31, Jesus foretold Peter's betrayal. Mark 14:12-31 records the story of the Passover night where death and betrayal. In this situation, although Jesus knows all things, he calmly prepares the final meal. He continues to foretell the betrayal of the disciples who have been together for three years (English 2000:216-217). Therefore, it is evident that the text intentionally shows that Jesus does this to accomplish the covenant.

However, the image of God revealed in the sermon is a God who dwells in praise. Pastor Lee quotes Psalm 22:3, claiming that God dwells in our praise. God receives glory from us, and bestows His grace upon us.

(2) How does the sermon interpret the text? How does the sermon interpret suffering in the text?

The praise mentioned in Mark 14:26, is the second part of Halle (Psalm 114-118 or 115-118). The way to sing these poems is for one person to recite the text with the others responding aloud with "Hallelujah", and then reciting the second half of the text in song. People usually sing this praise at the end of the Passover meal (English 2000:295).

However, pastor Lee does atomistic interpretation here. He is using the word "praise" found in the text to support the subject. Although it is written in the text that Jesus and disciples went to the mountains after they finished their praise, pastor Lee says that Jesus went up to the Mount of Olives with praises on His lips. This shows that the preacher is not interpreting the text correctly.

(3) How is the audience described in the sermon? How does the preacher approach the congregation who is suffered in the sermon?

In the sermon, pastor Lee is trying to understand their sufferings from the perspective of the audience. He uses the plural first-person pronoun "we" to approach the audience. He creates a consensus that there are many difficulties in



life, and that it is very difficult to deal with all of them. However, after a brief mention of suffering, pastor Lee hastily applies the text. He does not sympathize with or explain suffering to the audience. He does, however, urge the audience to praise throughout the sermon.

(4) What image of the preacher can be found in the sermon?

Pastor Lee's image is similar to that of an educator or teacher (Westerhoff 1993). In the sermon he tries to teach the audience the value of praise, and presents praise as the answer to people's problems. The entire sermon is "indicative and imperative". Each point has a concept, which he first explains through several illustrations, and then presents to the audience.

## 2.5 THE PROBLEMS OF PREACHING ON SUFFERING IN SKC

By means of the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis, we can identify the problems of preaching on suffering in SKC. I arranged the four essential elements (God, Scripture, preacher, audience) of selected sermons in the following table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: The analysis of four essential elements of selected sermons**

Preacher	The image of God	The Scripture	The Preacher	The Scripture
Jeong-hyun Oh	God who gives joy to the faithful	atomistic interpretation	witness	receiver of the message
Seok-jeon Yoon	God who gives happiness	atomistic interpretation	herald	receiver of the message

Sam-hwan Kim	God who gives grace and blessing to believers through suffering / God who loves the participation of believers in worship	atomistic interpretation	witness	receiver of the message
Hong-do Kim	God who responds to prayer	atomistic interpretation	herald	receiver of the message
Young-hoon Lee	God who dwells in praises	atomistic interpretation	educator or teacher	receiver of the message

### 2.5.1 The failure of showing God revealed in the text

The first problem is the failure of showing God as being revealed in the text. Through the sermon analysis, one can see that the image of God that preachers want to convey is quite different from the image of God revealed in the text. Rather than showing God who works through the text in the sermon, the preaching on suffering in SKC is more focused on showing God who blesses the faithful. Therefore, we can judge that the selected preachers deliver a skewed image of God that is not connected to the text.

This image of God poses the challenge that believers might not be able to distinguish what God is doing regarding the suffering of the congregation. This

may lead believers to believe that their suffering is self-inflicted. Thus believers focus more on suffering itself than to find God amidst their suffering. This image of God may be confusing to the congregation as they might believe that God causes suffering with the intention to bless them. Consequently, if the congregation does not comprehend the reason for suffering, it could result in them blaming or mistrusting God.

### **2.5.2 Eisegesis**

The second problem is “eisegesis”. Eisegesis is the process of interpreting the text through one's own presuppositions, agendas, or biases (Webster 1976:364). In other words, eisegesis is the act of imposing meaning on the text. It is often described in terms of reading “into” the text rather than “out of” it. The sermon analysis shows that all selected preachers take one element like joy, praise, or crying from the text for atomistic interpretation. They are not interested in what the text is trying to say, but in a specific element. In other words, the selected preachers are distorting the text to justify their presuppositions, agendas, or biases. Therefore, their interpretation can be evaluated as eisegesis, not exegesis.

They simply interpret the suffering from the perspective of causality, and explain the cause of suffering as a matter of sin. Despite the diversity of suffering, preachers do not interpret suffering from various perspectives, but rather through the causality of sin and suffering (Lee 2015:258-259). Thus, the preaching on suffering is mainly to overcome suffering, and to receive God's blessings through some special means. That is to say, the purpose of the sermon is to present a simple solution to avoid sin, without revealing the theological meaning of the suffering. In this case, the faithful do not have a deeper theological understanding of suffering, but merely recognize it as a problem to be solved.

### **2.5.3 The absence of the effective sermon form**

The third problem of preaching on suffering in SKC is the absence of an effective sermon form for preaching on suffering. As examined, the selected sermons are mostly deductive sermons. Jeong (2009:306) points out that the sermon form used for preaching on suffering in most Korean churches is a three-point form. This deductive form fails to engage the audience because it is simply for the purpose of making the audience understand and accept the meaning of suffering. In other words, the preacher who preaches on suffering merely focuses on delivering something about suffering, not taking into account an effective sermon form for preaching on suffering. Therefore, even if the interpretation is excellent, the preaching that only conveys interpretation is likely to be an objective lecture on suffering.

In fact, the absence of an effective sermon form is a criticism of new homiletics on the traditional approach to preaching. Preaching is not merely re-telling meaning through the interpretation of the text; it creates a Word-event that changes the congregation through the Word of God (Cf. Jeong 2002:31). To create a Word-event, a proper sermon form for preaching on suffering needs be considered.

#### **2.5.4 The absence of audience analysis**

The last problem is the absence of audience analysis. In the sermon analysis, it was found that the preachers preach without an understanding of the audience's situation or feelings. Rather than approaching the audience through audience analysis, the focus is more on persuading them by presenting various illustrations to strengthen the preacher's perspective. The audience analysis is very important since it considers the audience as an active participant (Craddock 1979:53-59). However, Korean churches that have adopted conservative theology tend to emphasize the importance of "content". Therefore, the image that preachers of Korean churches project, or believe they should project, is like that of a "herald" or "proclaimer". This shows that there is little awareness of the importance of audience analysis, and preachers do not perceive the audience as an object of communication, but merely as a passive object for receiving the message (Han 2013:131).

The absence of audience analysis creates a serious problem in that the Word-event cannot occur in the sermon. A preacher has to find the need and the problems of the audience through the audience analysis. Without the audience analysis, the sermon can be a sermon not relevant to the audience. This sermon can neither affect nor change the public.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

In chapter 2, we selected five preachers, and sermon scripts for sermon analysis. The Heidelberg method for sermon analysis was used to analyse preaching on suffering in SKC, and to identify the following challenges: The failure of showing God's work revealed in the text, eisegesis, the absence of effective sermon form, and the absence of audience analysis. Therefore, to propose more effective preaching on suffering, I will research the following subjects in relation to these problems later in this study:

- The image of God has to be delivered to the audience
- Theological understandings and perspectives on suffering
- Perspectives of interpretation of the text related to suffering
- Appropriate sermon form for preaching on suffering, and ways of organising the content in that format.
- The importance of audience analysis, and methods of audience analysis.

### **3. CHAPTER THREE: THE THEORIES AND ATTEMPTS OF SUFFERING**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Suffering is when pain is associated with the subjective side of anguish and distress. It is related to the objective side of pain. In medical science, the term “pain” is used, whereas in theology, the term “suffering” is preferred. Pain and suffering cannot be truly separated, as those who experience suffering are in pain, and those who are in pain are suffering. Suffering and pain are two sides of the same coin.

In this study, I will use the word “suffering” to refer to both suffering and pain. The word “suffering” thus refers to both physical and mental pain. Suffering is always a part of our lives, whether we are believers or unbelievers in Jesus. In this respect, suffering is an essential emotion that a preacher cannot avoid. In order to preach, the first thing to consider is what types of sufferings there are, examine the different theories regarding suffering, and apply them in context

Therefore, this chapter will aim to classify, and examine various types of suffering. Since suffering cannot be classified into only a few categories, this study will classify it according to the causes, and scope of suffering within theological purpose as understood by the different theodicies. Next, we will examine various theodicies.

History has shown that there have been many attempts to figure out this mysterious part of theology (Magnante 1997:9). Philosophers and religious intellectuals have proposed possible answers to the question “why” concerning suffering. We will attempt to contribute to the understanding by reflecting on the existing theories. These theories present several interpretations of suffering, and how people experience suffering (Farley 1999:103). After examining these theories, I will construct a “homiletical theodicy” by choosing interpretations suitable for preaching on suffering. I will also present a homiletical theodicy based

on the basic elements (Creation-Fall-Redemption-Recreation) of the meta-narrative (Cf. Webber 2010:147-165), and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This homiletical theodicy might provide insight as to what should be considered when preaching on suffering.

## **3.2 SUFFERING AND ITS VARIOUS FORMS**

Humans live by experiencing various types of pain, distress, disease, personal difficulties, social catastrophe, and natural disasters, directly or indirectly (Low 2000:11-16). However, it is not easy to categorize, or list all forms of suffering. The reason is that the definition and category of suffering can vary depending on perspective and interpretation. Various kinds of sufferings can be categorized according to diverse perspectives, and the methods of coping with them might be vaster than these perspectives. In addition, personal factors such as the character and temperament might also affect an individual's perspective regarding suffering (Cf. Keller 2018: 336-337).

One of the important tasks required for the preaching on suffering is to systematically classify various types of suffering, and to attempt to evaluate them theologically (Lee 2015:261). This will assist the preacher to interpret various sufferings correctly. In Chapter 3, suffering is categorized based on causes, to what they are related, and the theological purpose of suffering. These categories are often amalgamated. Once these classifications are understood, the preacher will have a better understanding with regards to what type of suffering is relevant at a specific time.

### **3.2.1 Suffering caused by moral evil and natural evil**

Evil is a concept that belongs to the judgment of a person. To those who suffer, some suffering is evil, while some suffering is good. However, is evil simply the result of subjective value judgments? Although the definition of evil developed in the history of Western theology and philosophy is not clear, I rely on the Bible to

define evil. In the Bible, evil is used to define a deviation from an implicit “right goal”. This goal appears in relation to the will of God. Therefore, in this study, I define evil as being against God’s will and purpose (Cf. Doo 2014:71).

Evil in the broad sense has been divided into two categories: natural evil and moral evil (Swinburne 1998:4). Moral evil is evil that is caused by the free will of man. For example, murder, rape, robbery, embezzlement, hatred, jealousy are all moral evils. When people, created in the image of God, choose to act in defiance of God’s law, the result is moral evil. In other words, moral evil is caused by humanity’s depravity. Natural evil is that which causes pain and suffering to humanity but which is not due to direct human involvement. Congenital diseases, tsunamis, earthquakes, drought, and famine are all cases of natural evil. There is no morality involved in such events.

There are sufferings caused by moral evil and natural evil. First, there is suffering due to moral evil. For instance, murder can bring pain and grief to a person. Persecution may result in trauma and physical disability to the individual. Sometimes moral evil causes suffering not only to parties but also to those around them. Second, there is suffering due to natural evil. For example, a large number of people die from earthquakes. Numerous children in Africa die each year as a result of drought. Sometimes natural evil causes suffering not only in humans but also in animals and plants. Floods, for example, remove the habitats of animals and destroy nature.

However, the problem is that there is no clear distinction between moral evil and natural evil (Park 2012:22-23). For example, it can be judged as natural evil when many people suffer from floods or landslides. But it can also be judged as a moral evil when considering human moral negligence in failing to prepare for a possible disaster. Of course, not all environmental catastrophes are intentionally caused by humans. We cannot deny that there is suffering that can be explained by moral and natural evil. Evil is much more complex and comprehensive than modern Western philosophy has defined (Dalferth 2006:17). Because of this, there is a limit to categorizing all suffering based on moral evil and natural evil.



### **3.2.2 Innocent suffering**

The Bible shows us that there is suffering not only caused by moral and natural evil, but also innocent suffering that cannot be understood. The Bible declares that the suffering of the world is the result of sin committed by humans, but at the same time stresses that all the suffering is not the result of specific sins. This means that all suffering cannot be explained by God's punishment for specific sins (Rittgers 2012:9). Indeed, there is gratuitous suffering in the lives of Christians (Carson 2017:26, 27). We experience meaningless suffering in the realities of life. These sufferings make believers cast doubt on God's work, and further negate the existence of God as creator and redeemer.

The Bible proves that we cannot fully understand evil (Keller 2018:210-214). For example, the wisdom literature of the Old Testament elaborates extensively on innocent suffering. Psalms are filled with prayers, appeals, and cries for innocent sufferings that can be encountered in life. Job and the Ecclesiastes focus on innocent sufferings of life. Seekers such as Jeremiah and Habakkuk use acrimonious expressions to express their human discontent at the reality full of innocent sufferings. The New Testament, including Hebrews and 1 Peter, is dedicated to help Christians deal with innocent suffering.

Since these sufferings have nothing to do with the morals, religions, ethics, or beliefs of those who experience them, it is inappropriate to directly link the cause of accidental suffering with the ethics, morals, or religion of the parties involved. It is easy to find uncomfortable realities that wicked people live better or healthier than good people, although faithful people suffer innocent sufferings. For this reason, innocent sufferings are not only contrasted with the teachings of karma in the East but also conflict with general causal thinking.

### **3.2.3 Individual suffering and social suffering**

Depending on the scope of suffering, suffering can be categorized as individual suffering, and social suffering (Lee 2015:264-265). Individual suffering is suffering

experienced by a particular individual, while social suffering is shared by a group of people. For example, individual suffering like disease is experienced by the sufferer and the family on an individual level, while social suffering is where society as a whole experiences terrible events or disasters.

Individual suffering can be divided into three types. The first is the suffering that must be undergone as a human. This suffering is universal suffering that cannot be avoided by human beings. This suffering includes diseases caused by aging, death of loved ones, death of parents and others. Leibniz defines this suffering as originating from human incompleteness as “metaphysical Evil” (Hirschberger 1988:266). The second is adventitious suffering. This means an unpredictable and sudden ordeal, such as sudden traffic accidents, body diseases, damage from crime, and suffering from natural disasters. However, this suffering may be understood differently by different cultures and worldviews. For example, depending on a specific worldview, the disease may, or may not be accepted as accidental suffering. The third is suffering that must be undergone to be a faithful Christian (Carson 2017:125-133). The most representative biblical passages associated with this suffering are from Mark 8:34-38 and John 15:18-20. Jesus said that his followers would be hated by the world and will receive shameful suffering because they are disciples. Paul also says that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). In this context, suffering is a privilege and a grace given. According to Jesus, we can be like the prophets through suffering (Matthew 5:12).

Social suffering can be understood from the perspective of moral and natural evil (Jeong 2012:5). The first is social suffering from moral evil which is pervasive in society. The second is social suffering derived from natural evil, such as natural disasters. Financial crisis, dictatorship, oppression, and power-related corruption are among the former, and tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, and epidemics are among the latter. However, it cannot be overlooked that human greed is a common cause at the heart of social suffering.

Until now, suffering has been viewed predominantly from an individual perspective. However, in modern society, suffering is also apparent in society as a whole. In

modern society, due to the development of science and technology, globalization, urban density, rapidity, popularization, etc., individual suffering is closely related to social suffering. Because people live as members of society, people frequently encounter hardships that they must suffer, regardless of their own negligence or culpability (Jeong 2012:4-5). Thus, individual suffering and social suffering are in fact closely linked.

### **3.2.4 Punitive suffering and educative suffering**

According to theological purpose, sufferings can be categorized into punitive suffering and educational suffering. Punitive suffering is caused by the punishment caused by actual sin<sup>26</sup> (Lee 2013a:51). The biblical ground of punitive suffering can be found in view of Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy 11: 26-28), which emphasises causal justice. Punitive suffering is related to God's justice, as punitive suffering is God's punishment for sin. Many passages in the Bible talk about punitive suffering, especially Proverbs.

On the other hand, educational suffering is suffering that is for religious growth rather than causal punishment of sin. Educational suffering serves as a warning, urging us to change our lives (Keller 2018:329-330). The meaning or value of suffering can be used as a pedagogy model (Hall 1986:62) for education, training, growth, and development. C. S. Lewis (2002:139-141) argues that the more sinful we are, the more in denial we are. God uses this unintended suffering as a way of guiding His people. The Bible also testifies that God shapes His people to be stronger believers through trial and training (Psalm 119: 67; Matthew 5:15; 1 Peter 3:17; Hebrews 12: 7-11). Models of punitive suffering and educational suffering can be found in the Bible. For example, David's suffering for his sin is punitive suffering, and Saul's chase is an example of educational suffering for David.

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<sup>26</sup> After Adam's first sin, all human beings were born with original sin, and original sin is the origin of actual sin. Louis Berkhof (1998:470) emphasises that actual sin includes not only external acts that result from original sin but to all conscious thoughts and wills. In other words, actual sin is not only internal qualities such as conscious doubts, evil plans, or special conscious desires or greed in the heart, but also external acts such as deception, theft, adultery, and murder.

### 3.3 VARIOUS THEODICIES AND THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

A special term often used in connection with suffering is “theodicy”. In 3.2 we discussed the various forms of suffering. Now we will examine various theodicies related to suffering.

The term theodicy was first used in the 17th century by the German thinker, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. In his book on the subject of evil, he created the word “theodicy”. He combined the Greek word “δικη” which means “righteousness”, and “θεός” which means “God”. The purpose of theodicy is to defend God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil. In other words, theodicy is to show the will of God that is veiled in suffering, so that people may accept God's work concerning evil as valid (Keller 2018:144-145). Therefore, the issues discussed in connection with theodicy are related to the following questions: “Where did suffering come from?”, “Is God not responsible for suffering?”, “Is God Almighty?”

For Christians, suffering is a great challenge to their faith. The preacher's responsibility is thus to recognize, and discern the positions of various theodicies in order to answer these challenges. Therefore, in this study, we will look at the arguments and limitations of the six representative theodicies related to suffering. Each theodicy will then be evaluated homiletically. However, the goal of this study is not to elaborate on arguments of theodicies, or to justify God's actions or omnipotence. Because the scope of theodicies is so extensive and complex, we will be satisfied with summarizing and evaluating the rough aspects of each theodicy.

#### 3.3.1 Perfect plan theodicy

The perfect plan theodicy is a theodicy that argues that everything happens in relation to God's will (Rice 2018:32-36). This theodicy is based on “the eternal

decrees of God” to reign over all things in the universe. All the details of the universe are based on God’s perfect plan (Is 40:22-23; 46:9-11; Rm 8:28). The Bible shows that what happens in nature, the entire flow of history and personal events is also in God’s hands, and that God takes care of the most delicate occurrence (Blocher 1994:90-91). *Westminster's Confession of Faith* (1643) explains the eternal decrees of God as follows: “God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass” (WCF. 3, 1).

According to the perfect plan theodicy, everything that is good or bad is just as God intended it to be, and it is no coincidence. Thus, suffering is also part of God’s plan. Thomas Aquinas, the representative advocate of the perfect planning theodicy, distinguished between the direct, and indirect providence of God through the second cause (Aquinas 2008:247). God’s direct providence means that all things belong to God’s eternal order. This direct providence indirectly governs through the second cause. However, indirect providence does not contradict God’s direct providence, because indirect providence is ultimately placed in the eternal decrees of God. Why, then, does God fail to stop evil through indirect providence? Aquinas uses the term “permission”. This means that God permits the deficiency of the second cause and the events that happens to creatures. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643), a representative confession of the Reformed church, is consistent with Thomas Aquinas’s argument. Chapter 5 of *Westminster's Confession of Faith* explains that “Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, He orders them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently” (Son & Cho 2010: 51). Nevertheless, the permission of evil cannot hinder the eternal decrees of God. The permission allows free will and accidentality, but all this is merely an instrumental means of the eternal decrees of God. Augustine uses a distinction between free will and liberty, explaining that among human liberty, moral ability towards good has been destroyed. According to Augustine, being destroyed is a neutral liberty, not a free will (Cf. Sproul 2015:92-93).

Where Aquinas tries to explain suffering through permission, Martin Luther tries to explain suffering through “bondage of the will” and “mystery”. Unlike theology of the Middle Ages, which attempted to clarify the conflict between God's foreknowledge and creation's freedom, it was Martin Luther (1483-1546) who proposed a new solution from the point of view of faith. Luther intensively discussed free will in the 1525 issue of *De Servo Arbitrio* (The Bondage of the Will). At the heart of the bondage of the will is the argument that there is no free will in humans, that is, human beings cannot make neutral choices. Since the total depravity of man, the free will of human beings, has been enslaved by sin and cannot choose good (Gogarten 1967:128). According to Luther, the will that human beings have as sinners is not in a neutral and selectable state, but simply the will to sin against God. Thus, Luther puts forward the argument that the idea of human beings having freedom of choice is “the greatest blasphemy” (Ji 1982:89).

Luther, however, insists that God is not the direct cause of all evil. It is not through God's compulsion that wicked men do evil work, but through the nature of the wicked themselves. According to Luther, God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 9:12) and God did not hinder him, but allowed him to act according to Pharaoh's evil nature (Ji 1982:200-208). Then we can ask: “Why does God leave the evil man's heart to be evil?” Luther insists that this belongs to “the divine mystery”, and that we should worship this mystery (Ji 1982:205). Luther argues that to attempt to explain God's mystery is to make God an idol, therefore we must accept this mystery through faith (Park 2012:130).

### **3.3.1.1 Criticism and limitation of perfect plan theodicy**

The first criticism of the perfect plan theodicy relates to natural evil. Natural sin, which continually occurs in this world, raises doubt about perfect plan theodicy. There has been a constant criticism of why sufferings such as disease, hunger, war, and natural disasters are included in God's plan, and why God fulfils His purpose in this painful way (Rice 2018:68-69). According to this criticism, it is difficult to exclude God's responsibility for natural evil.

The second criticism of the perfect plan theodicy relates to “The Goodness of God”. The key point of this criticism is that whether God, who planned the suffering, is “Summum Bonum (highest good)”. This criticism claims that God cannot interfere in our history if everything goes flawlessly according to God's plan. In other words, God is not the highest good, but just a spectator watching what is happening in His plan (Park 2012:111).

### **3.3.1.2 Homiletical evaluation of perfect plan theodicy**

It is important for a preacher to have a theological understanding of God's perfect plan. But at the same time, a preacher must be cautious not to give the impression that all suffering is God's will. To view someone's suffering as God's plan may cause more pain, and increase suffering. For this reason, a preacher should not only focus on the explanation of God's plan but should also present hopes revealed in God's plan. In other words, it is important to make clear that the glory that will be revealed in us is bigger than all sufferings of the present (Romans 8:18-39).

However, a preacher needs to provide a relevant application to the audience. The fact that everything happens according to the plan of God does not mean that believers should do nothing in the reality of suffering. It is necessary to consider an application if a preacher wants to preach on God's plan.

### **3.3.2 Free will theodicy**

Free will theodicy claims that suffering is not part of God's will, whereas perfect plan theodicy claims that suffering is part of God's will. Free will theodicy argues that free will is the reason why the Almighty God does not end all suffering. God gave Adam and Eve, the first human beings, free will to choose whether to obey or disobey God's Word (Genesis 2:16-17) but they chose to disobey. Their disobedience resulted in sin and sin cause suffering. As a result, mankind became separated from God and spiritually dead (Boyd 2010:38). The Bible calls it “σάρξ”,



which means “Life in the flesh” or “Life in the Adam” (Romans 5:14; 8:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

The proponents of free will theodicy argue that on this basis, suffering is not the intention of God, but the result of human misuse of freedom. Augustine explains that the origin and responsibility of evil are not in God, but in the first human who has freedom (Cf. Augustinus 1998:71-73). In this view, God is not responsible for the sin we commit, neither for the consequential suffering. In other words, “God is responsible for the possibility of evil, but not for the actuality of evil” (Rice 2014: 47).

### **3.3.2.1 Criticism and limitation of free will theodicy**

The first criticism of free will theodicy is found in the understanding of God's omnipotence. The philosopher, J. L. Mackie (2001:86), argues that God created moral beings that have the ability to choose to do good. He claims that God is not omnipotent, and that God is responsible for suffering because God has not created a creature that will act freely, nor always correctly.

Proponents of free will theodicy argue that this criticism is nothing more than a misunderstanding of omnipotence, or infinite power. Omnipotence or infinite power means “the ability to do what is logically possible” (Cf. Swinburne 1998:150-153). God cannot create a morally free creature which always chooses goodness, and we cannot be said to be such free creatures (Plantinga 1974:30). Augustine defends God's omnipotence in terms of the grace that will be given after sin. God knew through His foreknowledge that the first human would sin, but he did not force him to sin. Thus, God's foreknowledge and human actions are not tied to the inevitability of cause and effect. God knows all of this, and leads creation to the ultimate victory. In this respect, God is omnipotent and at the same time good (Park 2012:72-73).

The second criticism of free will theodicy is that good and evil necessarily exist together. This criticism argues that we would not know what moral good is, if evil



had not existed with good. Free will theodicy points out a flaw in this argument. According to traditional Christian teaching, the concept of evil that has existed since the beginning does not exist. Augustine says that evil is nothing more than a corruption or a deficiency in something that was originally good, claiming that “*Privatio Boni*” (The deprivation of good) is evil. According to Plantinga (1974:125), evil cannot be opposed to good. For example, there is the question whether suffering might result in the healing of evil. This evil can be understood as a process for the restoration of health, and can thus contribute to the “greater good”. Plantinga (1974:131) points out that in order to prove the confrontation between good and evil, the existence of unwarranted evil, meaningless evil that has no justifiable reason, must be proved. He claims that no one has ever proved, nor tried to prove it, so strictly speaking, evil doesn't really exist.

The third criticism is that free will theodicy tries to explain that all evil is a result of free will. In other words, free will theodicy leaves the question of how to interpret natural evil, although it can explain moral evil. In response, theologians who claim free will theodicy, argue that natural evil is the result of human misuse of free will (Cf. Inwagen 2006:90). The reason this defence is problematic is that it makes it seem as though God cannot control the consequences of free will. The Bible presents pieces of evidence that God is sovereign in history, leading to human choice without infringing upon humanity's free will, and responsibility for its actions (Carson 2017:177-203). God gave humanity free will, but still leads them to the consequences of choice. For this reason, explaining everything with free will results in limiting God's providence and sovereignty. If God has the purpose of allowing painful and miserable suffering, it must at least be something beyond free will (Keller 2018:150-151).

### **3.3.2.2 Homiletical evaluation of free will theodicy**

When preachers have an understanding of free will theodicy, they can remove the responsibility of suffering from God, thus showing the audience the seriousness of sin. According to free will theodicy, suffering does not originate from God, but from the creature. By revealing this, preachers can prevent people from blaming God

for their suffering (Rice 2018:84). Free will theology also raises awareness of sin. It allows us to discover the terrible consequences of sin, indicating that we must avoid them.

A preacher, however, must be careful not to cover the audience's sufferings with metaphysical answers. Individual and specific sufferings will be meaningless when a preacher dismisses suffering as merely a consequence of sin. Therefore, it is necessary to authentically sympathize, and share in the difficulties of their lives before addressing free will and its consequences. In addition, a preacher can declare God's love and ultimate victory with an understanding of free will theodicy. God created a creature that can love Him with free will, which shows us that God's essence is love. It is also comforting to proclaim ultimate victory to the audience. Augustine argues that God's justice is eschatologically fulfilled for all injustice and evil in the world (Augustinus 2004:2261). This realization, and the proclamation of ultimate victory, could be comforting to the audience.

### **3.3.3 Soul-making theodicy**

The Irenaean theodicy is sometimes referred to as the "soul-making theodicy", a phrase taken from the poet John Keats. Soul-making is the theory that evil has to exist so that humans can develop their souls by living and becoming good, moral people. It gives humans a chance to learn from suffering and develop moral virtues (Svendsen & Pierce 2010:51).

According to soul-making theodicy, an incomplete man with potential must make a long pilgrimage to the full completion of human nature. Therefore, humans should make responsible decisions under specific circumstances, and achieve positive and reliable personalities (Hick 1977:255-256). In that sense, soul-making theodicy regards the world as a place where people find God, and grow spiritually into all they were created to be (Keller 2013:89).

On a philosophical note, it was the religious philosopher, John Hick who developed this perspective on suffering. He is also the philosopher who claimed

the term "soul formation". He found a precedent for his theodicy in the writings of a second-century church father, Irenaeus of Lyons. The theodicy is, strictly speaking, a development of theology, and philosophy that took place in the 18th century. For this reason, Irenaeus, who lived in the 2-3th century, neither knew nor cared about the theodicy. John Hick simply extracted thoughts and themes from Irenaeus's writings and synthesized them as answers to the modern questions of theodicy. It would thus be possible to argue that soul-making theodicy is Hick's thoughts, and not that of Irenaeus's.

Unlike Augustine, who initially believed that man was a perfect being, Irenaeus insists that perfection was the end, not the beginning of human existence. In other words, human beings are imperfect and immature. Thus, in the process of reaching perfection, suffering plays an integral role in the development of one's character (Hick 1978:211-215).

Soul-making theodicy is similar to the understanding of perfect plan theodicy, as well as free will theodicy. Soul-making theodicy regards suffering as part of God's plan, as claimed by perfect plan theodicy. But soul-making theodicy simultaneously declares that human beings are free, as is the case with free will theodicy. The wrong choices of free human beings have caused suffering in this world. Some of those sufferings help us to mature, while others do not. In this regard, soul-making theodicy does not believe that God's will is the cause of all sufferings. Therefore, when asked if soul-making places suffering inside or outside God's will, the answer seems to be both (Rice 2014:68-69).

### **3.3.3.1 Criticism and limitation of soul-making theodicy**

The first criticism of soul-making theodicy is the criticism about the kind of "perfect character" soul-making seeks, which is very vague in definition. In practice, great men seem to go through more suffering if they exceed the level required for soul-making (Keller 2018:146). These phenomena raise questions about the character of soul-making. Their main argument that the world is involved in the soul-making program is not supported by empirical evidence (Peterson *et al.* 2009:250).

The second criticism is whether all sufferings are worth? Can all suffering be justified for our growth? Some forms of suffering are so severe that it is difficult to relate them to our growth. In other words, the various sufferings of the world cannot be explained merely as being for our growth (Long 2014:142). For example, God who demands or permits sufferings, as in the case of the Holocaust for soul-making, can be regarded as the agent of evil and a moral monster. It is very difficult to find the redemptive purpose of suffering in events like the Holocaust where six million Jews were killed. Hick (1977:335-336) recognized this criticism, but argues that it was a mystery. He said that our solution to the excessive and unjust suffering is to appeal frankly to the positive value of the mystery.

### **3.3.3.2 Homiletical evaluation of soul-making theodicy**

Soul-making theodicy can help the audience to understand, and apply the meaning of salvation, which they can easily see as abstract. According to soul-making theodicy, human beings becoming perfect beings, is God's hope. It is a long process in which human beings face various sufferings and realities of evil. Through a lot of trial and error, they learn what is true and right. Through this process, God accomplishes the great purpose of soul-making, and human beings enjoy true fellowship with God.

Based on soul-making theodicy, a preacher can concentrate on sanctification as a gradual "process" that resembles Christ's suffering. A sermon based on soul-making is particularly helpful when preaching on educative suffering. However, it is important for preachers to have a good strategy. For example, it is a good way for preachers to present enough examples of the Bible.

### **3.3.4 Cosmic conflict theodicy**

Cosmic conflict theology claims that Satan causes sufferings to undermine God's will for us (Rice 2018:122-123). In particular, the first chapter of Job shows Satan

initiating suffering. In addition, the Bible testifies that Satan is the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Ephesians 2:2), and a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Based on this biblical testimony, cosmic conflict theodicy argues that God is not responsible for suffering, and that His enemies, the followers of Satan and Satan himself, turned the world into an environment full of suffering, disease, and death. For this reason, cosmic conflict theodicy claims that there is no such thing as natural evil (Boyd 2001:247).

Gregory A. Boyd is one of the most vocal advocates of cosmic conflict theodicy. He introduced this theodicy as the “Trinitarian warfare worldview” in his book *God at war*, published in 1997. According to him, the perfect plan theodicy ascribes the cause of suffering to God. He argues that the authors of the Bible espoused the warfare worldview, and that this view is superior to all other alternative theodicies (Boyd 2001:22-23). According to Boyd, two questions, “Why?” and “Why me?” are answered when looking at the relationship between God and the world through the warfare worldview. Suffering was not confusing to the faithful. They were aware of the existence of evil, and attributed the cause of life’s sufferings to the power of evil, not to God.

Therefore, from the perspective of cosmic conflict theodicy, our suffering is not what God wants. Cosmic conflict theodicy aims to attribute all the causes of suffering to Satan. We are suffering because we live in war zones, and there is no need to find specific reasons or purposes for suffering. Cosmic conflict theodicy requires us to join in God’s work against the power of evil, and to devote ourselves to rebuking Satan (Rice 2018:123). The realm in which believers live can be seen as a battlefield. To live as a believer is to enter in a war against the enemies of God (Boyd 1997:269-293).

#### **3.3.4.1 Criticism and limitation of cosmic conflict theodicy**

The first criticism of cosmic conflict theodicy is the concept of cosmic conflict (Rice 2018:132-133). The claim that Satan is a real threat to God’s reign seems impossible in the light of God’s omnipotence and sovereignty. How can Satan,

who was created by God, be a challenge to the Creator, knowing that the Creator who created him can also destroy him? These questions arise with the concept of cosmic conflict, but cosmic conflict theodicy does not provide clear answers.

The second criticism of cosmic conflict theodicy is that it can distort God's omnipotence. According to cosmic conflict theodicy, God is not always able to do His will (Boyd 2004:27), nor does God have complete control over everything in the world. The will of God is often hindered by the power of evil (Boyd 1997:291). If so, is this God worth the praise of creation? How can believers be sure what the world will be like if God is not omnipotent as the Bible claims him to be? This accusation that God cannot control everything can be regarded as a serious challenge to the concept of God's almighty power as revealed in the Bible.

#### **3.3.4.2 Homiletical evaluation of cosmic conflict theodicy**

Cosmic conflict theodicy not only prevents us one from blaming God, it makes us reliant on God. According to cosmic conflict theodicy, God is not a transcendental of reality, but a warrior who fights against evil in every place (Rice 2018:137). Portraying this image of God in sermons can provide great comfort. This image of God triumphing over evil is comforting to those who are afflicted.

Furthermore, cosmic conflict theodicy provides the faithful with the power to fight, and resist. When a preacher explains suffering as a battle between good and evil, the audience might understand this conflict to be the reason for their suffering. Therefore, it would be helpful for preachers to provide Bible-based examples to guide the audience how to cope with the battle between good and evil. For example, a sermon on the full body armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-24) can be a good case study for a sermon based on cosmic conflict theodicy. This sermon can provide the audience with a spiritual weapon to fight suffering.

#### **3.3.5 Process theodicy**

Process theology is one of the new theological ideas that emerged in the United States in the 1960s. The most influential figures in process theology are Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000). They insist that everything is always changing and relative and those actual entities process and create new realities. Process theology recognizes reality as a social process and, regards momentary events as fundamental constituents of reality. In other words, the fundamental nature of reality is not a being or an entity, but a process. The understanding is that events happening to objects are more fundamental than immutable, mechanical, or self-existing entities (Rice 2018:167). Process theology applies this argument to God. Process theology emphasises the evolutionary nature of humans and the world, arguing that Deity is also in the process of developing through spiritual exchanges with the changing world. In other words, the universe is simply a process that includes God.

Process theodicy, based on process theology, argues that God cannot completely enforce His will on the outcome of events (Rice 2018:168-169). Traditional theology holds that God refrains from the use of infinite force, allowing human beings to exist as entities with a free will, or to fulfil God's plan. In contrast, process theology claims that God is so constrained by the fundamental laws of the universe that God cannot control His creation perfectly. The essential feature of the event is freedom, or self-determination, and God cannot hinder or interfere with the process of creation. This means that God cannot stop natural disasters, or high-speed trains to save the lives of innocent victims. Hence, according to process theology, suffering is inevitable in this world.

Thus, process theology places emphasis on "persuasion". God has no choice but to persuade because God cannot control His creatures. Process theology says that God cares about, and responds to the world, and is working diligently to fulfil His purpose for the world, but is incapable to accomplish His desire. For this reason, he only suggests the best possibility, which is persuasion, not coercion. This persuasion depends on human self-determination, and as a result, the process may not proceed according to God's plan.



### **3.3.5.1 Criticism and limitation on process theodicy**

The first criticism of process theodicy concerns the omnipotence of God. According to process theology, God cannot be omnipotent. God does not have the power to ensure ultimate goodness. God merely has the power to persuade the world to take the best possible alternative. However, the consequences of God's persuasion are not always good. William Fletcher is of the opinion that God is only a participant in the on-going process of creation, and is not a Christian God (Placher 1996:7-10). God, who is in the process of taking risks with the creation, and sharing them with human beings, is an incompetent God. In the process, God who depends on events cannot calm nor comfort anger. However, according to the biblical evidence, God is not simply a persuader. God exercises power beyond persuasion. The Bible makes it clear that God is the Sovereign of this universe, and that God the One who saves His people. As Carson (2017:45) pointed out, giving up faith in Almighty God may solve the problem of evil, but the reward is not satisfying. This God may pity us and reprimand with us, but God can never help or save us.

The second critique of process theology is that it denies immortality. Process theologians actually claim that only the creator can live forever, and that human life does not need immortality to have lasting meaning. Rather, they claim immortality in another form. They say that we make eternal contributions to God's experience, and remain in God's eternal memory (Rice 180-181).

### **3.3.5.2 Homiletical evaluation of process theodicy**

As we saw in Chapter 2, in the Korean church, conservative Presbyterianism is significantly larger than any other denomination. Thus, many believers worship in churches that follow Presbyterian theology based on Calvinism. Considering this situation in SKC, preaching based on process theology is hardly acceptable. To be flexible and proactive in a rapidly changing world, we must study, and investigate various theologies. But such activities must not go beyond the theology based on God's word. The perfect plan theodicy, free will theodicy, soul-making theodicy,



and cosmic conflict theodicy contain some biblical truths, and can thus be fittingly addressed in sermons. However, if we try to preach about suffering based on an understanding of process theology, the danger exists that the attributes and images embraced by Christians regarding God might confuse the audience.

### 3.3.6 Openness theodicy

Open theism emerged in 1994 with the publication of *The Openness of God* (Pinnock 1994). Pinnock claims that open theism can be an alternative to process theology and traditional theology. The understanding of open theism is that history is not the product of God's actions alone, but the result of combining the decisions, and actions of God and His creatures. Thus, creatures and God influence each other (Rice 2018:141-142).

It is a general theological understanding that God knows of all events that happen on earth. In other words, the past, present, and future are equal to God. But according to open theism, God knows everything that can happen. However, God does not know the content of free human decisions regarding the future. God does not know what our choice will be until we decide (Pinnock 2001:13). In this respect, openness theodicy has something in common with free will theodicy, as it places responsibility for suffering on creatures, not God. However, the difference between openness theodicy and free will theodicy is that openness theodicy denies the concept of absolute foreknowledge. According to openness theodicy, the future is entirely objective. God does not know everything, but knows everything there is to know. That is, God knows all the possibilities, but not the consequences of those possibilities.

The difference between openness theodicy and process theodicy is that openness theodicy distinguishes the relationship between God and the world. Open theism regards the relationship between God and the world as asymmetric (Rice 2018:144-145). This means that there is a clear distinction between God and the created world. The world relies on God for its existence, while God does not depend on the world for His existence. As the Bible shows, the creation of God

made the existence of the world possible. But this does not mean that this world is not important to God. Open theism emphasises that God did not give up on the world. Though there are so many imperfections on earth, God is still concerned about the world, and God is still actively involved in restoring the world (Rice 2018:146-147).

### **3.3.6.1 Criticism and limitation of openness theodicy**

The first criticism of openness theodicy is that it could limit God's knowledge, power and glory (Wilson 2001:10-11). If God does not know the future, God's knowledge is imperfect. If God's power is dictated by human choice, that power is also incomplete. This imperfect knowledge and power limits the glory of God. It implies that God's predictions may fail, meaning that God's guidance may fail. Therefore, this failing, imperfect God hides His glory (Park 2011:223).

The second criticism of openness theodicy is that openness theodicy undermines God's providence, and predestination. Norman L. Geisler (2010: 111-113) summarizes the main theories of open theism in the following five points:

- 1) God does not predestine.
- 2) Although humanity has fallen, it was still created in the image of God. Thus, humanity has the ability to judge good and evil.
- 3) God's grace is for all mankind, and may be rejected if wished.
- 4) Human choice and will are completely free.
- 5) The fate of man, including heaven and hell, has not been determined.

These five points show that free will is beyond God's sovereignty. According to these arguments, free will has priority over God's providence. Therefore, this claim is a reckless claim that derails the nature of the Providence principle of traditional Protestantism. This claim also undermines the reformed theological framework. For these reasons, this claim is not generally accepted in evangelical or Reformation churches.

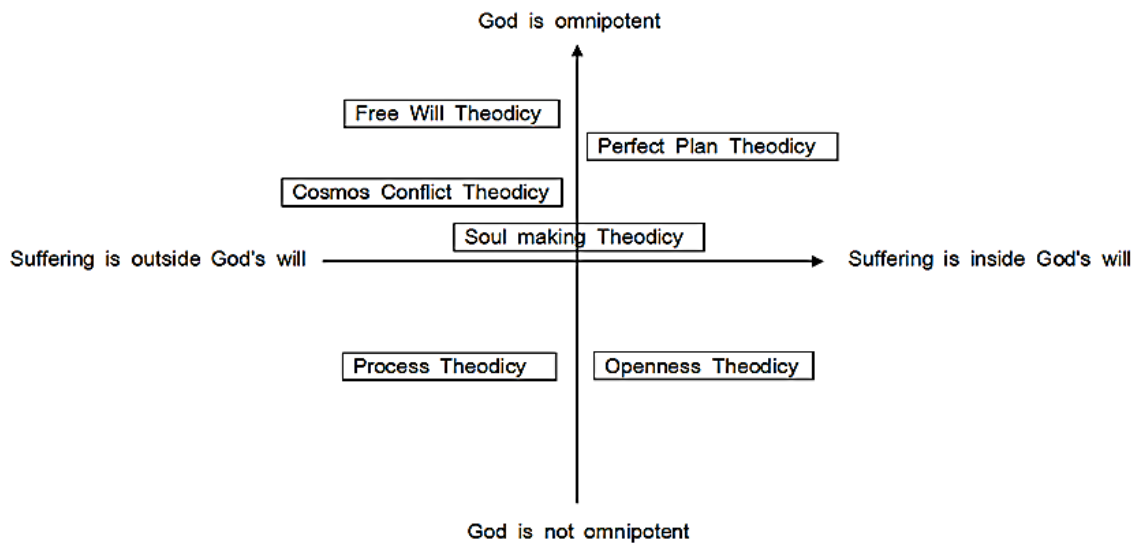
### **3.3.6.2 Homiletical evaluation of openness theodicy**

According to openness theodicy, God is a loving God who does not predestine, and is open-minded. This means that God is affected by all the good, and bad things we experience (Rice 2018:148-149). God rejoices when we rejoice, and he grieves when we grieve. It is important to emphasise this in a sermon based on this theodicy. This will help the audience realise that God is with them through all their suffering. However, care must be taken not to preach that God's plan is influenced or changed by our decisions, as argued by openness theodicy. Such a sermon cannot present the eschatological hopes that God promised to His people, making the audience uneasy.

### **3.3.7 Limitations of theodicy**

We have examined theodicy through six categories. Each theodicy provides interpretations of various perspectives on suffering. A perfect plan theodicy provides the confidence that God accomplishes purpose in our suffering. The free will theodicy reveals that suffering is not what God intended. Soul-making theodicy suggests that suffering develops our faith. Cosmic conflict theodicy reveals that God is actively responding to suffering. Openness theodicy suggests the possibility that God took the risk of creating a free being. Process theodicy distorts the nature of God through unbiblical claims, and shows us to the consequences of ignoring the Word of God.

The list of theodicies does not end here. There are other theodicies such as the plenitude theodicy (Turner 2003: 143-159) and Natural Theodicy (Cf. Lewis 1986; Swinburne 1998). The purpose of this study, however, is not to discuss all the theories. Based on the previous investigations, I group six popular theodicies into two categories: the omnipotence of God, and the will of God, as shown in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1 The position of theodicies**

A comprehensive assessment of theodicy is that there is no single theodicy or explanation of suffering that fully accounts for suffering. Each theodicy can explain a part of suffering, but each is incapable of explaining suffering comprehensively. As Long (2014:56) points out, the logical explanation of God's omnipotence, goodness, and suffering, only leads us to an "impossible chess game", or theological deadlock. J. L. Mackie (2001:77-90), one of the representatives who denies traditional theism, states that the following three propositions could not be affirmed at the same time:

- 1) God is omnipotent.
- 2) God is totally good.
- 3) Evil still exists.

