

The preacher as listener: A practical theological study of obedient-listening in the preaching praxis of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa

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Declaration

I, Geoffrey Mark Gertzen, declare that “The preacher as listener: A practical theological study of obedient-listening in the preaching praxis of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at the North-West University for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Geoffrey Mark Gertzen

10 November 2023

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I am grateful that Christ Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!

I am constantly staggered that Jesus would do that for me!

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Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika.

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to contribute to bridging the gap between the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church's (REACH-SA) commitments to reaching all of South Africa and the uneven praxis of church development within the denomination in recent decades. The study uses Osmer's method of Pastoral Theology to investigate REACH-SA's preaching praxis in order to discover whether this might be a contributing factor to the problem. The research question applied was: *Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?* Perspectives from neighbour sciences were considered to develop a definition of preaching as *the heard word (of Jesus Christ) spoken to a heard people*. African worldview perspectives reminded that preachers must not be viewed as individuals but must be considered as members of *both* current and historical communities. Normative perspectives elucidate that God's demand for obedient-listening profoundly resonates throughout the Scriptures and that this must shape current homiletical praxis. The research also investigated preaching models from Moses, Israelite history, Jesus and the New Testament in order to develop considerations for improved preaching praxis. The pragmatic perspectives developed a tool to aid sermon improvement for REACH-SA preachers.

Keywords: Preaching, Homiletics, Obedient-listening, Expository Preaching, Asymmetric Listening, Heidelberg Method of Sermon Analysis, Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of Southern Africa (REACH-SA).

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing poog om by te dra om die gaping tussen die Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church (REACH-SA) se verpligtinge om die hele Suid-Afrika te bereik en die ongelyke praktyk van kerkontwikkeling binne die denominasie in die afgelope dekades te oorbrug. Die studie gebruik Osmer se metode van Pastorale Teologie om REACH-SA se predikingspraksis te ondersoek om te ontdek of dit 'n bydraende faktor tot die probleem kan wees. Die navorsingsvraag wat toegepas is, was: Toon preke wat binne REACH-SA gepreek word gehoorsaam-luister na God, voortspruitend uit 'n gehoorde woord en 'n vaardige etnografiese analise van Suid-Afrikaanse kompleksiteit wat by 'n gehoorde volk aanklank vind? Perspektiewe uit buurwetenskappe is beskou om 'n definisie van prediking as *die gehoorde woord (van Jesus Christus) wat tot 'n gehoorde volk gespreek word*. Afrika-wêreldbeskouingsperspektiewe het daaraan herinner dat predikers nie as individue beskou moet word nie, maar as lede van beide huidige en historiese gemeenskappe beskou moet word. Normatiewe perspektiewe verduidelik dat God se eis vir gehoorsaam-luister diep in die Skrif resoneer en dat dit die huidige homiletiese praktyk moet vorm. Die navorsing het ook predikingsmodelle uit Moses, Israelitiese geskiedenis, Jesus en die Nuwe Testament ondersoek ten einde oorwegings vir verbeterde predikingspraktyke te ontwikkel. Die pragmatiese perspektiewe het 'n hulpmiddel ontwikkel om preekverbetering vir REACH-SA-predikers te help.

Sleutelwoorde: Prediking, Homiletiek, Gehoorsaam-luister, Verklarende Prediking, Asimmetriese Luister, Heidelbergse metode van preekanalise, Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of Southern Africa (REACH-SA).