According to Mackie, theologians must adhere to all three, however, they cannot. Mackie points out that no theodicy can explain these three propositions logically.

After all, as Gabriel Marcel (1960:260) points out, the conclusion that we can draw through theodicy is that suffering is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery beyond our understanding. Suffering is not a problem. The problem is that the more we think, the easier it is to understand. In other words, the problem becomes clear by using the appropriate technique. However, the mystery is beyond all technologies, and the longer we ponder, the more questions and doubts arise. Therefore, specific sufferings can be answered by specific theodicies, and in order to preach on suffering, a preacher needs to discern, and select the appropriate theodicy and interpretation for preaching.

### **3.4 HOMILETICAL THEODICY**

As we saw earlier, there is no theological system that contains all the answers to suffering. Christian doctrine can provide insight for suffering, but it may also leave believers in doubt and despair when it cannot be explained (Carson 2017:38-39). Therefore, the important thing is to discern the appropriate content for preaching on suffering. The views of theodicies discussed in 3.3 can provide preaching insights to the content of preaching on suffering. They are like pieces of a puzzle, drawing a great picture of suffering. A preacher may not get enough pieces to draw a complete picture, but it provides enough pieces to see a clear frame.

Therefore, this study aims to present a homiletical theodicy by discerning, and synthesizing the arguments of each theodicy. This is not to design and propose a new theodicy, but to construct, and propose a homiletical theodicy by considering arguments that may be helpful for preaching.

#### **3.4.1 The need for homiletical theodicy**

There is an inexplicable limitation in understanding, and explaining the experience of suffering with our own knowledge. For that reason, it is impossible to apply a certain interpretation of suffering equally to all suffering (Park 2012:17). The wrong answer may hurt the audience even more (Cf. Long 2011:43). For instance, no

matter what the perfect plan of God is, to communicate His plan in an unsympathetic manner, can result in shame and anger.

As we know, Job's three friends, instead of comforting Job, made him even more distressed. The audience is the same. They do not want pastors like Job's friends that present superficial explanations of suffering. Those who suffer might not benefit from a mere explanation of suffering because they might not yet be ready for such an explanation. What they need is not just an explanation, but comfort and sympathy. These are important trades of a preacher.

However, being sympathetic does not mean that a preacher can neglect an explanation regarding suffering. In the sermon, a preacher needs to explain suffering in such a way that the audience can relate to how the preacher understands suffering. The audience wants to listen to the reason and meaning of their suffering in the sermon (Ven 1999:85). John Cobb (1981:167) points out that a believer seeks a pastor not for the treatment of disease, but to question the meaning of suffering. The desire to understand suffering is a unique humanistic characteristic, and the desire to understand suffering is part of human dignity (Schweder 2003:74). As Long (2014:63) puts it, simply standing silently is an act of depriving the audience of the theological legacy. Viewed together, these facts show that humans instinctively tend to rely on certain concepts or interpretations of suffering.

Therefore, a preacher who wants to preach on suffering needs to take a pastoral attitude, while simultaneously espousing a homiletical approach that provides the audience with biblical perspectives on suffering. Because the audience expects a preacher to revive their faith anew, a preacher needs to provide the audience with Christian understandings on sufferings (Cf. Long 2014:64-67). The God of Christianity is the God who exerts the power of salvation in a specific existence and situations (Park 2012:48-49). Therefore the problem of suffering is inevitably related to biblical perspectives, and not only to comfort and empathy. A preacher must provide by preaching the interpretation of suffering from the Christian perspective without ignoring the cries of the audience in the face of suffering.

The preacher should not just be aware of the arguments of various theodicies, but also provide the audience with a “homiletical theodicy” that offers true comfort and courage, and has to make them understand the meaning of suffering. Homiletical theodicy is needed for two reasons:

- 1) The arguments of theodicies are derived from experiences of, and reactions to suffering, and should provide insight to those who suffer.
- 2) No church, denomination, or tradition of Christianity has publicly supported a specific theodicy (Turner 2003:143-159).

For these reasons, the preacher has the responsibility to discern which argument of theodicy can provide comfort to the audience, what can change the audience, what can lead people to the discovery of a God, and subsequently develop it into a homiletical theodicy.

### **3.4.2 The grounds of homiletical theodicy**

This study seeks to present a homiletical theodicy based on the four major elements of Christianity's meta-narrative, and on the crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

First, the reason for presenting a homiletical theodicy based on the Christian meta-narrative is that it can approach the interpretation of the audience's suffering within its biblical content, thereby offering a Christian interpretation of suffering.

Social theorist Max Scheler argued that “the meaning of suffering is at the heart of the teachings of great believers and thinkers everywhere in the world”, and that any society “provides the guidance necessary to properly confront suffering” to its members by choosing a specific stance to these ideas (Scheler 1992:98). Following this argument, Keller (2018:30) claims that each community needs to provide the “narrative” necessary for its members to understand their situation, and how to respond appropriately to suffering. His insight is applicable to the faith

community. The faith community can provide the audience with appropriate interpretations or guidelines for suffering based on the meta-narrative of the Bible. Through this meta-narrative, humans not only understand who God is, but also realise the meaning of being the people of God. Within the meta-narrative, the faithful grow, and become strong, and can fulfil the mission that God has given them (Wright 2009:89-118). Therefore, in this study, I try to present a homiletical theodicy based on meta-narrative.

The four elements of the meta-narrative – creation, fall, redemption, and recreation – are like four large pillars that hold up the Bible (Wright 2013:73). If the first two elements of meta-narrative reflect the Christian doctrine of creation and depravity, the other two reflect salvation and victory. If the first two elements provide an explanation of the origin and nature of God's creation and hardship, the last two explain the work, grace, and promise to the faithful of God beyond suffering.

Second, the reason I present a homiletical theodicy based on the crucifixion and resurrection is that these are possibly the best exemplification depicting the image of God. As John testifies in John 1, the Logos was with God at the beginning, and the Logos Himself is God. In knowing Jesus, we know God who is eternal. In particular, the crucifixion, and resurrection are indivisible, a mystery that explains, completes, and recovers everything. The fullness of God is manifested through Jesus, who died on a cursed tree, and was abandoned by God (Boyd 2010:54). The New Testament does not deny the existence of suffering in human life. The New Testament speaks of the death and resurrection of Jesus. According to Long (2014:175), the death and resurrection of Jesus help us to discover God's redemption and his ultimate victory.

### **3.4.3 The contents of a homiletical theodicy**

A homiletical theodicy includes the following essential components that constitute the preaching on suffering: origin, attitude, redemption, presence, and hope.



### **3.4.3.1 Origin: suffering is not the responsibility of God**

To preach on suffering, a preacher must grasp what the origin of sin is. This is because it can prevent the audience from viewing God as the reason for suffering. Carson (2017: 61-62; 340-341) claims that all suffering was caused by sin. In this respect, the doctrine of “total corruption” serves as the core doctrine of Christianity for suffering (Keller 2018:180). The correct understanding of the doctrine of total corruption can reveal the fact that suffering did not come from God, and that suffering is enrooted in human sin.

E. J. Young (cf. 1985) explains the origin of suffering as noted in Genesis. In chapter 1, God created man in His image. God's original creation did was not created with sin. However, in chapter 2, the disobedience of the creature to God caused corruption. When humankind turned from God, all other relationships suffered too. Because humankind rejected God's authority, everything about the world – hearts, emotions, bodies, relationships to other people, and the relationship to nature itself – were compromised. Ultimately, the brokenness of the world is inherited by the entire human race (Keller 2013:113-114).

Thus, preaching about the origin of sin may help avoid those who suffer extensively to think that they have sinned more than those who suffer less. By preaching that suffering is a natural consequence of sin, and the fair judgment of God, a preacher can avoid the argument that good people are happy, and bad people are unhappy. In other words, preaching on the origin of suffering can help the audience to overcome the false theological understanding that the suffering people committed certain sins, and their suffering is the result of these sins. It also helps the audience realise that humanity does not have the right to expect a life of peace and comfort, leading us to seek more of God's grace and mercy instead of blaming God (Carson 2017:68-69).

### **3.4.3.2 Attitude: Our expression of suffering is related to faith**

When we experience suffering, and face God in embarrassment and moral exasperation, we might resent, and become angry with God. However, this is not an absence of faith, but an expression of faith. If we do not believe in God's existence, it would be impossible to raise a voice of complaint toward God. In fact, these protests flow from a deep and sincere desire for God to be a loving and just God (Long 2014:196-199).

Therefore, one should not think that those who trust God cannot express anger or feel despair (Keller 2018:382-383). In the presence of evil, we naturally resent, and complain to God because we have the expectation that God is good and righteous. The Christian faith does not restrict expressions of grief, nor should one suppress negative emotions when experiencing suffering. These emotions should be regarded as natural and good in front of God. Rather, Christianity affirms, as written in the Bible, that God's people groan, complain, and argue with God (Carson 2017:111).

The same applies to preaching. Preachers should pay attention not to say that anger or sorrow is a lack of faith. Rather, in preaching, a preacher must show that biblical figures cried, angered, and resisted God because of their suffering. For example, Psalm 57, written by David, can be a good example to portray the emotions of believers who are suffering. An important element when preaching on suffering is the preacher's pathos. The preacher needs to acknowledge the pain of the audience, and empathize with their suffering (Yoon 2014:226).

#### **3.4.3.3 Redemption: God is working in the time of suffering.**

In preaching, it is important to proclaim redemption along with corruption. The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, is the fulfilment, and perfect expression of God's revelation in the Bible. Christ's entire life manifests the truth of God. In Christ, God was completely revealed. Colossians testifies that in Jesus "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9-10). The one by whom, and for whom the creation exists is the very same one who died and rose again to reconcile the world of God. Paul does not only refer to Christ's role in creation, but also in

redemption. Jesus Christ completed the purpose of creation by His death on the cross. Christ's redemptive work is not limited to the past, but is also available in the present, and the future (Boyd 2004:33-34). Even now, God works through Jesus Christ. God, who listened to the cries of the Israelites who were slaves in Egypt, still hear the cries of His people.

Therefore, the sermon must proclaim the redemption of God, who is involved in the suffering of His people (Park 2012:84). This is because the proclamation of the redemption of God provides the audience with healing. More important than the complete elimination of suffering, is the healing that strengthens inner abilities (Black 2008:209-210). This healing takes place when revealing God's redemption through preaching.

Healing is experienced when confirming God's redemption. In other words, by discovering the redemption of God who works through suffering, the audience can be strengthened to overcome suffering. Through the declaration of redemption, the audience discovers that God is still working today, and reinterprets the meaning of the suffering in their lives.

#### **3.4.3.4 Presence: God is with us in suffering**

The meaning of the word cross includes “together” as well as “instead”. Christ not only suffered for us, but He is also suffering with us (Rice 2018:242). Thus, though Christ is God, He suffered. He experienced the absolute weakness of man and lived a life filled with “loud cries and tears” (Hebrews 5: 7). To overcome suffering, and curse of sin, he endured the ultimate suffering (Keller 2018:190). Through the crucifixion, God's proclaims His love for us (Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16).

Therefore, God does not abandon us in the midst of suffering, but weeps and suffers with us. The New Testament describes us as “participating in Christ's sufferings”. Peter told the recipients of his letter that Jesus was spiritually enduring suffering, and emphasised “our participation in the sufferings of Christ” (Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13). This means that our suffering with the Lord proves

our faith to be true. If we endure suffering to the end, we will enjoy our future inheritance with Christ (Barton *et al.* 2008:192).

God's presence gives great comfort when he walks with us on our pilgrimage of suffering. Every process of finding the meaning of suffering, without denying the existence of God, is a difficult, unavoidable spiritual pilgrimage (Long 2014:182). God has a personal relationship with each of us. God loves us, speaks to us, responds to us, and suffers with us. Therefore, in the pulpit, a preacher has the responsibility to remind the congregation that God accompanies us on our spiritual pilgrimages. Though we are undeserving of God's love, God continues to love us unconditionally

Preaching that the believer's suffering is the participation in Christ's suffering can motivate the audience's faith to grow. Dan McCartney (1998:60) writes, "Christ learned humanity from his suffering (Hebrew 5:8) [And therefore] we learn Christhood from our suffering." This means that Christians will suffer with Christ and can grow into Christians through suffering (McCartney 1998:56). The audience may grow as the people of God when a preacher teaches or emphasizes this in the sermon.

#### **3.4.3.5 Hope: suffering makes us see the hope that God gives**

Christians understand from an eschatological perspective, viewing eschatological hope to be an essential element of preaching on suffering. Hope, here, means the hope given through the doctrine of resurrection and restoration (re-creation). Carson (2017:199-201) describes this as an evangelical "perspective." Without evangelical perspective, suffering has no meaning in the lives of believers, and Christian doctrines related to suffering are also meaningless (1 Corinthians 15:19).

The faith of the resurrection is the heart of Christian faith. The Christian faith does not claim to be able to explain the will of God disguised by suffering, but provides the final answer in the doctrine of the resurrection. The resurrection is not simply a level of comfort to the lost life, but rather complete recovery. Paul said, "He is the

head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18). Christ becomes the Head, and the author for all who will die and rise again to participate in victory of the resurrection. We will have a glorious, perfect, and indescribable life in a newly restored world (Keller 2108:186). The resurrection proclaims that the power of death is limited, and that there will be an ultimate victory in the future (Beker 1994:16).

When the faith of the resurrection gives us the hope of defeating death, the doctrine of restoration gives hope for the judgment, and the kingdom of God. When Jesus comes again, all the sin of the earth will be amended and all unjust suffering will disappear. Oscar Cullmann (1951: 84-88) calls the Second Coming of Jesus the Victory Day (V-Day). On V-day, all dominion, authority, and power will be destroyed, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15: 24-26). Also, the evil done by the wicked to the innocent will be paid, all tears will be washed away (Inwagen 2006:89), and the kingdom of God will be completed. The kingdom of God will not be a kingdom of the world, but represent the absolute sovereignty and rule of God above all the gods and all kingdoms in the world (Ladd 1983:93). The kingdom of God will come in a glorious form at the end of history to judge evil forces, corruption, death, and to claim the victory of righteousness (Ladd 1994:83). Therefore, the true Christian response to theodicy is that God wins in the end (Keller 2018:72-73).

To present hope in a sermon is not to declare that suffering will be completely resolved in this world, but rather to declare resurrection and restoration. There are many benefits to preaching resurrection and restoration. First, proclaiming resurrection and restoration will give us hope to live in this world, even though suffering is still present in our lives. The audience realises that it is too impetuous to judge justice purely on what is happening in this world, and is empowered by the fact that one day God's justice will be fully realised (Carson 2017:217). Meditation on the kingdom of God, in which God's full reign is embodied, turns even extreme suffering into glory. In addition, it makes us forgive others with warm-heartedness, and refrain from revenge and violent behaviour. Without confidence in the resurrection and restoration, we will try for revenge every time

somebody wrongs us. The fact that all evil will be corrected gives us the courage to forgive our enemies, and a spiritual attitude to pray for them.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In Chapter 3, we examined the various forms of suffering, and theodicies related to suffering, and presented a homiletical theodicy for preaching on suffering.

First, suffering can be divided into four categories according to cause, scope, and theological purpose. Suffering resulting from moral evil and natural evil shows us that suffering is the result of evil. Innocent suffering, whose meaning is unknown, proves that there are always unjust sufferings beyond our thoughts and understandings. Individual suffering and social suffering show that the extent of suffering is not limited to individuals. Through punitive suffering and educative suffering, the Bible tells us what we need to achieve through suffering. These categories will help a preacher identify which form of suffering needs to be preached.

Second, we reviewed the arguments, and criticisms of various theodicies related to suffering, and evaluated their claims from a homiletical perspective. Perfect plan theodicy argues that suffering is included in God's plan. The theological concepts that emerged from this theodicy are permission and mystery. In practice, it seems that many preachers support this argument. Perfect plan theology provides confidence that God will accomplish His purpose in our suffering, but homiletical wisdom is required when preaching on innocent suffering.

Free will theodicy claims that human suffering is caused by free will. In other words, suffering is not God's original intention. This theodicy provides the benefit of avoiding the thought that God is a cause of suffering, and makes us realise the seriousness of sin. Soul-making theodicy argues that suffering is beneficial for the growth of faith. Soul-making theodicy supports the believers' spiritual maturity. However, the problem with soul-making theodicy is that it cannot provide a clear answer to social suffering, and the sufferings caused by natural evil. Cosmic

conflict theodicy states that there is suffering due to the confrontation between good and evil. Therefore, according to cosmic conflict theodicy, there is no spiritual or special meaning to suffering. According to cosmic conflict theodicy, the responsibility of suffering is not on God, but entirely on the evil power, Satan. This claim helps believers to gain the power to fight, and resist the evil power. Process theodicy argues that suffering is an evolutionary process of the universe. According to process theodicy, God cannot fully enforce His will on the decision of events, and suffering is essential. This claim is unbiblical, and is to be avoided, because it abolishes the nature of God. Openness theodicy argues that history is the result of a combination of decisions, and actions of both God, and creature. Therefore, this theodicy argues that suffering is inevitable due to the free choice of the creature. According to the openness theodicy, God takes the risk of creating a free being. Openness theodicy has the problem of distorting God's omnipotence. However, openness theodicy has two main problems. First, it limits God's knowledge, power and glory. Second, it undermines God's providence and predestination.

Third, this study attempts to discern, and synthesize the arguments of theodicies. A homiletical theodicy was suggested by synthesizing the contents of theodicy that the preacher might deal with in preaching on suffering. The need for a homiletical theodicy originates from the understanding of theodicies as theories that develop through the experiences, and reactions of suffering. Also, no major church, denomination, or tradition of Christianity has publicly supported a specific theodicy.

This study presents a homiletical theodicy based on the elements (creation-fall-redemption-re-creation) of meta-narrative, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Homiletical theodicy based on this meta-narrative can approach the audience's understanding, and interpretation of suffering through biblical content, thus providing them with Christian perspectives on suffering. Homiletical theodicy based on the crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ shows the picture of God related to suffering. The homiletical theodicy includes:

- Origin: Suffering is not God's responsibility. This understanding prevents the audience from turning the cause of suffering to God. It makes the audience realise the seriousness of sin.
- Attitude: Our expression of suffering is related to faith. We need to recognise the sufferings of our lives. This attitude helps the audience discover that our reactions in suffering are actually expressions of faith.
- Redemption: God works through suffering. Redemption is at the heart of Christian doctrine, and it makes the faithful realise that God is fulfilling His plan, even in times of suffering.
- Presence: God is with us in suffering. The fact that God is always with us in times of suffering can help us discover God's presence through suffering.
- Hope: suffering helps us see the hope that God gives. Eschatological hope provides confidence in the resurrection and restoration after suffering.



## **4. CHAPTER FOUR: A STUDY ON NARRATIVE PREACHING AND REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL PREACHING**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, we will look at the basic theory of redemptive-historical narrative preaching. This chapter will be divided into three main parts.

The first will look at sermon forms, dealing with the definition, and necessity of sermonic forms. I will examine the various sermon forms, and discuss their limitations.

Second, I will look at narrative, and narrative preaching. After discussing the definition of narrative, I will focus on the plot – a key element of narrative. I will also research narrative preaching based on Eugene Lowry's homiletic theology, and evaluate it homiletically.

Third, I will look at redemptive-history, and redemptive-historical interpretation. I will discuss the definition of redemptive-history, followed by what redemptive-historical interpretation and redemptive-historical preaching mean. I will also examine the arguments of the proponents of redemptive-historical preaching, and discuss the limitations of redemptive-historical preaching.

### **4.2 A STUDY ON SERMON FORMS**

What is the sermon form? Is the sermon form necessary for preaching? What do the various sermon forms claim, and what are their limitations? To answer these questions, this study will discuss the definition, and necessity of sermon form. Thereafter, I will examine the various sermon forms and their arguments, followed by a discussion on the problems of various sermon forms.

## 4.2.1 The definition and necessity of sermon form

### 4.2.1.1 The definition of sermon form

What is the purpose of a sermon? Henry Grady Davis, who made a significant contribution to contemporary homiletics and modern sermons, emphasised the organic relationship between content and form in *Design for Preaching* (1958). Davis (1958:1) claims that “the relation of substance and form in the communication of thought is the kind of relation that exists between living tissue and organism.” Traditional homiletics believed that the content and forms are separated, but Davis understood the sermon as an organism in *Design for Preaching*. In other words, he argued that content and form are amalgamated, and not distinct entities.

Davis's understanding of sermon form has had a significant influence on homiletics. Stressing the importance of sermon form, Thomas Long (2016:137) defines the sermon form as “an organisational plan for deciding what kinds of things will be said and done in a sermon and in what sequence.” As we can see from Long's definition, preaching has been paying attention to the organic association of content and form since the late 20th century (Wilson 2007:215). Therefore, based on these arguments, I would like to propose the sermon form as “an organisationally constructed shape for delivering the content.”

The term “sermon form” can be replaced by various terms: sermon style, sermon pattern, sermon frame, sermon structure, etc. However, it is important to note that the sermon is distinct from preaching genres (McClure 2007:43). Preaching genres can be distinguished by different criteria (Jeong 2009:293). According to the way the text is interpreted, preaching can be classified as expository preaching, or exegetical preaching. According to the way in which the subject of the sermon is presented, preaching can be classified as text-topical preaching, topical preaching, or title preaching. According to the function and purpose, preaching can be classified as therapeutic (healing) preaching, counselling preaching, or evangelistic preaching. These are classifications of sermon types, not of sermon

forms. The sermon form is based on the structure of the sermon, and how it develops its contents (Jeong 2009: 294).

#### **4.2.1.2 Backgrounds that make sermon forms disinterested**

The sermon form is essential to deliver the message of the text. The sermon form not only gives a framework for preaching, but also brings vitality to preaching. For this reason, Thomas Long (2016:136-138) emphasises that sermon form is an important factor in how to make a sermon meaningful.

Historically, the importance of the sermon has often escaped notice. Even some preachers have been inclined to criticise, and reject an interest in sermon forms very strongly (Jeong 2009:295-296). Indeed, for many preachers, sermon form is neither a great concern, nor an interest. Preachers use sermon forms that they are accustomed to, or comfortable with. Therefore, we can ask: what has made preachers think of sermon form as insignificant? Is there some tendency that views sermon form negatively? There are four reasons why sermons might not be captivating.

The first cause is a theological position that emphasises content over form (Jeong 2009:296). This comes from the position that it is unfaithful to be too concerned about sermon form since it is more important to proclaim the Word of God. In other words, this theory argues that the primary purpose is to declare the contents of the Bible. In particular, dialectic theology, which emerged in the early twentieth century, had a profound influence on theology and preaching. Dialectic theology maintains a position of rejecting the sermon form. For example, Barth (1991:121) rejects using the sermon form, and argues that preachers only have to preach what the Bible text says. This position argues that using sermon form is wrong because it regards sermons as literary objects, and that if the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, the form naturally follows. For this reason, Barth refuses the introduction, conclusion, and the distinction of paragraphs in the sermons. However, negating form is merely asserting “Homiletical Docetism” (Cf. Resner 1999:69-71). The bible shows us the importance of specific forms in delivering the word of God.

Preaching does not merely convey theological ideas. The sermon form is needed to effectively convey God's word.

The second cause is the false optimism that biblical content can solve the communication problems (Jeong 2009:296-297). This is a common perception among Korean preachers. Those who maintain this position criticise people who emphasise the importance of sermon form. They argue that the church's problem lies vague communicating of biblical messages. Thus, the community is more concerned that the message delivered by the preacher is biblical, than the sermon form. Haddon Robinson (2007:23-27) points out that until the mid-20th century, preachers understood biblical sermons as being the same as the expository sermon that tries to correctly interpret the text and, faithfully convey content. But no matter how excellent the biblical and theological contents of the sermon may be, if it is not communicated effectively, it will not have the desired impact.

The third cause is a preacher's wrong interpretation of the text, as opposed to the preaching of it (Jeong 2009:297-298). Many preachers understand that sermons are simply grasping the subject of the text and proclaiming it to the audience. In other words, a preacher believes that his mission is completed when the subject is understood through the interpretation of the text. This misunderstanding brings about a disinterested attempt to utilize sermon form. This misunderstanding also overlooks the importance of looking at what form and rhetorical strategy the text used.

The fourth cause is the preacher seeing himself as the image of the herald (Jeong 2009: 298). Preaching is the act of proclaiming the Word of God, the King, to His people. The preacher was historically a man who blew the trumpet to gather people, or to a region to deliver important news on behalf of the king (Bromiley & Kittel 1965:683-696). In other words, a preacher as the herald (κῆρυξ) is sent by God, and proclaims His Word with authority. The herald image was the most prevalent metaphor advanced by homileticians in the mid twentieth century when they sought to describe what they believed the role of the preacher ought to be (Long 2006:20-21). The herald image reminds a preacher to recognize that it is of utmost importance to preach God's Word correctly.

However, the problem with this image is that it is too confusing regarding proclamation. Preaching is a living form of communication (Lloyd-Jones 2005:85-86). When focusing too much on proclamation, a preacher may urge, demand, or rebuke the audience rather than communicate with the audience. In this case, the audience does not become an active participant in the sermon, but remains a passive receiver merely accepting what the preacher proclaims (cf. Craddock 1979:53-59).

#### **4.2.1.3 The necessity of sermon form**

Based on the following three reasons, the sermon form is essential for preaching. First, the authors of the Bible are mainly interested in the literary forms. The Bible was not recorded as a theoretical book containing theological theory, but rather with the intention to influence the lives of the readers (Ramm 1970:113). For this purpose, the authors used the most effective literary forms to influence their readers. In other words, the Biblical authors knew that the Word of God is effective when being preached in a literary form. As pointed out by Sailhamer (1995:46-47) the text is the embodiment of the author's intention, and the author has a strategy to embody his own intention. Thus, the Bible contains not only the contents (what) of the text, but also the form (how) to convey it. In practice, the authors of the Old Testament, and New Testament deliberately used certain forms to convey their intention. For example, the sermons of the New Testament were based on the synagogue sermon that required complex communication skills (Long 1989:145).

These biblical examples tell us that sermon form is an essential element of the sermon which cannot be separated from the content. Therefore, preachers seeking biblical sermons should not simply pursue content or meaning in the text, but also consider sermon form that conveys the content effectively, as the authors of the Bible did.

Second, the content, and form are organisms. Although the content and form can be viewed separately, the two cannot be fundamentally separated (Wilder 1971:2-

4). Craddock (1979:145) claims that sermon form is not only the means of delivery, but also functions as a message within the sermon.

The sermon form serves to support the vitality of the sermon, and is an important factor for determining the flow and effectiveness of sermon (Long 2016:136). The sermon form also affects the theology of the sermon, the delivery of the sermon, and the usage of examples, and images (Cahill 2007:24). Therefore, a preacher should consider not just the content of the sermon, but also the sermon form in order to convey it effectively. No matter how good the content of the sermon is, it is meaningless without effective sermon form.

Third, preaching is divine communication. Preaching is not just telling the truth. It is also the divine communication between God and His people. God is a great communicator (Arthur 2010:25). God is not one-sided in telling us His Word; God is the One who associates with us through the Word. However, the essential element of achieving this divine communication is sermon form because the power of the sermon depends on the sermon form (Luccock 1944:118). This is not to say that the content is not important. Rather, as Long (1989:33) points out, it serves to create divine communication in the sermon. Thus, the preacher has to choose a form that can re-enact the effect of the text. In taking sermon form into account, the preacher performs an act of love to the listener, while simultaneously expressing love to God, the author of the revelation (Logan 1990:341-342).

To sum up, sermon form is an essential element for the preacher to consider. Sermon form is organically communicated through content, enriching the Word of God, and achieving the goal of divine communication. Therefore, a preacher must always consider the correct sermon form to convey the Word of God effectively.

#### **4.2.2 Various sermon forms and problems**

We have looked at the definition, and necessity of the sermon form. Our next questions are the following: What different sermon forms exist? What does each form claim? What are their strengths and weaknesses? It is by no means easy to

present the category of sermon forms in just a few ways. For instance, in *Patterns of preaching: a sermon sampler* (1998), Allen presents 34 sermon forms, and Jeong (2012) identifies 16 sermon forms. On the other hand, Pieterse (2009:269-375) blends the genres, and functions of the sermon without distinction, and classifies sermon forms according to text-topical sermons, instructive sermons, poetic sermons, narratives, etc. This study attempts to present sermon forms by classifying them according to development or movement. The development or movement refers to the entire structure of sermon flow.

Following the development or movement of the sermon, I will attempt to divide the sermon forms into deductive forms, inductive forms, deductive-inductive form, and inductive-deductive form.

#### **4.2.2.1 The deductive form**

The first sermon form I will address here is the deductive forms. The method used in deductive sermon forms is to explain the subject or “big idea” of the sermon first (Robinson 2014:78-85). Generally, deductive forms are called traditional homiletics. In traditional homiletics, the purpose of the sermon is to explain the subject or big idea to the audience in detail, and logically. For this reason, the deductive forms can be said to be didactic preaching. Christian sermons have stayed in this tradition for nearly 1,500 years since Saint Augustine introduced rhetorical techniques into sermons to systematize preaching theories and methods (Cf. Craddock 1979:37-38; Lee 2011:197). As we saw in chapter 2, the deductive forms are the most commonly used form by preachers in SKC that value the delivery of sermons.

The most popular deductive form is point-making form. Point-making form first determines the subject or big idea of the sermon, and then classifies it in several points. Robinson (2014:78-79) describes this format as subject-completed development. A typical point-making form is a three-point sermon. For example, a preacher may define a big idea, such as “you must obey your parents” in Ephesians 6:1-3, and preach three points as follows: First, obeying one’s parents

is part of being a Christian. Second, obeying one's parents is the proper thing to do. Third, obeying one's parents benefits one.

The advantages of the deductive forms are as follows: First, they are effective for preaching doctrines or specific topics (Jeong 2009:308). This is because the deductive form simply summarizes and concentrates the contents of the text into three or four points, making it easy to convey information. Chae (2015:23-35) claims that the three-points sermon is still effective today, and it clearly convey the message of the text. As Greidanus (1999:280) argues, point-making form has a solid logical framework. For this reason, point-making form can be effective in teaching doctrines or topical sermons, especially when they are supported by the text.

The second advantage of deductive forms is that the preacher is not limited to the elaborate strategic composition, and development of the sermon (Jeong 2009:309). This is because deductive forms already present a big idea or text subject at the beginning of the sermon. A three-point sermon, for example, is a way of proving each point after revealing an idea or subject at the beginning of each point. For this reason, Jeong (2008:99) claims that the deductive form can be beneficial to two types of preachers.

First, it benefits preachers seeking a proclamation role in preaching. The deductive form relieves the burden of preachers who are not proficient in inductive development or plot composition, and makes strong proclamation possible. Second, this format is beneficial to preachers pursuing logical sermons. The deductive form focuses on logic, so it aids in strong persuasion. Furthermore, it is a form of proving, not a form of deduction or imagination. This assures legitimacy to the preacher's interpretation.

However, the deductive form presents the following challenges. First, it is difficult for the audience to participate in the sermon (Cahill 2007:27-28). The reason is that this type of structure relies on the preacher's logic rather than a strategy that allows for audience participation in the sermon. Because the deductive form uses



a method of demonstrating or explaining, it is difficult to stimulate the curiosity of the audience (Jeong 2008:100)

Second, this form has discontinuous movements (Eslinger 2002:17). The deductive form can be said to be an outline-centred sermon consisting of several small sermons rather than a single sermon. For this reason, the flow of sermons result in many outcomes, making it discontinuous. As Eugene Lowry (2001:9) points out, the deductive form is a kind of architecture, not development, so it does not work as an organic whole, it's just a static combination. Thus, in the deductive form it is not easy to produce experience in preaching through rhetorical strategy and plot.

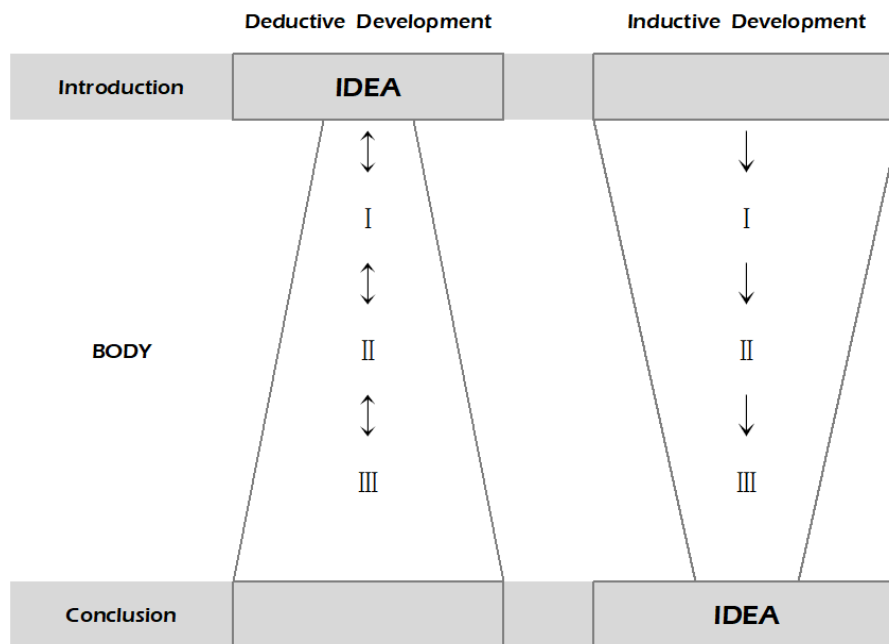
Third, this form is likely to result in errors in the interpretation of the text (Jeong 2008:100). For example, a preacher may try an atomistic interpretation that extracts, and uses certain elements of the text to create points. In such cases, the text eventually degenerates into auxiliary tools, or a “jumping board” for what the preacher is trying to say (Jeong 2009:310). In other words, a preacher misuses the text to express his own opinion.

#### **4.2.2.2 The inductive form**

The inductive form was initiated by the new homiletics. There were some who suggested methods similar to the inductive form, such as Franco Peneration and Davis (1920). However, the inductive form only gained interest with new homiletics. Craddock, a leading theologian in new homiletics, explains the inductive form in *As One Without Authority* (1971). In this book, he argues that traditional homiletics have thus far relied on deductive form, and that it is necessary to deviate from deductive form, and shift the preaching direction to inductive form. Since then, many homileticians influenced by Craddock's claims, have continued to propose various types of inductive sermons. For this reason, the inductive form is sometimes referred to as new homiletical form (Eslinger 2002:11-21).

The inductive form is a way of approaching the subject or big idea of a sermon, starting with specific events or experiences that occur in life (Willimon & Lischer 2003:77-78). As shown in figure 4.1, inductive development is a movement toward a big idea or subject, while deductive development is the distancing from the big idea or subject.

Inductive form aims to acquiring empathy from the audience, and to experience the Gospel using inductive movement. For this reason, Calvin Miller (1995:65) argues that inductive form is not just one of the ways of preaching the gospel, but the only way. In *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen* (1983), Lewis contrasts deductive and inductive forms by citing 25 items. While the deductive sermon is dialectical, the inductive sermon is empathetic; the inductive sermon is empirical, where the deductive sermon is logical (Lewis 1983:109).



**Figure 4.1 Deductive development and inductive development**

The most popular pattern of the inductive form is the problem-solving pattern (Long 2016:147-148). This pattern uses an inductive development in which the

preacher raises a question or conflict at the beginning of the sermon, and finds answers or solutions throughout the sermon. The most representative form of problem-solving is narrative preaching.<sup>27</sup>

Eugene Lowry proposes narrative preaching which develops during the flow of the sermon. This approach is explained in *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (1980). Lowry (2001:8-14) defines a sermon as an event-in-time, emphasising the importance of continuity, and movement in the sermon. The core of narrative preaching, as presented by Lowry, can be summed up as a sermon that presents the elements of a plot, such as conflict, complication, reversal, resolution, and consequences. The plot of the narrative, as proposed by Lowry, consists of five stages (Oops – Ugh – Aha – Whee – Yeah). I will elaborate more regarding narrative preaching and homiletical plots in 4.3.2.

The advantages of inductive form are as follows: First, the inductive form helps to recognise the role of the audience anew in preaching (Craddock 1979:30). The inductive form involves the audience in the sermon by raising questions, and finding answers with the preacher. Where the deductive form recognises the audience as a passive receiver, the inductive form recognises the audience as an active participant. However, the inductive form does not involve a practical conversation in which the audience participates verbally. Through unique movements, the inductive form draws attention from the audience, and gains their sympathy giving the audience the impression of participating in the sermon. Therefore, the audience does not take a defensive or a withdrawn stance to the

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<sup>27</sup> In this study, I will distinguish narrative preaching from story sermon or storytelling preaching. The story sermon, and storytelling preaching that Charles Rice and Richard Jensen use, are either a way of developing a sermon to a story or using a story, while narrative preaching relies on a “plot” to encourage movement in preaching. According to Lowry's theory, even if there is a story in storytelling preaching, it leads to the conclusion that it is not narrative preaching without a plot. In this study, therefore, story sermon or storytelling preaching are not included in the inductive form. This is because the story sermon or storytelling preaching often takes a deductive or semi-inductive form. Also, it is the latest homiletical trend to take Lowry's narrative preaching mainly as referring to a story-related sermon (Jeong 2009:317-318).

sermon, but rather an open attitude. As such, the inductive form focuses the position and role of the audience.

The second advantage of the inductive form is to help the Word of God become an event in preaching (Word-event). The inductive form begins the sermon specifically from the experience of everyday life, or from experiences that are relatable to prevent the sermon being a boring lecture or debate to which the audience cannot relate (Jeong 2009:314). The inductive form helps the audience discover God's Word themselves. For example, narrative preaching provides an experience of the Gospel through the "principle of reversal" in preaching (Lowry. 2001:54).

However, over time, problems regarding the inductive form started to emerge. First, the inductive form leads to the privatisation of preaching. Campbell (1997:140) claims that the inductive form focuses on personal experiences. According to Michael Quick (2009:49), this style of sermon belongs to individual sermons. He points out that the most alarming problem of the modern church's sermons is that it focuses only on individual problems and needs. When sermons are privatised, we cannot expect maturity and change in the community as a whole, not to mention the ethics or social responsibility of the faith community. In *Preaching Jesus: The New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (1997), Campbell criticizes the individualistic features of the inductive form from the perspective of ecclesiology. Campbell recons that inductive preaching is not conducive to the establishment of the church, in other words, the building of God's people (Campbell, 1997:144).

Second, the inductive form subordinates objective truths to subjective categories due to an excessive emphasis on personal experience (Willimon & Lischer 2003:78). For example, Lowry argues that the purpose of the sermon is the audience's experience. For him, the gospel is not understood but experienced, so the purpose of the sermon is to create empirical events for the audience (Lowry 1985:36). According to this claim, the final step in determining the meaning of the text lies with the audience who listens to the sermon, not with the author or the text.

Thomas Long (2016:48) criticises the dangers of sermons explaining personal experience as follows:

There is a deep theological danger in measuring preaching by its capacity to generate religious experience. Theologian Hendrikus Berkhof has reminded us that, in the Old Testament, one of the reasons that Israel was continually abandoning Yahweh for Baal was that Baal was always more available, more visible, providing blessings that were more predictable. One could always count on Baal for a religious experience, but not so Yahweh. Yahweh tended, on many occasions, to have a hidden face, to be absent in those times when the people yearned for a more readily available God. In sum, God does not always move us when we desire to be moved, and everything that moves us deeply is not God.

Excessive emphasis on experience reduces the Word of God to a tool for human experience. For this reason, Campbell (1997:142) points out, inductive preaching can degrade the gospel with "theological relationalism" that implies God's reliance on the immediate human experience.

Third, the inductive form is difficult to apply. This is because the inductive form relies on the belief that the audience can realise, and apply the text by themselves (Rose 1990:35). In *Overhearing the Gospel* (1978), Craddock introduces two styles of communication, direct and indirect. According to Craddock (1978:82-83), the direct method can make the audience uncomfortable and also close the heart of the audience. This homiletic theology encourages the audience to conclude, and apply the text themselves (Craddock 1979:64). In sermons, however, the application is not a simple insertion that is decided by a preacher's choice. In science, it is important for the reader to reach his or her own conclusions through learning. However, science and the Bible are fundamentally different. It is impossible to argue for absolutes due to the limitations of science itself. But sermons based on the Bible, the Word of God, are not bound by the pursuit of various opinions. Based on the truth of the text, a preacher needs to try to apply the text firmly, and boldly. The Word of God calls for change in the audience, and application needs to be applied for this change to be effective.

### **4.2.2.3 Deductive-inductive form and Inductive-deductive form**

The deductive form and the inductive form are, in theory, in opposition. However, in preaching, it is often difficult to clearly distinguish whether one is hearing deductive preaching or inductive preaching. This is because a mixture of inductive development and deductive development used, according to the preacher' strategy and intention in a single sermon.

The general three-point sermon uses deductive development most effectively. However, in some cases the main argument relies on inductive rather than deductive development. Sometimes, a sermon commences by presenting a big idea or subject deductively, followed by inductive development that starts with a specific event or experience, returning to the big idea or subject first presented. These forms can be called deductive-inductive form (Jeong 2009:315). In addition, some sermons first proceed in an inductive vein without distinguishing the main point, then explaining a big idea or subject in the conclusion using the deductive method. This form can be called inductive-deductive form (Robinson 2014:87).

## **4.3 NARRATIVE AND PLOT**

### **4.3.1 The definition of narrative**

The term “narrative” has recently been used not only in literature but also in various fields of Christian theology, including Christian education, Christian ethics, humanities, social sciences, and even general business administration. However, the definition of narrative varies slightly depending on point of view or emphasis. For example, narrative can be understood as a literary genre. Frederick J. Ruf criticises the tendency to define narrative too broadly in many fields: photography, painting, architecture, and sculpture in the visual arts; music, poetry, dramas, novels, and movies in the performing arts. Ruf (1994:799-818) says that

understanding narrative in a broad sense can cause confusion. Ruf suggests that in order to understand narrative's, three essential elements are crucial: the narrator, the narrated (persons, events, objects, and words), and how they relate to each other. Scholars like Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), Seymour Chatman (1990), and Paul Ricoeur (1984) also regard narrative as a literary genre. They claim that characters, background, time, space, and plot, are the minimum elements that narratives should have. Approaching narrative as a literary genre clarifies narrative as a story in which characters, backgrounds, acts, and events are structured according to the plot.

Some scholars focus more on the content of narrative. Roland Barthes (1977:79) regards the human common experience as a narrative, which transcends culture, and nationality. It can be shared through articulation, written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered amalgamation of all these elements.

Barthes believes that "narrative is international, transhistorical, and transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself". Similarly, Paul Nelson (1987:49-50) recognizes narrative as describing human existence in the real-world. According to him, narrative could be a theological source, because "narratives and human character stand in a relation of mutual presupposition". But, just because Barthes or Nelson approached narratives from content perspective does not mean they don't take into account the formal aspects of narrative. They also make it a premise that narrative is a literary genre that has characters, events, actions, themes, and plot (Nelson 1987:63). They simply describe the process of events, and emphasise narratives that include the speaker's interpretation of reality.

To sum up, narratives have literary elements such as "characters of the story", "events or acts", "background of the events or acts", and "a plot that reveals the progress of the events or acts". However, narratives go beyond just providing information or data, it also includes the intention and interpretation of the speaker (Alter 1981:46; Parker 1997:4; Patrick & Scult 1990:29). Therefore, in this study, considering the formal and content aspects of narrative, I would like to define it as follows: the narrative is a story that consists of literary elements, including the author's intention or interpretation.

### 4.3.2 The reversal and recognition of the plot

The key to narratives is to create an organised form called a plot (Abrams 1997: 97). A plot is a structure that shows the movement of a story. It is a literary artifice that has been used since the birth of Greek rhetoric (Ruf 1994:801). Aristotle (1999:133-134) defines a plot (*mythos*) as “the composition of the events” in *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, “the plot is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy.” The plot structure of the tragedy presented by Aristotle consists of a beginning, middle, and an end, as shown in figure 4.2 below. Aristotle teaches that tragedy should have a detailed plot that begins with *ἄμαρτία*, goes through *περιπέτεια*, and leads to *κάθαρσις*. Here, *ἄμαρτία* means “to miss the mark” or “to err”, *περιπέτεια* means “a reversal of circumstances or turning point”, and *κάθαρσις* means “purification”, “cleansing”, or “clarification” (Park 2013:67).

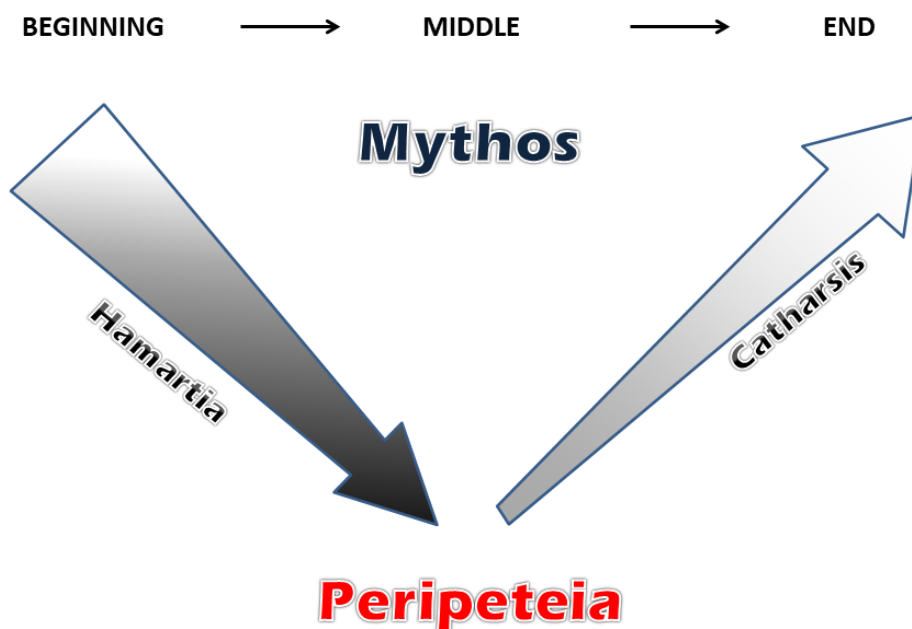


Figure 4.2 Aristotle's tragic plot structure



Aristotle argues that there must be a "reversal" and "recognition" in the tragedy. In the tragedy, "reversal" and "recognition" occur through reversal of the plot, exerting a powerful effect on the audience. Reversal is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, and recognition is a shift from ignorance to knowledge (Aristotle 1999:64). So how should the flow of the story be constructed so that a reversal and recognition can occur while still having a powerful effect on the reader or audience? To answer this, it is necessary to look at the interrelationships of reversal, and recognition within the narrative.

The interrelationship of reversal and cognition that Aristotle had in mind in *Poetics* can be identified from two positions (Kim 2010:215-243). First, Aristotle was mindful of cases where a reversal was caused by recognition. In other words, the recognition is the cause of the reversal. For example, in *Oedipus Rex* (Sophocles 1982:29-84), King Oedipus finds out that Laius and Jocasta are his parents. The shocking discovery that he had murdered his father and committed incest, led Oedipus to admit that he is a criminal. He is consequently deported from the country he once ruled.

The second position is opposite to the first: the reversal occurs first, and then recognition occurs. In other words, a sudden change or discrepancy in situations that are completely different from subjective expectations, provide recognition. For example, a Corinthian shepherd tells Oedipus the story with the intention to tell him good news.

The problem develops when "recognition that occurs after reversal" is not distinct from general recognition (Kim 2010:220). In other words, if the recognition means reversing the fate of the main character, all the general recognition can be misunderstood as the recognition that takes place with the reversal. In the same way, there is also a problem when "recognition that occurs with reversal" is not distinct from the general reversal. One way to overcome this problem is to understand that there is a distinction between reversal and recognition, and they occur together rather than sequentially. Lee (2002:66) says:

Oedipus expected the Corinthian Shepherd to reveal his birth. But what he said was the bizarre fact that he was the son of his current wife, Jocasta. This is a moment of complete “reversal” and also a moment of entirely new “recognition” for himself. Aristotle considered the plot, as in the case of *Oedipus Rex*, in which reversal and recognition occur together as the best plot.

For these reasons, the author’s intention must be considered in the plot. The plot can be changed depending on the intention of the author. For example, the author can create a plot that changes the fate of the main character through reversal. Also, the author can structure a plot in which the reverse of his situation occurs through recognition. In the end, reversal and recognition are unique elements that construct the plot. They also serve to convey the author's intentions more effectively.

#### **4.3.3 The narrative and communication**

Narrative is a part of language that places strong emphasis on communication. The first reason for the value of narrative is that it tells a story. Eugene Peterson (1987:119) says that a story can exert great influence on adults as well as children. All people live in a world full of stories and everyone lives a lifetime talking or listening to stories. In this respect, narratives are crucial to establish effective communication.

The second reason is that a narrative not only contains a story, but also a plot. The plot effectively communicates what a story wants to convey through a particular flow (Jeong 2009:318). This is because the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative (Crites 1971:291). In other words, human beings fundamentally have a narrative nature. In light of the narrative nature of human beings, the plot is essential to convey a story.

In preaching, narrative is also an effective means of communication. This is because it allows a preacher to communicate a big idea naturally without directly addressing the audience (Robinson 2014:90). Steven Mathewson (2004:200-201)

says that plots serve as devices for keeping the audience in a tense state, strategically delaying a big idea that the author wants to convey. Despite this, traditional homiletics overlooks the importance of narrative. The deductive sermon is simply a sermon that provides biblical information. The importance of narrative was presented in earnest by Eugene Lowry, a leading homiletician of new homiletics.

#### **4.4 EUGENE LOWRY'S NARRATIVE PREACHING**

The term "narrative preaching" refers to preaching containing some form of plot (Lowry 1985). In literature, if a narrative is a story with a plot, then in homiletics, narrative preaching is preaching with a particular plot. The leading promoter of narrative preaching is Eugene Lowry. Lowry (1985:22-26) argues that all sermons should pursue the homiletical plot that he suggests. For this reason, it is important to take a closer look at narrative preaching, and its homiletical theology as explained by Eugene Lowry.

##### **4.4.1 Preaching aimed at offering an experience to the audience**

Lowry criticises the traditionally accepted deductive and cognitive sermon, and insists on offering the audience an experience (1985:11-28). Traditional homiletics use point-making form more than other forms. Lowry points out that this form not only fails to attract audience attention, but merely creates sermons that convey the general meaning of the text. According to Lowry, locking the text in a fence of points is to make "dead skeletons of what once was lived experience" (1985:79-80).

There is a theological understanding of the Bible in the background of this homiletical theology of Lowry (1985:11-14). Lowry's argument begins with the premise that the Bible is non-propositional. He argues that the Bible was given to the audience to be experienced, and that the Gospel should be experienced by the audience, not only understood through logic and conceptualisation. Lowry

(1985:15-28) argues that preaching is not the conveying of textual ideas through points and subpoints, but should rather be experienced.

Lowry's preaching philosophy shares its roots with new hermeneutics, which claims to read the text as an event. The word "event" that Lowry uses relates to the "language-event" of Fuchs, or "word-event" of Ebeling (Fuchs 1964:196; Ebeling 1966:28-29).

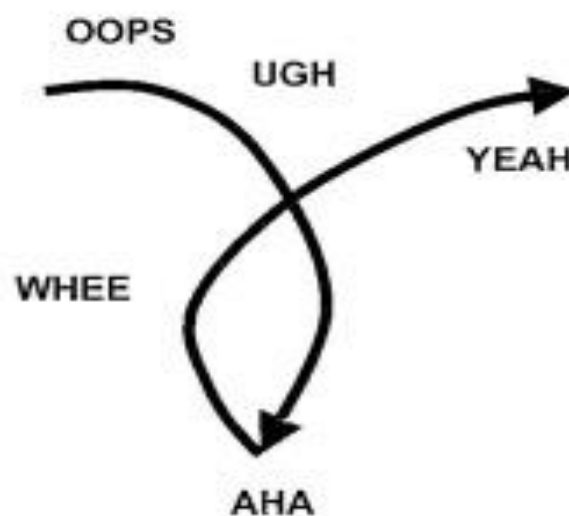
Based on new hermeneutics, Lowry regards the text as an event in which meaning develops through the experience of the audience or community, not in a language system with one meaning to be interpreted (Cf. Kay 2007:77-104). For this reason, the preacher's task is not to interpret the text, but to inspire experience through the text (Lowry 1985:13).

#### **4.4.2 The homiletical plot**

In narrative preaching, homiletical plot is the key ingredient to offer an experience to the audience. Lowry (1980:10) points out that traditional homiletics "has been trained to see the sermon as a thing, and hence sermonic formation typically has consisted of organising the constituent ingredients." For this reason, traditional homiletics has not paid attention to the transitions, and movements of the sermon because they mainly care about organising the points or ideas of sermons, using an outline. According to Lowry, in terms of architecture, traditional homiletics primarily pays attention to "the bricks" that make up the wall but neglects to pay attention to "the mortar" that connects the bricks.

Lowry (1980:12) argues that preaching is not a lecture that presents a concept through several points, but "an event-in-time which follows the logic born of the communication interaction between preacher and congregation." For this reason, the preacher's task is the same as that of an artist. A preacher is not an architect who builds, using bricks one by one. The preacher is an artist who creates tension and curiosity (Lowry 1980:14). Lowry suggests the plot of a narrative as a key ingredient that stimulates this tension and curiosity.

Lowry's homiletical plot (Lowry loop) has continuity and movement. The homiletical plot commences by demolishing common perceptions, and then continues with tension and conflict to establish a resolution. In other words, narrative preaching starts from the conflict (or problem of life), not the subject or ideas of the text. Lowry explains the homiletical plot in five stages as shown below in figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3 Lowry Loop – conflict and resolution (Lowry 1980:25)**

1) Oops! - upsetting the equilibrium (conflict): The first stage draws the audience's attention by raising conflict, tension, a problem, or a deeply felt human itch. The preacher induces tension and ambiguity at the beginning of the sermon by adding something quite the opposite of what the audience would expect. Lowry (1980:30) says that ambiguity is the top priority. The purpose of the first stage is to stimulate ambiguity in the listeners' minds. It is like "the opening scene of a play or movie in which some kind of conflict or tension is introduced" (Lowry 1980:30-31).

2) Ugh! - analysing the discrepancy (complication): The second step is to analyse the discrepancy caused by the problem or conflict presented in the introduction.

Lowry (1980:36-37) claims that a preacher needs to devote the most time to this stage to lay a sufficient foundation for the audience to understand the conflict. At this stage, it is necessary to constantly analyse the problem or conflict. In other words, diagnosing and analysing are the most important elements of this step. Lowry says the biggest reason for ineffective sermons is that they simply try to explain the text without analysing it in depth. While traditional homiletics have avoided the process of analysing discrepancies, merely providing answers to resolve them, Lowry emphasises that this process can engage the audience. “The purpose for stage two is not simply for a resolution to be reached but also for a readiness for resolution to be developed” (Lowry 1980:45).

3) Aha! - disclosing the clue to resolution (sudden shift): This stage is to disclose the clue to a solution. Every part of life has a problem or conflict and a process by which to solve it. Lowry says that this aspect of life is equally represented in preaching, so preaching should move beyond the question of “why” to the solution of “how.” However, this step is not to provide a complete solution to the problem, but a starting point toward the complete solution. In this step, Lowry (1980:48) emphasises the word “principle of reversal.” According to him, the reversal does not start from what we expect, but from what we have never thought of. This reversal provides surprise and expectation in the audience. Many stories in the Bible, especially the parables of Jesus, illustrate the principle of reversal that overturns readers’ expectation and anticipation. In the parable of the good Samaritan, for example, it is unexpected that a Samaritan helps, and saves a dying Jewish brother. This parable shows that a solution is not expected. The solution is what the audience needs to experience.

4) Whee! - experiencing the gospel: The previous steps exist just for this stage. To experience the Gospel more effectively, this stage is equivalent to an outpost. It is rather an easy step to present the Gospel once the problems of life have been fully analysed, and some clues to the solution are provided (Lowry 1980:62). Therefore, the content of the gospel is important, but the sermonic timing of when the gospel will be proclaimed, is more important (Lowry 1980:63). The actual content of the proclamation of the good news must be consistent with the diagnosis which

precedes it. Then the audience will realise that the “human fulfilment” mentality they cling to is meaningless, and experience the gospel (Lowry 1980:66).

5) Yeah! - anticipating the consequences (unfolding): Unlike traditional homiletics, Lowry (1980:67-68) only shows the possibility that problems can be solved. Traditional homiletics have a tendency to reach the conclusions that include the application at the last stage. However, based on his homiletical theology, Lowry claims that a preacher needs to leave the sermon open for another possibility without presenting the final stage clearly. The audience that experiences the truth of the gospel in preaching will look forward to the positive results that the Gospel will bring.

So far we have looked at the Lowry loop, which consists of five stages. If I convert the parable of Luke Chapter 15 into narrative preaching following the five steps presented by Eugene Lowry, I would be able to preach as follows: 1) The son has gained freedom (Oops!), 2) The son wastes all his inheritance, and faces trouble (Ugh!); 3) The son decides to go home (Aha!), 4) The father runs to his son and forgives him (Whee!), 5) The son is restored as his father’s son (Yeah!). Lowry describes these five steps in *The Sermon* (1997) by merging them in four steps: conflict, complication, sudden shift, and unfolding. However, in *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (2001), he follows five steps as stated above. Therefore, the fundamental principle of the Lowry loop (conflict to resolution) is the same, whether it follows five stages, or four stages.

#### **4.4.3 Variations of narrative preaching**

Narrative preaching is still in development, thus it does not rely on a fixed form. This opens the scope for variety in narrative preaching, depending on where the emphasis is placed on the plot, and how it is arranged. For example, Haddon W. Robinson (1990:92-95) proposes the narrative structure as follows: 1) find the issue, 2) explore the issue, 3) reframe the issue, 4) resolve the issue. The key here is what the issue is.

In Eugene Lowry's work, we discover the four basic variations of narrative preaching. In *How to preach a parable: design narrative sermons*, Lowry (1989:38-40) suggests four approaches to sermon design: running the story, delaying the story, suspending the story, and alternating the story.

1) Running the story: This is a step forward from the initial method of storytelling. Storytelling is a method of proceeding with the story of the text, while simultaneously doing interpretation, and diagnosis (Lowry 1989:38). The preacher first chooses the story from the Bible, then he explains the message of the story. It must be delivered to the congregation as if the preacher is drawing a picture. In the process, the preacher should maximize the conflict of the text, and provide answers through interpretation. However, this method has the weakness of being able to simply repeat a story that the congregation already knows. To overcome this weakness, a preacher's diagnosis, and interpretation should be substantiated to ensure that the congregation has a sense of solidarity. Also, it must be accompanied by a realistic and dramatic description of the situation (Yu 2010:54).

2) Delaying the story: This is a way of beginning the sermon with a relatable congregational concern (Lowry 1989:39). Here it is important to depict the problems of modern living. And then a preacher complicates the problems through the text. This is possible through dealing with the story of the text in more detail or through another text. After complicating the problem, the message of the sermon is presented, and this message is re-emphasised by another text or illustration, then finished with a summary. It is advisable here that the message is not long, staying under a paragraph (6-7 sentences). The message then needs to be viewed from a different angle through different texts or illustrations to overcome the boredom of the sermon (Yu 2010:55).

3) Suspending the story: This is a way to start the introduction of the sermon with the story of the text, connecting it to the situation of today's congregation, and then extracting the message from the text (Lowry 1989:39). Thus, it is the reverse of "delaying the story". This approach highlights the problem of the text in the introduction. The problem derived from the text is then extracted from the context of the congregation. A preacher needs to expand and develop the problem by



using other texts or illustrations. The message of the sermon is presented after complication. However, it is important to present the message through illustration rather than delivering the message directly. It is recommended that the message be presented briefly in one paragraph, and then deepen the message through another text or illustration.

4) Alternating the story: This is a very advantageous way to create narrative preaching from text that does not contain events or specific stories, such as the Epistles or the Prophetic Books. “Alternating the Story” proceeds with the sermon using a variety of different illustrations around one topic (Lowry 1989:40). These illustrations are from the Bible, and other sources. This method uses three to six short illustrations in the introduction to highlight the problem that the preacher is trying to raise. These illustrations intensify the problem gradually. For example, a preacher can deepen the “difficulty” using illustrations of difficulties in everyday life, physical discomfort, and the confusion of values. After the problem intensifies, a preacher presents the message from the text. The message is presented briefly, and should be supplemented by other illustrations. However, since this approach uses various illustrations, there is a risk that it will be a display case of illustrations rather than a sermon. Therefore, what is most needed to dispel these dangers is clarity in the subject that binds these illustrations together (Yu 2010:57).

All four the abovementioned variations have common characteristics; presenting the problem or conflict at the beginning, and presenting the message at the end of the sermon. The narrative structures vary, but keeping the movement and continuity of the plot is at the core of these approaches. Therefore, a preacher should consider which of these variations is suitable to convey the message to the congregation when attempting the narrative preaching. There are many things to consider in choosing a narrative structure. This includes the intellectual level of the audience, the preacher's speech ability, the duration of the sermon, the purpose of the sermon, and the subject, etc.

#### **4.4.4 Homiletical evaluation of narrative preaching**

So far I have considered narrative preaching and also Lowry's homiletical theology. Lowry insists on narrative preaching which puts the emphasis on continuity and movement. Referring to the insights of narrative preaching, we can think of the possibly using the plot in preaching on suffering to deliver a sermon effectively. But first, a desirable assessment of narrative preaching is needed. Therefore, I feel it is necessary to evaluate it by dividing it into contributions and problems.

#### **4.4.4.1 Contributions of narrative preaching**

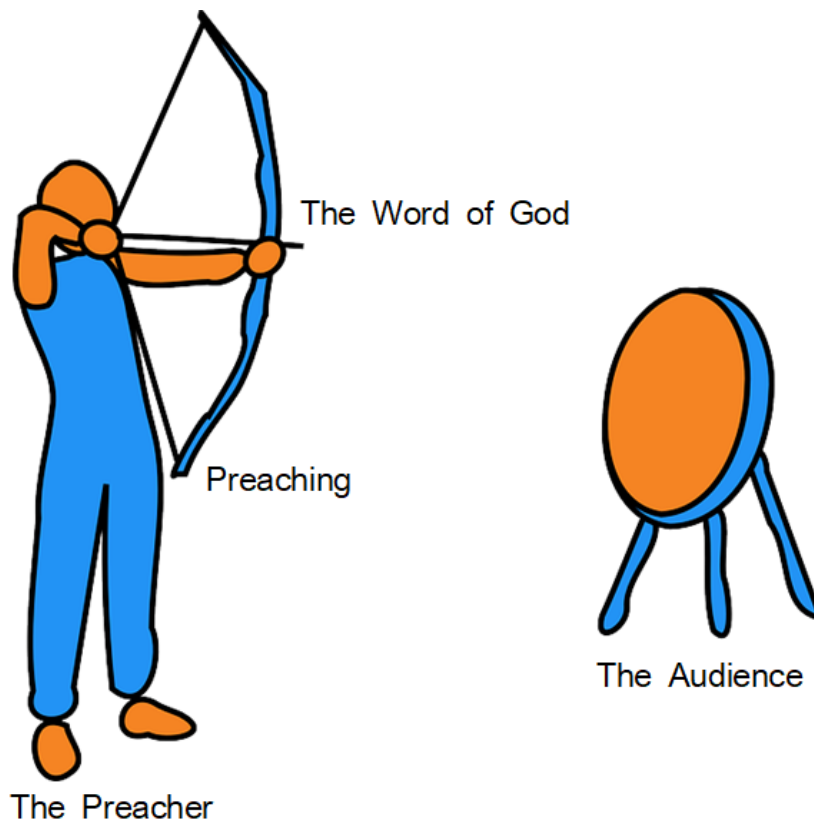
The biggest contribution of narrative preaching is the emphasis on the role of sermon form, and the importance of biblical narrative. In traditional sermons, the importance of form has been overshadowed by the importance of content. But Lowry wanted to prove through his own homiletical plot that the contents of the sermon could be delivered more effectively by form.

If traditional sermons focus on extracting an idea or meaning from the text, Lowry emphasizes the importance of the form that conveys it (Ryu 2009:224). Also, Lowry's narrative preaching urges preachers to be interested in the narratives that appear in the Bible. About forty per cent of the Old Testament is narrative, and much of the Gospels, and most of Acts in the New Testament's are narratives as well (Overstreet 2001:23). James Thompson (2001:7) points out that narrative theology has discovered that the most important form of the Bible is narrative.

Thompson evaluates the contribution of new homiletics by recognizing that the revelation is happening in the narratives itself, without only focussing on the propositional truth or historicity in the narratives. Therefore we can evaluate narrative preaching in an attempt to revive narratives in the Bible (Ryu 2009:225).

The second contribution of narrative preaching is that it has provided a new theological understanding of the audience. In traditional sermons, the audience is in the passive position of merely listening. Chartier (1981:15) expresses it well in figure 4.4. He evaluates the traditional sermons as a "bow-and-arrow model." The traditional sermons believe the archer (the preacher) uses the bow (preaching) to

shoot the arrow (the Word of God) toward the target (the audience). In other words, the bow-and-arrow model puts the audience in a passive position where must be hit by the arrow.



**Figure 4.4 Bow-and-arrow model (Chartier 1981:15)**

Lowry establishes that the bow-and-arrow model of traditional sermons fails to attract the audience's attention. He suggests a homiletical plot that moves the audience's hearts. The homiletical plot has the power to capture the attention of the audience, and helps them participate in reaching the conclusion of the sermon. Through a homiletical plot, the audience becomes an active participant in taking a journey with a preacher (Kim 2007:159-161). Narrative preaching, for example, starts by disrupting equilibrium to induce audience participation.

The third contribution of narrative preaching is making the audience realise the greatness of the Gospel. Ronald J. Allen (1998:94) argues that narrative preaching does not only make the audience rethink their lives, but also helps them to truly understand the gospel. Lowry's understanding of "point of contact" (2001:78-79) shows that Allen evaluates Lowry correctly.

It is a view different both from the inductive process of the liberal tradition (which view the gospel as continuous with human experience) and from the deductive process of the neo-orthodox tradition (which views the gospel as discontinuous with human experience ...The third alternative as expressed here is to view the gospel as continuous with human experience after human experience has been turned upside down. Hence I begin inductively, move toward the clue to resolution which reveals the dead-ends of the "human fulfilment" mentality and turns matters upside down, and then proclaim the gospel deductively.

The homiletical plot exposes the hypocrisy of the "human fulfilment" mentality, and helps the audience experience the gospel with surprise or reversal. For this reason, Lowry (2001:76) argues that the audience must recognize that all human actions and efforts are meaningless unless the gospel is proclaimed.

#### **4.4.4.2 Problems of narrative preaching**

There are also problems with narrative preaching. The first is that the author's intentions can be distorted. Narrative preaching authorizes the audience to determine the meaning of the text (Ryu 2009:226). It means that the message of the sermon is determined by the audience, not the text. However, the Christian sermon must be based on biblical text, for then it becomes the word of an authoritative God when it is faithful to the meaning of the text or the intention of the author (Cf. Robinson 2014:7).

Long (2016:125) refutes the example of "Amazing Grace" that Lowry cites, and concludes that Lowry's argument that the influence of the text does not relate to

the ideas, and propositional content of the text is wrong. Long says, “What a text says clearly governs what it does.” This means that even if the importance of the audience is emphasised, it is dangerous to pursue meaning beyond the text or to allow the audience to make their own conclusions. This is because the authority of the Gospel can be lost, even as the audience obtains autonomy. The sermon in which the author's intention is ignored results in the degradation of objective truths into subjective truths.

The second problem is that narrative preaching sets the audience's experience as the purpose of the sermon. It distorts the nature of the sermon to think that the purpose of the sermon is achieved only when the experience occurs in the sermon. Religious experience is indeed one of the purposes of the sermon, but making it the sole purpose of a sermon carries a serious risk. In the light of the Triad of Purpose presented by Poythress (1999:52-57), the sermon also has the following three purposes: truth (to teach the truth), presence (God is present), and control (to transform people).

Poythress, in *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (1999), suggests that the purpose of the Bible is threefold: for God to transform people, for him to teach the truth, for God himself to be present. However, he argues that the three purposes are coinherent, just as the Persons of the Trinity are coinherent (περιχώρησις). Therefore, it is challenging to achieve the entire purpose of God through preaching when mainly focusing on the experience. This can result in the overlooking of the other purposes of the sermon. For example, if a preacher only focuses on experience, and overlooks teaching the biblical truth in preaching, the audience can forget their distinct role and mission as God's people.

The third problem is that narrative preaching insists on an open ending. Lowry (2001:82-83) argues that preachers should avoid the sermon that values conclusions. “To make the call to commitment the central focus of a sermon is to place ourselves in the limelight, where we have no business being” (Lowry 1980:69). Lowry emphasises leaving the conclusion in the hands of the audience because he regards the preacher's conclusion, and application, as a unilateral tyranny. This demonstrates Lowry's philosophy of the Bible. Since Lowry

understands the Bible as a plot, he does not value the importance or perception of the Bible's absolute truth. In this regard, Thompson (2001:13) argues: “narrative preaching is reluctant to speak with authority or to make concrete demands for change in the listener’s lives.” Attempting to leave the conclusion to the audience may stand in contrast to the text or the author’s intention due to the diversity of the audience, and the tendency to self-centred interpretation. Furthermore, a sermon without application has difficulty in changing the heart of the audience. Without application, the sermon will not only lose its meaning but also its purpose (Kim 2014:13).

The fourth problem is that narratives focus on personal experience, so they are vulnerable in establishing a faith community. Campbell criticises Lowry by referring to Frei's postliberal theology. Campbell (1997:117-45) classifies homileticians who insist on an inductive approach, such as Rice, Craddock, and Lowry, as what Lindbeck calls an experiential-expressive model.

In the experiential-expressive model, the text functions as non-informative and non-discursive symbols of feelings, attitudes, or existential orientation (Cf. Lindbeck 1984:16). Despite Lowry’s comments on the importance of story for establishing communal identity, the experience that narrative preaching focuses on has a decidedly individualistic orientation (Lowry 1985:39-41). In fact, Lowry (1980:37-38, 40, 62, 64) consistently employs the images of doctor-patient or therapist-client to describe the preacher-congregation relationship in the preaching event. For this reason, Campbell asks the theological critical question: “How faithfully does narrative preaching follow the logic of the Gospels, which are aimed at proclaiming Jesus Christ and establishing a community?” According to Campbell (1997:144), narrative preaching has thus far provided no resources to think carefully about establishing the people of God as a community. In other words, it is vulnerable in the establishment of a faith community that the church should pursue. In conclusion, narrative preaching (whose main purpose is to produce personal experience) is an example of the experiential-expressive model which falls in the framework of modern liberalism (Campbell 1997:121-122).

The fifth problem is that the Gospel presented by the narrative preaching is replaced by the subjective gospel. The emphasis on experience turns the Gospel into a gospel of the existential realm. Campbell (1997:142) points out that the emphasis on experience eventually degrades the Gospel to the “theological relationalism” that makes God too dependent on immediate human experience. In other words, the Gospel spoken in narrative preaching is a subjective gospel, judged by personal experience. This can be evidenced by Lowry's homiletical theology as we discussed earlier. Lowry claims that the audience should experience the Gospel existentially. After all, according to Lowry, the Gospel is only an existential experience.

Campbell (1997:192) criticises this understanding of the Gospel as follows: “What is important for Christian preaching is not ‘stories’ in general or even ‘homiletical plots,’ but rather a specific story that renders the identity of a particular person.” Campbell asks whether Lowry's plot and the homiletical theology are aware of the ascriptive logic of the gospels. Campbell (2008:271) identifies serious problems with simply organising the plot with the focus on the audience's experience. Campbell argues that narrative preaching must focus on the story of the Bible, especially the story of Jesus Christ which forms the centre of the Bible. He argues that the identity of Jesus Christ, as revealed through the plot, is the gospel that narratives should convey to the audience. To sum up, Campbell's position insists that a clear theological understanding of the gospel is necessary for narrative preaching.

In preaching, theology affects the sermon form, and the sermon form also affects theology (Cf. McKim 1994:15). Essentially, preaching is not simply a means for problem-solving but a theological act of proclaiming the Gospel. Therefore, not only is an effective way of delivering the Gospel required, but also a clear theological understanding or content of the Gospel. Using the plot to replace the Gospel with personal experience is nothing but a liberal theology that distorts the nature of the Gospel.

## 4.5 REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION AND REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL PREACHING

So far, we have looked at narrative, and narrative preaching. Now I will discuss redemptive-historical interpretation, and redemptive-historical preaching.

### 4.5.1 Redemptive history

Before discussing redemptive-historical interpretation, and redemptive-historical preaching, I would like to explore the meaning of redemptive history

#### 4.5.1.1 The definition of redemptive history

Redemptive history is a debated term, also called Salvation history, sacred/holy history, Heilsgeschichte in German (Soulen 1981:82), or the biblical history of Israel (Waltke & Yu 2007:53). The term can be confusing among theologians as both reformed and liberal theologians use the term frequently. For example, Dogmatic theologians like Barth and Pannenberg, New Testament theologians Bultmann and Cullman, and Old Testament theologian Von Rad, and many others, enjoy using this term (Park1988:10). However, this study will not look at all the definitions and historical development of redemptive history because the purpose of this study is not to examine all the various theological positions of redemptive history.

In this study, I would like to limit the use of the term “redemptive history” to the terms used in relation to a particular view of biblical theology. In fact, the question of what theme can take an insight into the Bible is an old biblical theological issue. Also, whether the Bible can be viewed as one theme or various themes is a constant source of controversy in biblical theology. Those who insist on one theme present these themes: the redemption of God, the covenant, promise and achievement, the Kingdom of God, the mission of God, the new creation, the reconciliation of God, and the grace of God. *Understanding biblical theology: a*



*comparison of theory and practice* (Klink & Lockett 2012), one of the latest books on biblical theology, shows the five types of biblical theology as follows: Biblical theology as historical description, biblical theology as history of redemption, biblical theology as worldview-story, biblical theology as canonical approach, and biblical theology as theological construction.

However, some argue that the Bible consists of multiple themes. For example, Scobie, in *The Ways of Our God* (2003), shows multiple ways of approaching the entire Bible: God's Order, God's Servant, God's People, and God's Way. However, the common premise of biblical theologians is that all the revelation is completed within Christ regardless of single, or multiple themes. "The focus or orientation of scripture in all its parts is the history of God's accomplishment of the redemption of his covenant people, which reaches its climax in the work of the incarnate Christ. So far as its content is concerned, biblical revelation is redemptive-historical (or covenantal) and Christocentric" (Vos 1980:XV). Therefore, this study seeks to suggest redemptive history as the main theme of biblical theology.

How does biblical theology define redemptive history? Vos (1862–1949), who taught at Princeton Seminary for nearly 40 years, is best known for *Biblical Theology* (2003), the archetypal treatment in the discipline of biblical theology. Vos (1980:15) defined redemptive history as an organic progress of God's supernatural revelation that has both historic continuity, and multiformity. In this statement, Vos emphasises both the organic unity between the Old and New Testament, as well as a progression in which more and more of God's redemptive plan is revealed as it moves from the Old to the New Testament.

Graeme Goldsworthy (2000:88) claims that salvation history refers to that aspect of universal history in which God is specifically active; both to reveal, and to effect the salvation of his people. This means that redemptive history is not just history recorded in the Bible, but a history that still happens to the people of God. In that sense, Goldsworthy (2000:86-87) says:

The essence of salvation-history is the recognition that the books of the Bible, while not being uniformly historical in form, all relate

to an overarching history in which God acts to bring salvation to his people. Beginning at creation event the storyline moves through the entry of sin to the history of Israel as the chosen people. This history leads eventually to Jesus Christ and finally to the consummation and the new creation.

This understanding assumes a unified theme in both Testaments, and in all of scripture, that is, a meta-narrative of the Bible. Based on this understanding, dogmatic theologian John M. Frame also proposes redemptive history as a narrative. Frame (2013:537) addresses the narrative nature of redemptive history as follows:

(Redemptive history) is that series of events by which God redeems his people from sin, a narrative fulfilled in Christ. It is the principal subject-matter of scripture. Redemptive history constitutes the “mighty acts of God” that he performs for the sake of his people, those acts by which people come to know that he is the Lord (Ex. 7:5, 14:18).

Combining the representative theologians’ discussions on redemptive history, there are four premises in redemptive history. The first is that redemptive history is God’s sovereign history. Redemptive history is not a separate history from “profane” history, but a sovereign history of God that enters history, and comes about with, and through history. God realises his plan of redemption on the horizontal plane of history (Greidanus 2001: 122).

Second, redemptive history is a single narrative centred on Jesus Christ. Redemptive history is a meta-narrative that God extends from Genesis to Revelation. This redemptive act of God reaches its climax in the person and work of Christ Jesus (Clowney 2002:74-77).

Third, redemptive history is progressive. God progressively achieves His Eternal Decree (Seo 2015:5). In other words, redemptive history is the on-going story of God’s saving acts in history.

Fourth, redemptive history is unity (Cho 2012:10). This is because the Bible is an uninterrupted continuation from Genesis to the Revelation. The Bible shows us that God is consistently carrying out the history of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Based on these four premises, this study seeks to define redemptive history as follows: redemptive history is the process of all historical acts in which God, who is sovereign, progressively, and organically performs redemption through Jesus Christ.

#### **4.5.1.2 The necessity of redemptive-historical approach**

The Bible is redemptive in nature. It continuously reminds us of God's salvation and restoration of his people (McCartney & Clayton, 2001:58). The Bible shows the redemption of God from Genesis to Revelation. In other words, the Bible was recorded to inform depraved human beings of God's salvation. God did not annihilate His people when they rebelled against Him. Rather, God bestowed redemption, and promised to send a Saviour, Jesus Christ, to continue with His redemption (Stott 2005:97). Therefore, all the signs, and actions of God revealed in the Bible are related to His redemption of mankind.

For this reason, it is required for preachers to interpret, and preach the text from a redemptive-historical approach. Reason being, God's redemption is the purpose of the Bible, showing the audience that God is still active in their lives today. In this regard Vos (2003:5-6) states the need for a redemptive-historical approach as follows:

It (the historic progressiveness of the revelation-process) is not completed itself in one exhaustive act, but unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts. In the abstract, it might conceivably have been otherwise. But as a matter of fact this could not be, because revelation does not stand alone by itself, but is (so far as Special Revelation is concerned) inseparably attached to another activity of God, which we call Redemption. Now redemption could

not be otherwise than historically successive, because it addresses itself to the generations of mankind coming into existence in the course of history. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption; it must, therefore, unfold itself in instalment as redemption does.

In conclusion, a redemptive-historical approach is a key to the biblical sermon. Therefore the interpretation of the text cannot be solved simply by familiarisation with some methods of biblical interpretation. Before interpretation of the text, preachers need to keep in mind that the events recorded in the Bible are not mere events, but events of redemptive history.

#### **4.5.1.3 The objective and subjective dimensions of redemptive history**

Vos (2003:6) emphasises the objective, and subjective dimensions of redemptive history. He explains the mutual solidarity and distinction between the objective and subjective dimensions of redemptive history as follows:

We must take into account an important distinction within the sphere of redemption itself. Redemption is partly objective and central, partly subjective and individual. By the former we designate those redeeming acts of God, which take place on behalf of, but outside of, the human person. By the latter we designate those acts of God which enter into the human subject. We call the objective acts central, because, happening in the centre of the circle of redemption, they concern all alike, and are not in need of, or capable of, repetition. Such objective-central acts are the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of Christ. The acts in the subjective sphere are called individual, because they are repeated in each individual separately. Such subjective-individual acts are regeneration, justification, conversion, sanctification, glorification ... We must remember that continually, alongside the objective process, there was going on the work of subjective application, and that much of this is reflected in the scriptures. Subjective-individual redemption did not first begin when objective-central redemption ceased; it existed alongside of it from the beginning.

The distinction between the two dimensions of redemptive history stems from two reasons. First, in the Bible not only was objective events of redemptive history recorded, but also subjective responses, and changes of God's people through redemption. Lee (2012a:708) claims that redemptive history includes the objective statement of redemptive history (the indicative mood), and the subjective statement that demand change and response from the people of God based on this objective statement (the imperative mood).

The indicative mood indicates or expresses an objective fact or reality. The imperative mood, in contrast, expresses a command, an order, an entreaty, a request, or an exhortation. Therefore, it is a preacher's dereliction of duty when overlooking the subjective statement of redemptive history by simply making objective statements of redemptive history.

Second, God's redemptive history is still on-going in the subjective realm of believers (Lee 2012a:709). At this moment, the sovereign rule of the Trinity is being achieved, and believers and churches are responding to God's salvation ministry. Therefore, this study would like to divide redemptive history into two components. The first is the objective component of redemptive history, which refers to God's work of redemption recorded in the revelation. The second is the subjective dimension component of redemptive history.

The term "subjective" is used here to express how God's redemption is applied in the facets of life. It can be subjective in that God's redemptive history is applied to both individuals and communities. God demands change, and response from His people who have experienced God's objective work of redemption. This change and response in people is the subjective dimension of redemptive history.

#### **4.5.2 Three premises of biblical theology for redemptive-historical interpretation**

Redemptive-historical interpretation centres around three important premises of biblical theology. There are interpretation methods based on this principle. The grandfather of biblical theology amongst evangelicals, Vos (2003:V), in *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, says that “biblical theology deals with the material from a historical standpoint, seeking to exhibit the organic growth or development of the truths of Special Revelation from the primitive pre redemptive Special Revelation given in Eden to the close of the New Testament canon.”

Biblical theology developed through theologians such as Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Clowney. Greidanus (2001:122-124) presents common postulations of redemptive history: history, unity, and progression. Clowney (2002:17) also said that “the most fruitful understanding of biblical theology is that which recognizes both the historical and progressive character of revelation and the unity of the divine counsel which it declares.” Therefore, for redemptive-historical interpretation, historicity, unity, and progression must be addressed. In this section, I will take a closer look at the three premises presented by Greidanus.

#### **4.5.2.1 Historicity**

Greidanus (2001:122) claims that “redemptive history is history.” This means that redemptive history has historicity as an essential element, and that God realises His plan of redemption on the horizontal plane of history. Redemptive history is the history of redemption that unfolds in, with, and through history. God reveals Himself in history and is known by history to the next generation (McCartney & Clayton, 2001:58). “The faith of Israel and the faith of historical Christianity is found not in lofty ideas or ideals but in God’s acts in human history” (Greidanus 1988:24). Vos (2003:6) describes the actual embodiment of revelation in history as follows:

The process of revelation is not only concomitant with history, but it becomes incarnate in history. The facts of history themselves acquire a revealing significance. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are examples of this.

Unfortunately, the historicity of the events proclaimed in scripture is currently under a cloud of suspicion. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's historicism, and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher's liberal theology, adopted the historical-critical method. Those who regarded reason as their top priority rejected both the supernatural and spiritual. For this reason, it is impossible for the historical-critical method to understand redemptive history as it destroys the authority, and theological testimony of scripture (Klein *et al.* 1997:109-110).

Another is the supernatural understanding of history centred on Karl Barth. This is a reaction to rationalism, and liberal theology's historical-critical method. Barth separates redemptive history from secular history (*Historie*). He regards redemptive history as a supernatural history and calls it Sacred history (*Geschichte*) (Kim 1996:14).

The scripture is a book about *Geschichte*. It is Scripture that reveals this supernatural element to us (Kim 2010:92). In other words, where *Historie* refers to past events that can be objectively demonstrated, *Geschichte* refers to existential history. For example, according to Barth, the resurrection of Jesus belongs to *Geschichte* and not to *Historie*. For this reason, the realm of *Historie* is worthless, and believers should rather encounter Jesus in the realm of *Geschichte* by faith (Conn 1974:25-26). The dualistic method between this understanding of Barth's history and supernatural history separates redemptive history from history and turns Christianity into a supernatural religion. In this regard, Greidanus (2001:122) says:

All history is sacred history because all history is in reality God working toward his goal. Every date is therefore *anno Domini*, the year of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, God redeems, re-creates the world. His kingdom is coming into this world, into our "profane," fallen, history.

Greidanus points out that redemptive history is not separated from secular history, because God is working in *Historie*. God achieves His plan of redemption on the horizontal plane of history. “The process of revelation is not only concomitant with history, but it becomes incarnate in history. The facts of history themselves acquire a revealing significance” (Vos 2003:7). However, Greidanus argues that redemptive history and world history should not be considered to be the same. Greidanus (1988:98) says:

God is certainly active in the whole world and concerned with the whole world and will in the end redeem the whole world, but starting with Gen 12 the focus of God’s redemptive activity narrows primarily to one family (Abraham’s) and one nation (Israel) and finally to one Person, Jesus Christ. After Christ’s resurrection and with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, all the nations of the world come into view again, and the promise is given that on the last day the entire creation will be renewed (Rom 8:21; Rev 21-22).

Louis Berkhof (1969:113) says, “The Word of God evolved in a historical way, and therefore, can be understudy only in the light of history.” For this reason, the text should be interpreted historically, and be understood as part of redemptive history. Redemptive history discards the historical-critical method of rejecting both supernaturally and spiritually. Also, redemptive history rejects the dualistic understanding of dividing history in *Historie* and *Geschichte*.

#### **4.5.2.2 Unity**

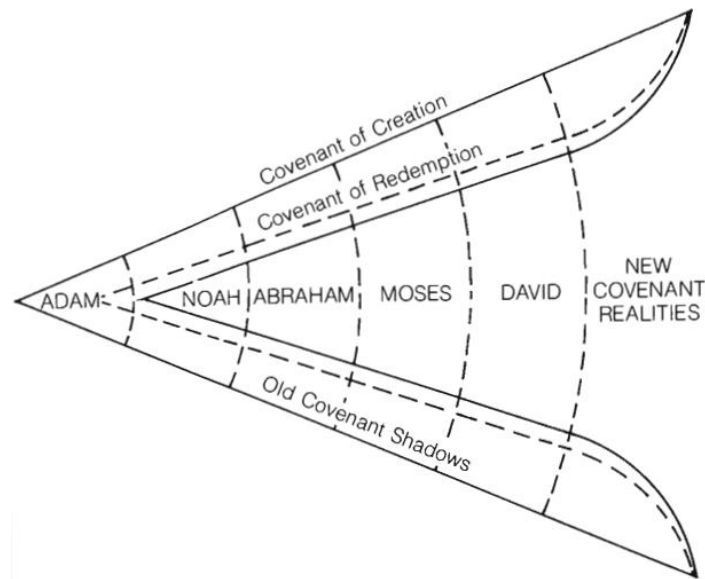
Redemptive history is a form of unity (Greidanus 2001:123). Scripture speaks of the unified story of God's plan to save mankind (Gibson, 2006:58-59). At the centre of redemptive history is Jesus Christ. The Bible shows that God, who has a plan of salvation, proceeds with redemptive history through Jesus Christ. Thus, the Bible is one redemptive history. Nowhere can the cohesive quality of the unity of scripture be seen more dramatically, and graphically than in its comparison with



the sacred writings of other religions. James Orr (1906:31-32), for example, presents this contrast:

The Koran, for instance, is a miscellany of disjointed pieces, out of which it is impossible to extract any order, progress, or arrangement. The 114 sutras or chapters of which it is composed are arranged chiefly according to their length - the longer in general preceding the shorter. It is not otherwise with Zoroastrian and Buddhist scriptures. These are equally destitute of beginning, middle or end. They are, for the most part, collections of heterogeneous materials, loosely placed together. How different everyone must acknowledge it to be with the Bible! From Genesis to Revelation we feel that this book is in a real sense a unity. It is not a collection story to tell from beginning to end; we see something growing before our eyes: there is plan, purpose, progress; the end folds back on the beginning, and, when the whole is finished, we feel that here again, as in the primal creation, God has finished all his works, and behold, they are very good!

Palmer Robertson (1981:4) explains a unity centred on the blood covenant (ברית) of Jesus Christ. "A covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered. When God enters a covenantal relationship with men, he sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond." The primary covenants in scripture are those made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the new covenant. God had brought to a further stage of development the same redemption that had been promised earlier as seen in figure 4.5 below. This covenantal structure of scripture, which is revealed from Adam to Christ, shows the unity of the Bible (Robertson 1980:7-12; 27-45).



**Figure 4.5 The covenantal structure of scripture**

In *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*, Greidanus (1999:48) says that one single redemption is the centre of the Old and New Testaments: “Redemptive history is the mighty river that runs from the old covenant to the new and holds the two together.” Greidanus (1999:48) argues that redemptive history is the basis, and foundation of the unity of the Bible:

Old Testament themes, such as the kingdom of God, covenant, and redemption, even while undergoing dramatic transformation, are continued into the New Testament. All of these links demonstrate the unity of the Old and New Testament. And all of these links are based, ultimately, on the fact that God’s redemptive history is of one piece. For the connections between promise and fulfilment, between type and antitype, and the continuity of themes in the Bible are possible only because of God’s covenant faithfulness in redemptive history. In other words, a single, God-guided, redemptive history is the basis, the foundation, of the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

Goldsworthy (2006:238) says that “not only do the Old Testament scriptures truly testify to Jesus (John 5:39), but this unity exists in tension with the real diversity within and between the Testaments.” Goldsworthy (2006:239-245) argues that the unity of the Bible is the premise of various approaches suggested by modern biblical theologians, and that this unity is the primary context of the interpretation of the text.