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CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Theological, personality and ecclesiastical conflicts amongst Anglicans in South Africa during the 19th Century resulted in two denominations in Southern Africa with historical roots derived from the Church of England (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:85)¹, namely the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA)² and The Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (REACH-SA).³ As the complex conflicts unfolded, individual congregations affiliated with either denominational grouping (Ive, 1992:52-58), with the vast majority of churches becoming affiliated with ACSA.⁴ One of the main controversies revolved around the relationship between Bishops Robert Grey and John Colenso. Grey and Colenso had vastly different theological views (Shaw & Gitau 2020:204; Roy, 2017:100–102), missionary strategies (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994:84) and they disagreed on the shape that the Anglican witness in Southern Africa was to take (Ive, 1992:19). Colenso was a champion of the Hlubi and Zulu peoples. He was nicknamed both ‘Sobantu’ (father of the people) and ‘Soululeka (father who brings freedom) (Houser 2010:16). He stood in protest (Guy, 1983:353) against racial oppression (Guy, 1983:356) and was branded a ‘political mischief-maker’ by his opponents (Guy, 1983:344). He often opposed the brutality and duplicity of the colonial authorities advocating for justice for chiefs Langalibalele and Cetshwayo (Guy, 1983:225-232, 272-289), as well as advocating for the wellbeing of the entire Zulu nation (Shaw & Gitau 2020:204).⁵ Colenso’s contribution in South African linguistics is significant. Guided by William Ngidi (Vilakazi 2002:35-36), he was responsible for significant pioneering linguistic work in Zulu including a dictionary, the first grammar and the first translation of the New Testament (Ive, 1992:34; Roy 2017:100–102). As a result, many Zulu speaking congregations remained loyal to him, and together with other congregations across South Africa, they formed the present-day REACH-SA. At the beginning of the 20th Century, REACH-SA comprised a small number of suburban English-speaking churches together with this larger group of Zulu-speaking churches (Ive, 1992:70-73; REACH-SA, 2019).

In the 1970s and 1980s REACH-SA was to experience extensive numerical growth under the leadership and ministries of Bishops Joe Bell and Frank Retief, which resulted in significant church planting in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal (Brown, 1998:84).⁶ This church planting later spilled over into Gauteng, the Eastern Cape and the Free State. As this church development

¹ The legal position established by *Merriman vs Williams* in 1880, “ruled that the CPSA had separated itself from the Church of England ‘root and branch’” (Ive, 1992:54).

² ACSA was formerly called the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA).

³ REACH-SA was formerly called the Church of England in South Africa (CESA).

⁴ Mandryk (2010:758) estimates ACSA to have 1563 churches and REACH-SA to have 146 churches.

⁵ Colenso’s growing love and affection for the people that he was to serve is evident in his writings even though it is recorded in language that is offensive today. See *Ten Weeks in Natal* (1855).

⁶ Brown (1998:84) estimates that St James Church under the leadership of Frank Retief planted 22 churches in that time.

has unfolded it has been noticeable that the vast majority of churches planted have occurred in English-speaking, suburban contexts; and in Zulu-speaking, rural contexts in KwaZulu-Natal. With only a few exceptions; significant church planting has not occurred in the township areas of South Africa.⁷ REACH-SA is however committed to growth and development of churches across all of South Africa and the African continent. In 1989, REACH-SA founded George Whitefield College for the training and development of its ministers (George Whitefield College, 2019). The college has the stated vision,

That Africa be filled with preachers and teachers who deeply love the Lord Jesus and who have a profound understanding of Scripture, in order that Africa may increase its share in the Kingdom of God (George Whitefield College, 2019).

In his opening charge at Synod 2018, REACH-SA Presiding Bishop Glenn Lyons said,

On this 80th anniversary of the adoption of our CESA Constitution, I'm reminded of the many trials and challenges that our forerunners faced and overcame, with God's help, to bring us to where we are today. By His grace we stand today as a strong fellowship of Reformed Evangelical Anglican churches who, along with our College (GWC) are making significant ministry impact not just on Evangelical witness in SA but across the African continent (Lyons, 2018:1).

He concluded with the prayer, "Lord, give us Africa for Jesus. iAfrika mayibuyele ku Jesu." (Lyons, 2018:16).

1.2 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This research seeks to contribute to bridging the gap that exists between the REACH-SA denominational commitments to reaching all of South Africa's complicated diversity and the uneven praxis of church planting and development within the denomination in recent decades. This study aims to investigate whether preaching might be one contributing component in what is a multi-faceted and complex problem comprising questions of legacy, history, power-structures, financial-considerations, denominational models, church models as well as language usage. This research seeks to examine a small component of the preaching praxis within REACH-SA in order to better understand the state of preaching within REACH-SA and then to contribute proposals in order to encourage change if required. In addition, this research seeks to contribute to the

⁷ REACH-SA website (2019:Churches) lists 118 churches in South Africa. Excluding KwaZulu-Natal churches, only 21 churches are listed from township areas.

pedagogical debate on the training of preachers for ministry in South African (and African) contexts where Eurocentric and western models have often dominated.