To sum up, “the unity of the Bible is a matter of theological conviction and faith because of the testimony of Jesus, and the nature of the gospel” (Goldsworthy 2000:51). The New Testament and the Old Testament have remarkable unity despite diversity. The Bible presents only one coherent picture about the redemption of God, centred on Jesus Christ.

#### **4.5.2.3 Progression**

Redemptive history progressively develops in history (Greidanus 2001:124). The redemptive word proclaimed by God to Adam and Eve is a word that grows increasingly. That which begins in seminal form in Genesis 3:15 matures to become a comprehensive revelation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This aspect of God’s self-communication is called “progressive revelation” (Swain 2011:23). The revelation is not completed at once, but progressively manifests itself through long-running events. Vos (2003:5-6) writes about the progression of the revelation as follows:

... [A]s a matter of fact this could not be, because revelation does not stand alone by itself, but is (so far as Special Revelation is concerned) inseparably attached to another activity of God, which we call Redemption. Now redemption could not be otherwise than historically successive, because it addresses itself to the generations of mankind coming into existence in the course of history. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption; it must, therefore, unfold itself in instalments as redemption does.

Clowney (2002:8-13) explains that the revelation was not given at once. The revelation will be accompanied by redemptive history. In this regard, Vos calls the historical process the first feature of biblical theology. He expounds on the features of progressive revelation as follows:

The self-revelation of God is a work covering ages, proceeding in a sequence of revealing words and acts, appearing in a long perspective of time ... By imparting the elements of the knowledge of Himself in a divinely arranged sequence God has pointed out to us the way in which we might gradually grasp and truly know Him.

From these discussions we can see that redemptive history means progression. God progressively achieves his plan of redemption. However, “the progression of redemptive history should not be disconnected from the unity: it is a progression in unity and a unity in progression” (Greidanus 2001:124). History always means unity and progression simultaneously. God achieves one single redemptive history centred on Christ on the horizontal plane of history, but God progressively achieves His redemption. Therefore, as Greidanus said, redemptive history has three premises: 1) redemptive history is history, 2) redemptive history is a unity, 3) redemptive history means progression.

#### **4.5.3 Redemptive-historical interpretation**

The premises of biblical theology show that God has been working on the horizontal plane of history, and that the Bible has unity, and progression at the same time. The next question is as follows: how will a preacher make a redemptive-historical interpretation with these three premises? The Bible is interlinked with the theological theme of redemption, the historical events that embody this theological theme through history, and the literary form as a communication strategy to convey the theological theme (Greidanus 1988:49-51). This means that for redemptive-historical interpretation, the three areas of history, literature, and theology, which the text includes, should be considered together.

For this reason, three interpretation methods are needed: grammatical-historical interpretation, organic interpretation, and synthetic interpretation.

#### 4.5.3.1 Grammatical-Historical interpretation

The term “grammatical-historical” first appeared in 1788 by Karl. A. G. Keil (Telford, 2015:1). The grammatical-historical interpretation was once used in resistance to the allegorical interpretations of medieval churches (Ramm 1950:51-59). In that sense, grammatical-historical interpretation is a restoration of the authority of the Bible (Hasel1972:84-86). The term “grammatical-historical” is now used in various contexts (Virkler 1981:76-112).

Walter Kaiser Jr. uses the term “syntactic-theological”, Mickelsen uses the term “grammatical-historical-contextual”, and Virkler uses the term “historical-cultural”. Whatever the term used, it focuses on analysing the text according to the original language, and the original historical situation. However, one should be cautious to equate this interpretation with “historical-critical interpretation.”

In *Introduction to biblical hermeneutics: the search for meaning* (2009:223), Moisés Silva warns that historical-critical interpretation is incompatible with the divine character of scripture. However, this can be confusing because not everyone uses the term “historical-critical” the same way.

Unfortunately, the term “criticism” has a very vague character. In the field of art and literature, the term criticism refers to the art of evaluating the artistic value of a particular work. When it comes to biblical interpretation, the main role of this term is to scientifically investigate the historical origin, sentence composition, and the delivery process of literary documents. No one who acknowledges that the Bible is not only God's history but also literature, will be able to oppose such criticism.

Problems arise from the close association between critical interpretation, and the principles of the Enlightenment. The priority given to human reason during the Enlightenment resulted the Bible to be viewed like any other book. Influenced by

the Enlightenment, historical-critical interpretation doubted the truth of the Bible and did not recognize the divine authority of the Bible. In short, agreeing to the view that the Bible is completely unreliable has become the principle of historical-critical interpretation.

For example, historical criticism, which investigates the historical origins of the Bible, does not accept the Bible as it is and does not recognize the authority of the Bible. In the early 20th century, “conservative” interpretations, and “liberal” interpretations were almost completely polarized. However, according to Silva, two points need emphasis. First, the common purpose of both sides to discover the historical significance of the text should not be overlooked by the conflict between them. Second, theological belief can hardly be separated from the decision of the interpretation principle. Therefore, it is necessary to study the role of "preunderstanding" to interpret the text of the Bible (see Grant R. Osborne's *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (1991) for a discussion of preunderstanding).

Grammatical-historical interpretation takes grammatical elements such as words, sentences, expressions, and genres, and studies the time and circumstances in which the author wrote, especially the author's background and circumstance. The aim of grammatical-historical interpretation is to determine the perception required by the laws of grammar, and the facts of history (Kaiser 1981:87). In other words, this method tries to get rid of the reader's prejudice to find out what the original author meant.

The need for grammatical-historical interpretation can be seen as follows. First, the text represents literary and historical characteristics (Cf. Cilliers 2004:93-94). When authors of the Bible recorded the text, they probably considered grammatical and historical elements. Second, it fulfils the need for both a diachronic, and a synchronic approach. If a preacher only approaches the text synchronically, a sermon can be an existential sermon, psychological sermon, allegory sermon, or moral sermon (Cf. Cilliers 2004:106; Greidanus 2001:73-83). Third, the text is the product of a particular situation. Before the text became the Word of God to who live in “here and now”, it was already the Word of God to

others who lived “then and there” (Klein *et al.* 1993:172). The Word of God is for the practical needs of the people of a particular era, from a particular culture (Osborne 1991:134).

Grammatical interpretation is used to study the meaning of the words recorded in the text, the relationship between different words, the impact of case, mood, tense, and the development of ideas (Park 2002:188). Grammatical interpretation can help preachers better understand the remarkable turning points, nuances, and movements of the text, thus effectively using these literary elements in their sermons (Cilliers 2004:105). Grammatical interpretation is essential because the historical text showing God's redemption has literary elements (Greidanus, 2001:214-216). For this reason, grammatical interpretation is one of the important aspects of redemptive-historical interpretation.

Historical interpretation is the careful historical investigation of biblical writings to set them directly in the cultural, religious, political, and literary environment of their own times, and to understand their messages in that original context (Greidanus 1988:80).

The Bible was recorded at a certain point in the past, in other words, within a historical background (Cilliers2004:106). There is a big gap between today and the time in which the text was recorded, although all are connected in redemptive history. There is also a gap between the audience at the time the text was recorded, and today's audience. Therefore, the original meaning of any text cannot be understood without considering its historical background.

Historical interpretation attempts to listen to the original message of the text within the context of the period in which the text was first presented to the audience as the Word of God. Historical interpretations provide objective control to the interpreters to prevent subjective or arbitrary interpretation, which is called εἰσῆγησις (Greidanus1988:81-82).

#### 4.5.3.2 Organic interpretation

History means unity and progression at the same time. Thus the text, a record of redemptive history, requires interpretation that supports both unity and progression. This leads to two interpretations. The first is an organic interpretation which interprets the text in relation to the entire redemptive history. The second is synthetic interpretation that interprets the text's uniqueness (Greidanus 2001:133-134).

Organic interpretation approaches a text as part of an organic body, viewing the text in relation to the whole scheme, namely, the unity of redemptive history (Greidanus 2001:135-136). The unity of redemptive history leads each text to be interpreted organically, which means the text must be interpreted as a part of redemptive history (Jeong 2003:44).

The Bible does not consist of a collection of scattered pieces, but of unity with the consistent purpose of God, being redemption. Therefore, the important concepts to be considered in organic interpretation are the theological horizon of the text, the complete structure of redemptive history, and the relationship with the revelation. For organic interpretation, a preacher should begin with the primary context of the text, expanding it to the milieu of the New, and Old Testaments, and the context of the whole structure of the Bible (Jeong 2003:45).

Biographical preaching, anthropocentric preaching, and sermon highlighting biblical figures, usually ignore this organic interpretation. These sermon styles emphasise behaviour or features of biblical figures because they adopt fragmentary approaches, such as illustrative interpretation, atomistic interpretation, and fragmentary interpretation (Greidanus 2001:60-64). In other words, when ignoring the organic structure of the Bible, a preacher has no choice but to make a moral sermon centred on behaviour or features of the biblical figure. Therefore, in order to avoid a fragmentary approach, we need organic interpretation. Organic interpretation helps one to realise that the text is not a fragment, but a part in the redemptive history which proceeds from God.



### 4.5.3.3 Synthetic interpretation

Greidanus presents synthetic interpretation as one of the methods of redemptive-historical interpretation. Synthetic interpretation is interpreting the text within its uniqueness. “A certain text may contain many of the same elements as other texts, but in the synthesis of these elements every text is unique” (Greidanus 2001:137). In other words, the text is unique, and has a unique message. Synthetic interpretation can prevent the atomistic interpretation performed in the sample sermons. Synthetic interpretation seeks to do justice to the uniqueness of each historical text by considering a specific synthesis at that particular place in history of all elements within the text (Greidanus 2001:138). Therefore, synthetic interpretation pays attention to the special relationship between the elements contained in the text.

The principle of synthetic interpretation is essential for identifying and understanding the unique topic and message that the text has, especially historical text (Greidanus 2001:138). Every historical text is a unit, composed of a variety of elements, but these elements have formed a very specific synthesis at this point (Greidanus 2001:139). This special synthesis gives every text a unique place within the totality of revelation. For example, in Ruth, it is a very important issue that Naomi’s family left the Promised Land (Bethlehem) and went to Moab. Naomi’s family believed that they can solve the difficulties by themselves. However, leaving the Promised Land was not God’s will (Seong 2009: 489). Therefore, to interpret “leaving” in Ruth as leaving one’s hometown or moving to another country does not accurately grasp the unique message of the text. The meaning of “leaving” in Ruth can fully reveal its original meaning (uniqueness) when considering all elements in the text.

In conclusion, synthetic interpretation cannot be separated from organic interpretation (Greidanus 2001:139). Organic interpretation finds its complement in synthetic interpretation, which brings out the uniqueness of the text in the specific synthesis of elements at a particular place in history. Organic-synthetic

interpretation is one indivisible procedure, and both the continuity, and discontinuity should be carried through in the explication as well as the application.

#### **4.5.4 Redemptive-historical preaching and its problems**

In this section I will take a general look at redemptive-historical preaching. First, I will look at the definition of redemptive-historical preaching and its purpose. Second, I will look at the historical background, and development of redemptive-historical preaching. Third, I will discuss the problems of redemptive-historical preaching. Fourth, I will discuss theologians who advocate redemptive-historical preaching and their arguments on redemptive-historical preaching.

##### **4.5.4.1 Definition and purpose of redemptive-historical preaching**

If redemptive-historical interpretation is to witness the redemptive history of the past recorded in the Bible, redemptive-historical preaching is to preach the recorded redemptive history of God found in the text. Redemptive-historical preaching is expressed in various terms, such as Christ-centred preaching or Christological preaching, depending on the focus (Jeong 2006:498). Since redemptive-historical preaching is centred on Jesus Christ, even if such a sermon is described as Christ-centred preaching or Christological, the fundamental meaning is the same. Although the focuses of these terms are slightly different, they all emphasise Jesus Christ as the core of salvation and revelation (Ryu 2008:63).

Redemptive-historical preaching is also called biblical-theological preaching because it is closely related to biblical theology (Ryu 2008:61). In other words, the term “redemptive-historical” reflects the biblical-theological view of the text. However, the term “preaching” also reflects the legitimacy of delivering such biblical-theological interpretation to today’s audience. John Stott (2017:99) argues that preaching can not only stop at interpretation:

Yet to assert that “preaching is exposition” would not be a wholly satisfactory equation, for then preaching would be no more than the interpretation of the biblical documents and would have no necessary for any contemporary application.

The goal of redemptive-historical preaching is to contemporise redemption recorded in the text in people of “here and now” through preaching (Lee 2013b:132). This is important because redemptive history does not stop in the text, but continues in our life. Therefore, redemptive-historical preaching is to witness the redemptive work of God through the text, and to proclaim God who is still caring for his people in the same way, and with the same ability as in the text.

#### **4.5.4.2 Historical background of redemptive-historical preaching**

Dutch Calvinists in the late 1930s started using the term “redemptive-historical preaching.” Between World War I and II there was a “new direction” taking place in Gereformeerde Kerken (Reformed Churches) in Holland (Greidanus 2001:22-24). The “new direction” was an attempt to establish the Calvinistic philosophy, which includes issues in dogma and homiletics. The “new direction”, motivated by its counterparts in philosophy and theology, sought the answer through a new method of interpretation and preaching: redemptive-historical interpretation and redemptive-historical preaching. Theologians who were advocating a redemptive-historical approach included Holwerda, Schilder, Veenhof, and Van Dijk (Greidanus, 2001:39-40). The "new direction" strongly criticised dialectical theology, subjectivism, and exemplary sermon, and as a result, redemptive-historical preaching began to be discussed.

##### **(1) The reaction to dialectical theology**

Redemptive-historical preaching can be said to be a reaction to dialectical theology (Greidanus 2001:29-32). Homiletics in the early 20th century was dominated by dialectical theology, or theology of the Word of God. Karl Barth, who was shocked by the occurrence of two World Wars, and the apparent failure of

liberal theology, believed the sole task of the sermon was to let God speak (Härtner, & Eschmann, 2014:45-46). In dialectical theology, history stands in antithetical relation to God as part of nature (Greidanus 2001:31). The nature-grace dualism declares history unfit for God's redemptive acts. This is because to speak of redemptive history is a contradiction in terms: "revelation means the end of history" (Greidanus 2001:32).

Dialectic theology made an impact in Holland almost from the start. In some circles Barth was hailed as the corrective to Kuyperian theology; others desired to combine Kuyper and Barth. Thus, Reformed theologians took an active part in discussions around Dialectic theology (Greidanus 2001:29-30). One of the Dutch theologians who criticised dialectical theology was Schilder who pursued the redemptive-history approach. Schilder does not accept the dialectical antithesis between God and nature, God and history, nor God and the creature. He claims that the conflict is elsewhere. It is between sin and grace, sin and God, and sin and God's Word. According to Schilder, Barth had "murdered" a splendid Reformed discipline – the *historia revelationis*, or history of God's revelation. He pointed out that Barth's dialectical theology cannot make a biblical interpretation because it has a wrong understanding of the history of God's revelation (Greidanus 2001:31-32).

Criticism of dialectical theology continued to be raised, not only by Schilder, but also by various reform theologians afterwards who presented redemptive-historical preaching as an alternative to dialectic theology. To sum up, the emphasis on redemptive-history or redemptive-historical preaching of the "new direction" was a reaction to the historical approach of dialectical theology (Jeong 2001:353).

## (2) The reaction to subjectivism

Second, redemptive-historical preaching is a reaction to the subjectivism of reformed Churches in Holland in the 1930s (Greidanus 2001:33-38). Subjectivism emphasises the experience of Christians. At that time, there were religious currents in reformed Churches in Holland, among which subjectivism, which is known as Dutch pietism, emphasised the experience of Christians.

Subjectivism emerged as several tendencies in pietism, including individualism, spiritualism, religious life without Christ, unbiblical ecclesiology, psychological feeling, and a human-centred perspective (Greidanus 2001:33). The tendencies of subjectivism conflicted with revelation, and reformed theologians condemned this subjectivism. Against this subjectivism, “new direction” opposed three views of subjectivism (Greidanus 2001:36-39).

First, “new direction” objected to the anthropocentric viewpoint, urging to move away from placing man at the centre of religion, and returning to the Bible with God's grace at the centre. Second, “new direction” criticised the excessive emphasis on self-examination. “New direction” claims that certitude cannot be found through self-analysis, but through the simple acceptance of God's promises. Third, “new direction” opposed individualism, and focuses on the biblical notion of the covenant which breaks through the individualism-collectivism dilemma.

According to “new direction”, the individual is in an organic relation with the community. “New direction” appealed for a return to “*sola scriptura*”, and as an alternative to subjectivism, they suggested redemptive-historical preaching. In other words, redemptive-historical preaching began as a response to the subjectivism. A theological position of not preaching subjective elements, but the work of redemption, is the background of redemptive-historical preaching.

### (3) The reaction to exemplary sermons

Third, redemptive-historical preaching is a reaction to exemplary sermons (Greidanus 2001:56-85). It is not known exactly when exemplary approach originated, but it is a method of preaching that has been in use from the early church to the present.

Clement of Alexandria thought of the Bible as a book of ethical models. In a book about worship ritual, Justin Martyr said that preachers chose the historical text to urge the audience to follow good examples (Jeong 2001:355). Greidanus (2001:9) says this approach continued through the middle Ages, and neither Martin Luther

nor John Calvin tried to escape this traditional approach. “New direction” criticised the exemplary sermon in terms of interpretation and homiletics, and insisted on redemptive-historical preaching.

First, they resisted the exemplary sermon in terms of interpretation (Greidanus 2001:60-64). Proponents of redemptive-historical preaching criticize the illustrative interpretation because it can ignore the uniqueness of the text. They also oppose the atomistic interpretation. They argue that because atomistic interpretation separates the text from the redemptive history, it inevitably leads to a human-centred exemplary sermon unrelated to the purpose of the Bible. Second, “new direction” opposes exemplary sermons in terms of homiletics (Greidanus 2001: 65-85). This approach, they felt, degenerates the sermon into human-centredness through citing biblical figures as “examples” for imitation. Therefore, they opposed the historical equation mark of the exemplary sermon. Exemplary sermons overlook the historical discontinuity between the people then and people today by placing an equation mark between past and present: “then = now”. In conclusion, the debate over exemplary sermons has led Reformed theologians to stress the importance of redemptive-historical preaching.

#### **4.5.4.3 Problems of redemptive-historical preaching**

It can be said that redemptive-historical preaching made an important contribution to homiletics in that it secured biblical-theological legitimacy. In other words, redemptive-historical preaching contributed to revealing the location of the particular text in redemptive history based on the unity of the Bible, and the organic continuity of the revelation through finding theological meaning from the text (Jeong 2003:43). Despite these contributions, however, redemptive-historical preaching has its limitations.

##### **(1) The hasty application of redemptive-historical approach in interpretation**

The basic principle of biblical interpretation is to interpret the text in a grammatical-historical interpretation (Cho 2012:28). However, when a preacher ignores

grammatical-historical interpretation, and hastily draws up a redemptive-historical approach to the text, there is the possibility that the text will not be interpreted correctly. Kim (2002:53) warns of the danger of the hasty application of redemptive-historical approach at the stage of interpretation as follows:

The fact that the framework of redemptive history enters into the first stage of exegesis so quickly is the inherent problem of many of redemptive-historical preaching so far. It should be noted that the framework of redemptive history can swallow primary exegesis. This framework can make a preacher not properly understand the grammatical-historical meaning of the text.

His comment suggests that the uniqueness of the text can be lost in the primary exegesis because of the hasty application of the redemptive-historical approach. A redemptive-historical approach should be applied after the grammatical-historical interpretation is complete, or the meaning of the text can be interpreted as allegorical meaning (Cho 2012:30).

Kim analyses *Between Exegesis and Sermon* (Gootjes 1987) to prove the danger of hasty application of the redemptive-historical approach. In the sermon “The Lies of Abraham” (1987:16-22), for example, Gootjes argues that the key message in the text is the fact that God had already delivered Sarai from the Pharaoh's palace three thousand years earlier to establish salvation of the descendants of faith.

In response, Kim (2002:53) questions whether it is a key message of Genesis 12:10-20. Kim says that this message is far from the overall structure and context of the text. He claims that the key message of the text is Abraham's unbelief. In Chapter 12 of the Genesis, there are unique elements of the text related to Abraham's life, such as the various difficulties, and conflicts that Abraham experienced while living in Canaan, including disappointment and frustration while relying on, and trusting God. These elements are used to convey the unique meaning of the text, and provide valuable lessons for us today. But if a preacher only focuses on redemption that will be achieved in future, he deprives himself of the opportunity to preach the unique message of Genesis.



For this reason, the preacher should avoid the hasty application of redemptive-historical approach. Organic interpretation does not mean that each text in itself does not have an independent message or meaning. Rather, organic interpretation suggests that the meaning of the text is revealed within its holistic structure, theologically, historically, and contextually. Each text has its own content, and a unique meaning or message. By ignoring this fact, a preacher can make the mistake to hastily apply the redemptive-historical approach in interpretation.

## (2) The negative view toward the application

The primary goal of redemptive-historical preaching is to preach God's redemption which is achieved through “then and there”, and subsequently apply it to the faith community who live in the “here and now”. However, a concerning error that those commit who advocate redemptive-historical preaching is the negative view of the application (Cho 2012:30-33). In other words, those who advocate redemptive-historical preaching reject the relevance of this method to people who live “here and now”. Derek Thomas discusses this negative view of the application in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Flea for Preaching* as follows (Don Kistler, 2002:90):

Redemptive-historical preaching takes a lot of time to deal with the stream of salvation. This sermon is very exciting when first hear it. However, after listening to it many times, it is always boring because it repeatedly presents the same redemptive history. Moreover, such sermons often end up by listening to a drama that has nothing to do with people's life because they try to avoid moral application. Redemptive-historical preaching provides a great deal of knowledge and information, but there is no application at all that calls for changes in life.

Proponents of the exemplary sermon also critique redemptive-historical preaching (Greidanus 2001:198-190). They criticise redemptive-historical preaching for neglecting the realistic aspects of today's people. According to them, redemptive-historical preaching focuses on the redemptive-historical meaning of the text, but it does not pay much attention to what it implies for today's audience. The problem



is that despite these criticisms, those who insist on redemptive-historical preaching still overlook the need for the application. Greidanus (2001:160) shares his view of the proponents of redemptive-historical preaching as follows: “The preacher’s task is not to add application to the Word, but to proclaim that Word today in all its relevance – a relevance which is already contained in the theocentric explication. The preacher is a minister of the Word, a herald for the King.” Those who insist on redemptive-historical preaching believe that application has already been made when the message is proclaimed in the sermon. Thus, to attempt to apply it in contemporary audiences is meaningless.

The reason for this reluctance is because the proponents of redemptive-historical preaching regard redemptive-historical interpretation as redemptive-historical preaching (Jeong 2006:506). In other words, they believe that it is redemptive-historical preaching that reveals the position of the text in redemptive history, and the redemptive-historical meaning of the text. As a result, redemptive-historical preaching shows the work of redemption to the audience. However, the message does not appeal to the audience of “here and now” and can thus not convert them to people of God. Strictly speaking, this is redemptive-historical interpretation, not redemptive-historical preaching. Simply declaring redemptive history cannot be the application of the text (Krabbendam 1993:185). Preaching is an on-going communication process of retelling God's redemptive story to today's audience with the intent to transform the audience to people of God (Jeong 2006:784).

### (3) Obsession with mention of Christ

Some proponents of redemptive-historical preaching believe that whatever text a preacher chooses should always refer to Christ or his ministry (Jeong 2006:507). However, the obsession that all biblical texts should always refer to Christ inevitably compels a preacher to connect with Christ using a certain element of the text. These attempts eventually lead to an allegorical interpretation. For example, in church history, many preachers link the scarlet cord of Rahab with the blood of Christ. Some preachers even link the word “tree” to the cross of Christ when mentioned in a text. Greidanus (1988:118) describes the obsession with mentioning Christ as “Jesucentric” and says:

Often Christocentric preaching is misunderstood as Jesucentric preaching, that is, every sermon must somehow make reference to Jesus of Nazareth, his birth, life, death, or resurrection. That endeavour itself is not wrong, but its imposition as a methodological principle on every text is wrong, for it leads to forcing parallels between the text and Jesus. Moreover, it short-changes Jesus, for the New Testament testifies that he is the eternal Logos, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

What a preacher should remember is that Christocentric preaching is exemplified in organic interpretation (Jeong 2006:508). The principle of Christocentricity in redemptive-historical preaching does not mean that a preacher must refer to Jesus Christ in the sermon. The term “Christocentric” means that the text should be interpreted organically from the perspective of redemption that focuses on Christ. In this regard, Greidanus (1988:119) defines Christocentric preaching as follows: “Christocentric preaching is the preaching of God’s acts from the perspective of the New Testament. In other words, Christocentric preaching requires that a passage receive a theocentric interpretation not only in its own (Old Testament) horizon but also in the broader horizon of the whole canon.”

#### **4.5.5 The development of redemptive-historical preaching**

Redemptive-historical preaching began in the late 1930s with the reformed theologians of Holland. However, acknowledging the problems of the early period of redemptive-historical preaching, several theologians presented advanced redemptive-historical preaching to overcome these problems. By looking at their arguments, we will be able to grasp the development of redemptive-historical preaching. Here, I would like to look at the arguments of Edmund P. Clowney, Sydney Greidanus, and Bryan Chapell as examples.

##### **4.5.5.1 Edmund P. Clowney**

Clowney is a theologian who emphasises the importance of biblical theology. Clowney (2002:15) argues the need for biblical theology as follows:

The revelation was not given at one time, nor in the form of a theological dictionary. It was given progressively, for the process of revelation accompanies the process of redemption. Since redemption does not proceed uniformly but in epochs determined by God's acts, so revelation has an epochal structure, manifested and marked in the canonical scriptures. Modern dispensationalist rightly recognizes that there are great divisions in the history of redemption; it errs in failing to grasp the organic relation of these successive eras, as developing manifestations of one gracious design. Biblical theology formulates the character and content of the progress of revelation in these periods, observing the expanding horizons from age to age. So understood, Biblical theology is both legitimate and necessary.

Clowney (2002:30) argues that biblical theology is the foundation of all sermons. He maintains that the interpretation of the text must be biblical. According to Clowney, a biblical-theological perspective clarifies the meaning of the text, emphasises its central message, and provides for sound application. In developing the biblical-theological interpretation of a text, the aspects of epochal structure and continuity may be separately considered. The first step is to relate the text to its immediate theological horizon. The second step is to relate the event of the text by means of its correct interpretation in its relevant period to the entire structure of redemptive history, and then to us who live in the "here and now" (Clowney 2002:88).

Clowney also emphasises that biblical theology is closely related to redemptive history. Clowney describes how to prepare redemptive-historical preaching in *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (2002:87-117) based on the biblical theology of Geerhardus Vos. Clowney (2002:74-75; 98) claims that the unifying structure of scripture is the structure of redemptive history, and that a preacher needs to study, and find the redemptive-historical meaning of the text based on biblical-theological principles. Therefore, it can be said that the biblical-theological preaching that Clowney claims is indeed redemptive preaching based on biblical theology.

However, Clowney opposes the exclusive stance of some reformed theologians from Holland who focus on the objective dimensions of redemptive history. According to Clowney's argument (2002:79-80), it is wrong to choose between redemptive-historical preaching, and exemplary preaching. He claims that a preacher should avoid disputation between the redemptive-historical approach, and ethical approach. "The redemptive-historical approach necessarily yields ethical application, which is an essential part of the preaching of the Word. Whenever we are confronted with the saving work of God culminating in Christ, we are faced with ethical demands." This means that redemptive history requires ethical demands: a religious reaction of human faith, and obedience.

The Bible records not only the work of redemption but also the lives of believers. The Bible shows that biblical figures believed in God's promise and faithfulness (Cho 2012:35). In other words, the redemptive-historical approach does not have a confrontational relationship with the practical dimensions of the Word. Therefore, we should avoid dichotomous separation of a redemptive-historical approach and an ethical approach.

In conclusion, Clowney argues for redemptive-historical preaching based on biblical theology. However, he opposes the extreme stance of conveying only the objective meaning of redemptive history. He believes that ethical elements found in the lives or conduct of biblical figures that played important roles in redemptive history are very important. Thus, he focuses on the rich religious experiences of believers in the text, and claims that these experiences can serve as an example to today's audience.

#### **4.5.5.2 Sydney Greidanus**

In his book, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (2001), which is called the textbook of redemptive-historical preaching, Greidanus expounds his homiletic theology, presenting the principles of interpreting and preaching the text, especially the historical text. At first, Greidanus (2001:56-102)

discusses exemplary preaching. He assesses exemplary preaching as an effort to restore the relevancy of the sermon. However, he argues that the exemplary preaching which is indiscriminately conducted in the pulpit disassembles the unity of the redemptive history into many stories. He also criticises exemplary preaching as anthropocentric, presenting the Bible as a book of ethics, and does not interpret the text objectively by de-historicising certain elements of the text.

After criticising exemplary preaching, Greidanus (2001:140-152) discusses redemptive-historical preaching. He examines the beginning, and development of redemptive-historical preaching in the Reformed Churches of Holland between World War I, and II by analysing the principles of redemptive-historical preaching. He concludes that redemptive-historical preaching is God-centred preaching.

However, Greidanus criticises the redemptive-historical approach for committing the same wrongdoings as the exemplary approach. First, Greidanus (2001:174-176) criticises the "schematism". Greidanus warns that the rich variety of Scripture's historical texts cannot be caught in an all-encompassing scheme. Greidanus evaluates that scheme imprisons historical texts. In other words, the uniqueness of the text is lost. Second, Greidanus also argues that the position of redemptive-historical preaching is too speculative and forced. According to him, redemptive-historical preaching "frequently takes the texts out of their scriptural context, combines them, places them in a redemptive-historical framework, draws parallels, and thus establishes their meaning" (Greidanus 2001:176-180). Third, Greidanus (2001:180-190) argues that redemptive-historical preaching is like an objective sermon which has no relevancy for the audience. In other words, redemptive-historical preaching can only give objective and theoretical explanations of redemptive history. These sermons are not interested in the needs of the audience, and cannot urge them to convert.

Greidanus (2001:213-234) proposes a principle for preaching historical texts to overcome the problems of redemptive-historical preaching. He argues that a preacher must seek the point of departure not in redemptive history, but in the historical text. The historical text bears the marks of the time in which it was first proclaimed, as is apparent from its language, imagery, patterns of thought,

polemical thrust, etc. Also, although the historical text witnesses to God's acts in history, the nature of the witness is not an objective description but a proclamation: the aim is kerygmatic. In other words, the historical text is a kerygma, or proclamation to the church at a certain stage of redemptive history.

To sum up, Greidanus criticises moral preaching, human-centred preaching, and instructive preaching. However, he also criticises the problems (schematism, speculation, and objectivism) of redemptive-historical preaching. As an alternative to overcoming the problems of redemptive-historical preaching, he emphasises the historicity, and kerygmatic nature of the historical text. These features of historical texts require preachers to avoid being trapped in the redemptive-historical framework and urge them to listen to God's message from the text.

#### **4.5.5.3 Bryan Chapell**

Chapell does not directly use the term “redemptive-historical preaching”. Instead, he uses the phrases “Christ-centred preaching” (Chapell 2005:302-305). Chapell (2005:269-270) argues that the Word of God becomes a tool of the work of redemption, and that the ultimate purpose of the Bible is to spiritually restore the depraved side of man. According to him, the faithful expository sermon solves the problem in an act called redemption. In other words, he emphasises the importance of redemptive history. In *Christ-Centred Sermons: Models of Redemptive Preaching*, which presents models of Christ-centred sermons, Chapell (2013:ix) argues that preaching does not just consist of lectures that give guidance, but are a redemptive event. Therefore, we can say that the Christ-centred sermon presented by Chapell is in some ways one of redemptive-historical preaching.

Chapell rejects sermons that focus on “be” messages such as “be like”, “be good”, and “be disciplined”. This is because these messages contain only moral instruction, implying that we can change our fallen condition in our strength. He (2005:293-294) criticised these “be” messages:

“Be” messages that contain only moral instruction imply that we are able to change our fallen condition in our own strength. Such sermons communicate (although usually unintentionally) that we make the path to grace and that our works earn and/or secure our acceptance with God. However, well intended, these sermons present a faith indistinguishable from that of morally conscientious Muslims, Unitarians, Buddhists, or Hindus.

Chapell (2005:279-280) argues that Jesus Christ should be at the centre of the sermon. Since Christ is the centre of redemptive history, and the core of the work of redemption, all preaching should be Christ-centred. The law, the prophets that precede, and the apostolic ministry that follows the work of the cross, make Jesus their centre. Prophets, apostles, and the Saviour testify that all scripture ultimately focuses on the Redeemer. For this reason, Chapell claims that expository preaching is Christ-centred preaching.

Chapell (2013: xiii), however, opposes interpreting the text through a mysterious alchemy of allegory or typology to mention Christ. Chapell (2005:310) criticises the preacher of mistakenly using artificial imagination to mention Christ. He emphasizes that not all sermons referring to the cross of Jesus are redemptive-historical preachings. This means Chapell refuses an exclusive redemptive-historical approach to preaching.

To avoid exclusive redemptive-historical preaching or interpretation, Chapell (2005:48-52) focuses on “FCF” (Fallen Condition Focus). FCF is a common condition for all human beings. The FCF can help people realize that they are incomplete. The FCF can also help to make people realize that God's grace guides the lives of believers. For this reason, Christ-centred preaching can be seen as redemptive-historical preaching. It presents God's solution to the fallen, reminding us to look beyond ourselves, and to seek Christ for our redemption (Chapell 2005:308-309).

However, Chapell does not ignore, or reject any of the examples of biblical figures. According to Chapel, it is a preacher's error to decide that examples of biblical



figures are not valid because they are irrelevant to redemptive history. Chapell (2005:285-286) argues that the examples of biblical figures should not be ignored, because God uses examples of biblical figures as either positive, or negative examples.

To sum up, Chapell says the text should be interpreted from a redemptive-historical perspective, focusing on Christ, the pinnacle of the work of redemption. Although the expression “redemptive-historical preaching” cannot be found in his book, we can presume that Chapell proposes Christ-centred preaching as a form of redemptive-historical preaching. Also, his unique theory, FCF, is a new challenge to overcoming the limitations of redemptive-historical preaching.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The sermon is an effort to satisfy both content and form (York & Decker 2008:27-38). The content of the sermon can be validated by the interpretation of the text, and the sermon form can ensure its relevancy by effective delivery. Therefore, before presenting redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative for preaching on suffering, I examined redemptive history, and redemptive-historical preaching to ensure the validity of interpretation, form, narrative, and narrative preaching to ensure relevancy of delivery.

First, regarding sermon form, we discussed the fact that it is not merely an artificial device chosen by the preacher for effective delivery. The sermon form is essential, and creates an organic amalgamation with the content. The sermon is as divine communication, and achieves communication through the combination of message and form. This research of the sermon form makes us recognize its importance, and gives us justification for considering proper form for preaching.

Second, through research of narrative, and narrative preaching, we discussed the fact that the plot is effective in delivering the message of the text. The plot of narrative generates reversal and recognition, helping to achieve effective communication with the audience. Eugene Lowry's narrative preaching



emphasised the role of sermon form, and reconfirm the importance of biblical narratives. Narrative preaching also provides a new theological understanding of the audience and emphasises movement and continuity in the sermon.

Third, we looked at redemptive-historical interpretation, and redemptive-historical preaching. Redemptive history is a biblical-theological theme that shows God's redemption in history. For this reason, redemptive-historical interpretation interprets the text from the three premises of biblical-theology, which are historicity, unity, and progression of revelation. Redemptive-historical preaching concentrates on redemption which is the purpose of the Bible itself. In other words, the purpose of redemptive-historical preaching is to show the work of redemption which God himself achieves in our history. Therefore, Redemptive-historical preaching helps to escape from anthropocentric preaching and exemplary preaching.

However, we also looked at concerns regarding narrative preaching, and redemptive-historical preaching. Narrative preaching has the following weaknesses. First, narrative preaching can distort the author's intentions because the audience is the determinant of the text's meaning. Second, narrative preaching regards the audience's experience as the only purpose of the sermon rather than the meaning of the text or the intention of the author. Third, narrative preaching insists on an open ending, and neglects the application of the sermon. Fourth, as narrative preaching focuses on personal experience, it is vulnerable when establishing a faith community. Fifth, the gospel presented by narrative preaching can be replaced by subjective gospel. Redemptive-historical preaching also has the following problems: First, redemptive-historical preaching ignores grammatical-historical interpretation, and hastily draws a redemptive-historical approach to the text. Second, due to the negative view of the application of the sermon, redemptive-historical preaching can stay in objective explanation of redemptive history. Third, the obsession with mentioning Jesus in all the text can lead to allegorical interpretation.

Through the research of this chapter, we see the need to overcome the weaknesses of narrative preaching, and redemptive-historical preaching, yet also take into consideration their strengths. The reversal, and recognition of narrative,

and the plot of narrative preaching, could be beneficial elements for preaching on suffering. In addition, the redemptive-historical approach is a useful approach for the God-centred message of preaching on suffering because it emphasises the work of the redemption. Therefore, in Chapter 5, I explore how the plot of narrative preaching, and redemptive-historical approach can be newly applied, and expanded from an integrated perspective, and will propose redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative to preaching on suffering.

## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 4, I investigated the arguments of redemptive-historical preaching and narrative preaching. When the problems of redemptive-historical preaching and narrative preaching are overcome by considering their respective strengths, they can be an effective method for preaching. Therefore, in this chapter, I will explore how the plot of narrative preaching, and the hermeneutical viewpoint of redemptive-historical preaching can be newly integrated, and expanded. I will then propose redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative to preaching on suffering. The goal is to achieve a balance between “what to deliver (content)” and “how to deliver (form)”.

This chapter will be divided into four main parts. First, I will define redemptive-historical narrative preaching. Second, I will discuss the necessity and merits of redemptive-historical narrative preaching. Third, I will suggest the preparatory steps of redemptive-historical preaching. Fourth, I will present the practices of redemptive-historical preaching based on various genres.

### **5.2 THE DEFINITION OF REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING**

Jerome Bruner, a prominent psychologist at Harvard University, in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986), claims that there are two types of cognitive functioning, or types of thought, each providing distinctive ways of expressing experience, or constructing reality. Bruner (1986:11) mentions that humans have basic modes of thought: “a good story” and “a well-formed argument.” These two methods have their own principles and standards for judging right or wrong. The argument explores “truth”, while the story tries to show “lifelikeness” through the story itself Bruner (1986:12).

Brunner's two modes of thought can also be found in redemptive-historical preaching, and narrative preaching as discussed in Chapter 4. First, redemptive-historical preaching tends to argue ideas. This approach is like George Lindbeck's "cognitive-propositional" model which sees religion primarily as making claims about reality and their doctrines as informative propositions to be assessed cognitively (Lindbeck 1984:16).

This model is deeply rooted in a theological foundation which focuses on the delivery of information or the delivery of ideas. Second, narrative preaching emphasises experiences through story. This approach is similar to the "experiential-expressive model" (Lindbeck 1984:16). The experiential-expressive model emphasises emotional aspects rather than rationality. This model is embedded in a theological foundation that emphasises existence and experience, rather than the delivery of doctrines or theological propositions.

Lindbeck (1984:32-33) argues, however, that the foundation of religion is not built only on a series of cognitive propositions or unique expressions of human experience. According to him, the foundation of the religious community is the comprehensive "cultural-linguistic frame" of the community, which creates modes of thought, values, and ways of life of the members of the community. In other words, recognition and experience are achieved through the language and cultures of the religious community.

Lindbeck (1984:20) calls this a "cultural-linguistic model", suggesting it as an alternative to the cognitive-propositional model and experiential-expressive model. This "cultural-linguistic model" contributes significantly in that it displays the uniqueness of Christianity. The "cultural-linguistic model" shows that sermons are not based on an individual's experience, but a communal language of the religious community (Craddock *et al.* 1993:121).

However, Lindbeck's argument is seen as being controversial. Many theologians criticise his argument. The main criticism is that Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model can pursue a new Christian view of truth, which stands in contrast to

traditional views of Christianity. According to him, the truth can only be true within the system of the community. In other words, there is no objective ontological truth that can correspond to anywhere, but there are truths that belong to a specific community.

In this regard, Vanhoozer (2005:279) criticises Lindbeck for overlooking an objective revelation. Vanhoozer (2005:167) attempts a “canonical linguistic approach”, arguing that the origin of Christian faith is deeply embedded in the “canon” rather than in community. Vanhoozer critiques Lindbeck’s regulative theory of doctrine, explaining that the ultimate theological authority is not the church’s use of scripture, but rather God’s use of scripture. Vanhoozer (2002:24-25) believes that canonical language is the first theology. Thus, Christianity is spoken and practised based on the Bible. The same is true of sermons. Preaching is a Christian practice based on the Bible, the canon of the Christian community. In other words, the authority of a sermon is not from the preacher but from the Bible (Robinson 2001:24).

Thus, before presenting a homiletical alternative for preaching on suffering, homiletic theology, which includes three models based on the insights of Lindbeck and Vanhoozer, will have to be considered as follows: canonical linguistic model, cognitive-propositional model, and experiential-expressive model. The canonical linguistic model emphasises that sermons should be sermons based on the text of the Bible. The cognitive-propositional model emphasises the contents of the message through the interpretation of the text. The experiential-expressive model emphasises the importance of form to effectively convey messages in the text. Therefore, preaching pursued by this research is based on the Word of God, conveying the message of the text in an effective form.

Based on this homiletical theology, this study proposes redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative for preaching on suffering. In general, redemptive-historical narrative preaching refers to narratives that are recorded in the Bible relating to God’s salvation (Lee 2017:93-94). The aim of this study is to respect that narratives regarding God’s salvation, as recorded in the Bible, should be prevalent in preaching. The redemptive-historical narrative preaching that this

study proposes is to interpret the text from the redemptive-historical perspective, and convey the God-centred big idea of the text through the special plot.

Redemptive-historical narrative preaching supports the theological position of “*Textus Rex*” which means the text is king. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is based on the text, and extracts the big idea from the text. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching effort attempts to embrace redemptive-history preaching which emphasises the unity, the organicity of the Bible, and the redemption of God as recorded in the text. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is also an effort to take advantage of narrative preaching which focuses on movement and continuity. The plot of narrative preaching is effective because it gives the audience the experience of discovering God in preaching, and it encourages audience participation. Therefore, redemptive-historical narrative preaching can be evaluated as “theology-based and audience-directed” preaching.

### **5.3 NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING**

In this section I will discuss both the advantages and the necessity of redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

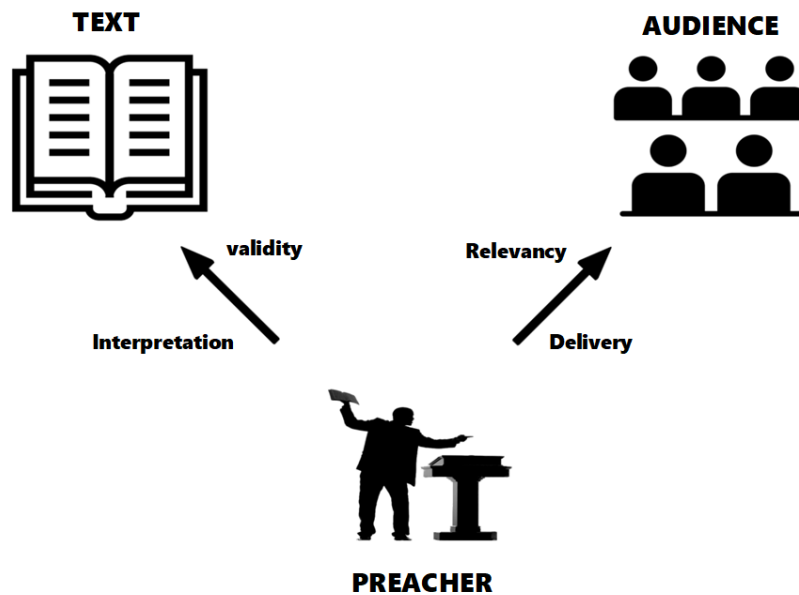
#### **5.3.1 The necessity of redemptive-historical narrative preaching**

The reasons why redemptive-historical narrative preaching is necessary are as follows: First, it is necessary for the integration of God-centredness and audience-centredness. Second, it is necessary for the integration of text-centricity, and text applicability.

##### **5.3.1.1 The integration of God-centredness and audience-centredness**

A preacher faces two objectives. First, the text must be interpreted. Second, the preacher must now share his interpretation with the audience (Jeong 2003:9). This

means that a preacher must always consider two objects: the text and the audience. A preacher cannot neglect either one. Therefore, as shown in Figure 5.1 below, a preacher performs the following tasks (Jeong 2003:39). First, a preacher interprets the text of “then and there”, and then conveys the interpretation of the text effectively to the audience who is the “here and now”.



**Figure 5.1 Two objects of a preacher**

However, the validity of the interpretation should be secured through God-centredness. The reason is that the sermon should proclaim something about the character of God and His nature (Wilson 1999:41). God reveals Himself through preaching (Wilson 2007:59). Redemptive-historical preaching is based on God-centredness, and provides an alternative to overcoming the problem of a sermon which is anthropocentric or moral. In other words, redemptive-historical preaching is a homiletical effort to restore God-centredness.

Despite these advantages, the problem with redemptive-historical preaching is that, as discussed in Chapter 4, it clings to the objective dimension of redemptive history, and can result in a sermon unrelated to the lives of today's audiences, especially when preaching on suffering. If a preacher simply discovers the

meaning of suffering or explains what God does in the midst of suffering, the sermon will only be a good lecture about redemptive history to those who suffer.

The relevancy of delivery is secured by “audience-centredness”. The reason is that the audience is the ultimate object of the sermon. As Long (2016:71) points out, “The Bible speaks to particular people in the concrete circumstances of their lives”. Once the preacher has interpreted the text, the next task is to consider the means of delivering the message effectively. This task is important to ensure relevancy.

Narrative preaching attempts to use a specific plot so that the audience can relate to the teaching. In other words, narrative preaching is a homiletical effort to raise the audience's interest and communicate with them. However, narrative preaching has weaknesses in showing the divine authority of God's word and making vertical communication with God. Narrative preaching can cause the message to be subjective or fail to show the image of God because it focuses on horizontal communication with the audience.

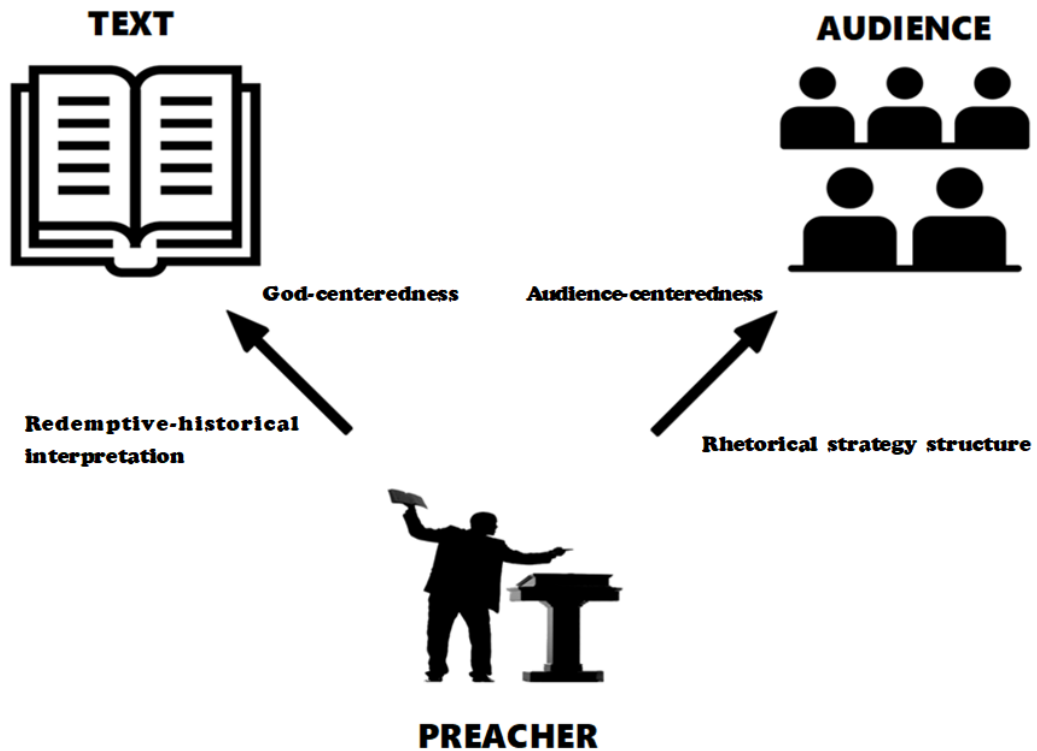
Therefore, redemptive-historical narrative preaching as proposed in this study, is an effective alternative for integrating God-centredness, and audience-centredness. As shown in Figure 5. 2, redemptive-historical interpretation provides a preacher with the big idea which shows God's redemption. In other words, redemptive-historical narrative preaching emphasises God-centred preaching in which God becomes the subject of the sermon, not anthropocentric preaching.

It is important for a preacher to recognize God as the main character of the text, and focus on God's actions and words. Paul Scott Wilson (2001) calls searching for God a “God-sense” when reading and interpreting the text. He warns that a preacher's interpretation of the text should not be confined to obtaining historical knowledge or religious information. He insists that a preacher must find God in the text and attain “God-statement” (Wilson 1999:39-44).

Redemptive-historical narrative preaching obtains the big idea which includes “God-statement” through redemptive-historical interpretation. For this reason, this



big idea will be called the God-centred big idea in this study. The God-centred big idea shows that God is still working among the suffering of His people. The God-centred big idea will be discussed in more detail in 5.4.1.3.



**Figure 5.2 The integration of God-centredness and audience-centredness<sup>28</sup>**

The God-centred big idea secures audience-centredness through an effective plot. The plot of redemptive-historical narrative preaching has a rhetorical strategic structure (Lee 2017:94). In this study, I will suggest a plot which consists of conflict, complication, theological reversal, resolution, and application. Through this plot, the audience first discovers their conflict or problem. Feeling the need for salvation through the complication of the conflict, they discover the Triune God who works in their lives through theological reversal. Furthermore, those who discover God can reaffirm their mission, and live as the people of God again through a concrete

<sup>28</sup> This figure is made by the researcher. The icons are from <https://thenounproject.com/>.

application. The specific plot of redemptive-historical narrative preaching will be discussed in 5.4.2.

### **5.3.2 The integration of text-centricity and text's applicability**

As discussed in Chapter 4, redemptive-historical preaching tends to neglect the audience by unilaterally proclaiming the text. On the other hand, narrative preaching has audience-oriented advantages. A preacher should consider the importance of the text, and simultaneously invite the audience to relate to the text. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is an alternative that considers both. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching forms integration between “text-centricity” and “text’s applicability” as shown in Figure 5.3. Text-centricity refers to the faithfulness of whether the message of the sermon is based on the text, and text’s applicability refers to the possibility that the message of “then and there” can be applied to the lives of the audience “here and now” (Brown 2003:390&Jeong 2003:9-13).

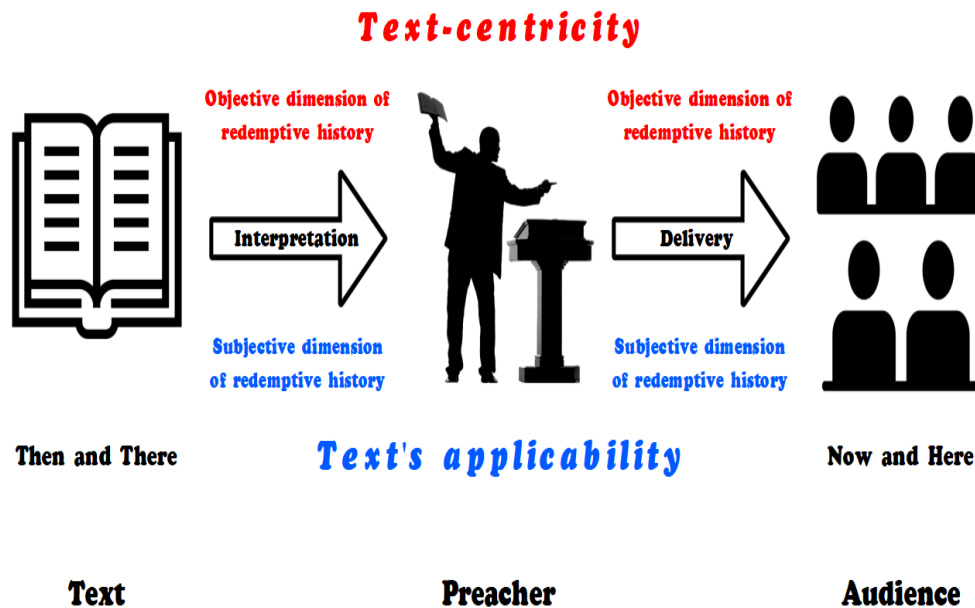


Figure 5.3 The integration of text-centricity and text's applicability<sup>29</sup>

Text-centricity is a preacher's homiletical belief that must be observed when a preacher prepares or delivers a sermon. Robinson (2014:3-4) points out that modern sermons have lost their vitality because the preacher is tempted to deliver a message other than the Bible's due to: a political system (either right-wing or left-wing), a theory of economics, a new religious philosophy, old religious slogans, or a trend in psychology. This means that when preachers' interpretation is not based on the text, they can preach a message that is not true to the text. For example, illustrative, fragmentary, and atomistic interpretations can distort the message of the text. Therefore, an interpretation concentrating on the text is required to maintain text-centricity. One such interpretation is redemptive-historical interpretation. Redemptive-historical interpretation asks what God is doing in the text. For this reason, Redemptive-historical interpretation can secure the theological ground from the text.

<sup>29</sup> This figure is made by the researcher. The icons are from <https://thenounproject.com/>.

In addition, redemptive-historical narrative preaching has text applicability. The reason is that redemptive history has an objective, and subjective dimension. Even though the revelation of objective salvation was terminated by the completion of the canon, the application of the subjective dimension of redemptive history through the proclamation of the word of God has continued beyond timing and history. Therefore, the text containing the objective dimension of redemptive history cannot remain in objective explanation of the salvation of God that occurred in the past. The text contains text's applicability because God's redemption revealed in the text can still be applied and repeated subjectively in a contemporary audience's life.

When Based on the indicative and imperative in Paul, an interpretation of the text cannot merely stay in an "indicative description" proclaiming the salvation of God in history, and may even have to proceed as an "imperative application" (Ryu 2004:145). Therefore, redemptive-historical narrative preaching presents the application to the audience of "here and now". This is the difference between narrative preaching and redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

If narrative preaching avoids application, and insists on an open ending, redemptive-historical narrative preaching presents the application based on a God-centred big idea to the audience, urging them to live as God's saved people. As a result, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is a homiletical alternative that helps to preserve text applicability and accept text-centricity, allowing them to harmonize with each other.

### **5.3.3 Advantage of redemptive-historical narrative preaching - maturity of the faith community**

As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the greatest challenges with narrative preaching is that it is individualistic. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is one alternative to overcoming the challenge of narrative preaching. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching has two advantages. First, redemptive-historical

narrative preaching unites the faith community and enhances its ethical practice. Second, redemptive-historical narrative preaching provides a Christian worldview to the faith community.

### **5.3.3.1 The unity of community and enhancement of communal practice**

Redemptive-historical narrative preaching unites the faith community. According to Miller (1996:173), a story is the “mortar” that unites the mutual relationships of community members. In other words, a story can serve to unite the community. Miller's insight can also be applied to the sermon. In preaching, particular Christian stories can be the mortar that unites the faith community. For example, the story of God's salvation in which the Triune God completed salvation among his people, serves as mortar that unites members of the faith community (Lee 2013a:219).

The unity of the faith community enhances communal practice because communal practice is based on narrative. Stanley Hauerwas (1981:1) says that “the most important social task is nothing less than to be a community capable of hearing the story of God we find in the scripture and living in a manner that is faithful to that story.” Hauerwas (1981:90-91) says:

To stress the significance of narrative at the very least helps reminds us that the documents crucial to the life of the Christian community take the form of a narrative. Of course, some of the material in those documents is not immediately narrative in form, but such material could not exist without the narratives and indeed draws its intelligibility from them. To insist on the significance of narrative for theological reflection is not, however, just to make a point about the form of biblical sources, but involves claims about the nature of God, the self, and the nature of the world. We are “storied people” because the God that sustains us in a “storied God,” whom we come to know only by having our character formed appropriate to God’s character.

The narrative in scripture shapes character, and promotes communal practice. “The remarkable richness of these stories of God requires that a church be a

community of discourse and interpretation that endeavours to tell these stories and form its life in accordance with them” (Hauerwas 1981:92).

The story of God's salvation, in particular, urges the faith community to participate in communal practice as a people of God. Walter Brueggemann (1997:121) says that the memory of the story of God's salvation does not simply end up as a cognitive activity that recalls information about past events, but serves as a driving force that establishes obedience and devotion. In other words, the story of God's salvation does not end in providing information to members of the community, but also serves as a motive for communal practice. Christopher Wright (2004:25-30) argues that the story of God's salvation plays a role in urging ethical behaviour:

God takes the initiative in grace and redeeming action and then makes his ethical demand in the light of it. Ethics then becomes a matter of response and gratitude within a personal relationship, not of blind obedience to rules or adherence to timeless principals... Israel was not told they could deserve or hasten their own deliverance by keeping the law. No, God acted first. God first redeemed them out of their bondage, and then made his covenant with them, a covenant in which their side was to keep God's law, as their response of grateful obedience to their saving God.

According to Wright, the driving force behind Israel's the communal practice as a holy community lies in the remembering, and retelling God's salvation. This means that God's salvation encourages the faith community to carry out communal practice. To sum up, redemptive-historical narrative preaching shared by members within the faith community can unite them, and provide motivation to live as God's people.

### **5.3.3.2 Providing a Christian World View**

Redemptive-historical narrative preaching provides a Christian worldview to the faith community. Events or situations that seem meaningless to the community depending on the worldview that is passed on in a particular story become meaningful (Allen 1988:168). In other words, events or situations that seem

meaningless gain unique meaning because of the worldview of a story shared within the community. For example, in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989), Leslie Newbigin argues that there are two main stories in the world. One is the Christian story which is God-centred, and the other is the human story which is human-centred.

The human story includes the secular world view, and the Christian story includes the Christian world view. Each story claims that its worldview is right about the true reality of the world and requires the listener to devote his or her entire life to the story (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008: 20-21). It can be said that one's life depends on which story belongs to the Christian story, and which to the human story. This is because the worldview in the story shapes human life, and humans lead their lives by their own worldview (Reid 2006:145).

Allen (1988:168-169) says the worldview embedded in a story which is shared by a community has three important functions: First, it provides the community with a sense of order and security in the face of chaos and death. Second, it answers the questions of identity. Third, it orders social life. Allen's insights could also be applied to redemptive-historical narrative preaching. A certain theological point of view of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, redemptive history, presents not just a story of the past but a Christian worldview in today's church (Lee 2013a:220-221).

The Christian worldview embedded in redemptive history has three important functions for the community. First, the worldview of redemptive history provides the community with a sense of order and security based on God's redemption when the community faces a crisis. For example, when the church faces a crisis because of the coronavirus, a preacher can provide security to the faith community through redemptive history. Second, the worldview embedded in redemptive history provides an answer to the identity of the community. For example, through a sermon on Genesis, the church realises that they are the faith community that has been brought into a covenantal relationship to the God of Abraham and Sarah. Third, the world view in redemptive history urges the social life of the community.

For example, the conviction that God has chosen believers as His people can encourage the faith community to live as God's people.

#### 5.4 PREPARATION OF REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING

Craddock (2010:84) said that there is a fundamental principle that a preacher should remember in sermon preparation: the process of finding what to say must be distinguished from the process of considering how to say it. This means that there are two processes in preparing a sermon, which is the study of the text, and constructing the sermon from the studied text. In accordance with Craddock's understanding, I will divide sermon preparation into two processes. Sermon preparation is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

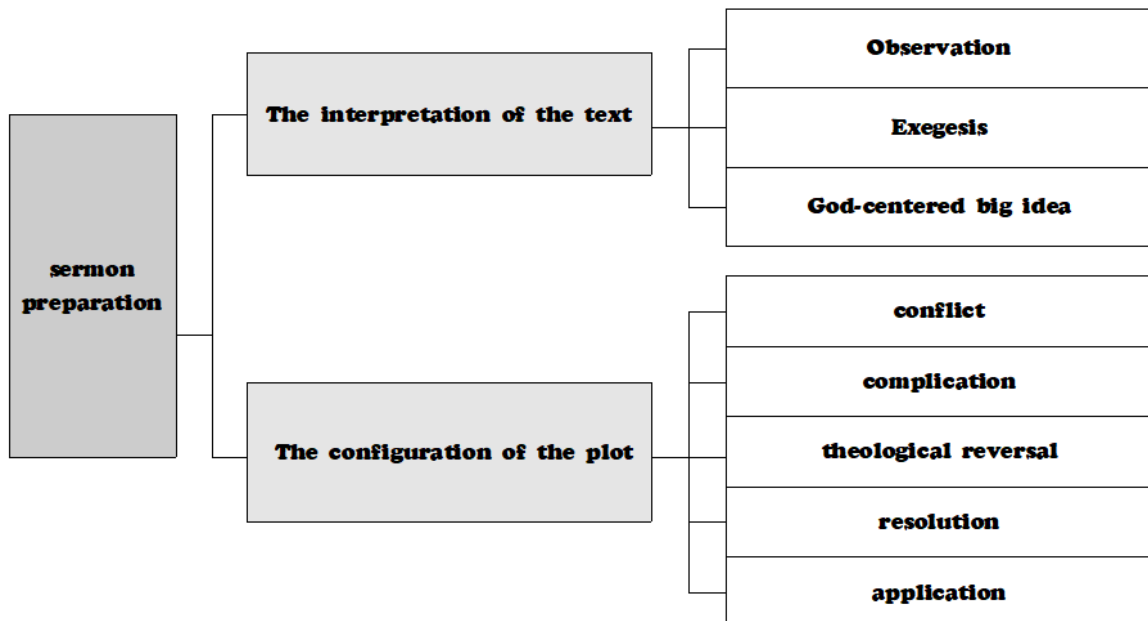


Figure 5.4 Preparation of redemptive-historical narrative preaching



The first process is the interpretation of the text. This process is to study the text, the original source of the sermon. The three steps are as follows: 1) observation, 2) exegesis, 3) God-centred big idea. The second process is the configuration of the plot. This process is to give movement, and continuity to the God-centred big idea obtained through interpretation. This process consists of plots of conflict, complication, theological reversal, resolution, and application. To help understand, I refer to Esther 4:15-17 as an example, and briefly show the simple practices of preparation for redemptive-historical narrative preaching. The simple practices according to the genre will be further discussed in 5.5.

#### 5.4.1 The interpretation of the text

Biblical texts are the foundation of all sermons. It can therefore be said that the success or failure of the sermon depends on the interpretation of the text. In this study, I propose observation, exegesis, and finding a God-centred big idea as the main steps of the interpretation of the text. These steps are illustrated in Figure 5.5. Observation is reading and grasping the text. Exegesis is to understand the meanings of the text through historical, grammatical, and redemptive-historical interpretations. The God-centred big idea is the big idea of the text in which God is the subject.



Figure 5.5 Three steps of the interpretation of the text

### 5.4.1.1 Observation

Sermon preparation begins with observation of the text. Wayne McDill (1994:45) says this about text observation:

For Bible study observation means identifying significance details in a careful examination of the particulars of the scripture passage. The aim of recording these observations is to understand the intended meaning of the writer.

Craddock (2010:105) describes the observation in the words “first reading of the text” and explains:

This first reading is a spontaneous, even naïve, engagement with the text. All faculties of mind and heart are open, with no concern for what one ought to think, much less what one will say later in the sermon. This is time to listen, think, feel, imagine, and ask.

At the step of observation, a preacher must read the text with an open mind, repeatedly, and with concentration. The text must also be read according to the adjacent context to which it belongs, and also within the context of the whole Bible. It is also helpful to read other translations for understanding the text. According to Sunukjian (2007:22-23), it is good for a preacher to observe the text closely. For example, a preacher can search for important words or repeated words. The preacher can also write down questions such as unfamiliar customs, incomprehensible logical connections, or awkward-looking words. For instance, the structural diagram presented by McDill (1994:17-35) might be of help in observing the text. Figure 5.6 below shows the structural diagram of Esther 4:15-17.

Rhetorical Functions	V.	Structural Diagram (Esther 4:15-17)
Action	15	Then Esther <b>sent</b>
Object		this reply
Recipient		to <b>Mordecai</b> :
Exhortation	16	Go, <b>gather together</b> all the Jews ,
Location		who are in <b>Susa</b>
Exhortation		and <b>fast for me</b> .
		<b>Do not eat or drink</b> for three days, night or day
Action		I and my maids will fast as you do
Condition		When this is done,
Action		<b>I will go to the king</b>
Contrast		<b>even though</b> it is against the law,
Condition		And <b>if</b> I perish,
Action		I <b>perish</b> .
Explanation	17	So Mordecai went away
Action		and <b>carried out</b> all of Esther's instructions,

**Figure 5.6 The structural diagram of Esther 4:15-17**

However, it is not compulsory for a preacher to try McDill's structural diagram. The more important aspect of observation is to feel, and understand the text correctly. For example, while reading Lamentations, a preacher should be able to feel the author's sorrowful heart and the sadness conveyed through the text. As Chapell (2005:107) advises, the text should be carefully observed to ensure the content is understood, even though the meaning may not be.

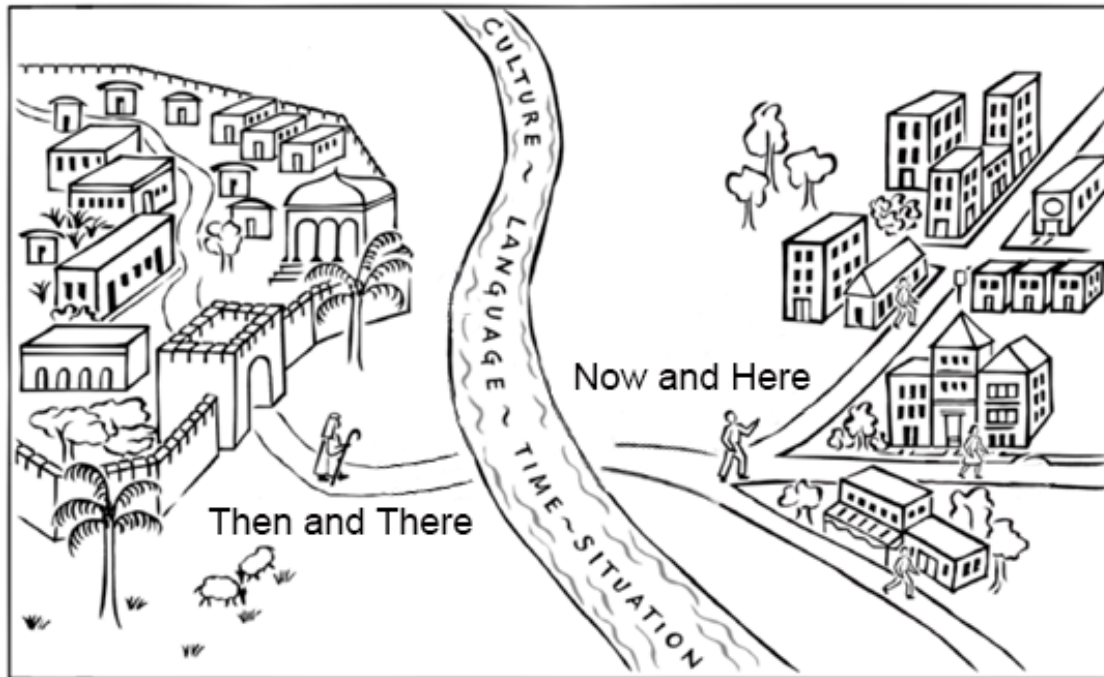
#### 5.4.1.2 Exegesis

Exegesis is to find what the text means (Osborne 2010:22). Exegesis comes from the Greek word “ἐξηγήσομαι”. The word means “explain”, “drag out”, and “a leading

out”. Louw and Nida defines (1989:411) “ἐξηγέομαι” as making something fully known by careful explanation or by clear revelation. This definition explains what the original purpose of exegesis is. The main purpose of exegesis is to study the text to find out exactly what the original author is trying to tell the reader.

The interpretation guides exegesis to understand the text. If exegesis is an act of finding out the meaning of a specific sentence, phrase, or context, interpretation provides fundamental principles in finding the meaning. Therefore, exegesis and interpretation are closely related (Park 2002:22-23). The most basic interpretation of exegesis is grammatical-historical interpretation. There is a hermeneutical gap between “then and there” and “now and here” such as culture, language, time, and situation as shown in Figure 5.7 (Duvall & Hays 2005:19-20).

Grammatical-historical interpretation is the most important, and fundamental method to overcome this hermeneutical gap between the text and the audience. Through grammatical-historical interpretation, a preacher can get information on the text. Grammatical-historical interpretation examines grammatical details such as words and expressions of text, the genre of the text, and the historical details in which the text is recorded, especially the author's background and purpose. The readers of “here and now” are too far away from the original readers of the text culturally, situationally, and linguistically.



**Figure 5.7 The hermeneutical gap (Duvall & Hays 2005:19-20)**

However, if the interpretation stops in grammatical-historical interpretation, it can be called an incomplete interpretation. The reason is that disinterest in theological interpretation is not to interpret the Bible correctly, but to ignore the interests of the text (Alexander & Rosner 2004:30).

The Bible consists of three dimensions: history, theology, literature, and contains theological intention. Therefore, this study emphasises the importance of theological interpretation, and proposes redemptive-historical interpretation as a theological interpretation. In other words, this study suggests redemptive-historical interpretation as a hermeneutical key to interpretation. As discussed in Chapter 4, redemptive-historical interpretation presupposes grammatical-historical interpretation. It also includes organic and synthetic interpretation. Synthetic interpretation is to reveal the uniqueness of the text, emphasizing text-centricity. In other words, synthetic interpretation complies with the principles of “*Sola Scriptura*”. On the other hand, organic interpretation is based on the uniformity of the Bible, which emphasises looking at the text in the general context. In other

words, organic interpretation is based on the principle of “*Tota Scriptura*” (Song 2008:30). For example, the word “God” does not appear in Esther, but when preachers try to read Esther in the context of the redemptive history, they can find God's providence through the unique elements of the text, such as Mordecai's call, and Esther's decision.

#### **5.4.1.3 God-centred big idea**

What is the big idea of the text? Robinson (2014:16-17) defines the big idea as a single dominant idea that can summarize the text. The big idea is expressed in different terms by preachers. For example, Long (2016:126-135) expresses the big idea as a focus statement, Wilson (2004:22) expresses the big idea as the major concern of the text (MCT), and McDill (1994:88) expresses it as the textual idea.

Homiletics in North America uses the term central idea, master idea, main idea, and central proposition as a substitute for the phrase “big idea”. However, whatever term is used in place of “big idea”, the concept is the same. The big idea is not everything the text says, but the most important subject that the text can integrate into everything it says (Robinson 2014:17-18). The big idea is the unit of thought that binds all the details in the text together and gives them meaning (Richard 1995:67).

Here are the reasons for the necessity of the big idea. First, conveying one central theme conforms to the purpose of the text. The text has one key theme, and the author of the text aims to convey this theme to the reader (Stott 2002:242-46). The big idea conforms to the purpose of this text by summing up the meanings of the text into one idea. Second, focusing on a single message is more effective than conveying a variety of topics. For a speech to have the best effect, one central proposition must be developed (Litfin 1992:80). In concurrence, Robinson (2014:17) says, “a sermon should be a bullet, not buckshot.” Richard Ramesh (1995:67-68) argues that because the big idea in the text is the heart of the text, a preacher should find the big idea that integrates the whole text through exegesis.

Therefore, to create the biblical sermon, a preacher must find, explain, and apply the big idea supported by many meanings found in the text.

Robinson (2014:20-26) argues that the idea has two components. The first is “subject”. The subject of the big idea is an accurate answer to what the author is talking about in the text. The second is “complement”. The complement of the big idea is the answer to what the author says about the subject in the text. Referring to Craddock’s expression (2010:122-124), to find the big idea of the text one should ask: “what is the text saying” and “what is the text doing”. But it is important to note that in redemptive-historical narrative preaching, the main agent of a big idea becomes God.

Greidanus (1988:113-114) argues that the most important question we should ask when interpreting the text is “what does this text say about God?” In other words, the text should be God-centred in its interpretation. Wilson (1999:39-40) also argues that a preacher must intentionally find out what God is saying through the text. Wilson argues that preachers should train themselves to find God who is working in the text in a broader perspective.

The common argument between Greidanus and Wilson is that the big idea of the sermon should be theocentric, not anthropocentric. Based on their arguments, this study asserts that the big idea of redemptive-historical narrative preaching should be a theocentric big idea called a “God-centred big idea”. The reason a God-centred big idea is necessary is that a particular religious act or a religious example cannot be the ultimate solution to problems.

The advantage of expository preaching, which is claimed by homileticians from the SBC (Southern Baptist Convention), is that it presents the importance of the big idea. The limitation of expository preaching is that the big idea can often be replaced by an anthropocentric one. For example, the preacher can suggest “the believers overcome the crisis with faith” as the big idea of Esther 4:15-17. This big idea's problem is that the ultimate solution to the crisis eventually depends on the human. To overcome this problem, this study proposes the God-centred big idea. Through redemptive-historical interpretation, a preacher presents a God-centred



big idea to the audience through which the audience can discover that only God can heal suffering.

God-centred big ideas consist of a God-centred subject, and a God-centred component. A God-centred subject has to do with what the text says about God, and a God-centred component is the answer to what it says about the God-centred subject. In this study, I will present Chapell's "FCF" (the Fallen Condition Focus) as a way to find a God-centred subject and component.

A preacher can find a God-centred big idea through the FCF revealed in the text. There is a common FCF in the text that can be shared by historical readers, and contemporary readers (2005:105-106). For example, a preacher can present the God-centred big idea using FCF which is revealed in Esther 4:15-17. Esther reveals Haman's plan to kill the people of Israel. This persecution is still relevant today. There are still forces that persecute Christians, and attack churches.

Based on this FCF, a preacher will be able to make the God-centred object, and God-centred component. God-centred subject of Esther 4:15-17 is "God who saves from persecution." God-centred complement is "to save Israel through Esther." A preacher can suggest the God-centred big idea of Esther 4:15-17 as follows: "God saves the people of Israel from persecution through Esther." This God-centred big idea reveals that it is God who gives faith and courage to Esther who risked death to go to the king. In other words, this God-centred big idea reveals the providence, and grace of God, and prevents the sermon to become an anthropocentric sermon.

#### **5.4.2 The configuration of the plot**

Balthasar (1990:91) attempts to resolve the theological conflict between God's absolute sovereignty, and human freedom through drama theory. Balthasar (1988:268-342) introduces the three elements of creativity of Theo-drama (the author, the director, and the actor), and three elements of realization of Theo-drama (presentation, the audience, and horizon).



In Theo-drama, the author is God, the director is the Holy Spirit, and the actor is a person. Vanhoozer is influenced by Balthasar, and suggests Theo-dramatic theology. Vanhoozer focuses on the Bible which is “the script,” and explains God (the author) develops his theories regarding doctrine, church, and the actor.

God’s drama of redemption consists of five acts. The first act is creation, the setting for everything that follows. The second act is God’s election, rejection, and restoration of Israel. The third act is the first advent of Christ, and His accomplishment of the gospel. The fourth act is Christ’s resurrection, and the coming of the Spirit to establish the church. The final act is the conclusion of the eschaton with the church “poised between memory and hope” (Vanhoozer 2005:3-12).

Vanhoozer (2005:447) uses the analogy of the church as “a company of the gospel that gathers to celebrate, and anticipate the Theo-drama and its end, to worship the divine *dramatis personae*, and to perform the script that sets forth God's self-communication”. These words, “company,” “*dramatis personae*,” “perform,” and “script,” all point to his analogy of theatre as the grounding for his proposals. In particular, the function of the theologian is that of the little-known *dramaturge*, the mediator between script and director. The theologian as *dramaturge* is a resource for the company, helping the director in ensuring the script is understood, and applied with creative faithfulness, neither parroting nor forgetting previous acts and scenes of the Theo-drama.

While the drama theories of Balthasar and Vanhoozer have differences, there are commonalities. These theories attempt to include the significant Christian doctrine of "soteriology" through drama. In other words, they regard God’s drama of redemption as Theo-drama that records God's dispensation and providence (Park 2012:167).

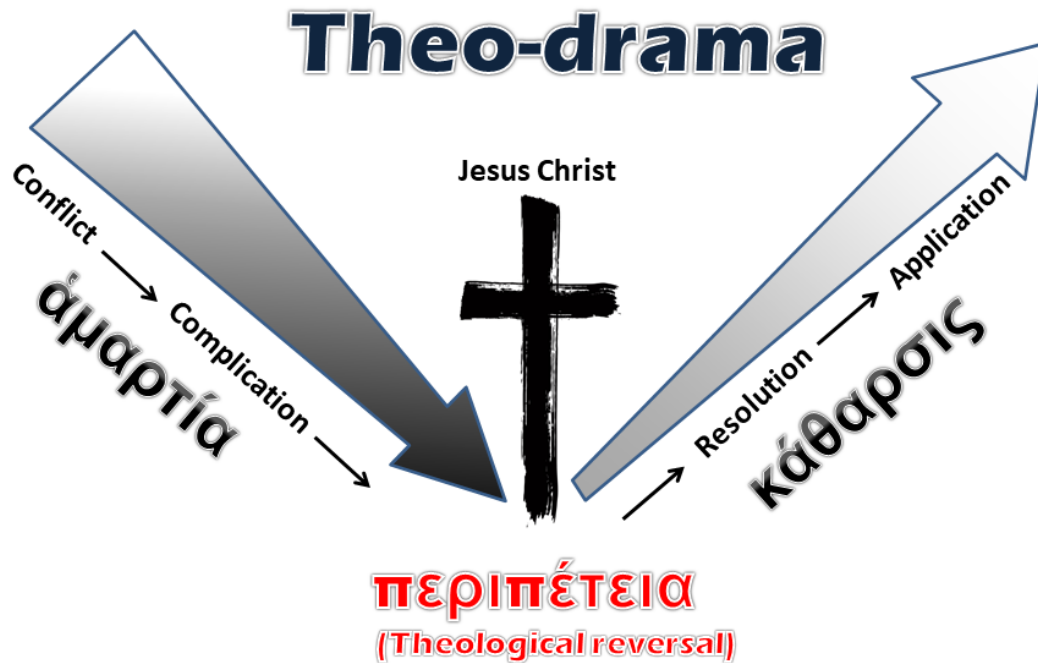
However, this Theo-drama is a narrative of the great reversal (Verhey 1984:94; Steinmann 2006:95). Every text in the Bible is based on the Theo-drama of a great

reversal. The reason is that the entire Biblical text is included in the redemptive history.

As shown in Figure 5.8, the narrative of this Theo-drama has reversal. Adam's sin has broken humanity's relationship with God, and there is no possibility of restoring this relationship (conflict). Human beings gradually drifted away from God, and the law indicates the impossibility of humanity's situation (complication).

These two steps may be called *ἀμαρτία*, as explained by Aristotle. But Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came to this world to bear the sin of mankind. Jesus Christ broke the power of death, and rose three days after his crucifixion, sending the Holy Spirit to his people so that they can be exalted (reversal). This was an amazing reversal that turned impossibility to possibility. This reversal may be called *περιπέτεια*, another of Aristotle's terms. This reversal made sinners new creatures. In addition, Jesus Christ will make a second coming, and then the world will be fully restored (resolution).

The sermon is not simply a lecture regarding God's redemption, but a Theo-drama requiring believers to live as the people of God who have been saved. The preacher should emphasise to the audience in the sermon, the role of God's people based on redemption. Therefore, as the final step in the plot of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, this study presents its application. For this reason, reversal and application may be called *κάθαρσις*, yet another of Aristotle's terms.



**Figure 5.8 The plot of redemptive-history narrative preaching<sup>30</sup>**

When the God-centred big idea originates from a redemptive-historical approach, the plot of redemptive-historical narrative preaching is a modification of Lowry's homiletic plot in light of the character of Theo-drama, and the nature of preaching. What makes the plot proposed in this study different from Lowry's homiletical plot is that the reversal has changed into a theological reversal, and the application has been added. The theological reversal will be discussed in 5.4.2.3, and the need for an application will be deliberated in 5.4.2.5.

#### **5.4.2.1 Conflict**

This step is to identify, and present conflict or problems that appear in the text. This is important because conflict and problems are concepts that the faith communities can relate to, thus, establishing audience participation. Forth (1973:38) claims conflict is part of constructing a story. Just as movies, plays, and

<sup>30</sup> This figure is made by the researcher.

dramas captures the audience's interest by presenting conflict in the beginning, a preacher also presents ambiguity at the beginning of a sermon to arouse or stimulate interest from the audience.

However, it is important to note that conflict should be based on the God-centred big idea in the text when presenting conflict in the beginning. This attempt is intended to overcome the limitations of conflict presented by narrative preaching. Lowry's narrative preaching focuses on presenting conflict or problems simply to arouse or stimulate the audience's interest. The problem, however, is whether the conflict stems from the text or from the audience. If a preacher focuses on the conflict experienced by the audience to arouse the audience's interest, the human situation will determine the big idea of the sermon, creating a possibility of distorting the message of the text (Ryu 2005:200-201). In this case, conflict does not serve the purpose of correctly revealing the message of the text, but rather serves to raise the interest of the audience.

On the other hand, the conflict of redemptive-historical narrative preaching stems from the existential nature of human beings. The Bible shows the "total depravity" of human beings, and that all the problems stem from this (Chapell 2005:105-106). When presenting conflict based on this theological principle, the audience naturally expects God's grace.

In this regard, a preacher can present conflict based on FCF. For example, at the beginning of a sermon on Esther 4:15-17, a preacher can present conflict as the persecutions against God's people as follows: "There is persecution in believing in Jesus." A preacher can further elaborate on conflict by making changes to the FCF, considering the circumstances of the audience or sermon. For example, a preacher may present conflict by referring to the special circumstances shared by the church: "Missionary Kim's church in the Philippines was burned down by an Islamic extremist group attack last week. Pastor Kim went to the Philippines with a passion for mission two years ago, but now his family is under threat." When presenting conflicts in this way, a preacher can secure both text-centricity, and text applicability

### **5.4.2.2 Complication**

If preachers capture the interest of the audience through conflict, they need to elaborate on the aspects that cause conflict. Lowry (1997:66-70) argues that the purpose of complication is to deepen our understanding of conflict. According to Lowry, complication helps to find the remedy based on the gospel. “Faithful preaching is the practice of pointing others to a provision beyond themselves so that they are able to do what God requires and what the regenerate heart desires” (Chapell 2005:309). For these reasons, Lowry (1980:36) argues that preachers should devote the most time to complication.

Conflict can be complicated through various methods. First, a preacher can use an example or illustration associated with today's audience. For example, in Esther 4:15-17, a preacher can set persecution as conflict. This can make the audience understand conflict better as they can relate to the difficulties and problems they face in their lives. Second, a preacher can refer to a story or example from the Bible. For example, persecution in Esther 4:15-17 can be complicated through a story of similar biblical figures. Third, conflict can be complicated by combining the methods discussed earlier. However, in this case, an example or illustration should be presented clearly.

### **5.4.2.3 Theological reversal**

As discussed in Chapter 4, reversal is something that happens without expectation, and may be caused by circumstances or by cognition. However, it is important that the reversal is contrary to what is expected. An example of this reversal can be found in the Bible. At the heart of redemptive history stands the reversal through Jesus Christ. The problem of sin was solved by Jesus Christ, and God's salvation was given as a gift to His people.

The principle of the reversal of redemptive history is also reflected in biblical texts. The biblical texts show us the work and providence of God, rather than focussing

on conflicts and problems. Therefore, if the sermon is faithful to the text, there should be a recovery from conflict, solving of problems, and a theological movement to grace (Wilson 1999:156-157).

This theological movement can be called reversal in the sermon. If conflict has been presented and complicated, it is important to show how God can solve the conflict. The climax of the sermon should reveal God's unconditional love and his mercy. For this reason, this study refers to the term "theological reversal".

Theological reversal is helpful in the following ways. First, when focusing on God's action, preaching can be distanced from the human-centred preaching that emphasises human behaviour and faith. Second, since the text provides the answer to the conflict, the experience of the audience can avoid the danger of being subjective.

Theological reversal focuses on God's action in the text. For this reason, a preacher needs to determine what God has done through interpretation. God's action can be found throughout the Bible (Wilson 1999:161). However, it is also important to reveal how God continues to work in a similar manner in our lives. If a preacher cannot speak of God in the text, a sermon is just abstract and propositional.

However, sometimes God's action, as revealed in the text, is not obvious. Wilson suggests that preachers should practise to find God's grace in the text, and to mention God's actions (Wilson 1999:158-161). In Esther 4:15-17, for example, a preacher can see that Haman's plan to exterminate the Jewish people is reversed by Esther's determination and dedication. Here a preacher needs to show Esther's determination, and dedication as the providence of God and not her own determination and dedication. Esther intentionally shows this through various elements in the text. Therefore, a preacher can show that God saved the people of Israel through the actions of Esther as a theological reversal.

It is better to present theological reversal in the present tense. This is because a biblical message is not so much, "This is what God said then," as it is, "This is

what God is saying now, to you” (Sunukjian 2007:12). When a preacher uses past tense, God's work in the text can simply seem like an act in the past to the audience. Also, when a preacher uses the future tense, the suffering of the audience might remain unsolved for it may seem that God's unconditional grace is actually conditional grace. Preachers should rather comfort the audience by reminding them that though they might experience problems, God will not forsake them,. For example, in the sermon on Esther 4:15-17, it is more effective to presented God as “God is saving the people of Israel through Esther” as theological reversal rather than “God saved the people of Israel through Esther.”

Theological reversal can be strengthened by using an example or illustration. First, any example or illustration associated with the contemporary audience can be used. Second, a biblical story or example can be used. This can serve to find God's action in other biblical texts. Examples and illustrations are helpful to cognize that God in the text is the same God that is in our lives today. For example, in the sermon on Esther 4:15-17, a preacher can link Esther with the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ to strengthen theological reversal as follows: “Just as God saved the people of Israel through Esther, God saved us from sin through Jesus Christ.”

#### **5.4.2.4 Resolution**

The solution proposed by this study does not imply that a preacher is capable of providing alternatives or answers to solve suffering. Rather, this study proposes that the audience might experience new possibilities. The purpose of the sermon, as Johann Cilliers (2004:123) asserts, is not to provide the audience with a list of munitions that they should use to win over the world, but to open their spiritual eyes so that they can discern God's existence in this world, and participate anew in the kingdom of God. In other words, a preacher does not provide an answer to the audience, but rather a demonstration of how God will guide our lives. For these reasons, resolution is similar to “Yeah!”, the last step of the homiletical plot in narrative preaching. The solution provides details of the possible outcomes that we can expect (Lowry 1980:72-73).

Therefore, the solution has two characteristics. First, the solution has an apocalyptic characteristic. The solution, however, does not simply explain apocalyptic doctrines. Rather, based on apocalyptic doctrines, resolution proclaims the promises God will fulfil in the future. Second, resolution has a declarative characteristic. Through the resolution, a preacher can proclaim the promises, and plans of God. In the sermon on Esther 4:15-17, for example, a preacher would be able to link God's salvation to the Second Coming of Christ and present the solution as follows: When the Lord comes again, He will wash away our pain and wounds, and our tears, and He will lead us to eternal peace and joy.

#### **5.4.2.5 Application**

This study presents the application as the final step of the plot. Application suggests how we should respond to God, who saves us and judges evil. There are two reasons for the application. First, because the sermon cannot merely be an objective explanation of God's salvation that has occurred in the past, it should proclaim the salvation of redemptive history, and suggest an application of the subjective dimension of redemptive history that can be repeated in today's congregation (Lee 2012b:34). In this context, Dennis Cahill (2007:56) argues that if the sermon begins with a problem in the text (FCF), and moves toward a resolution within the gospel, it should now move toward our response to grace. Ryu (2004:145) cites the logic of the Epistles in the New Testament, saying that the sermon should include the application of imperative application which appears after the conjunction of "therefore" (γὰρ) instead of just staying in the indicative description of salvation which is recorded in the text.

Second, preaching is aimed at changing the audience. As discussed in Chapter 4, the sermon has the following threefold purpose: to transform people, to teach the truth, and to affirm God's presence. The threefold purpose shows that sermons should not only evoke the audience's experience regarding the truth, it should also establish change in the audience.



In this regard, Chapell (2005:54) claims that “preaching without application may serve the mind, but preaching with application results in service to Christ.” A sermon is not simply a transmission of knowledge, but an influence on behaviour. A sermon is not just informing, but also the stimulation of revolution in the lives of the audience. In other words, a sermon does not merely provide information to the audience, but also encourages them to be like Christ (Sunukjian 2007:12). Therefore, this study suggests application as the last step of the plot.

The foremost task for application is audience analysis. The need for audience analysis has been raised in the field of general communication. Generally speaking, in speech communication, the purpose of audience analysis is to find aspects of the demographic and psychological characteristics of the audience with the intention to respond to the needs of the audience (Ehninger *et al.* 1996:98; Beebe & Beebe 2009:91). If so, is audience analysis only necessary in general communication and public speech, or also for the purpose of sermons?