1.3 STATUS OF RESEARCH

Three areas for further research were identified in the preliminary literature study.

1.3.1 Listening-Obedience

The Bible⁸ introduces a God who speaks.⁹ He spoke historically, “at many times and in many ways,” (Hebrews 1:1) and he continues to speak presently (Knox, 1988:14–21).¹⁰ Pelikan (2005:9) says,

On this, at least, Jews and Christians are in agreement...the God of the Bible is the God who speaks.

The Bible calls humanity to respond to the speaking God with listening-obedience (Heb: שמע).¹¹ The Biblical meta-narrative is exquisitely interwoven with the interplay of God’s word spoken and the corresponding expectation of listening-obedience. Creation explodes into existence at the word of God.¹² Humanity, the pinnacle of God’s creation, is spoken-out and spoken-to¹³ but catastrophically fails to listen.¹⁴ God’s redemptive plan is spoken in covenant to Abram¹⁵ and the patriarchs¹⁶ whose listening-obedience is falteringly inconsistent. Rescued Israel is spoken to at Sinai¹⁷ and called to hear and obey.¹⁸ They are promised protection and priesthood but instead grumble, fail to hear and turn away.¹⁹ Moses reaffirms this call on the Plains of Moab²⁰ summarised in the שמע of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Joshua makes a similar call with similar warnings for failure.²¹

Saul is urged to,

Fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD. (1 Samuel 12:14)

⁸ All Bible references are taken from The Holy Bible. English Standard Bible. 2003. Crossway: Wheaton.

⁹ Blanchard (1987:6) estimates that the Old Testament contains over 4000 phrases like ‘the LORD spoke/commanded/said’.

¹⁰ Ps 95:7; Heb 1:1-12; 4:12-13

¹¹ Theologians have not always been in agreement as to the appropriate response to God’s speaking. For example, see Coggan’s (1987:20) call to ‘the silence of worship’ as the appropriate response.

¹² Gen 1

¹³ Gen 1:28-30; 2:16

¹⁴ Gen 2-3. Brueggemann (1989:18) perceptively points out that the opening narrative of the Bible ends in Genesis 11:1-9 with the terrible declaration that “they did not listen.”

¹⁵ Gen 12,15

¹⁶ Gen 28:13-15

¹⁷ Ex 19:5

¹⁸ Ex 15:26, 19:5, 23:21; Lev 26:21-27

¹⁹ Ex 15:24,32

²⁰ Deut 4:1,6,14; 5:1

²¹ Jos 3:9, 5:6; Jud 2:2, 6:10

Saul fails to heed this call and is rejected as king because he does not listen nor obey.²² David is rebuked for despising the word of the Lord.²³ Solomon and subsequent kings are called to walk in the ways, statutes and commandments of the Lord²⁴ but the prophets complain that neither the kings, nor the nation, listen to God, nor attend to his word, and as a result of not ‘hearing’ they do not trust him nor obey his commands.²⁵ This culminates in the Assyrian exile, when the author of 2 Kings, in summarising the reasons for God’s judgement on the northern kingdom of Israel, records an extensive list of sinful violations committed by God’s chosen people. In the face of all the evil committed, God had warned them repeatedly but, “they would not listen,” and they did not believe/trust his word.²⁶ As a result, the author summarises (Hobbs 1985:254) that God’s judgement came because they, “did not obey the voice of the LORD their God”.²⁷ This failure to listen and obey is poignantly contrasted with Judah’s king Josiah who, “heard the words of the Book of the Law,” tore his clothes and obeyed.²⁸

The New Testament begins with the incarnated word (*λογος*) made flesh.²⁹ God’s call to humanity is now to listening-obedience through attending to Jesus his son,³⁰ as suffering, crucified and resurrected, Messiah-king.³¹ After the resurrection, the church explodes through the Spirit-empowered proclamation begun at Pentecost (Brown & Powery, 2016:3). The multilingual, resurrection word is spoken by the apostles which results in people hearing and obeying.³² The word spreads³³ (Longenecker, 1981:233-234) so that even the Gentiles hear and obey³⁴ while others fail to hear.³⁵ The writer to the Hebrews reminds his hearers of God speaking³⁶ through his Son and then calls his listeners to continue hearing and obeying.³⁷ As the Biblical record concludes, the ascended Jesus, calls his church to have ears to hear.³⁸