Estes (1993:228-229) argues that the analysis of the contemporary audiences, as well as an analysis of the historical audience can assist a preacher to deliver a message appropriate to the contemporary audience. Miller (1995:24-30) argues that audience analysis is needed through communication with the world, exegesis of society, and analysis of cultural diversity in the face of paradigm shifts such as the new consumerism, denominational decline, and Christianity as a subculture. It can thus be said that audience analysis is essential for preaching. “Without the audience, there would be no need for the preacher and his sermon. Indeed, there would be no need for the Bible” (McDill 1999:39).

The methodologies of audience analysis presented by modern homileticians vary widely. For example, Ezell (2004:83-84) advocates religious and spiritual background analysis for audience analysis. Warren (1991:479) emphasises the need for sociological tools to discern the audience's philosophical preferences. Turner (1995:86-87) emphasises the need to write a social statistical profile of audiences living in a media society.

In this study, I will attempt to adopt the life-situation grid of Haddon Robinson (2007:117) as shown in Table 5.1, and use it as a framework for audience analysis. Across the top of the grid, as Robinson suggests, I label columns for men, women, singles, married, divorced, and those living together. On the side of the grid, there are rows for different age groups (youth, young adult, middle-age, elderly), professional groups (the unemployed, the self-employed, workers, and management), levels of faith (committed Christians, doubters, cynics, and atheists), and the sick and the healthy, to name a few.

**Table 5.1: A life-situation grid of Haddon Robinson**

	Men	Women	Singles	Married	Divorced	Living together
Different age groups Ex) youth, young adults, middle age, elderly						
Professional groups Ex) the unemployed, the self-employed, workers						
Levels of faith Ex) committed Christians, doubters, cynics, atheists						
Levels of health Ex) the healthy, the sick, mental distress, the disabled						
Various spiritual idols Ex) money, power, refutation, pleasure						

A preacher can wander around the grid, looking for two to three intersections where the application will be relevant. Based on this, a preacher can present a concrete application that suggests the direction or practice of life. For instance, in the sermon preparation on Esther 4:15-17, as Pretoria Korean church's youth minister, I paid attention to students who come to South Africa from Korea to study.

They believe that God has a definitive purpose for them studying in South Africa. However, they have several difficulties with their studies because of the coronavirus. I wondered how they would relate to the story of Esther, and suggested they refer to Esther's actions when they face difficulties.

## **5.5 THE PRACTICES OF REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING ACCORDING TO BIBLICAL GENRES**

In 5.5, I will present the practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching following the sermon preparation presented in 5.4. In particular, this study will focus on practices according to biblical genres. In the following section, I will commence to discuss biblical genres after which I will present several practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

### **5.5.1 Biblical genres**

The term genre is a French meaning "form" or "kind". When the term genre is applied to the Bible, biblical genres refer to different categories or types of biblical literature appearing in the Bible (Duvall & Hays 2005:150). There are various genres of literature in the Bible. There is little agreement among theologians regarding the number, and classification of biblical genres (Greidanus 1988:21). For example, Thomas Long (1989) presents five biblical genres. Douglas Arthurs (2010) presents six biblical genres. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart (1993) present ten biblical genres. This is because the smaller "forms" of literature are not clearly distinguished from the larger "genres". Therefore, it will be helpful to distinguish the characteristics of the various genres and forms.

J. Arthur Baird (1972:386-88) introduces the form as a category for analysing relatively small, individual units of literary material, and the genre as a collective category that combines many individual units. However, this is not a clear distinction. The distinction between forms is not always clear, and it is possible that the different genres may overlap or contain similar forms (Greidanus 1988:22).

Despite this fluidity, theologians seem to agree that the main genres of the Bible are Hebrew narrative, prophecy, wisdom, gospels, and epistles. However, there are disagreements about law, parables, psalms, apocalyptic literature, and the book of Acts.

To resolve this disagreement, Greidanus (1988:22-23) presents the following alternatives: First, he classifies law and parables into subsidiary types belonging to a larger biblical genre. Second, he classifies apocalyptic literature as prophecy. Third, he treats Acts as a unique continuous content of the Gospel of Luke, rather than dividing them into separate genres. Greidanus classifies genres and forms as shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Genres and Forms of the Bible (Greidanus 1988: 23)**

Categories	Forms of biblical literature					
Genres	Narrative		Wisdom		Apocalypse	
	Prophecy		Psalm		Epistle	
Forms	Law	Dream	Lament	Parable	Miracle	Exhortation
	Autobiography		Funeral dirge		Lawsuit	Pronouncement
	Report		Royal accession		Passion	Subforms

In this study, I will like to present the practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching according to the four main genres of the Bible: Hebrew narrative, psalms, gospels, and epistles. The reasons for presenting the practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching according to these four genres are as follows. First, these four genres occupy most of the Bible. The predominant representative genres of the Old Testament are story and poem (Clines 1980:117-118). The most representative genres of the New Testament are gospels and Epistles. Second, the purpose of this study is to show that redemptive-historical narrative preaching is not only available in narrative genre, but also in other

biblical genres. For these reasons, this study seeks to select text from Hebrew narrative, psalms, gospels, and epistles to present the practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

### **5.5.2 Redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Hebrew narrative**

In this study, Genesis 18:1-14 was chosen as the text for redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Hebrew narrative. The reason for choosing this is as follows. First, this text has distinct elements of the biblical narrative such as the main character, narrator, and background. Second, this story has a clear plot that can be referenced in sermons and it can be well represented. Third, this text illustrates how God turns Abraham and Sarah's mistrust into faith.

#### **5.5.2.1 The interpretation of the text**

##### **(1) Observation**

Genesis 18:1-15 speaks of God's promise to Abraham that Sarah will have a son. I looked at the beginning and end of the text for observation, and found in Genesis chapter 17 that God had already told Abraham that he would give them a son. Therefore, in Genesis chapter 18, God intentionally came back to remind Abraham of His promise. What is unique about the discovery in Genesis chapter 17-18 was that Abraham and Sarah both laughed. In Genesis chapter 17, Abraham laughed at God's promise, and in Genesis chapter 18, Sarah laughed at God's promise.

The text explains in detail why Sarah has no choice but to react this way. Abraham is very old, and Sarah had been through menopause, so it would have been physically impossible for them to have a child. For this reason, Sarah's laughter is a natural response. In Genesis chapter 17, Abraham had already given up on the possibility to father a child. "Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a

child at the age of ninety?” And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

The text indicates Abraham and Sarah’s their mistrust in God. In Genesis 18:13, God said to Abraham and Sarah “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” This is to stress that there is no limit to God’s ability, thus, Sarah’s laughter can be seen as an act of distrust, illustrating that she does not believe God’s promise. Therefore, the text intentionally links Sarah's laughter to God's power, making the reader feel that Abraham and Sarah did not trust God.

What is noteworthy is that even though Sarah did not believe, God once again declared that his promise will be realised within a year. By fulfilling his promise, God bestows his authority to Abraham and Sarah. Thus, though we might doubt in God’s promises, he will not forsake us.

## (2) Exegesis

Mamre is near Hebron and about 32 kilometres south of Jerusalem. After Abraham and his nephew Lot went their separate ways, Abraham continued to live in Mamre. Genesis 18:2 shows that three men visited Abraham. In accordance with Genesis 18:13 and Genesis 19:1, we know that one of the men is God, and the other two are angels. In Genesis 18:3, Abraham uses the expression “My Lord” when addressing one of the visitors. Some theologians argue that Abraham immediately realised that one of the three travellers was God. However, the Hebrew word “אֲדֹנָי”, which means “Lord”, is an honorific title. Hebrews 13:1 testifies that Abraham had served angels without knowing it (Carson *et al.* 2010:117).

In Genesis 18:4, Abraham washes the feet of visitors. The Arab and Palestine regions have mostly rugged desert roads covered with sand and dust. It was thus an act of courtesy to wash a guest feet because they walked along dusty roads, wearing simple shoes such as sandals. Genesis 18:5-8 also shows Abraham's extending this act of hospitality to his guests. This act of kindness was intended to convert potential enemies to friends.

The three seahs of fine flour used to make bread are equal to 20 litres of flour. This quantity and quality of flour shows Abraham's generosity to his guests. The fact that Sarah remained in a tent reflects the custom that women did not eat with men (Walton *et al.* 2000:50).

One of the guests suddenly asks a question about Sarah. He knew Sarah's name. It was discourteous to call another man's wife by her name in the time of ancient Asia. This showed that the guests were not ordinary travellers, and their visit was no coincidence.

They were special visitors to Abraham, delivering a special message about Sarah. The message was that Abraham's son would be born. However, Sarah laughed inwardly as she listened to them. The reason for Sarah's laughter was that she knew she was too old to conceive. Thus, the limits of human ability makes Sarah doubt the promise of the Lord (Wenham 2006:137-138).

Genesis 18:13 records that God rebuked Sarah for laughing. God knew that her laughter indicated her lack of faith. God then asks the question: "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" This is a reminder that God is the creator and the governor of the universe. Thus, though Sarah was passed her childbearing years, her becoming a mother was part of God's divine plan.

The intervention of the Almighty God is the only way to solve our problems. From the redemptive-historical view, it was the achievement of the promise that God opened Sarah's closed womb. From the redemptive-historical view, this was the fulfilment of the promise. God called Abraham out of Ur and honoured His promises regarding land, descendants, and blessings (Genesis 12:1-3). The narrative in Genesis shows that God fulfils his promise in Abraham's life. God's promises cannot be hindered by any obstacles (Song 2008:285-287).

(3) God-centred idea

To derive the God-centred idea of the text, I researched the FCF of the text. In the text, Abraham and Sarah did not believe in God's promise because of their physical limitations. The guest in the text deliberately points this out, and scolds them for their distrust. Therefore, I view the FCF in the text as the distrust of God's promise. Based on the FCF, I have illustrated the God-centred subject, God-centred component, and God-centred big idea of the text as follows:

- God-centred subject: Can God's promise be fulfilled even in an impossible situation?
- God-centred component: God does not forget his promise, and will surely fulfil it.
- God-centred big idea: God does not forget his promise, and will surely fulfil it even in an impossible situation.

#### **5.5.2.2 The configuration of the plot**

The plot of the sermon on Genesis 18:1-14 is as shown in Figure 5.9.



## The plot of the sermon on Genesis 18:1-14

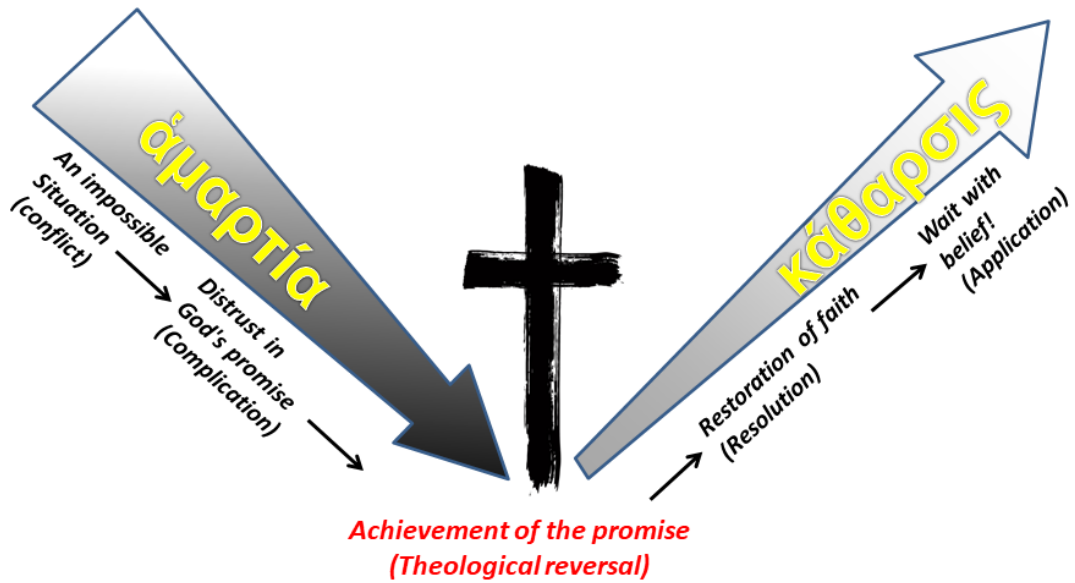


Figure 5.9 The plot of the sermon on Genesis 18:1-14

### (1) Conflict

The conflict in Genesis 18:1-14 is Abraham and Sarah's impossible situation. When the three guests came to Abraham and Sarah, he was 99 years old, and she was 89 years old. This means that from a human perspective, God's promise regarding descendants cannot be fulfilled because of their physical limitations. This impossibility is not only true of Abraham and Sarah. We, too, are sometimes in an impossible situation where we cannot solve problems.

### (2) Complication

The guests who came to Abraham and Sarah once again proclaimed to them that God's promise will be fulfilled, but Sarah laughed at their talk. This laughter shows those twenty-four years after she first heard of God's promise, she no longer believes in God's promise. Thus, more alarming than Abraham's and Sarah's age disadvantage, is the fact that Sarah has lost her faith in the Lord. A preacher can compare Abraham and Sarah's distrust to our situation. For instance, a preacher

can give examples of our distrust in God's promises. Therefore, this sermon presents the believer's distrust in God's promise as the complication of the plot.

### (3) Theological reversal

God fulfilled his promises even in an impossible situation. God did not forget the promise he made to Abraham and Sarah. God speaks to Sarah who distrusts Him. "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" In Genesis chapter 21, God's promise is fulfilled exactly a year later. This shows that in any situation God honours His promises. Therefore, this sermon presents the achievement of the promise as the theological reversal of the plot.

### (4) Resolution

God gave Abraham and Sarah a son named Isaac, the Hebrew term *Yiṣḥāq* (יִשְׁחָק) which literally means "he laughs/will laugh." God caused Sarah to laugh again, and restored her faith through her son. This shows that the conflict has been resolved. A preacher can relate what God has done in Sarah's life, and can relate it to the lives of believers. God restores our distrust to faith. Therefore, this sermon presented the restoration of faith as the resolution of the plot.

### (5) Application

First, I did an audience analysis for application. At the church where I was serving, there was the Jesus Festival. The purpose of this festival was to invite friends and family who do not believe in Jesus Christ. The church members were very busy preparing for the Jesus Festival. Some, however, wondered if this festival would help the church. Some even criticised this festival as a waste of money. I realised I had to restore their faith. I decided to conduct a sermon before the Jesus Festival. I spoke of the importance of trust, and reminded the congregation of God's faithfulness. I believe that it is the responsibility of the preacher to remind the congregation of God's devotion when achievement seems humanly impossible. It was evident that the congregation found value in this teaching.

### 5.5.2.3 The redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Genesis 18:1-14<sup>31</sup>

Today's text is a story that happened 24 years after Abraham left his hometown. Abraham sat and rested for a while under the tree, avoiding the hot sunlight. Then three guests came to Abraham. Genesis chapter 18 recorded that Abraham treated them according to the customs of that time. Abraham served them milk, freshly baked bread, and calf meat.

But after the meal, they suddenly said something very strange to Abraham. It is noted in Genesis 18:10. "Sarah your wife will have a son." The reason why this is strange is that Abraham was a 99-year-old at the time. Abraham's wife Sarah was an 89-year-old. But they proclaimed that Abraham and Sarah will have a son. It is impossible. How they can have a son?

Let us think logically. Is it possible to conceive at the age of 89? Physiologically, no. Women in their 50s and older experience menopause. After menopause, women cannot conceive. Some people might ask: "Is there any possibility for a 90-year-old woman to get pregnant at such an advance age in ancient times?" No, the text clearly states their impossible situation. In Genesis 18:12, Sarah describes herself as "old." The word "old" in Hebrew means "worn out." Thus, for her to mother a child was highly unlikely.

Sarah, who stood behind the tent, heard the story of the three men. Sarah could not believe what she heard. How does Sarah react to this? Genesis 18:12 states: "So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Sarah laughed inside. It is understandable that Sarah laughed. She knew that she was well past child bearing age. Sarah probably thought: "I'm 89 years old, and my husband is also old, how on earth can that happen?"

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<sup>31</sup> This sermon was presented to the adults who participated in APS on October 11, 2017, and was briefly summarized without unnecessary examples, questions, and contents.

But there is a more serious problem. That is that Sarah no longer trusts God, regardless of the possibility of pregnancy. The real problem we can find in the text is not that Sarah is too old to be pregnant. The real calamity was that Sarah could no longer believe in God's promise. Sarah was tired of waiting for a long time. God promised Abraham and Sarah that he would build a great nation from their descendants. Twenty-four years passed, and yet they still did not conceive. We can imagine how they must have felt after waiting this long. It could not have been easy. Eventually, they gave up hope.

It is almost unimaginable to think how they felt when they learnt that they were going to have a son. Twenty-four years passed, and Sarah started to distrust the Lord. Sarah was not just laughing because what the visitors said was absurd. She laughed at God's promise. So, I want to define Sarah's laughter as "Laughter of distrust." Sarah's laughter was neither happy nor funny. Her laughter was laughter of distrust.

Do you think such a level of distrust has nothing to do with us? Isn't Sarah actually who we are? Aren't you tired of waiting like Sarah for a long time? Aren't you laughing inwardly at God's promise? Even though you are participating in worship, and listening to God's promise, aren't you in fact not expecting or believing in God's promise, and rather laughing at it? Because of your sorrow and the endless waiting, aren't you distrusting God's promise?

There was a time when I mistrusted God's promise like Sarah. Seven years ago, when my beloved sister ran away from home after becoming victim to heresy, I begged God to save her. I cried and prayed every day. Then God answered my prayer. "She's the daughter I have chosen. Your sister will surely come back. Don't worry." But after seven years, she still did not return. My sister is still a victim to heresy, and she is still avoiding her family. But after seven years, I found myself changing like Sarah. Although I worshipped, and read the Bible every day as a pastor, I found myself laughing just like Sarah did. "Can God really save my sister?" Of course, the pastor should not think like this. But after a long time of difficulties and pain, I began to lose hope.

The same is true for us. We are all weak. When long periods of difficulties and pains continue, seeds of distrust grow deep in our hearts, just like Sarah. We are all weak. When long periods of difficulties and pain continue, seeds of distrust grow deep in our hearts, just like Sarah. As you know, we are about to have the Jesus Festival soon. Someone might think negatively about this. This is because the result is worse than expected. For years, we have spent so much money on the Jesus Festival, but the church hasn't been very prosperous. Like Sarah, we doubt in God's promise and, we too, become disheartened.

However, the text teaches us amazing facts. It reminds us that God will fulfil his promises. Though Sarah and Abraham distrusted God, he remained faithful. As stated in Genesis 18:14; "Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." The text shows us that God will fulfil the promises he made to Abraham and Sarah. Sometimes our faith is weak, but God does not forget the promises he makes to us. God will never fail, nor forsake his children.

But God's time is not our time. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). We are limited in time and space. So if the problem is not solved within our time and space, we become anxious. The longer it takes for God's promise to be fulfilled, the more we distrust the Lord. However, God will fulfil his promises at his own time.

God reminds us: "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" God's promise will be fulfilled without fail. The Bible proclaims the faithfulness of God from beginning to end. How can God who sacrificed his only son betray us? No! God achieves His plans in his way at the most opportune time. God never fails. He reminds us: I'm almighty God. I will surely achieve what I promised you!

Genesis 21:1-3 states that God's promise to Sarah was fulfilled exactly a year later. What God said to Abraham and Sarah was not just to comfort them. It shows that God achieves His promise. The prophet Isaiah cries out to the Jews who will be taken captive by Babylon. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of

our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8). Isaiah believed that God's promise to Israel would be fulfilled.

God gave Abraham and Sarah a son exactly a year later. His name is Isaac. What The Hebrew meaning of Isaac means laughter. “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me” (Genesis 21:6). Can't you see the contrast? Now Sarah is laughing again in Genesis chapter 21. This laughter is completely different from the laughter of Genesis chapter 18. Sarah's laughter now feels different from the Laughter of distrust. What kind of laughter is that? It is the laughter of joy. It is not secret laughter, but the laughter that everyone can hear. It is not lonely laughter, but happy laughter. It was laughter of gratitude, joy, grace, and happiness.

God will also give us this joy. We can thus say that the title of today's sermon is: Smile again. God will make us laugh again. God has never forgotten His promise to us, and he has been faithful to His promise. Even when there is no possibility for us, even when we are tired of waiting and suffering and distrusting God's promise, God achieves His plans in his way at the most opportune time. But his timing is not our timing. God gave our church promises. God will not forget those promises, and he will make them come true. When the time of God comes, our laughter will be laughter of joy.

Therefore, we have to be diligent in our faith. Our faith must be everlasting. Faith is a choice. Though our prayers might not be answered immediately, we must continue to trust in the Lord When we distrust God's promises, God speaks to us through prayer: “Dear son, I know you are suffering. But remember, I am the Almighty God. Trust in me and do not lose faith. God is also speaking to us sitting here today. “Dear beloved, I know you are facing difficulties. But I will not forsake you. It's not time yet. Be patient

Remember. Though Sarah distrusted God and laughed at Him, God fulfilled his promise to her. God is a faithful God. Beloved, do you want to laugh again? Then restrain yourself from the laughter of distrust, and persevere with you faith. Let's trust God until the end, even if it's hard and difficult! Then God will make us smile

again! The laughter of distrust that was deep in our hearts will disappear, and we will have a truly joyful smile. I pray that you will receive the blessing of God, and smile again like Sarah! Let's pray.

### **5.5.3 Redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Psalms**

In this study, Psalm 13:1-6 was chosen as the text for redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on psalms. The reason for choosing this is as follows: First, Psalm chapter 13 was written when David was chased by King Saul. Second, Psalm chapter 13 expresses David's suffering. Third, Psalm chapter 13 shows a reversal.

#### **5.5.3.1 The interpretation of the text**

##### **(1) Observation**

Psalm chapter 13 is a poem which expresses hope beyond the despair of a poet. Psalm chapter 13 starts with the question "How long, O LORD?", but it finally expresses trust, and confidence in God. Frustration derived from the poet's experience suddenly changes into trust in God.

Psalm chapter 13 can be divided into three stanzas: The first stanza is the poet's sigh (Psalms 13:1-2). The poet complains that God seems to have abandoned, and forgotten him. The painful reality does not improve at all, thus the poet repeatedly asks, "How long?" and sighs before God. The second stanza is the poet's appeal (Psalm 13:3-4). In this paragraph, David is appealing to God. David does remain in a state of lamentation, but advances to prayer.

The poet begins his prayer by asking God to look after him in a difficult situation. He also asks God to restore his vitality and to give him insight. He also asks that enemies will not rejoice in the sight of his failure. The stanza shows the conviction

of the poet (Psalm 13:5-6), and here David discovers new hope and praises Him. It is not clear why the poet has this sudden change of attitude.

## (2) Exegesis

It can be said that the poem was written in the early days of the Hebrew dynasty. The reference to the "chief musician" in the title suggests that the poem was mainly used in worship during communal laments (Craigie 2000:187). The poet's lamentation stems from "foes". Because of his foes, the poet appeals to God with a painful cry: "How long?" This expression occurs about 20 times in Psalms (Walton *et al.* 2000:520).

There are many interpretations of this poem. Some scholars interpret these foes as death. However, it is presumed that this poem was recorded when David was pursued by Saul for a long time (Calvin 1980:347) David feels more distant from God when Saul torments him. In this poem, David expresses that he feels God is hiding his face from him. Here, "face" represents God's care and love toward him. Therefore, if God hides his face from David, it means that God does not give any attention or show any grace to David. However, this does not mean that God is turning his back on David. This means that the poet feels that he has been abandoned by God (Calvin 1980:348).

The poet's lamentation turns to prayer. David entreats God to turn his face to him again. "Look on me and answer, O LORD my God" is a plea for God to answer his entreaty. In Psalm 13:3, giving light to eyes does not simply imply a healthy state. This means the restoration of the relationship with the Lord. When God returns to David again, David will not only be able to see God's face, his spiritual eyes will also be opened (Craigie 2000:189).

However, in his prayer, David suddenly praises God. This is not because all his problems are solved. He does, however, experience the presence of God in his prayers. This gives him spiritual enlightenment.



David recalled the grace of God that he experienced in the past, the faithful covenant of God (Hesed). This faithful covenant of God gave hope to David (Lee 2008:191). In this sense, Psalm chapter 13 testifies to God's redemptive history which is saving people from despair. The lamentations in the Old Testament are closely related to God's salvation. The absence of God and the silence of God are transformed to a confession of His salvation. Based on God's covenant of love with His people, they are convinced that God will never turn his face away from them forever. Because of their experience of God's salvation, the people of God can overcome sufferings, and can have hope for the future (Carson *et al.* 2010:670).

### (3) God-centred idea

David felt that God was deliberately hiding his face. However, God was with David throughout his life, but David thought that God was not with him because of his suffering. Like David, we also often think that God is not with us. Therefore, I set the FCF as the believer's misunderstanding that God is not with us. Based on this FCF, I have arranged a God-centred subject, God-centred component, and God-centred big idea of the text as follows:

- God-centred subject: Where is God when we are suffering?
- God-centred complement: God is still with us and he will save us.
- God-centred big idea: In suffering, God is still with us and is saving us.

#### 5.5.3.2 The configuration of the plot

The plot of the sermon on Psalm 13:1-6 is as shown in Figure 5.10.

## The plot of the sermon on Psalm 13:1-6

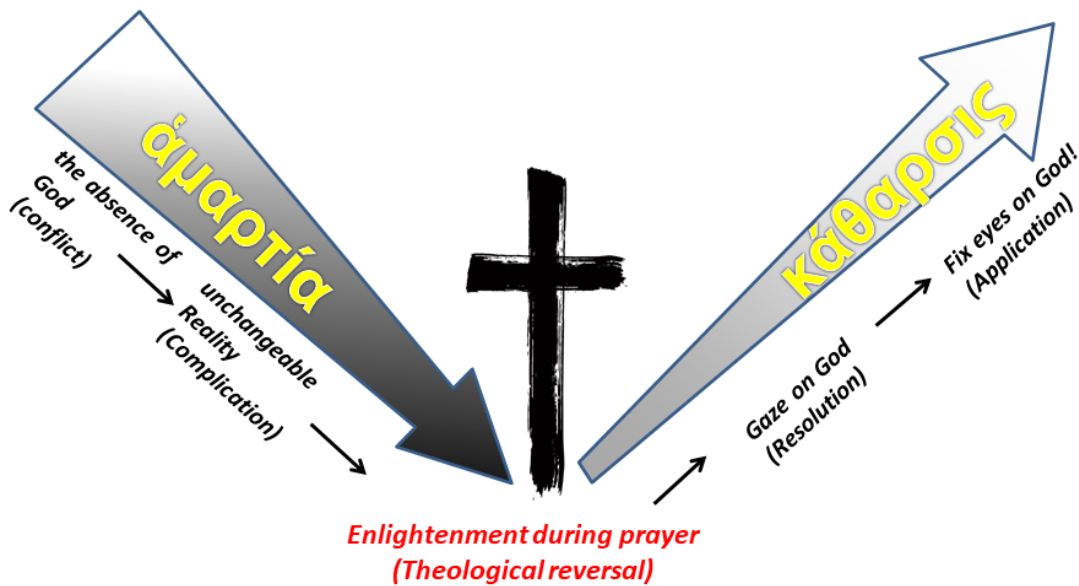


Figure 5.10 The plot of the sermon on Psalm 13:1-6

### (1) Conflict

In the text, David is looking for God, crying out: "How long, O Lord?" David is troubled because he feels that God hid his face and abandoned him in his time of suffering. This conflict can also be found in our lives. We, too, sometimes believe that God has abandoned us. This can make our heart weary. Therefore, this sermon shows the absence of God as a conflict of the plot.

### (2) Complication

David seeks God for a speedy escape from suffering. But, despite his earnest pleas, David's reality does not change. Rather, he is anxious about greater sufferings, and he is afraid that his foes will mock him. This does not only apply to David. We also beg God for a speedy recovery from our sufferings. However, we

often realise that our prayers are not always answered immediately. Therefore, this sermon presents one's unchanging reality as a complication of the plot.

### (3) Theological reversal

In prayer, David realises the love and salvation of God, and thanks and praises him for that. So are we, when we pray during suffering, God guides us to discover His love and salvation. We, who have discovered God's love and salvation, have no choice but to thank and praise God. Therefore, this sermon presented the enlightenment during prayer as the theological reversal of the plot.

### (4) Resolution

David can praise God after he rediscovers the love and salvation of God. The reality does not change, the situation worsens, but David can praise God because he finds that God is always with him and that God will save him. We, too, can praise God when we discover God's love and salvation. What is more important than solving the problem of suffering is that God will remain with us.

### (5) Application

This sermon is for people who participated in the EMP. Generally, SKC has an EMP six times a week at 5 a.m. or 5:30 a.m. Most of the people who participate in the EMP are Church officers and deacons. The EMP lasts about an hour. The sermon is shortened to approximately 10 minutes, and the rest of the time is allocated to silent prayer. This sermon's application is to turn our eyes away from suffering and look at God.

#### **5.5.3.3 The redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Psalm 13:1-6<sup>32</sup>**

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<sup>32</sup> This sermon was given to the adults who participated in EMP on June 10, 2018, and was briefly summarized without unnecessary examples, questions, and contents.

Sometimes we feel trapped in our lives. We long for a breakthrough, but it doesn't happen. Earnest desire doesn't does not necessarily result in resolution. During these times, we become worried and frustrated, and gradually lose confidence in everything. We start to compare ourselves with the people around us, and come to believe that we're trapped in a dark cave.

This happens even though we walk in faith. We seem to believe in Jesus, but yet, our problems are not solved. We pray, but it seems like the Lord is not responding. It seems that difficulties and anxieties surrounding us. We feel we are facing a wall that we can't get through. We plead to God: "O Lord, did you forget me?" We feel like we're wandering alone in the dark, and we do not know when God will answer our prayers.

The poet of Psalm chapter 13 starts the poem with this cry. In Psalm 13:1-2, David confesses: "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" The anguish, and anxieties of the poet are mounting, but God seems to deliberately avoid answering him. David does not know when these sufferings will end. As Psalm 13: 4 recorded, foes proclaim victory and rejoice when the poet falls.

Many biblical figures appealed to God like David did. Habakkuk is filled with content regarding the prophet's appeal to God: "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?" Habakkuk saw the reality of God's people suffering in a world of sin and evil. He believed that the Lord's righteousness would solve this problem. But his cries became echoes of emptiness, and the situation did not improve at all. Have you ever associated with the challenges that David faced? Have you ever doubted whether God is alive, or whether God is the God of love and grace that you believe in? You've probably experienced this situation to some extent. Sometimes we feel that God has abandoned us.

Sometimes things do not get better. On the contrary, it sometimes even gets worse. In Psalm 13:3 of the text, David confesses. "O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death." This shows David's utter despair. He couldn't

bear the suffering anymore. When humans are subjected to constant difficulties, they can get physical diseases, and depression. As a believer, when we are subjected to constant difficulties, we could get physical diseases and depression.

In Psalm 13:4, David says: “My enemy will say, “I have overcome him, and my foes will rejoice when I fall.” The foes are laughing at David’s sufferings. In fact, what David was afraid of was that his enemies boasted, and rejoiced in his sufferings. The Revised New Korean Standard Version translates Psalm 13:4 as follows: “How long my soul should be watching the triumphant enemy before me?”

I don't think our reality is much different from David's. Enemies attack us amid suffering. “Hey, I got promoted this time. I heard you didn't get promoted. You've been saying that you believe in Jesus. Oh sorry. I don't know why such a good thing only happens to me although I am not Christian.” The situation only worsens, and the enemy seems to laugh at our despair. When the foes rejoice in our suffering, we doubt why God does not help us. So we ask God: “Where are you? O Lord, where are you?” We start to believe that God hides his face from us, and that it is impossible to escape from our sufferings.

No. Our hope is in God as David confessed: “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.” David's prayer suddenly turns into praise. Through the grace of God, David once again experienced the love, and salvation of God.

Through prayer, David's journey with God unfolded like a panorama. The love of God that protected David from the lion, the salvation of God that saved David from the fight with Goliath, and the miracles God that were bestowed on David, reminded him of God's faithfulness . He realised that God was always by his side. Despite this difficult situation, David discovered that God loves him and that he will never forsake him.

Didn't we all have the same experience a few months ago? At the retreat, some of the youth group were injured, and the church was accused. Everyone was worried every day and we prayed every day in EMP. But things didn't get better. The

situation got worse, and the church paid a huge compensation. At that time, many church members were disappointed and faced a very trying time.

But the senior pastor said in the sermon: “Let us not be concerned and afraid, but see what God has done through our church so far. Let us meditate once again on the love of God.” The sermon was a great challenge for us. Since then, all the church members have gathered and prayed together for weeks, rethinking the love and salvation God has shown us in our church. I was there, too. Although the matter was not solved, it was a valuable time to experience God's love and grace. At that time, we all experienced God's grace and comfort. We can thus conclude that God is still with us and that he will never forsake us. God is faithful. He works beside us. He continuously applies His salvation to our community. It is God who has led our church to where it is today.

The reality of the matter might not change. But something did change. God's grace leads us through the challenges we faced. When we confirm God's love, we can rejoice and praise God. It is my wish that today's EMP becomes a place where we can discover God's love again. Even if the problem is not solved, I hope it will be a time for us to discover and thank God, and may we always be reminded that he will never turn his back on us.

If we remember the love of God, who gave his son to us when we were still sinners, we will be able to endure, and overcome our sufferings. Paul confesses: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If we remember the salvation of God, who saved us from sin, we will be able to praise God during times of suffering. Through the salvation of God, His people can overcome the grim reality, and have hope for the future. “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare

his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

My dear brothers and sisters, are you in suffering? Does it feel God as if God is hiding His face from you? Now, do not be blinded by your sufferings. Focus on God's salvation. Remind yourself of the grace that God has shown to you in the past. Continue to count your blessings. You will find new hope when you keep your eyes fixed on the Lord. Then you will praise God again like David. Amen! Let's pray.

#### **5.5.4 Redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Gospels**

In this study, Mark 5:1-20 was chosen as the text for redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on the gospels. The reason for choosing this is: First, the encountering of evil spirits – by Jesus and man – is recorded in all three the synoptic gospels. Second, Mark 5:1-20 is a narrative that shows Jesus' identity. Third, Mark 5:1-20 illustrates the reversal of the situation.

##### **5.5.4.1 The interpretation of the text**

###### **(1) Observation**

The meeting between Jesus and a man with evil spirits can be divided into four paragraphs. The first paragraph is Mark 5:1-5. This paragraph introduces a man with an evil spirit. The second paragraph is Mark 5:6-10. This paragraph records how the man with an evil spirit came to meet Jesus. Jesus asked the name of the evil spirit. The third paragraph is Mark 5:11-13. In this paragraph, the evil spirits begs Jesus to let them enter a large herd of pigs. The fourth paragraph is Mark 5:14-20. In this paragraph, the man begs to follow Jesus. Jesus orders this man to proclaim the miracle he has witnessed to those around him.

The main characters in the text are the man with an evil spirit, and Jesus. The text introduces a man who is possessed by an evil spirit. Mark doesn't tell us why this person became possessed. But Mark emphasises in Mark 5:2-4 how miserable and tired this man is. Mark tries to show how serious this man's condition is. People tried to control his violent behaviour by trying to chain him, but the evil spirit's within him exerts almost superhuman power. No one could control or stop him, or even chain him. This man was hurting himself with stones, and was living in a tomb.

In the text, a man with an evil spirit came and met Jesus. Mark 5:6 records that this man recognized Jesus "from afar". The man ran to Jesus and bowed to him. When only referring to Mark 5:6, it seems that he came to Jesus without any intention. But, in Mark 5:7, he appeals to Jesus, "Don't torture me!" Perhaps this person has come running just to see who is approaching him. What is unusual is that this man already knows Jesus' name, and uses the title of Son of God when he addresses him. We do not know how this man knew Jesus' name, but we know from the text that this man seems to be afraid of Jesus.

Jesus asks the man his name. The evil spirit introduces himself as "Legion." Mark reveals why the evil spirit's name is Legion. The meaning of Legion is many. The demons beg Jesus not to drive them out of their area, and ask to be casted into a large herd of pigs that stood nearby. Jesus grants their request. Once casted out of the man, the demons entered nearly two thousand pigs, ran into a lake, and drowned. We can ask many questions about this. How could the demons dominate this man? Why did the demons want to stay in that specific area? Why did the demons ask Jesus to let them enter pigs? Can the demons enter animals? Why did the demons run to the lake? Where did all the demons go after the pigs died? The important question is, "Why did Jesus indulge the demons' demands and let 2,000 pigs die?"

Mark 5:1-20 does not answer these questions. Mark 5:1-20 only emphasizes the fact that Jesus drove out demons from this man. The reason Jesus granted the request of the demons was not for their sake, but for the man who was possessed



by them. In the Gospels, Jesus says that one soul is more precious than the entire world. For Jesus, one man's life was more precious than a thousand pigs.

In the end, the text tells the story of Jesus, who saved the man that was possessed by demons. From the beginning of Mark chapter 4, to the end of Mark chapter 5, Jesus performed four miracles. First, Mark 4:35-41 mentions the miracle of Jesus calming the storm. Mark 5:1-20 tells of the miracle that Jesus saved a man with an evil spirit. In Mark 5:21-43 we read of the miracle where Jesus saved a woman that bleed for twelve years, and we read of Jairus's daughter. These four miracles suggest who Jesus is. Mark introduces Jesus as the one whom all creatures must obey, one whom every spirit must obey, and one who solves every problem. In other words, Mark is declaring Jesus as the Messiah.

There are many mentioning's in the Gospels of people that were saved by Jesus. Most of them returned home, but the man who was possessed by demons said that he wanted to stay with Jesus. However, Jesus declined the man's request. Why did Jesus refuse this man's request? The text states the reason as follows: "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." Jesus tells the man to go back, and to testify what Jesus did for him, and that Jesus showed mercy to him.

## (2) Exegesis

The meeting between Jesus and the man with an evil spirit is also recorded in Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39. In the Gospel of Matthew, the place where the event took place is introduced as "Gadarenes" (Matthew 8:28), and in the Gospel of Mark, "Gerasenes." There is also disagreement among scholars as to where the event happened. However, it can be assumed that this area is a non-Jewish area as it is one of the Decapolis' pig breeding areas (Keener 2014:139).

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this event, but the record in the Gospel of Mark is the longest, and the most detailed. Mark presents two important facts that play an important role in the understanding of this event (Yoo 2013:159-163). First, Mark reveals two factors that are not recorded in Matthew and Luke: the

uncontrollable nature of the man, and his self-violence (Mark 5:3-5). Through this, the author shows the strength of the demonic forces that controlled the man, and how powerful Satan is. Second, Mark introduces what the man did after Jesus's command. Matthew did not record the man's reaction, but Mark and Luke record that the man went home, and proclaimed to the people what Jesus had done for him. What draws particular attention to Mark's recording is that he declared the location of this event as Decapolis. This testimony of the man was of great help to the evangelical work of Jesus in Decapolis. According to Mark 8:1-10, it was the region of Decapolis where Jesus healed a deaf and mute man. It was also here where Jesus fed 4,000 people with only seven loaves of bread, and a few fishes. These events happened because the man proclaimed Jesus to the people of Decapolis.

According to Jewish law, the man whom Jesus met was unclean in three respects. He was non-Jewish, he was demon-possessed, and he lived in a tomb. All these factors were considered as unclean by the Jews. However, Jesus helped him regardless of his situation. This shows that Jesus saw this man as a precious being, regardless of moral standards or religious beliefs (Osborne 2003:216).

Jesus asks the evil spirit's name, and the man introduces himself as Legion. Legion refers to a Roman army organization composed of 6,000 soldiers. This name describes his condition. The demons living in the man are "military" ghosts who want to stay in their area. Eventually, they beg Jesus to enter pigs, and after they entered pigs, they ran into the lake and drowned. However, Mark's intention is to show Jesus' ability to control evil spirits. Jesus is the son of the most exalted God, and is able to rule over the evil forces (Guelich 2001:470).

Mark records three miracles in Mark chapter 5: The miracle of the man that was saved from demons, the miracle of a woman who suffered from bleeding for 12 years, and the miracle of Jairus's daughter's resurrection. These three miracles illustrate Jesus' ability to solve problems that are beyond our means (Yoo 2013:155). These are miracles that show us who Jesus Christ is, and it indicates the purpose of Jesus Christ's ministry (Anderson 2014:59-64).

Jesus commands the man: "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." This is what Jesus wants. Those who met Jesus Christ have to live as disciples and are tasked to proclaim the good news. Through the testimonies of disciples, God's love is experienced here on earth (English 2000:151-153).

### (3) God-centred idea

To derive the God-centred idea of the text, I first looked up the FCF of the text. The text gives a detailed introduction of a man who is possessed by demons. This introduction is intended to show the suffering of human beings under the influence of evil forces. Therefore, I set the FCF in the text as the human condition possessed by evil forces. Based on this FCF, I placed the God-centred subject, God-centred component, and God-centred big idea of the text as follows:

- God-centred subject: Why does Jesus help people who are possessed by evil forces?
- God-centred complement: Jesus restores people, and converts them to be children of God.
- God-centred big idea: Jesus encounters people obsessed by evil forces, and restores them as children of God.

#### **5.5.4.2 The configuration of the plot**

The plot of the sermon on Mark 5:1-20 is shown in Figure 5.11.

## The plot of the sermon on Mark 5:1-20

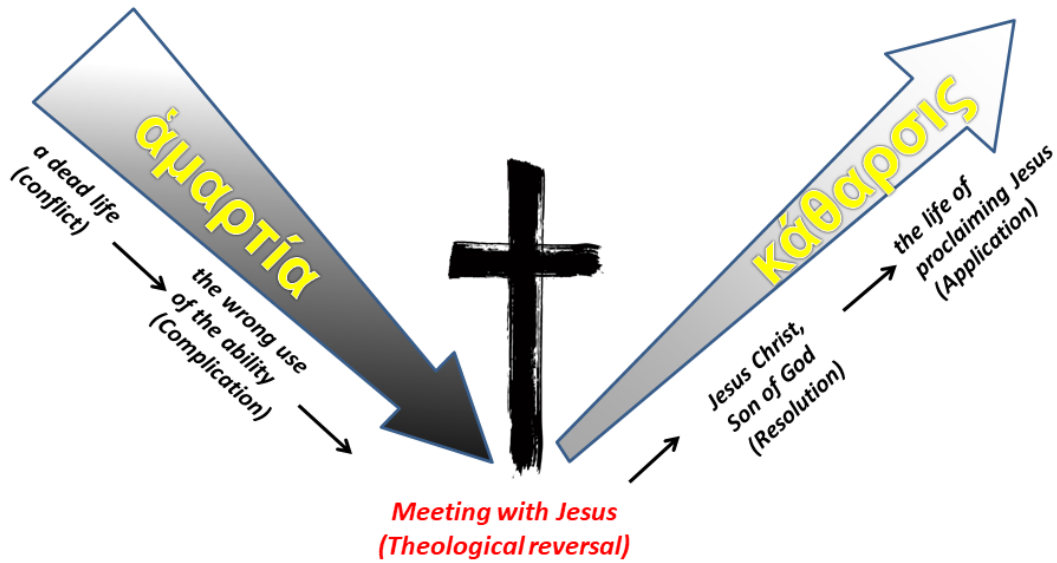


Figure 5.11 The plot of the sermon on Mark 5:1-20

### (1) Conflict

A man possessed by demons lives in a tomb full of traces of the dead. He seems alive, but the reality is that he has lived like the dead. In other words, his life is a dead life. This is not only the particular story of this man but also the story of many other people.

When possessed by evil forces, the human being's life is but a dead life. Although breathing and moving, when people are possessed by evil forces, they have no choice but to chase the wrong values, and to live meaningless lives. Therefore, this sermon presents a dead life as the conflict of the plot.

### (2) Complication

The man possessed by demons had many abilities, but because he was possessed, he screamed and hurt himself. Modern people are no different.

Therefore, this sermon presents the misuse of one's ability as a complication of the plot.

### (3) Theological reversal

Jesus met a man possessed by demons, and saved him. For Jesus, saving this single man was more important than the lives of 2,000 pigs. The man recovered through his meeting with Jesus and lived a new life. The path to a new start is a meeting with Jesus. Those who meet Jesus will have a new life. Therefore, this sermon presents the meeting with Jesus as the theological reversal of the plot.

### (4) Resolution

Mark attempts to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the Son of God through different miracles. The knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God leads believers to a new life. Therefore, this sermon presents Jesus Christ as a resolution to the plot.

### (5) Application

Jesus ordered a man who was possessed by demons to go and proclaim his salvation. Meeting Jesus and starting a new life is not just a one-time event. It is a continuous proclamation of Jesus and His grace to us. Therefore, this sermon presents the life of proclaiming Jesus as the application of the plot.

#### **5.5.4.3 The redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Mark 5:1-20<sup>33</sup>**

We can find one man in today's text. This man looks very strange. This man lives between the tombs. The text says the tomb is the home of this person. In other words, his home is a tomb where the bodies and bones of the dead are gathered.

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<sup>33</sup> This sermon was given to youth group on March 25, 2018, and was briefly summarized without unnecessary examples, questions, and contents.

He seems alive, but he lives with the dead. He can breathe and move, but he lives a life that is not rewarding, nor satisfying nor meaningful. He is living a dead life.

There is only one way for this person to express himself. It's screaming. He is shouting day and night, going back and forth between the tombs. This is the only way he can express himself. As we know, the most prominent characteristic of a tomb is probably the silence. But in this particular tomb, the silence is broken by a possessed man's cries.

Though people can hear his screaming, no one understands what the screaming means. Maybe it's the sound of anger, the sound of fear, or the sound of wailing in sorrow. But no one feels compelled to investigate. It's a sound that has no meaning. It's a desperate sound of a man in agony.

But there is something amazing about this man. It is that he has an amazing superpower. People sometimes tie him up with chains, sometimes with shackles to hold him, but he breaks off the chains that tie him to the spot. In addition, he has amazing spiritual insight. As Jesus approaches him, he sees him from afar and recognizes who he is. He runs to see Jesus and bows. He cries out loud, "Jesus, the Son of God, the Highest." He has the ability to know Jesus' name, and he recognizes him as the Son of God.

But here's a disturbing irony. Though he has superpowers, he still hurts himself. His superpower also does not benefit anybody else. Rather, he wanders between tombs day and night, shouting, and harming himself.

Why does this person live like this? Mark tells us who this person is. This is a man with an evil spirit. He is a person who is possessed by demons. Jesus asks the evil spirit: "What's your name?" Then an evil spirit reveals who he is. "My name is Legion." A legion means a military unit of about 6,000 people. This man was a person who lived with many demons and was under the control of the demons.

What do you think of this person? Is this the first time you've heard about him? Don't you think you've seen this before? As I continued to meditate on the text, I

felt that this person was no different from the typical modern people of today. Perhaps this man possessed by the demons reflects us. Today, people have made significant scientific progress. They can clone pigs, go to the moon, go to Mars, and even clone humans. But their abilities seem like those of a man shouting between the tombs. With amazing abilities, people are only burdening themselves. The war is never-ending. They fight each other, they hate each other.

But a man approaches this person who everyone is reluctant to meet. This man is Jesus. Mark chapter 4 says: “A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat”. Nevertheless, Jesus came across the Lake to meet this man. Jesus approached this man. The man ran and fell on his knees in front of Jesus, shouting at the top of his voice. “Jesus, Son of the Most High God What do you want with me? Swear to God that you won't torture me! Yes. I know who you are. You are Jesus, the Son of God, who is extremely high. But what does it have to do with me? Your presence will only make me more distressed. Please don't bother me, but leave me.” The Common Revised Translation says, “Why are you interfering with me?” That means “Get out of my life, and get away from me.” This man is rejecting Jesus.

However, something strange is revealed in the text. After a while, this man hangs on to Jesus and begged him. Mark 5:18 says: “As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.” He says “Jesus! I want to follow you.” Now, this man is begging Jesus, who must leave by boat: “I want to be with you for the rest of my life. I want to give you the rest of my life.” In Mark 5:17, the man said: “Son of God, Jesus, what do you have to do with me, you are a torment to me. You bother me a lot. Leave me alone.” But now he says, “I want to be with you all my life. I want to give the rest of my life to you.”

What happened between the two contrasting statements, “Don't mind me,” and “I'll give you my whole life?” What makes this possible? This is because Jesus healed the man. Even though this man rejected the Lord, Jesus approached him. Jesus ordered the demons: “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!” (Mark 5:8). The demons begged Jesus to let them enter pigs. Jesus granted the demons their wish.

Once the demons entered the pigs, they rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

And what happened? He sat dressed and in his right mind. The recovery of his humanness happened. He became a living person, not a dead life. The reason this person can say the exact opposite compared to his first statement is because of the meeting with Jesus. Jesus ended this man's life lived between tombs and let him start a new human life. The confession that he follows Jesus for the rest of his life was actually made that way.

People are not to be trusted. Look at the reaction of people around this man. If there were people who would be most happy to hear that this man recovered, they would be the people in the neighbourhood. When they saw that this man recovered, maybe they would have come and invited Jesus. "Oh, I have a similar person in my house, so please come here." "Oh, my neighbour has a similar person. Please come and cure him." But, paradoxically, the people who saw this miracle came and forced Jesus directly. "Leave this place." Why? Because they could not loss 2,000 pigs to save this man. If Jesus was in the position that 2,000 pigs were nothing to save a man, the people in this village could not do this. That's why they told Jesus to leave. This is the difference between Jesus and humanity. People are completely unreliable. They just act for their own benefit. But Jesus died on Cross to save us. He who is innocent has died on the cross for our sins.

Listen carefully to the text. The text tells us clearly. For you who lived a dead life, there is a new start! It is to meet Jesus Christ. There is a way to recovery of humanness. It is to meet Jesus Christ. That's the most urgent and surest way for human beings.

What are you doing to solve the difficulties faced in life? Where are you going? Will all problems be solved if you have more ability than others? Will all the problems be solved if you get a better job than others? Will all the problems be solved if you live in a better house than others? The surest and only way to solve life's problems is not there. Accepting Jesus as the master of life is the surest way



to start anew. In other words, we need to go back to Jesus. That's the only way to make a new start.

The text seems to be about a man with an evil spirit, but if you look carefully at the text, you can know that the text focuses on Jesus Christ. This is evidenced in the context before and after the text. In Mark chapter 4, Jesus and his disciples met a storm while sailing a boat at night. Everyone was confused, but Jesus woke up and said: "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. The text asks us: "Who is this?" Then, Mark says: "This is the Messiah, whom all creatures obey!" And Jesus crossed the lake and met the man possessed by demons. Jesus says. "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" Demons came out of this person. Now, the text asks us: "Who is Jesus whom even the spiritual forces obey?" Then, Mark says: "This is the Messiah whom even spiritual beings obey."

The latter part of Mark chapter 5 also proves who Jesus is. When Jesus went on his way to heal Jairus's daughter, a woman came and touched Jesus. She'd had haemophilia for 12 years. Medically and empirically, she was a woman who was found to be incurable. Jesus says to this woman. "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." At that moment, this woman became clean. The text asks people who read this text: "Who is this man to solve problems of the flesh that no one can solve?" Then, Mark says "This is the Messiah!" All people believed that Jairus' daughter was dead. But Jesus said, "Talitha koum!" meaning, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Jairus' daughter immediately the girl stood up and walked around. The text ask people who read this text: "Who is Jesus who solves the problem of death?" The answer is this: "This is the Messiah!"

Mark proclaims to us, there is someone whom all creatures must obey. There is someone whom all the spiritual beings must obey. There is someone who solves all the physical problems of humanity. There is someone who solves the problem of death. Who is he? "He is Jesus, the Son of God, the Highest!"

There is a new way to start for those who have lost themselves, such as the man in the text. There is also a new way to start for those who live by shouting

meaningless things. What is that? That is to meet the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. “Oh, Jesus Christ has done such a great salvation!” “Oh, Jesus Christ died for me!” “Oh, Jesus Christ gave me such a great favour!” When we discover these things, our lives can be completely different.

What is the new way of living a new life? The text shows us. Look at Mark 5:18-19. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” This person thought that the new way of living was to follow Jesus and stick with him. But Jesus says. “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” Jesus asked him to tell people what Jesus did for him.

That's the mission left for the people who believe in Jesus. Isn't that the most important thing we must do? God wants us to live proclaiming Jesus Christ. We've been studying the Bible for weeks, focusing on a Christian's mission. We prove Jesus in our lives. In my words, in my actions, in my thoughts, Jesus is revealed. The greatest insult that Christians in Korea now receive from the media is that they cannot see the difference between those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. People even point out that people believing in Jesus are more vicious and more fraudulent. It's heart-breaking.

I hope that our young group will not forget that they are responsible for the Korean church in the future and live a life that proves Jesus. I don't care if you go to a good university, get a good job, or become famous. The most important thing is to live a life that proves the love of Jesus who saved me. We should be able to show others a different character. We must give more love. As everyone knows, we will go on short-term missions soon. But there's something more important than failing the drama skit you've prepared. Our true mission is to prove Jesus to the people there. Smile one more time. Hug one more time. Love one more time. That's the life of people who meet Jesus.

Remember. We are saved by grace, not by our efforts. Jesus came to us in person and called us His people. We don't wander between tombs anymore. We don't shout meaningless things anymore. We don't hurt ourselves with special abilities anymore. We're the new creatures that have been saved. This salvation is not just a one-time event. With the experience of meeting the Lord and recovering humanity, we now live as people of God. That's a real new start. I hope you enjoy the grace of living a new life. Let's pray.

### **5.5.5 Redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on Epistles**

In this study, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 was chosen as the text for redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on epistles. The reason for choosing this is as follows: First, It can make the plot through the elements of sufferings and comfort that appear in the text. Second, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 shows the Christian identity in living as God's people. Third, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 clearly suggests the responsibility of Christians who are saved by grace.

#### **5.5.5.1 The interpretation of the text**

##### **(1) Observation**

Paul, who began the letter as a simple greeting to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:1-2), then thanked God who gave him a great deal of comfort in sufferings. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 includes praise for God, of comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-7) for the sufferings Paul experienced in person and the salvation of God (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, the subjects Paul deals with are suffering and comfort. First, Paul talks about sufferings. Paul calls the sufferings of believers the sufferings of Christ. To follow Christ, as Jesus said, is to bear our own cross. In this regard, Paul seems to have expressed that those who follow Jesus are naturally afflicted like Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, Paul says the believers suffer as Christ did.

The sufferings of Christ that Paul the Apostle referred never point to the sufferings of Jesus experienced on the cross. But Christians can suffer like Christ because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. They may be condemned and rejected, abused, hated, denied, and betrayed because of their faith in the Lord. These can be called the sufferings of Christ. Second, Paul talks about the comfort of God. Christians suffer in this world but are comforted by God. Paul purposely reveals that the source of this comfort is God. The word “comfort” appears nine times from 2 Corinthians 1:3-6. Paul reveals that God's comfort is the driving force that gives believers the strength and courage to overcome their sufferings. Paul reveals that through Christ our comfort overflows. He who suffers in association with Christ has already taken part in the glory of Christ and is united with Christ, the source of comfort.

Paul explains why God comforts him, which is to comfort those who suffer from the comfort he received from God. Paul's confession clearly shows that Christians are united with each other. God's comfort is not just for him but overflows to each other. A believer cannot have the superpower to save others from suffering, but he or she can establish the faith community when he or she shares with others the comfort he or she received in suffering.

## (2) Exegesis

In the ancient world, it was customary to include a prayer to God or a word of thanks for a considerable length in the letter. These prayers and words of appreciation can also be found in most Pauline epistles. One of the most common forms of Jewish prayer is praise that begins with “Praise be to God”, giving glory to God (Keener 2014:500). So, what does Paul praise? Paul praises the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. This means that God is not only a source of all compassion and comfort but also a merciful father to us (Martin 2007:108-109). The fact that God is the source of compassion is the basic idea of the Old Testament (Psalm 86:5,15; Daniel 9:4; Micah 7:18), and compassion is one of God's attributes. The fact that God is the God of comfort means that he not only visits His people in sufferings, giving them relief and hope, but also gives them joy and peace (Romans 15:5,13). Here, the Greek word “*Παρακλησις*,” meaning comfort, is often found throughout the epistles. This word does not mean ease or

relaxation. Rather, it is more like encouragement. This word means that God will teach His people how to overcome the problems of life, by training and guiding them (Barton *et al.* 2001:38).

From 2 Corinthians 1:4, Paul explains the God of Comfort. Paul first mentions troubles. The word “θλιψις” originally used by Paul means “pressure,” which implies the intense pressure he experienced. But these troubles are closely related to Christ. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, Paul confesses that he calls his troubles the sufferings of Christ and through Christ, our comfort overflows. Here the solidarity of Christ and his people is implied (Barnett 2002:36). Jesus predicted that those who followed him would suffer like him. This means that his disciples also suffer when proclaiming the Gospel (Matthew 25:45). There are many kinds of sufferings (Acts 20:23, Philippians 1:17, 2 Thessalonians 1:6, Hebrews 10:33, Revelation 2:22). This is because the world is in a hostile relationship with God (John 15:19). Therefore, to follow Christ is to bear his cross and face his sufferings (Matthew 8:34). Paul was an apostle who, more than anyone else, experienced the sufferings of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul confesses that he was under great pressure, far beyond his ability to endure, so that he despaired even of life. Moreover, few people comforted and helped Paul in his suffering.

But God comforts his people through “παρακαλῶν”, which appears in the fourth verse. It is the current participle of “παρακαλέω”, meaning God's comfort continued without interruption. God does not leave His children alone when they suffer in the world. He gives them courage and faith, and he builds them up to walk in the ways of the LORD again. Paul, who deeply experienced God's grace in the text, praises God with a confession of faith that Christ's suffering overflows and comforts him at the same time.

Paul stresses that we should comfort others with the comfort we have received from God. Paul teaches us that Christians are united in Christ. We can comfort those who are in any distress by comfort from God. We must comfort each other in Christ. God comforted Paul by the coming of Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6). It is as if Titus had been comforted by Corinthians before (2 Corinthians 7:7). Now Paul

wants to comfort the Corinthians. Therefore, God's comfort goes round through Titus, from the Corinthians to Paul, and back to the Corinthians (Barnett 2002:38).

### (3) God-centred idea

I set the FCF in the text as people seeking true comfort elsewhere than Jesus. Based on this FCF, I have organised the God-centred subject, God-centred component, and God-centred big idea of the text as follows:

- God-centred subject: What does God do for a Christian who suffers?
- God-centred complement: God comforts us and gives us the strength to comfort others.
- God-centred big idea: God comforts us when we are suffering and gives us the strength to comfort others.

#### **5.5.5.2 The configuration of the plot**

The plot of the sermon on 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 is as shown in Figure 5.12.

## The plot of the sermon on 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

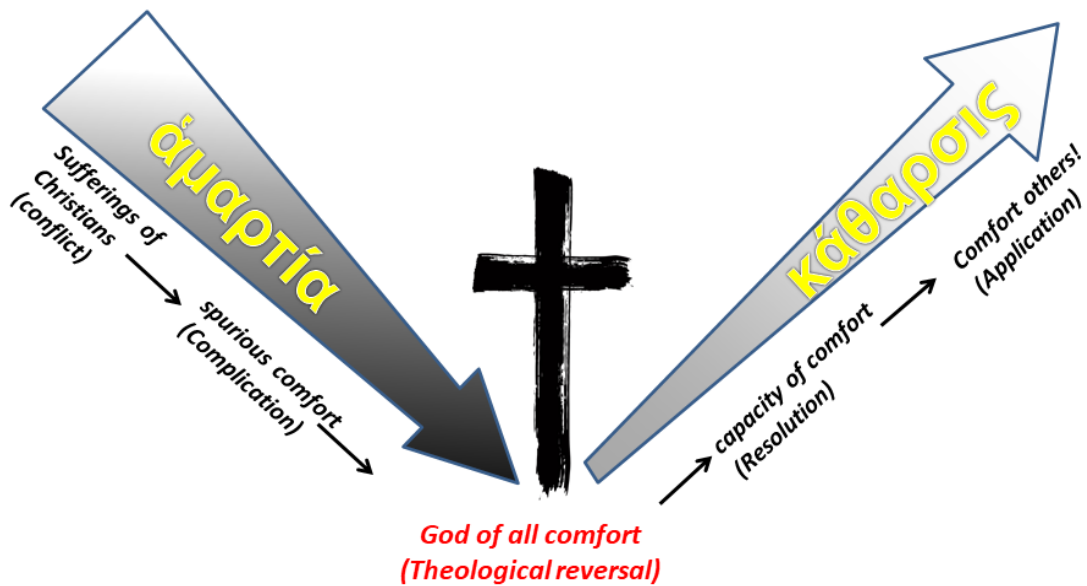


Figure 5.12 The plot of the sermon on 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

### (1) Conflict

In the text, Paul says that all Christians suffer when they live as Christian. Therefore, this sermon presented the sufferings of Christians as a conflict of the plot.

### (2) Complication

Many people seek true comfort from the world, not from God. This is due to the nature of human beings corrupted by sin. Spurious comfort will only make life more exhausting for Christians. Therefore, this sermon presents spurious comfort as a complication of the plot.

### (3) Theological reversal

Paul reveals that true comfort comes from God. God is the one who comforts us in all our sufferings. Therefore, this sermon presents the God of all comfort as the theological reversal of the plot.

#### (4) Resolution

Paul says that God not only comforts us but also gives us the power to comfort others. Therefore, this sermon presents capacity of comfort as a resolution of the plot.

#### (5) Application

If we have been comforted by God, and can comfort others, what we must do now is evident, which is to comfort those who suffer around us.

### **5.5.5.3 The redemptive-historical narrative preaching based on 2 Corinthians 1:3-7<sup>34</sup>**

Suffering is a part of life and we always live with many sufferings. Rather, there are sufferings that we must face because we have become Christians. According to 2 Corinthians 1:4, it is written, "He comforts us in all our troubles, and so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." Here we can see that the Corinthians were in trouble. If you look at the history of the early church in the first century, it is clear that believers faced many troubles. Because of their belief, there were people who were kicked out of their homes, and even those who were killed.

These days, of course, there are very few such sufferings for a believer. Believing in Jesus in Korea is not like the Roman era. We are free to believe in Jesus. But when we live as Christians, we still face many unseen troubles. In John Bunyan's

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<sup>34</sup> This sermon was given to the adults on May 7, 2015, and was briefly summarized without unnecessary examples, questions, and contents.



*The Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character Christian meets a destroyer named Apollyon as he passes through "The valley of Humiliation" and fights a fierce spiritual war. He barely manages to get out of the valley, but again, Christian passed through other valleys of sufferings. Sometimes we experience passing through such valleys. Sometimes we experience psychological and mental sufferings. Just because we believe in Jesus, we feel like other people are ostracizing us. There are times when we have psychological distress as if we are alone in the world. Sometimes, we suffer difficulties in human relationships.

But, whatever kind of difficulties these people face, they expect one thing. That is comfort. When we feel lonely, or when we don't feel motivated to live, what we need is comfort. Even when we suffer from physical weakness, what we really need is comfort. Even when relationships are broken or the situation is troublesome, what our deep insides expect is comfort. When comforted, we can gain new power to live. Therefore, what the afflicted need is comfort.

So, people are all looking for comfort. It's human nature to find comfort from something or someone when troubled. We try to find comfort in our own way. To find comfort, we wander. Some people drink because they believe they can forget everything when drunk. Some people find something or someone to vent their anger towards. Some people become workaholics because they believe they can forget everything when they devote their lives to work.

But there is no true comfort anywhere. We try to drink and forget, but it only makes us feel good, and we can't really comfort ourselves. Anger and screaming can't be a real comfort to us. Cheerfulness is only for a short time, but it makes our heart feel heavier and more difficult. We find that everything is futile. In the end, we are disappointed to discover that such things cannot comfort us.

So where is the real comfort? Paul tells us today in the text where to find the true comfort of the troubled man of life and who can comfort him. Apostle Paul says so in 2 Corinthians 1:3; "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort." This is what Paul says to the Corinthians who have troubles living through Christ. Paul said that what the

disturbed Christians need is comfort. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, Paul repeats the word “comfort” many times. Paul confesses that God is the only one who can truly comfort.

Paul then speaks about God in 2 Corinthians 1:4; “who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” This means that God can comfort any kind of suffering. God comforts those who are mentally and spiritually suffering. God also comforts those who are in turmoil and in pain due to physical problems. God comforts those who suffer through painful human relations.

Yes! God comforts us. We experience God's comfort every time. You've probably experienced that a lot in your life. God comforts all your pain and suffering. I often experience that. I served the church as minister 2 years ago. There was friction with the senior pastor. I was misunderstood and the relationship became uncomfortable. That was 10th-year of my ministry. It was difficult for me to continue to serve. Thinking that many sufferings would continue in the future, I didn't have the desire to serve. “Do I have to keep working?” “So what do I want to do?” I felt lonely and the oppressed. I couldn't find the meaning of ministry. It was hard and painful. I couldn't even pray.

One day, I was driving to church, and heard a gospel song from the radio. "You bind the broken-hearted, you heal the wounded soul, Father of all heaven, and we give you full control. Come have your way in us, O Lord, come set our spirits free, O Father send revival and start the work in me." Suddenly all my sufferings disappeared in a moment through tears. Everything was the same. Nothing had changed. But in my heart, I experienced an amazing grace and restored peace. At that time, I experienced God comforting me. God always comforted me whenever I was troubled. I had found that in last 10 years God was always with me. When I was constantly frustrated and anxious, God always comforted me in many mysterious ways. I'm sure you have experienced this comfort a lot, too. God does not leave His children alone and always watches them. The God of comfort comes to us who are concerned, worried, and distressed to comfort us.

Job was in great trouble. But he finally met God and was greatly comforted by God. He said, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.” He met God, who comforted him in suffering. Yes. We meet God in suffering. For those who follow Christ, the ups and downs, the trials, and the difficulties that come, are in some ways an opportunity for grace to experience God's comfort.

Paul suffered more than anyone else. He had a hard time being betrayed by people. Sometimes he was deeply frustrated. He was beaten to almost death and people threw him out. He was enthusiastic about the ministry, but he experienced deep disappointment because fruits did not appear as expected. Paul was a man who had suffered all troubles. But Paul confesses that he always experienced God's comfort in sufferings. Based on these experiences, Paul confesses that God is the God of all comforts and true comfort comes from God.

Some people drink alcohol and try to overcome their sufferings. Some people try to overcome difficulties by focusing on their work. But those things can't be a solution. Where will you find comfort? Paul the Apostle says, “Don't go any other way to forget comfort, but get comfort from the God of all comfort.” Remember that suffering is an opportunity for Christians to meet God. God comforts you! Suffering is an opportunity to experience God. Are you suffering from troubles? This is a golden opportunity to experience God's comfort. It is a golden opportunity to meet the God who comforts you, not the God you only hear from your ears. May you have the grace to meet God and experience the God of all comforts.

But there's something we need to remember. God not only comforts us but also gives us new power. Paul confesses in 2 Corinthians 1:6: “If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.” After experiencing God's comfort, we have the ability to comfort those who suffer the same difficulties. We can comfort others. So Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:4: “we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” Because of the comfort we have received from God, we can comfort others who need it.

This is the spiritual ability of the believer who has experienced and passed through suffering. Do you know? This is amazing. This is unbelievable. Why? Because this means that God uses us for the salvation of one man. Those who have been comforted by God now have the ability to comfort and build others who suffer the same difficulties. When we comfort someone, it means that we build the faith community. Yes, we are working for God's salvation. In that way, the sufferings we face for a while are not only great grace to us, but also a channel for God's salvation.

Now we have to think. What will you do with God's comfort? If you experienced comfort, I hope you will also comfort other vulnerable people with God's power. Be a channel of God's salvation by comforting and helping brothers, sisters and neighbors who suffer. We can make our church the faith community that experiences God's comfort. The overflowing comfort from God will flow to all of you and to your neighbors. May the grace and power of the God of comfort be full of your life! Let's pray.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I proposed redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative for preaching on suffering. I explored how the plot of narrative and the methodologies of redemptive-historical preaching can be newly applied, and expanded from an integrated perspective.

In this chapter, I looked at the definition of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, the necessity of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, the advantages of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, and the preparation steps of redemptive-historical narrative preaching.

First, I defined redemptive-historical narrative preaching. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching refers to the sermon that interprets the text from a redemptive-historical perspective, discovers the big idea of the text in which God becomes the subject, and conveys it using the plot of the narrative. Redemptive-historical

narrative preaching is an effort to highlight the advantages of the Bible's unity and organicity. It is also an effort to evoke experience to the congregation and let them participate in the sermon. In this regard, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is integrated preaching that is based on theology but also oriented toward the audience.

Second, I discussed the need for redemptive-historical narrative preaching. First, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is needed for the integration of God-centredness and audience-centredness. A preacher needs to consider the two subjects of the sermon: the text, and the audience. Thus, a preacher is given two duties: interpretation and delivery. The validity of the interpretation is secured through God-centredness. Redemptive-historical preaching has made a great contribution as an alternative to overcoming the problem of modern, human-centred, and moral sermons, through God-centred interpretation. The relevancy of transmission is secured through audience-centredness. Narrative preaching's emphasis on the congregation can help to analyse the audience and raise their interest. Therefore, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is the homiletical alternative to securing God-centredness and audience-centredness. Also, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is needed for the integration of text-centricity and text applicability. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching has text-centricity. The reason is that redemptive-historical narrative preaching is based on the redemptive-historical interaction. Since the redemptive-historical interaction asks what God is doing in the text, the theological ground can be secured from the text. Also, redemptive history has a subjective dimension. The text, which contains the objective dimension of redemptive history, has the applicability of the text so that it can be applied and repeated subjectively in the lives of today's audience. As a result, redemptive-historical narrative preaching helps to bring together the advantages of text's applicability and text-centricity. Therefore, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is a homiletical alternative to securing text-centricity and text's applicability.

Third, the advantages of redemptive-historical narrative preaching were discussed. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching helps the growth of the faith community. First, it enhances the solidarity and communal practice of the faith community. The

story of God's salvation serves as mortar to unite the faith community and serves as a driving force for ethical behaviour. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching also provides a Christian worldview. The Christian worldview that God's salvation story provides has three important functions for the community. First, the worldview of redemptive history provides the community with a sense of order and security based on God's redemption when the community faces a crisis. Second, the worldview embedded in redemptive history provides an answer to the identity of the community. Third, the world view in redemptive history urges the social life of the community.

Fourth, I suggested the preparation of redemptive-historical narrative preaching. I divided the preparation process of redemptive-historical narrative preaching into the process of what to say and how to say it. The first process is the interpretation of the text. This process is to study the text that becomes the original source of the sermon. These include three steps: observation, exegesis, and the God-centred big idea. The important thing in the interpretation of the text is to derive the God-centred big idea from the text. The God-centred big idea is the big idea in which God is the subject, showing the salvation God performs among His people. The second process is the configuration of the plot. This process consists of conflict, complication, theological reversal, resolution, and application. This process is important because it gives movement and continuity to the God-centred big idea so that it can engage the audience in the sermon, providing the audience with experience in God's salvation. I provided the practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching according to biblical genres in this chapter.

Through the study of this chapter, I proposed redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative for preaching on suffering. To find out if there are any papers or articles on redemptive-historical narrative preaching, Riss.kr from South Korea, HTS from South Africa and ALTA from the United States were researched. However, no papers or articles on redemptive-historical narrative preaching could be found. For this reason, redemptive-historical narrative preaching proposed by this study can state that it has originality or novelty. However, the study on redemptive-historical narrative preaching needs to be supplemented continuously by further research in the future. Suggestions for

redemptive-historical narrative preaching will be discussed in the final chapter, the conclusion.

## **6. CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

In this study, I identified the problems of preaching on suffering in SKC and presented redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative to overcoming these problems. This chapter, as the conclusion to this study, will be divided into three main parts. First, I will summarize this study. Second, I will evaluate redemptive-historical narrative preaching. Third, I will make suggestions regarding the study.

### **6.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1, as the introduction to this study, first introduced the background and motivation of the study. As a preacher, I confessed to feelings and difficulties I felt in preaching on suffering, and presented the need for maturity within the faith community as a motivation for research. Second, the questions I would address in this study were introduced in conjunction with the four essential elements of preaching: God, scripture, the preacher, and the audience. These questions demonstrate that this study pursues a homiletical alternative that takes these four elements into account. Third, the methodology adopted in this study was addressed. After introducing various methodologies of practical theology, I adopted Osmer's methodology. Osmer's methodology consists of the descriptive-empirical study/task, the interactive study/task, the normative study/task, and the pragmatic study/task. I constructed the research according to this structure. Fourth, I introduced the hypothesis of this study. This study assumes that redemptive-historical narrative preaching can be a homiletical alternative to preaching on suffering in SKC. Fifth, the purpose and limitations of this study are introduced. The purpose of this study is to reveal the problems of the Korean church's sermons on pain, and to present biblical interpretation and effective sermonic form for preaching on suffering. Also, this study pursues discovering the value of preaching on suffering.



In Chapter 2, I analysed preaching on suffering in SKC and identified the problems in that context. First, five preachers were selected for analysis from five different representative denominations in South Korea. The reason the preachers were chosen from five representative denominations in South Korea is that they show theological characteristics of each denomination, and show how the four essential elements of preaching appear in each sermon. Second, I adopted the Heidelberg method for sermon analysis. The Heidelberg method was adopted because it illustrates both the superficial and deep structures of each sermon. Furthermore, the homiletical questions helped to identify clearly the four essential elements of preaching. In this work, I modified two questions of the Heidelberg method as appropriate for this study: the linguistic, and the homiletical questions. Third, I analysed preaching on suffering in SKC using the Heidelberg method. Through this analysis, I identified four problems of preaching on suffering in SKC. The four problems are as follows: the failure of showing God revealed in the text, eisegesis, the absence of effective sermon form, and the absence of audience analysis.

In Chapter 3, various forms of suffering and theodicies related to suffering were examined, and homiletical theodicy was presented. First, I divided suffering into four categories, according to cause, extent, and theological purpose. These categories of suffering will help preachers correctly grasp. Second, I looked at how the arguments of various theodicies related to suffering and evaluated their arguments homiletically. Perfect plan theodicy provides the conviction that God achieves his purpose through suffering, but homiletical wisdom is required when a preacher address unjust sufferings where meaning or purpose are obscure. Free will theodicy provides the benefit of exempting God from the responsibility of suffering and makes us realise the seriousness of sin. Soul making theodicy helps develop the spiritual maturity of believers, but it cannot provide a clear answer to social and natural suffering. Cosmic conflict theodicy removes God's responsibility for the suffering and empowers believers to fight and resist their suffering. Process theodicy says that suffering is one of the evolutionary processes of the universe. This position is an unbiblical argument, and it destroys the central attributes of God. Openness theodicy contains problematic ideas that result in combining the decisions and actions of God and creatures through history, distorting God's integrity. Third, I tried to discern and synthesize the arguments of these theodicies

and in the process suggested a homiletical theodicy clarifying how the preacher should deal with preaching on suffering. Homiletical theodicy is very important because it provides theological boundaries and insights for preaching on suffering. This study seeks to present a homiletical theodicy based on the four major elements of Christianity's meta-narrative, and on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Homiletical theodicy approaches the audience's understanding and interpretation of suffering through the biblical content and naturally provides them with Christian perspectives on suffering. Homiletical theodicy includes: 1) Origin: Suffering is not God's responsibility. 2) Attitude: Our expression of suffering is related to faith. 3) Redemption: God is working in the time of suffering. 4) Presence: God is with us in suffering. 5) Hope: suffering makes us see the hope that God gives.

In chapter 4, I looked at the need for an effective sermon form, redemptive-historical preaching, and narrative preaching. First, I discussed the fact that form makes an organic combination with content. As divine communication, preaching achieves communication through the combination of content and form. The research of sermon form gives justification to consider the effective sermon form for preaching. Second, research on narrative and narrative preaching demonstrates that plot in conjunction with movement and continuity is very effective in delivery. Narrative causes reversal and recognition, which helps to effectively achieve communication with the audience. In particular, I examined Eugene Lowry's narrative preaching in detail. Narrative preaching can be highly appreciated for emphasizing the role of the sermon form and the importance of biblical narratives and providing a new theological understanding of the audience. Third, I examined redemptive-historical interpretation, and redemptive-historical preaching. Redemptive history is one of the subjects of biblical theology that shows the redemption of God. Redemptive-historical interpretation interprets the text from the three premises of biblical-theology, which are historicity, unity, and progression of revelation. Redemptive-historical preaching concentrates on redemption, which is the purpose of the Bible itself. Redemptive-historical preaching can help to escape from anthropocentric preaching, and exemplary preaching, because it focuses on God's redemptive purpose. Fourth, I looked at the problems of narrative preaching and redemptive narrative preaching. The

problems of narratives are as follows: 1) narrative preaching can distort the author's intentions; 2) narrative preaching regards the audience's experience as the only purpose of the sermon; 3) narrative preaching insists on an open ending and neglects the application of the sermon; 4) narrative preaching is vulnerable to establishing a faith community; 5) the gospel presented by narrative preaching can be replaced by a subjective gospel. Redemptive-historical preaching also has the following problems: 1) redemptive-historical preaching ignores grammatical-historical interpretation and hastily draws a redemptive-historical approach to the text; 2) redemptive-historical preaching can stay in objective explanation of redemptive history; 3) the obsession that Jesus must be mentioned throughout the text can lead to allegorical interpretation.

In Chapter 5, I discussed how to synthesize and develop redemptive-historical preaching and narrative preaching discussed in Chapter 4, and proposed redemptive-historical narrative preaching as a homiletical alternative. First, I defined redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which interprets the text from a redemptive-historical perspective, discovers the big idea of the text in which God becomes the subject, and conveys it using the plot of the narrative. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is an effort to emphasise the unity and organicity of the Bible, and let the audience participate in the sermon. Second, I discussed the need for redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which is needed for the integration of God-centredness and audience-centredness. In addition, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is needed for the integration of text-centricity and the text's applicability. Third, I explained the advantages of redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which helps to unite the faith community and enhance communal practice. It also provides the Christian worldview through the story of God's salvation of the faith community, giving a unique meaning to events and phenomena. Fourth, I suggested the preparation of the redemptive-historical narrative preaching, which begins with the process of interpreting the text. This includes three steps: observation, exegesis, and the God-centred big idea. The important thing in the interpretation of the text is to derive the God-centred big idea from the text. The second process is the configuration of the plot. This process consists of conflict, complication, theological reversal, resolution, and application. This process is important because it gives movement and continuity to

the God-centred big idea so that it can engage the audience in the sermon, providing the audience with experience in God's salvation. I provided the practices of redemptive-historical narrative preaching according to the biblical genres in this chapter.

## **6.2 AN EVALUATION OF REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL NARRATIVE PREACHING**

With the advent of the new homiletic, academic interest and focus in preaching have shifted from “content” to “delivery.” This was a new challenge considering the changing times and the resulting changes in the audience. As a result, the homiletic has become more interested in the audience than ever before, and the field of research has expanded widely. This challenge of the new homiletic cannot be ignored and should be highly appreciated.

However, new attempts to overcome this crisis of preaching have resulted in a greater crisis than before due to the absence of theology, and an obsession with delivery. In particular, the advocates of the new homiletic are mainly those influenced by liberal theology, and they do not consider the authority of the Bible important. As a result, the authority of the Bible and its message have been overlooked in the new homiletic. As a result, the interest of the new homiletic has manifested a bias toward communication for the audience alone.

Should the new homiletic be abolished? What is our alternative? How do we overcome this crisis? This study was initiated by this concern, and the researcher proposed redemptive-historical narrative preaching, that harmonized with the narrative preaching of the new homiletic, and the redemptive-historical preaching of the traditional homiletic. In this regard, the researcher intends to evaluate this study as follows:

First, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is an alternative that can overcome the limitations of the new homiletic, which ignores the authority of the Bible and focuses on delivery. If the merits of the new homiletic, which focus on the

audience, are combined with the advantages of redemptive-historical interpretation, which focuses on God's redemptive history, preaching can be “theology-based” and “audience-directed.” Therefore, the proper combination of two homiletics can be a valuable way of solving the problems of the new homiletic.

Second, redemptive-historical narrative preaching has greater significance, not only in terms of overcoming the limitations of redemptive-historical preaching and narrative preaching but also in maximizing the advantages of both. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching will be a breakthrough, contributing to the revival of preaching by countering the weaknesses of both the traditional and new homiletics, and exploiting their advantages.

Third, redemptive-historical narrative preaching can lead to the maturity of God's people by not only engaging the audience in the sermon but also emphasizing the appropriate application to their situation. In this study, I emphasised the importance of application as a response to God's salvation, which can lead to the maturity of the faith community if applied correctly.

However, at the same time, in applying redemptive-historical narrative preaching care should be taken with the following:

First, in some biblical genres, conflicts are often not clearly revealed. Conflict is easy to find in genres such as narratives, gospels, and epistles, but it is often not clearly revealed in other genres, such as wisdom and prophecy. Therefore, in this study, I presented FCF to discover conflict in the text. Chapel (2005:52) argues that the following questions are required to ensure that FCF is faithful to the text of the Bible: 1) What does the text say?; 2) What spiritual concern(s) did the text address (in its context)?; 3) What spiritual concerns do listeners share in common with those to (or about) whom the text was written?. The basic interpretation necessary for these questions is grammatical-historical interpretation. In other words, grammatical-historical interpretation is the priority in finding conflict in the text. In this regard, the first work of redemptive-historical interpretation is grammatical-historical interpretation.

Second, redemptive-historical narrative preaching is not the only resolution for preaching on suffering. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is just one of the many alternatives to preaching on suffering. It is wrong to argue that redemptive-historical narrative preaching is the only biblical preaching. There is no complete homiletical form or method in this world. Homiletical efforts and attempts are constantly working toward perfection. Depending on the preacher's pastoral direction or the genre of the text, various types of preaching can coexist. What is important in the sermon is that God's intention should be well revealed and delivered in a way that meets the purpose.

### **6.3 SUGGESTIONS**

The researcher suggests redemptive-historical narrative preaching as an alternative for preaching on suffering. Redemptive-historical narrative preaching is to interpret the text based on redemptive history, which is the theme of biblical theology, and to use the concept of plot for effective delivery to the audience. Here are some suggestions for applying this.

First, the first thing a preacher needs to do before preaching on suffering is to have “special affection” for the audience. In other words, to preach on suffering, a preacher needs to understand and love the audience. Then, a preacher can cry and laugh with the audience. When a preacher tries to approach the audience with the love and the character of Christ, his preaching ministry will be enriched.

Second, preaching on suffering must be done by the work of the Holy Spirit. As discussed in chapter 5, the two basic pillars of the sermon are interpretation and delivery. But there is another pillar that is less tangible: the Holy Spirit. Interpretation and delivery are realised through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the whole process of preaching. In other words, the sermon should be made through the working of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, a preacher needs to pray for the Holy Spirit to work through the preparation of the sermon.

Third, there is a need for continuous research into redemptive-historical narrative preaching. By trying and applying redemptive-historical narrative preaching in our preaching ministry, we can continue to develop the concept. Through such continuous research, I hope that redemptive-historical narrative preaching will be a homiletical alternative for the various fields of homiletics, such as the doctrinal sermon, the ethical sermon, and the expository sermon.

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## ANNEXURES

### ANNEXURE A – sermon scripts of Jeong-hyun Oh’ preaching on suffering

Title: The new nature of overcoming the suffering – Joy

Text: 1 Peter 1:8-12

The mystery that reborn spiritually

Living hope is given through rebirth, which leads to the succession of an incorruptible, unflagging inheritance. Also, we are blessed by God's power in the field of life through the faith that arises from living hope. Jesus was the one who emphasised this important rebirth the most. Jesus said this in John 3: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again’. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:6-8).

Nicodemus, a religious leader and Pharisees, visited Jesus. He asked about eternal life and salvation. He did not seem to be lacking, but in fact, he was feeling the futility of life.

Jesus told him that nobody can see the kingdom of God unless he was born again. When Jesus was asked by Nicodemus' continuing question, he said that man is born physically, but must be reborn spiritually. ‘Spiritual birth’ means a new outpouring of God's eternal life upon the dead spirit. We can be a new creation by being released from the sinfulness that stems from Adam, and all the sins held from the mother's womb.

We are people who have already experienced a new spiritual self, and a new birth by the Holy Spirit. If you are born physically, you will die forever; if you are born spiritually, you will live forever. In Jeremiah 13 we read: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?”

Ethiopian is an African. If Africans can change their skins and leopards can change their spots, we can also do good before God. This means that sinners cannot change their sinful nature by themselves. A person born physically cannot change his or her nature. Therefore, a person must be born again spiritually. You cannot solve the problem of sin by being born physically. Only God transforms the sinful human's mind into a new nature through the Holy Spirit.

Thus, rebirth brings our dead spirit back to life in a spiritual resurrection. When we who die of sin and transgression experience a spiritual resurrection, we will be blessed to receive a resurrection body like the Lord. In other words, the resurrection of Christ is the spiritual basis and foundation for our rebirth, and eschatologically means that the resurrection of our bodies is renewed. It's a spiritual resurrection in



which our dead spirits come back to life, and a new life that has experienced spiritual resurrection must have a physical resurrection on the day of the end.

As we experience this rebirth, we are transformed to beings with new life, new hopes, new convictions, new joys, and new destiny, all through God's grace. It is a complete change of our identity, destiny, and life goals. So, we can start again anytime, no matter how difficult.

Here is the mystery of rebirth. No matter how hard it may be physically, we will gain the power to start anew when our spirits are revived. When we experience spiritual birth, our character can change, and our actions will be different. For example, St. Augustine believed in Jesus, and as soon as he was reborn, he experienced an emotional explosion of endless tears, repenting for his dissipated past. However, people experience rebirth differently. C.S. Lewis said that one day as he went to the zoo by bus, he silently became aware that Jesus was the son of God.

If we look at this rebirth in detail, we realise that the focus of rebirth is always God. "Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:13).

#### To live as an reborn spirit

When you are born in this world, you receive a birth certificate. But that's just one piece of evidence. In fact, it is more important that we breathe. The same is true of spiritual birth. Even if you go to church, and are baptized, and have a baptism certificate in your hand, it is only earthly evidence of our existence. The Holy Spirit must live and move in our spirits. The new work of life should spring up in us, and the fact that God has poured out the Spirit of life needs to be confirmed and proclaimed.

There are some aspects that show that we our spirits are reborn.

First, those who are born again testify of God's "amazing grace". The apostle Paul had fellowship with the Lord in Arabia after falling down in Damascus, and confessed that he is a prodigal son who was forgiven.

Second, our spiritual hunger increases. The born-again spirit is hungry for prayer, the Word, the praise, and the divine things from heaven.

Third, the born-again spirit is responsible for the mission and vision of the kingdom of God, the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

Fourth, when the born-again spirit sees Jesus' name being damaged or the church injured, he feels the deep pain of the spirit.

#### The heavenly joy overcoming suffering

We are all born, live, and die in this world. No one can escape death. But Jesus died on the cross and rose again. He was resurrected and became the first fruit of those who sleep. What should we do if we truly believe that Jesus was resurrected? “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

In the first century, the people of faith who spread out in Asia and believed in Jesus were persecuted by the Roman Empire. They dug caves in Cappadocia and lived together. They had a shortage of food and faced difficult situations, but they shared it and overcame it with faith. In fact, they didn't see Jesus in person, but they knew his love and their spirits were renewed.

We can contemplate the difference between those who believe in Jesus, and those who do not. Those who believe in Jesus are immersed in great joy and glory that cannot be explained. This joy is the best joy. Of course, there are joys such as the joy of the Olympic gold medal winner through hard work, the joy of entering the desired job after graduating from college, and the joy of having a child after a long wait. But they are no match for this best joy.

The apostle Peter knew this sovereign joy. Acts chapter 5 tells us that Peter and his disciples shared the gospel and grace, and that the Roman rulers caught them, tortured them, humiliated them, and troubled them. “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they were deemed worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). Peter and his disciples rejoiced in the Lord amidst their sufferings and challenges. They were glad and grateful that they could sacrifice and devote themselves to the Lord.

Jonathan Edwards said that everyone who is reborn has a common instinct. It is to love God and to rejoice in Jesus. When a new instinct to love the Lord is confirmed, and the Spirit of purity that the Lord pours out from above comes, there is joy in us. Then we can experience the joy that awaits us in heaven while we are still here on earth. “But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13).

George Muller said this: “I have realised that rejoicing in God is the true power of life, and this is a valid truth that has remained unchanged until this time when I stand before the Lord for the last few decades.” It means that as he underwent the valley of suffering, he got the power that could pass this valley through the joy in God and the joy in God in the present life is still the driving force in his life.

So where does this joy come from?

First, joy comes when you trust and believe in Jesus. Therefore, we will live a life of joy when believing in Jesus. Thus, to believe in the Lord is to rejoice; also, to rejoice is to believe.

Second, glorious joy comes down from heaven. It is glorious beyond words. This joy is the heavenly joy that comes from heaven for believing in Jesus. People who don't know Jesus can't imagine it.

In the praise of J. W. Peterson, the gospel hymn composer, there are the lyrics, "Oh, a beautiful day, how can I forget my good day ... the glory of heaven has come to my heart." Heavenly glory here is heavenly joy.