Snodgrass (2002:11) summarises the interplay between word-spoken and listening-obedience when he says,

The Biblical text itself gives priority to hearing...The biggest complaint in Scripture is that people do not listen to God...Of all the commands, expectations, and desires

²² 1 Sam 15:19-24, 28:18

²³ 2 Sam 12:9

²⁴ 1 Kin 3:14

²⁵ 1 Kin 11:38; 2 Kin 18:12; Psa 81, 95, 106; Isa 1:2, 6:10, 30:9; Jer 2:4, 3:13,25; 7:23, 11:4-10, 17:23; 22:5; 25:4-8, 29:19, 35:13, 37:2, 42:21, 44:5,23; Eze 3:7-11, 27; Dan 9:6-14; Hos 9:17; Zec 7:11-13)

²⁶ 2 Kin 17:9-17

²⁷ 2 Kin 18:12

²⁸ 2 Kin 22:11

²⁹ John 1:14

³⁰ Matt 7:24-26; 11:15; 13:9-23; 17:5; Mark 4; 9:7; Luke 6:47-49, 8:8-18; 9:35; John 8:47

³¹ Mark 8:31; 9:9, 12,31; 10:34,45; 14:21,41

³² Acts 2

³³ Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20; 28:30-31

³⁴ Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8; 10; Rom 10:14

³⁵ Acts 28:26-28; Rom 11:8

³⁶ Heb 1

³⁷ Heb 3:7,15; 4:7

³⁸ Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,20,22

that God has for humans, the most frequent and important is hearing, the recognition of God as the Other to whom we should give attention and listen.

Snodgrass (2002:9) notices that this call for a 'hermeneutic of hearing' has often been argued for by philosophers and Biblical scholars.³⁹ De Cavel (2019:20), however, notices a lack of empirical research when this subject is related to the task of homiletics when he says that,

(His) theological interest in the listening preacher is not in itself original, although it has been the subject of little empirical research in an Evangelical context.

Bartholomew (2015:18) draws attention to a divide between the academic disciplines of Biblical Studies and Theology when he notices differences in understandings of the underlying nature of Scripture and how to receive it. He suggests that Western academic study concentrates on analysis while Scripture asks to be heard as God's address (Bartholomew, 2015:18). Western, scientific thought with its Enlightenment legacy over-privileges sight while under-emphasising listening (Bartholomew, 2015:19,24). This elevates right method over the submissive, hearing relationship announced in Scripture (Bartholomew, 2015:25). Quicke (2003:38) calls for a holistic engagement with Scripture that, "captures head and heart, intellect and imagination, emotions and will." He suggests that many preachers are trained in the discipline of exegesis and thus have a tendency to engage it only with their minds, so that their preaching becomes cerebral, while others focus on feelings and emotions, and fail to engage the mind (Quicke, 2003:39). Barth describes the complexity of actually listening to Scripture (1991:97). He describes preachers who listen to Scripture, as preachers who trust it, respect it, read it with attention (giving attention to context (1991:98)) in order to submit their ideas to its correction, and then to be moved by God's word (1964:89-92).

This research seeks to further develop, within the discipline of homiletics, Snodgrass's call for a 'hermeneutics of hearing' with its corresponding and consequent call for a 'hermeneutic of obedience'. Snodgrass (2002:9) calls for less self-centred speaking and more attention to be given to a deep hearing of the inscripturated voice of God which calls creation to listen, trust and obey. This research seeks to specifically investigate whether preaching within REACH-SA is characterised by the obedient-listening demanded throughout the Biblical meta-narrative.

1.3.2 Preaching within REACH-SA

No research could be found on the status of preaching within REACH-SA.⁴⁰

³⁹ Snodgrass (2002:9) lists philosophers Gadamer, Betti, Levinas, Ricouer, Thiselton and Vanhoozer, as well as Biblical scholars Stuhlmacher, Meyer, Hays, Wright, O'Collins and Kendall as examples of scholars emphasising careful listening.