In *The Image of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis described the joys of heaven as pouring out the Lord's grace from heaven, wetting our hearts with the dew of heaven. According to him, when the joy of heaven is in us, the dry heart comes back to life, and there is a pious brook in it, and there is a good fruit. The unclean things are gone, our hearts are moved, and the children of God are given the freedom of glory. So we see things that we haven't seen, we hear new sounds, we taste new flavours, we experience new powers, and we see amazing images of the Lord.

Heavenly joy is not just an emotional joy. It's a joy bursting deep into our spirits. The broken heart is restored because the Holy Spirit gives us joy. When the joy of heaven comes, the spirit rejoices, and praise comes from the lips. When the joy of heaven comes, the inner difficulties are immersed in the flood of joy, and there is the peace that the world does not know.

Reformer Thomas Bilney described the state of heaven's joy when it came. "My broken bones jumped and danced joyfully. When the joy of heaven comes, the bones will, my heart, my flesh, and my soul also joyfully dances." This is the joy and celestial joy of those who believe in Jesus. This is not only for special people but for everyone who believes in the Lord.

We feel secure when the powerful man in the world protects us. Likewise, how confident and glad are we that the Lord, who has the power of heaven and earth, has protected us? We may be hard on the surface, but there is joy in our spirit. This joy is a spring that never dries up like an oasis in the desert. The flood of joy always comes from this spring. This is a special characteristic of life that a holy stranger has. Loving the Lord brings joy.

The final stage of life overcoming with joy

"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." We cannot see the Lord physically, but we are in a circle of grace when the Lord pours joy on our spirits and continues to love Him through it. Because of love, joy comes. When joy comes we love more. That is why we should thank the Lord for allowing us this kind of love and joy.

Peter walked with the Lord and experienced miracles. He also met the risen Jesus. Such a man says that even if we have not seen Jesus, loving him is full of joy that words cannot express. Even when Jesus was alive, there were those who could not believe in his power and miracles. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing."

We did not see Jesus. But in his grace, we are born again and live with indescribable joy. Our love for Jesus is not the mere memory of the past Jesus who lived on earth 2,000 years ago but to know and love Him at this moment. We walk with the Lord through the Word and prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Fanny J. Crosby was born blind. However, she wrote thousands of hymns before she died at the age of 95. Who asked her: "Didn't you have been bothered or upset by blindness since childhood?" She replied, "I don't resent being blind, but rather thank God. Because I can see my beloved Jesus more clear."

Her blind eyes were not polluted by the things of the world, but she was able to love the Lord more purely, sensitive to His guidance, and feel the Spirit of the Lord up close. Even if she walked all over the dry land, she could enjoy the joy of the Lord. There are hardships and pains in the life of a disciple who follows the Lord, but we are full of joy because we have the love of the Lord that the people of the world do not know.

St. Augustine said after he realised this truth: "What is it that you really don't have when you really love Jesus?" It means that even if you are a rich man with everything, it is of no use without the true living water that comes from loving the Lord. As much as we love the Lord, the level of joy we enjoy is determined.

We walk with Jesus and our spirits are saved. We all have a fountain of saved joy. I don't know what the first half and the middle half of your life was, but I'm sure the last half of our life will be saved and full of joy. The end of life will eventually go up to the completion of the joy of seeing the beloved Lord, without fear of death.

A decade ago I visited Urumqi, China, and a political reporter from China's Communist Party newspaper guided me. He laughed at the Christian faith, saying it was like opium addiction. However, while we were on an old plane from Beijing to Urumqi, the plane was swept by turbulence and shook like it was about to crash. The reporter's face was flushed and screamed. But I prayed to the Lord and calmly passed the crisis. After arriving at the airport, he was surprised at my calmness and asked. "How can you stay still in that situation?" And my answer was, "I believe in Jesus. The end of my life is decided, so I'm never afraid to die."

### The joy of heaven beyond pain

We live a life of strangers scattered on this earth, but ultimately we are people who are guaranteed victory. The path we have to go does not fit well with the culture of this world. If this world's culture is a round pipe, we are a square pipe. No matter how hard one tries to fit a square pipe into a round pipe, it's impossible because it doesn't fit. Thus, we are treated as ugly ducklings in this world. But remember that someday we will all be beautiful swans.

There was an article in the American Baptist press news a few years ago. Missionary Carret Watson was sent to serve as a refugee centre during the Iraq War. He did not hesitate to obey the Lord's call. In northern Iraq, armed guerrillas fired rifles and threw grenades, killing five missionaries, including him. Before he went to Iraq, he left a letter to his church minister. His letter was read at the funeral.

“I didn't hesitate when God called me a missionary. I wanted to give my life to the nations if possible. I thought that I was not a missionary bound to one region, but to the whole of God's kingdom called to the Lord. I will endure suffering if necessary to obey my calling. I will be glad that God alone will be my glory and He is my reward in the midst of suffering. The most important thing for me is to fulfil this mission with joy. And I thank you for your prayers that I can handle this mission well. Please keep sending missionaries in the future. Keep growing young pastors. Focus on the ministry of preaching the gospel powerfully. I want to glorify our Father with joy, preaching only the everlasting gospel that transforms life. First, caring for the soul is more important than being smart, second, taking risks than thinking about own safety, third, dreaming is more important than reality, and fourth, expecting greater things of the Lord than doing what is possible by my own power. I was called to follow Jesus. The greatest joy is to know Jesus and to serve the Lord. In the love of the Lord, Shalom!”

What do you think of Carret's death? It may be a sad death in the world, but we already know that Carret is already rewarded for serving the Lord with joy.

In the first century, the oppressed people of Christ rejoiced in joy in their great suffering. It was because of the confidence and love of salvation that became the children of God. The joy was so great that it was not a problem to suffer from poverty and not to have anything to eat right away. Living in a miserable cave also wasn't a problem. In other words, they received greater ability to cover up the problems.

#### Prayer

Heavenly Father, help us to complete our joy when we stand before you. We have lived to rejoice in worldly success. But the joy is for a moment and we know it doesn't last long. Lord, help us to love you who is in us with indescribable pleasures and to be partakers of the heavenly joys that overcome any environment. I pray in the name of Jesus, the source of joy. Amen.

### **ANNEXURE B – sermon scripts of Seok-jeon Yoon's preaching on suffering**

Title: Jesus solves your despair

Text: Luke 7:11-17

God is love. God does not have that love alone. God finds those who will be loved and gives them that love. It is the best harmony between God's love for man and man's love for God. God's love is itself an absolute power that gives happiness. The love of the world is nothing but philanthropy, but God's love is the ability to go beyond philanthropy completely and work everything in God's will without limit. God's love gives happiness to man, and we can be happy only when we are loved by God.

There is no happiness in this world. Thousands of people struggle to find happiness in the world and use every means and method, but it is clear from the experience of everyone's life that there is no happiness on this earth. The bible tell us "Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). We will return to the ground, since from it we were taken (Genesis 3:19).

From birth, humans walk on the road of suffering, and eventually the body returns to a handful of dirt at the end of its life. The soul of believer who believes in Jesus goes to God, and the soul of unbeliever goes to eternal hell for punishment. Therefore, believers in Jesus are blessed people. The reason is that at the end of the life the pain will disappear and we will go to the kingdom of God and live forever.

The best happiness is the eternal kingdom of God

The greatest happiness is the kingdom of eternal God, the kingdom of heaven, without any suffering. The great nation is waiting for the saints of faith. "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). As Paul said, there is hope for us to live happily after in the kingdom of God even though we may face many persecutions, tribulations, and difficulties by believing in Jesus. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." This hope cannot be found in the world. It is the greatest blessing that God has given us.

God sent his son Jesus Christ to the earth to grant us the absolute happiness that is not in the world. Therefore, people who have the Son of God have happiness, and people who do not have the Son of God have no happiness. "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). This means that those who believe are descendants of God's happiness.

Therefore, believers are those who have the greatest happiness that God allowed. "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). Many people on this planet are struggling for life, but the life of the body is not life. The Bible says that only the Son of God is life and this life is the happiness of living forever. There will only ruin without the son, so God sent the Son to the perishing mankind to give eternal life happiness. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Those who eat and drink the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ are those who eat and drink eternal food and eternal drink. He gave us his flesh and blood as eternal life and food. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink" (John 6:54-55).

Human instinct is what to eat, what to drink, and what to wear. There is no food in the world and Jesus Christ said: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every



word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). His flesh and blood are the inheritance that can give us life forever, but also the rights and happiness we can enjoy. Who on earth will die for me? Who can tear and bleed for me and give flesh and blood to eat and drink? Only Lord Jesus Christ can do that. Therefore, the grace of atonement through Jesus Christ is happiness.

The freedom given by Jesus is the greatest happiness.

The world changed to be unhappy because of sin. Death came to mankind for the sin of Adam's eating of the fruit of good and evil, and the happiness of mankind was brutally destroyed. It is not a blessing to obtain worldly wealth and authority. Rather, it is a blessing to be forgiven of sins that will perish forever. “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7).

God has compassion on the world because there is no happiness in the world, and sin will eventually destroy it. God sent His Son to this earth to bring happiness to mankind. God healed the sickness of mankind by allowing him to be whipped and settled the curse of mankind by allowing him to take the cross of the curse. God also paid for the eternal death of mankind by causing him to die on the cross. So now we are free from disease, curse, and eternal death by believing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has atoned for all the sins of mankind.

The freedom that Jesus gave is the greatest happiness on earth. Are you still complaining that it's not enough although having this great happiness? Those who don't know the value of this happiness suffer because of the economic and environmental challenges that they face for a while. But economic and environmental suffering cannot suffer us when we think of the happiness that will last forever in heaven. So there is no frustration in Christianity. There is no despair in Christianity.

Lazarus was a beggar and suffered physically, but no one could take away happiness in his soul. And finally, as soon as his soul left his body, his soul went into a paradise. His happiness began forever in the kingdom of God.

Therefore, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to find the unfortunate ones who must be destroyed under sin and make them happy forever. Jesus Christ comes to this earth to raise the dead, to make the blind see, to make the deaf hear, to make the crippled walk, to cleanse the lepers. And he was crucified to ward off evil spirits that give humanity suffering and misery, so that the suffering of mankind was completely ended.

He was resurrected and ascended three days after his death, and gave to us the Holy Spirit and still indwelling in us. This is to preserve his people who bought by blood so that they enjoy eternal happiness.

The Holy Spirit has come to the earth to deliver the happiness that Jesus Christ was crucified for us. We heard the news of this happiness through the Holy Spirit. Thus, the man who goes to hell has become a man who will be happy forever because he believes in Jesus. We have been transformed into a person of status worthy of God's eternal love, and into a person of status to receive God's beautiful inheritance.

Now believers have no despair, no curses, no suffering. No misfortune, no sorrow, no happiness cannot take away my happiness that God has given me. This is because the greatest happiness already is in us.

### Rights available to believers in Jesus' name

The salvation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind have been good news for us. This grace is the highest happiness God has given to mankind. Jesus Christ ascended, gave us His name by the Holy Spirit, and give power to believers. "He said to them, "Go into the entire world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mark 16:15-18).

Because power is a believer's right, we can use this power at any time with a firm belief that the Lord has given me. The Bible shows us that the Lord worked in the disciples' ministry when they believed in the Word of Jesus. "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" (John 14:13).

Thus, Jesus' name is the name given to us to destroy the enemies that afflict humanity. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. The church is the Lord's body, and it must represent the life and functions of Jesus. The Lord still wants the churches to function as the body of Jesus Christ, like Early Church, destroying so many despairs and sufferings of mankind, and all people in the world to be saved and gain eternal life for happy.

In the text, the Lord met a widow struggling against two walls of despair. The first was bereavement with her husband, and the second was the death of her only son. When humans die, they must return to the dust. This is the order of God and the order of nature. Who can stop this absolute order?

But the Lord stopped this order. He ordered the coffin bearers to stop. Then he touched the coffin and said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" Then the dead man sat up and began to talk. Who can save the dead from death? Only Son of God, Jesus Christ can do that.

The Lord said: "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12). "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:23). This is the Word given to the believer. We must believe that we have the same power. And in the name of Jesus, we must destroy the misfortune that still exists as destiny in the home from generation to generation. We need to enjoy freedom. The Lord gave us his name because He wants us to exercise his power it in faith.

Just as the Lord visited widows who suffered, He is now waiting for our faith to solve our misery and perishable problems. We must let Him work by faith to stop the



torrent of despair we can't handle. Instead of being a spectator like a crowd, like a widow and a young man in a coffin, we must be the main character of this blessing. No matter how great your despair is, can it be greater than the despair of a widow who lost the only son? Can it be greater than the despair of this young man who died and returns to dust? You must seal the gates of despair in the name of Jesus in advance so that such despair does not come to you. And open the door wide for eternal life, the gift, blessedness that Jesus gave. Now here you have to solve your problems with Jesus immediately. The Lord is here to solve the problems of our despair. Hope you believe that the Lord is in you.

### **ANNEXURE C – sermon scripts of Sam-hwan Kim’s preaching on suffering**

Title: Follow until the end. You will receive a response.

Text: Matthew 15:21-28

The TV dramas “The Empress Myung-sung” is historical dramas about the story of the Joseon Dynasty. I was moved when seeing our painful history through the drama. I'm interested in “Empress Myung-sung” in particular because it was dealing with relations with Japan.

Emperor Gojong, the husband of Empress, is always in conflict and suffering between father and wife. The king cannot be without feelings, but as a king in charge of the government, I felt that he lacked courage and determination. "What would I have decided if I was in the position of Emperor Gojong?" "What would I have decided if I had been a leader of another country?" I came to think from many points of view. My dear saints, how should we live in this world? How should we respond when something is difficult?

There is a valuable lesson in the text that answers this question. When Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanite woman came to the LORD and cried out. "Lord, my daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession. Please save my daughter."

When I was young, I saw several times a person who was possessed by a demon. They were dressed in flabby clothes, naked or torn. Without washing their body, they were caught in the rain when it rained, and when it was cold, they were shivering and wandering in the streets. I also saw some of them freeze to death on the street. However, most of them were women, and mothers took full responsibility for them. It means that the daughter's misfortunes were passed on to her mother. Most of the fathers and siblings did not want to live with her and so that only the mother had to live with a daughter. This is because a mother cannot abandon her child.

The mother in today's text was very patient and devoted herself to her daughter. But she could not drive a demon out. Meanwhile, she came to the Lord. “The Son of David, please heal my daughter! Please save her! Help her!” Jesus did not answer a word. But the woman followed the Lord and shouted again. “The son of David, have mercy on my daughter! Please save us. Rather, Jesus spoke of the Jews' ideas

about strangers at that time. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." Jews didn't think of gentiles as human beings like them. They didn't think gentiles were a little short of strangers. For Jews, strangers were like dogs.

"How can I give the children's bread to a dog?" This was a tremendous blasphemy and curse. If you were there, you might attack him immediately. You may curse him with all kinds of abusive language. But she was a woman of faith. She knew how to be healed. She was a woman who knew how to receive grace.

"You're right. The word of the Lord is right. How can I dare to ask for the grace that you give to your children? I only wish you show me the kindness of the crumbs for the dog. I want you to give me the crumbs that fall from the table. Have mercy on me!"

Then Jesus answered, "A woman worthy of grace! Blessed woman! Your faith is great! You will live with your daughter in good health and happiness. From this time of day, a demon of your daughter will be gone forever."

This woman was saved from the Lord. The curse went away and freedom came to her. A new life from heaven was given to her. My dear saints, the Lord is telling us to act like this woman. Follow the Lord but follow until the end. You have to follow through with faith. Even if there are obstacles or discouragements on the way, don't step back. No matter what you say, no matter what pain you have, even if you have a test like a rugged mountain, you have to go toward your goal with strong faith.

This is how you get saved. This is how grace and blessings are received. And through this process, when you go to the Lord, you come to salvation. This is faith and determination. God helps people like this woman. The grace of treatment comes upon them, and they are blessed. God meets those who come with courage and perseverance and makes them experience miracles.

The winning figures in the Bible, the leaders who are used by God, and the successful people in history were the people of faith. But people who fail and are unhappy fall down when they have obstacles. Even small things hurt a great deal, and even the grace received is poured out. Why is misery coming? Because we often fall down when we encounter obstacles. Those who succeed and win are those who overcome any obstacle. Blessings do not come easily. You must overcome and deal with it. Be patient and run to the end to meet the Lord.

Do I need to explain the way Abraham walked? Look at Noah's path. Look at the way Isaac and Jacob walked. Did God ever give a cheap grace? After passing all the difficult and tough tests, they were used by God. Was Joseph blessed easily? Was David easily received grace?

If David had become king easily, his royal authority would be taken away suddenly. The Davidic dynasty was able to bless the whole human race, because David passed all the difficult tests. Faith is hard to get. So you have to keep it precious. You will see the Lord of Victory when you go on patiently toward him to the end.

Many people have studied 'the Bethel Bible' in our church. 1200 students studied, and about 100 students came from rural areas. They came from all over the country

to study: Daejeon, Daegu, Jeonju, Pohang, Sokcho, and Jecheon. They were not absent until the end.

At that time, a deacon who was working for Pohang Steel came to study every week. After finished work on Saturday, he flew in the afternoon and attended. That's great. One Saturday he arrived at the airport and find that the plane cannot fly because of some problem. Then he thought he could drive to Daegu and get on the last flight. So he drove quickly and arrived in Daegu, exactly 1 minute before departure. He prayed, "Lord, I must go today." By the way, what's going on? The departure of the plane was delayed. That day he flew because of the grace of the Lord. Since then, he has never been absent before finishing his studies. He confesses that his life of faith was much easier and more enjoyable after he once experienced God's help. This deacon is now managing director of the company.

If the plane doesn't fly, you might think you can go next week. You may think God will understand it because it's inevitable. Of course, God understands. But God sees in detail all our actions and everything we think.

Anyone who retreats in front of an obstacle always retreats. But the person who advances like the Canaanite woman in the text always jumps over obstacles. The dodger always avoids, but the challenger challenges the end to experience the living of God and experiences the grace and blessings of the Lord.

That's right. You have to work to the end and walk with faith. You have to pray to the end. The Lord gives grace at the end when we take courage and does our best. It is up to the Lord to bless, and it is up to me to follow. I must make a decision. See Naaman. Naaman had to do his job to heal leprosy. Miracles are given by the Lord, but it is my responsibility to follow the Lord to the end.

Everything is in the hands of the Lord. It's the Lord who's holding a life-and-death. When I do what I have to do, the Lord answers my prayers and helps me. I will guard the week and I will pray. Keeping Sunday worship is up to me, gospelizing to others is up to me. Attending worship also is up to me. If you do not do your best, the Lord will not give to you. The Lord bless those who attend church, he gives grace to those who keep the Sunday worship.

I have a friend who is in charge of a big church in Seoul. This pastor served in the army as a military police officer. My friend, who is the pastor's son, finished military training and was assigned to the unit. He said to his platoon "I have to go to church." The platoon leader was angry. He called a platoon together and began to punish them. The military police are famous for their disciplinary punishment. The platoon leader thought that he should give my friend a lesson. It is because no one went to church on Sunday In the military police. "Would you get beaten up and go to church? Would you rather stay quiet and not go to church?" "I will go to church even if I die." "Lie down!" He even fainted because he was beaten too much. The platoon leader asked again when he woke up: "Would you like to go to church?". "Yes, I will." Then the platoon leader gave him permission. "You may go to church until the day of discharge." From then on he was able to attend church.

The Lord does not force us to respect the Sunday. We must willingly respect it. We have to come to the Lord, then he will show us the way. The Lord will not help you if

you step back when you have difficulties, damages, or problems. The Lord opens the way for obedient people, and answers those who cry out in prayer. He bestows blessings to those who choose to respect the Sunday, the joy to those who tithe, and the faith to those who want to live by faith.

In America, there is a world-class hotel called Holiday Inn. The company operates more than 2,600 hotels in 60 countries around the world. The company's former chairman, Mr Kleimer, has pledged to God not to have a gambling house inside the hotel. Generally, hotels have more revenue from gambling houses than from regular rooms. That's why all the hotels are trying to get permission for gambling houses. But while many executives insisted on running the gambling house, Mr Kleimer refused until the end because of his promise to God. Then, this hotel group has been blessed by God all over the globe

My dear saints, if we abandon God's commandments for the sake of materialistic things, God will abandon us. He who respects God will be exalted, but he who strives for earthly wealth will be abandoned by God. On the surface earthly wealth is appealing, but evil comes with it. There are tribulation and testing. On the surface, the building looks like it's going up, but its inside is rotting.

No matter what damages or difficulties, we must live according to the Word. By faith, if you want to do God's will, God will help you to accomplish what you want to achieve. Try to stop your sin. You can stop it. Try to stop drinking. "Please help me stop" Do not speak! Just do it. "I have to quit smoking". Don't speak, just do it. The Lord will help you quit. Didn't the water split when people of Israel stepped into the Jordan river?

Look at the people of Israel. When they came out of Egypt and went to Canaan, God led them by a pillar of cloud, and a pillar of fire. As they travelled through the desert, God made them cross the Red Sea. He made water come from a rock. He sent manna from heaven. He made it possible to cross the Jordan, and he destroyed Jericho. The Lord continuously provided in the needs of the Israelites through miracles.

Christianity is a religion continues to grow. It's an evolving religion. It is a dynamic religion. You have to grow in your faith to resolve your challenges. Is there a feud in your family? If you stagnate, the feud will continue. Try to be a happy and harmonious family. God will help you. I had a family feud. I'm the one who caused the family feud. I tormented my wife. But I repented. Now I love and understand my wife.

I tried to resolve our differences as soon as possible. The usual quarrels and loud voices in our house are gone. It's not up to the Lord. The Lord helps us when we try. Stop drinking. Stop gambling and drugs. Cut off the porn. If you leave it as it is, the Lord will not help you. You must stop before it is too late.

The list of about 170 sexual assaults on minors has been released in the media and on the Internet. One person even raped a three-year-old girl. Sexual desire is like fire. If you don't put out the fire, it will continue to destroy.

The families of those whose names were released were destroyed. Their children are too shy to go to school. The wives ran out of the houses. People cannot live in

such shame. Can one endure that shame for 20 or 30 years? They'll probably die of unbearable heartache. Where can they go? What can they do? Turn off the fire of sexual desire.

Even if you're not ashamed, the fire will burn in any way. "It is ok only except a minor." No, all sin will be judged by God. I saw in the newspaper that fifty per cent of women who work at adult entertainment venues in Seoul have cervical cancer. Thus, a sinful life can result in deadly disease. How alarming is it? Imagine suffering from that decaying body for the rest of your life. Make sure you get off the wrong path quickly. God will help you. When you leave the path of debauchery, blessings await. Even in Christian history, how many have turned away from the path of the prodigal and chose to serve God? Augustine fathered an illegitimate child at the age of 18, but he repented at the age of 30. Romans 13:11-14 tells: "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Augustine became a great leader and the greatest saint in Christian history by turning away from the prodigal son's path. He became one of the three great men along Paul and Calvin. If you turn away, you will see miracles. If you turn away, you will meet the Lord. It takes courage to turn away from sin. It requires valour and faith to end an unrighteous life. Success comes to those who are courageous and steadfast. President Bush of the United States also repented and chose to be guided by God. Any sinner can receive the blessings of the Lord if they repent and change their ways.

Respect the Sunday. Try to come to church, no matter what challenges you may face. Try to come to the early morning prayer. Then the Lord will help. I have attended the early morning prayer since I was young. I rang the bell since I was 18 years old. Though it was difficult to wake up at dawn, I encouraged myself by saying: "I will ring the bell every day for early morning prayer."

From that day on, at the same time in the morning the Lord woke me up. From 1970 to 1980, when I started to serve as a minister at the Sea Church in Seoul I diligently rang the bell for 10 years. If one desires to fulfil the task the Lord has given you, he will give you the strength to do it.

As a child, I always slept in a room with my father. He disapproved of me going to church. My father always scolded me on the day I attend in the early morning prayer. But for a few years, my father did not know that I attend the early morning prayer. This is because the Lord allowed him to fall asleep like Jacob. Though it might be challenging to go to church, the Lord will help you. Decide to honour the Sunday. The Lord will bless you.



“I'm tired, I want to sleep. Why do I have to go to the early morning prayer?” However, the Lord gives us new strength when we turn to him. When we go to church, the Lord strengthens us.

Some people compare faith to a helicopter. Though the helicopter's fuselage is very heavy, once it starts to rotate, the helicopter will lift up. Your burdens might be as heavy as the helicopter's fuselage, but when we come before God to worship him, we, too will be lifted through the help of the Holy Spirit and the power of the word.

God lifts us up through worship so that we can rise in our spiritual lives. Attend worship. Attend the early morning prayer. You will feel your life being lifted up, your health improving, and your family refrain from feuds. Worship will help you to resist sin, and it will calm your anxieties.

Sleeping on Sunday doesn't relieve your tiredness. It is only when you pray before the Lord that true rest is experienced and problems are solved. Be vigilant in your faith. The LORD will free you from all your troubles and prepare the way before you. He will let you soar like an eagle.

We can do it. “Let's respect the Sunday. Let's be good believers! Let's live a glorious life! Let us be blessed!” The LORD holds our hand and helps us. The Lord accompanies us, creates miracles, and helps us to prosper. He fulfils our wish.

Pastor Bang-hyun Shin returned home after 14 years as an Indonesian missionary because his wife had cancer. The life of a missionary's wife is very difficult. She has no freedom to roam. She has no friends to talk to. She can also not eat as much as she wants. Because of these challenging circumstances, many missionary's wives fall ill.

Shin's wife had rectal cancer. The cancer also spread to her liver. Doctors had to remove three quarters of her liver. Despite the attempts to constrain the cancer, it spread to her lungs. How sad is it? She was treated with chemotherapy, but her prognosis was very slim. The doctor informed her that she had approximately three months to live, and that she had to rest at home.

She returned home. However, the air in Seoul is extremely polluted, making it very difficult for such a sick patient to recover. She subsequently relocated to Yangpyeong. One day, Pastor Shin came to me and asked if he could go on vacation. “I think God will call my wife soon. If you give me a month off, I'd like to take care of my wife.” “No problem. Don't worry about church.”

One day Pastor Shin, who was nursing his wife in Yangpyeong, sat at home praying when he heard the voice of God. “Get out! Don't stay in the room, get out!” His wife's eyes were closed most of the time. Again, he heard the voice. “Get out!”

Pastor Shin went out to Paldang Dam. He saw that the fishes swam up in the opposite direction of the flowing water. Without any contemplation he jumped in the water with an inexplicable urge to catch a big fish. It was not easy to catch a fish without equipment, but he managed to catch a fish.

“This is from God! God wants me to give this fish to my wife!”

As we know, it's hard to catch a fish in the flowing water. But he caught the big fish with his bare hands. He cooked the fish and gave it to his wife to eat. As she ate the

fish, she was miraculously revived. From lying motionless, she regained her strength to fulfil her daily duties. How wonderful is God's grace?

We should not be discouraged when we face trying times. If there is a fish, you should do your best to catch and eat it. Cheer up. God fulfils his promises when we are faithful. Christianity is not a complacent religion. It's an ever-evolving religion. Take courage and walk in faith. God uses those who press forward. When you come to church, I believe that all curses will go away, demons will go away, and change, power, and blessing will be bestowed on you.

## **ANNEXURE D – sermon scripts of Hong-do Kim's preaching on suffering**

Title: The cry out of Bartimaeus

Text: Mark 10:46-52

There's Pastor Ki-chang Park in Methodist Church. When he joined the army as a soldier, he was informed that he had applied for long-term service as a career soldier. He was surprised because according to his knowledge, he never applied to be a career soldier. He approached the battalion commander and told him about this situation. The battalion commander told him there was not possible to reverse his application. He was distressed about this situation. But he was told that the commander of the division would visit his battalion. He anxiously awaited the division commander. One day, he saw the car of the division commander approaching. Suddenly he found himself kneeling down in front of the commander's car "I have something to tell you." Surprisingly, the division commander said to him: "Come to my office later!" The next day he went to the commander's office. He was surprised that the commander was willing to meet a low ranking soldier. He explained his predicament to the commander. To his surprise the commander ordered the misunderstanding to be rectified immediately. Fortunately, he could be discharged from the military. When I heard his story, I was moved by his courage and tenacity to approach the commander.

Today's text speaks of an event much greater than this. Bartimaeus was not only a blind He was also a beggar. But he heard that Jesus, the Messiah was passing by on his way to Jericho. He was aware that Jesus healed several sick people. He healed the lepers, and raised the dead. He was hopeful that Jesus would also heal him from his blindness. At the moment that Jesus passed him, he loudly cried out: "Son of David, have mercy on me."

The crowd that was traveling with Jesus scolded him for troubling the Messiah. He shouted even louder. "Son of David, have mercy on me." Then Jesus stood still. As Jesus approached the man, he threw his cloak aside, jumped to his feet, and approached Jesus. Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" He asked this question because he wanted Bartimaeus to proclaim his faith. "Rabbi, I want to see." Jesus replied, "Your faith has healed you."

## 1. A person in a desperate situation.

When all is going well and we face no adversity, we often tend to distance ourselves from God because we are under the impression that we do not need him when all is going well. One can thus say that adversity is a means to keep us close and faithful to God.

### 1) He was blind.

Bartimaeus realised that the only way that his blindness could be healed, was if Jesus showed mercy on him. He was correct. As Jesus said after he healed him, “Your faith has healed you”.

Physical blindness is better than spiritual deafness. Romans 10:17 says: “consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Fortunately, this blind man heard about Jesus and had faith to cry out.

### 2) He was a beggar.

He was a desperate beggar that could not earn a living. All he could do was to sit and beg. But he believed that if he could meet the Messiah, he could be healed, and he could live a normal life. When the opportunity presented itself, he reached out to Jesus, and he was healed from his blindness.

## 2. The cry out of this man

### 1) He cried out in faith.

Although he was blind, he might have had better insight than those who journeyed with Jesus. So, as soon as Jesus came to where he was, he began to cry out. Because he had heard about Jesus, he called out to him, believing that the Messiah would open his eyes.

### 2) He cried out in the name of Jesus

“Son of David, have mercy on me.” When Jesus heard his name being called out, he stood still, approached the man, and healed him because of his faith.

The same applies to us today when we pray in the name of Jesus. “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:13). Jesus said, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14).

### 3) He cried out when he prayed.



Bartimaeus cried out with all his might to stop Jesus. If he had prayed in silence, Jesus might not have heard him. Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder.

You can pray while lying down, you can pray along the way, and you can pray with meditation. But, the most powerful prayer is crying out. This prayer attracts God's attention and stops Jesus. There is even more power in the prayers where more than one unites in prayer.

"O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." Joshua's prayer was the only that was able to make the sun stand still. However, while Joshua's prayer made the sun stop, Bartimaeus' cries made the Lord stop. .

If all the believers of Korea cry out together, we can prevent war and pray for rain, and receive many great blessings. Blessed are the people who choose the living God as their God, a faithful God who answers their prayers.

"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:12-13). If we cry out, you can experience God, like Bartimaeus. God said, "This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it--the LORD is his name: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." For the one who cries out to the Lord, nothing is impossible.

One may perhaps doubt the power spirituality, but it was to those who understood and yearned for greater spirituality and faith that God reached out to and it was their prayers that were answered through the persistence in their faith.

God promised Elijah that he would answer his prayers for rain. Elijah put his head between his knees and prayed seven times before a cloud as big as his hand appeared in the sky. Elijah's persistence paid off.

When Jesus prayed earnestly, though he was the Son of God, the drops of sweat fell like drops of blood. "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). The word "with all your strength" here includes the power of the body. Therefore, crying out in prayer with all one's strength is an expression of one's love for God.

"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God" (Acts 4:24).

"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken" (Acts 4:31).

There are so many examples in the Bible where people prayed out loud. I have witnessed many people who prayed out loud and whose prayers were answered than those who have been praying quietly. A church where the sound of prayer is heard will surely be blessed with persisting growth.

#### 4) A cry for mercy

"Son of David, have mercy on me." Bartimaeus begged. He was merely a blind man dressed in rags, a man with no status, but his faith was sincere.

We must cry out with all our might, but we always pray with sincerity for mercy and kindness.

It is to this kind of faith that Jesus adhere to. It is then when he stands still.

Are there problems in your life? Are you in a desperate environment?

Do not be concerned about your appearance or your status. Jesus Christ is the same today as when Bartimaeus called his name. You can call on Jesus in your home, in your business, or anywhere where you are in need of his grace and mercy, and like he did when Bartimaeus called him, he will stand still and listen to your plea.  
. Halleluiah!

## **ANNEXURE E – sermon scripts of Young-hoon Lee’s preaching on suffering**

Title: Our praise and prayer in times of suffering

Text: Mark 14:26

Praise is one of the privileges and blessings that God has given to Christians. Even when we are sad and dismayed, when we praise the Lord, he will bestow unimaginable comfort upon us. He comforts, encourages, gives us peace, and draws us closer to Him. He helps us to trust and love Him. This is why we need to praise the Lord as often as possible. Martin Luther, the Reformer, once said, “The greatest gift that God has given to us is praise.” It is true. One’s life should be a life of praise. Praise is the stepping stone from earth to heaven. We will leave all other things behind when we leave this world, but we will take our praises with us to heaven. We will praise the Lord forever and ever in heaven.

### 1. God who dwells in our praises

Psalm 22:3 says, “Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel.” When we praise the Lord, He will dwell in our praises, receiving glory from us and bestowing His grace upon us. He takes delight in our praises. The heavenly hosts are praising the Lord even now.”

When Isaiah went to the temple courts, he saw the door of heaven opened and the splendour of heaven. Seraphs were praising the Lord there. Isaiah 6:3 says, “And they were calling to one another; ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’” The seraphs were praising the Lord, saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. God formed us so that we may proclaim His praise. Isaiah 43:21 says, “.... the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.” As God’s chosen people, it is our duty to praise God.

Hudson Taylor is called the father of China Inland Mission. Even though he was born and raised in a Christian home, he moved away from his Christian beliefs until the age of 17. One day, while journeying, he stayed over at a friend His mother pleaded with God for the conversion of her only boy. She became so obsessed with this

desire that she decided she would not leave that room until the Lord answers her prayers. Hour after hour she prayed fervently. Suddenly, she was convinced that God had answered her petitions and that he granted her the desire of her heart.

At the very moment that Taylor's mother was interceding for his soul, he was reading an evangelistic tract pamphlet titled the finished word of Christ. He asked himself, "What was finished?" Taylor read in the pamphlet that Jesus had paid through his death on the Cross the price for our sins. Because of Jesus's crucifixion, we are saved from all our sin and adversities. He thought, "Then, if the work of atonement is finished, what is there left for me to do?" He instantly comprehended God's plan of wondrous salvation. He professed his faith in Christ. Taylor made a resolution to praise and live for the Lord for the rest of his life. He dedicated his life to Christ and became the father of China Inland Mission.

Once we decided to give our lives to God, we will praise him forever. Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name." Praise is our offering of sacrifice to the Lord. The Lord will receive our praises and pour his abundant grace upon us.

When King David was brought the Ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem, he appointed some Levites to give thanks and praises to the Lord, the God of Israel. 1 Chronicles 16:4 says, "He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel." They did not simply praise the Lord, but gave thanks with praises to the Lord. I want you to praise the Lord with thanksgiving.

How did they praise the Lord? 1 Chronicles 16:23 says, "Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day." The book of Psalms is the thickest book in the Bible. It contains the petitions and prayers of the Israelites. They praised the Lord with psalms. Nothing is more important than praises during a worship service. Praise is a prayer with a melody.

Psalms 72:19-20 says, "Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. This concludes the prayers of David, son of Jesse." We must praise God when we are happy or sad, and when things are tough and frustrating. No matter what kind of trouble may burden us, if we give thanks and praises to the Lord, he will delight in our praises and will pour His wondrous grace upon us.

When we praise the Lord in times of sorrow, he will give us comfort, peace, and courage. When we praise the Lord in times of pain and agony, he will give us hope to overcome our troubles. When we praise the Lord in times of joy, he will give us greater joy. The Lord will help us to experience his abundant grace in our lives. Therefore, we must always give thanks and praises to the Lord. God will fill our hearts with joy when we praise him. When we give praise to the Lord, evil spirits will be cast out.

David's praises to God soothed Saul's spirit and the evil spirit that constantly tormented Saul, left. 1 Samuel 16:32 says, "Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he

would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.” Praise has great power. When you praise God, evil spirits will be cast out. Worry, trouble, anxiety, and uneasiness will leave you. You will be filled with marvellous peace from the Lord.

Therefore, we must always give praise to the Lord. When we praise the Lord with thanksgiving in times of sufferings and trouble, God changes our hearts to enjoy both spiritual and physical blessings.

Proverb 4:32 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Indeed, we must guard our thoughts. There is no room for worry, anxiety, or uneasiness in our hearts when we praise the Lord. All our worries from this world will evaporate when we pray and praise the Lord. Hatred cannot enter our hearts when we pray and praise the Lord. This is why we must wake up in the morning and praise the Lord. We must give thanks and praise the Lord when we are driving. We should give thanks and praise to the Lord when we are doing dishes at home. We must make praising a natural part of our life. We must always keep praises on our lips.

When we praise the Lord, we are renewed. As long as we praise, we cannot hate or hold grudges in our hearts. We can have peace when we praise the Lord. Then we can forgive, understand better and comfort one another.

David praised in Psalm 103:1. “Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.”

George Beverly Shea, a famous gospel singer who ministered with the Billy Graham Crusade Team used to be a clerk in Mutual of New York Life Insurance Company. One time, Shea sang on an NBC amateur radio program. That single moment initiated Shea’s fame as a singer. Shea impressed his critics and gained scores of fans, but he still did not feel that he had discovered a true direction for his life.

One Sunday morning, at the age of 23, Shea went to a piano and saw a poem written in his mother’s handwriting. She copied the words of a poem written by Mrs Rhea F. Miller, a wife of Pastor Miller She left it beside the piano, probably hoping that her son will find it. The Holy Spirit touched him as he read that poem. Through eyes glistening with tears, Shea rewrote that poem and composed a song which soon became a famous church hymn, - Hymn Number 102 in our Hymnal. “I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold; I’d rather be His than have riches untold; I’d rather have Jesus than houses or lands; I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand than to be the king of a vast domain, or be held in sin’s dread sway; I’d rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.”

One day, there was a large Crusade in Amsterdam. George Beverly Shea sang praises in front of a large audience. Deeply moved by his praises, people cheered him with a standing ovation. When their applause subsided, Shea responded: “Thank you very much, but I will not trade Christ for your applause.”

It is true. What can we trade Jesus for? As his faithful servants, we should stay humble before the Lord. We should praise Him and live for the glory of God throughout our lives.

## 2. God who wants us to praise Him in times of suffering

Mark 14:26 says, “When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” The night before his crucifixion, after the Last Supper, Jesus sang on the way to the garden of Gethsemane. He went up to the Mount of Olives with praises on His lips. While on route to Gethsemane in the Mount of Olives, Jesus was singing hymns.

Jesus was going to be crucified the following day. One can only imagine how heavy His heart must have felt! But Jesus walked the path of darkness which led to his death, singing hymns rather than lamenting his sorrows. He praised God instead of grumbling to God. Our lives are often strewn with many strained situations. Many problems and temptations we encounter often leave us powerless, sometimes even to the point of preferring death over life. During those times, we should go before the Lord with praises on our lips.

When you cannot pray, praise. When you cannot praise, listen to praises and sing along in your heart. “I love you, Lord. I trust in you! I concentrate on you!” God will perform great wonders for us when we march on, singing hymns.

On the second missionary journey, Paul and Silas went to Philippi to preach the Gospel. There they were falsely accused, beaten, and thrown into prison. Their bodies bore many bruises, aches and pains, but they praised the Lord. Paul and Silas neither grumbled nor complained. Less spiritual people would have protested, “Lord, why should I be persecuted while I am doing your work? It is not fair. How can this happen to me?” But they did not do that.

Acts 16:25 says, “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners listened to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundation of the prison was shaken. At once all the prison doors flung open, and everybody’s chains came loose.”

When we are thrown into a prison of despair, sorrow, and pain, we must praise the Lord. We must pray to God. Then God will shake the foundations of prison of despair. He will open all prison doors and loosen all our chains. Do not worry or be dismayed. The Lord is with you.

In 2 Chronicles Chapter 20, the Moabites along with other nations came to make war in Judah. Judah despaired at the sight of this vast army coming against them, so they prayed. In 2 Chronicles 20:15, God answered: “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. I will receive glory from this.” God promised Judah’s victory. King Jehoshaphat consulted with his people and appointed men to strategically sing to the Lord. These songsters sang and praised the Lord, marching in front of the army. Which army in this world meets a fully equipped enemy with praises? But Judah marched on, confident that they would win the war. They went forward, singing praises to their God.

2 Chronicles 20:21-22 says, “after consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.’ As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against



the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.”

As Judah began to sing and praise, the Lord defeated allied enemies. Judah won that battle without having to use their swords. When allied enemies attack you, when problems sweep over you, praise the Lord. Give thanks to him. Since the battle belongs to God, he will ensure your victory.

Once, while giving a lecture at a conference, Dr Sang-eun Park, President of Sam Medical Clinic, Korea, showed a grotesque picture of a man who looked more like a monster than a human. This man’s whole face was covered with black cancerous lumps. These lumps were like grapes, even covering the man’s eyes and mouth. This picture was a horrible portrayal of humanity. Why did Dr Park show this picture? Dr Park explained that he once treated this patient who was terminally ill of skin cancer. He did not have many days to live, but when Dr Park approached this patient, he heard a humming sound. He was singing a hymn – Hymn number 23 in our Hymnal. “O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise; the glories of my God and Kind; The triumphs of His grace.”

Although this man’s face was horrifically disfigured by skin cancer, and though he was soon to die, he was singing praises to God.

This is what the children of God should do. Christians do not despair or sit back in frustration just because there are problems. Christians should praise the Lord despite of trials and tribulations. I want you to praise the Lord. When you are sad or in pain, or even when you might be facing death, I pray that you will sing praises to the Lord and, thus overcome all forms of despair, problems, and difficulties.

Psalm 40:2-3 says, “He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.”

We continuously encounter many unexpected problems in the course of our lives. As there are high tides and ebb tides at the shores, so are problems which come with rage only to retreat. Indeed, it is difficult for us to cope with all the problems that come our way. However, praise the Lord whenever you encounter problems. Pray to the Lord. He will solve all your problems. When you are perplexed, powerless to do anything, praise and pray to God. Ask for his help. As Jesus sang a hymn before he was crucified, offer the sacrifice of praises to the Lord.

### 3. God who wants us to pray in times of suffering

Jesus went to a small place on a hill called Gethsemane and began to pray. He fervently prayed to God. We must pray when we face problems. We will not be able to solve any problems if we do not pray.

Mark 14:23-34 says, “They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, ‘sit here while I pray.’ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,’ he said to them. ‘Stay here and keep watch.’” Jesus

said, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” Why did he say that? He knew that he would be crucified the following morning. He knew that he would have to take all the sin of humankind and die on the Cross. His relationship with God would be severed on the Cross. In fact, on the Cross, Jesus cried out to God, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

There is no other place in the Bible where Jesus called God “My God” He always called and referred to God as “father”, On the Cross, when Jesus took on himself all the sin of humankind, he called to God “My God” only once in the Bible. On the cross, Jesus was so disfigured and marred that God turned his face from him.

Knowing what would happen to him, Jesus said, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” Luke 22:44 says, “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” Hebrews 5:7 says, “During the days of Jesus’ life in earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” But during this most painful time, the disciples slept. His disciples were sleeping while their Lord was praying so fervently that his sweat fell like drops of blood on the ground. During his greatest moment of despair, Jesus prayed alone.

Mark 14:36 says. “Abba, Father. Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Jesus walked alone along the path of death with the Cross – a path no one else could walk. There are times when we feel lonely and weary in serving the Lord. At such times, turn to Jesus. He will comfort you. He will be with you. He wants you to be a testimony to his grace. I urge you to cry out to the Lord in prayer in times of trouble. Jeremiah 33:3 says, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

According to 2 King Chapter 20, King Hezekiah wept bitterly and prayed to God. On the fourteenth year of his reign, when Hezekiah was only 39, he was deadly ill. The prophet Isaiah went to him and said, “Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” Hezekiah was shocked, “I am too young to die.” So, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked faithfully before you with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes. Look at my tears and make me live. Extend my life, Lord.” Hezekiah wept bitterly. What prayer is stronger and more fervent than that of a dying man? Hezekiah fervently prayed, and God subsequently added fifteen years to his life.

Are you surrounded by a wall of hopelessness, sorrow or death? Or are you surrounded by a wall of disease? If so, you’re your face to the wall you are facing and pray to the Lord. “Lord, save me. Have mercy on me. Give me another chance.” Then that wall will collapse. A wall of hope will replace any wall of hopelessness. A wall of joy will replace a wall of sorrow. A wall of health will replace a wall of disease. Cry out to the Lord. Do not despair. Do not give up. Do not retreat. I pray in the name of the Lord that you would march forward with praise, prayer, and thanksgiving, keeping our eyes fixated on Jesus.