⁴⁰ Research on REACH-SA has been concentrated in four areas:-

1.3.3 Preaching within an African Context

Homiletics wrestles at the intersection of the eternal and the temporal (Coggan, 1987:139). It grapples with the mystery of a word spoken that is both folly and power. The apostle Paul describes authentic preaching as folly (*μωρία*) and a stumbling block (*σκανδαλον*) but also as power (*δυναμις*) and the wisdom of God (*σοφία*).⁴¹ Campbell and Cilliers (2012:1) summarise one aspect of this mystery when they say, “The gospel is foolishness. Preaching is folly. Preachers are fools...”

Developing the folly of preaching they notice that (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:20),

Theologically, it was unimaginable that the Messiah-the-Christ-would be crucified. Philosophically, it was unthinkable that the divine would hang in the flesh on a cross. Politically, it was inconceivable that the Messiah would liberate Israel through crucifixion by the very empire from which liberation was expected. And culturally, it was impossible that one shamed on the cross could be honoured as the Christ.

As homiletics grapples with the complexity of its task of declaring an incarnated deity and a suffering, crucified Messianic-king (Long, 2008:6) to a world concerned with other seemingly more pressing agendas, homiletics wrestles with its own legitimacy and efficacy. It seeks to cultivate proficiency, excellence and power while also acknowledging the folly and scandal inherent within its message. Western homiletics grapples with this dichotomy while also navigating through Post-Modern disruptions of Modernist certainty (Lose, 2003:1-29). Western homiletics is unavoidably shaped by Enlightenment individualism and human autonomy (Fleming, 2005:316; Williams, 1988:224). It grapples with the rapid emergence of media as the primary source of authority for a post-literate, visually-orientated society that is increasingly characterised by secondary-orality

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- i. The schism between CESA and CPSA. The historical background and their international consequences have been well researched. See for example Ive, A. 1992 *A Candle Burns in Africa*: Gillitts: Church of England in South Africa and Vilakazi, MJ. 2002. *A Critical Analysis of Community Priesthood in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa with Special Reference to the Black Community Priesthood of the Diocese of Natal*. MTh Thesis. Durban: University of Durban-Westville: 13-49, amongst many others. Also, many references in historical works on South African and Anglican church history contain sections on the conflict. See for example Roy, K. 2017. *The Story of the Church in South Africa*. Carlisle: Langham: 99-102.
 - ii. Extensive research has been done on the life, writings and contribution of John Colenso. See for example Cox, GW. 1888. *The life of John William Colenso, D.D.: bishop of Natal*. London: W. Ridgway; Draper, JA. 2003. "The Trial of Bishop John William Colenso". In Draper, JA. (ed.). *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Inspiration*. London: A&C Black; Guy, J. 1983. *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Hinchliff, P. 1964. *John William Colenso: Bishop of Natal*. London: Nelson; Rowse, A. L. 1989. *The Controversial Colenso*. Dyllansow Truran.
 - iii. Some research has taken place on the contribution of REACH-SA/CESA in the South African political arena. See for example Balcomb, A. 2004. From Apartheid to the New Dispensation: Evangelicals and the Democratization of South Africa. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34(1):5-38.
 - iv. Some initial research has been attempted on St James Church, Kenilworth and the ministry of Frank Retief. This is an area for further study, especially as regards to the influence, contribution and preaching of Frank Retief. See Brown, JA. 1998. *The Seed and the Harvest*. Cape Town: St James Church.

⁴¹ Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 1:17-25

(Quicke, 2003:43; 78-85). Battle (1997:59) references Desmond Tutu's observations that Western thought is preoccupied with power and that it determines human value in materialistic terms (Battle 1997:36). Western homiletics operates in the context of economic prosperity and significant Christian decline (Quicke, 2003:34-36; Wilson, 2008:8). It has presented possible solutions by challenging preachers to better congregational or cultural understanding (Tisdale, 1997) and giving better attention to the historical and sociological aspects of preaching (Long, 2008:15). The 'New Homiletic' has challenged the monotonous similarity of much preaching birthed within a Western framework (Craddock, 2001:143-44; Greidanus, 1988:16-23). The 'New Homiletic' has reimagined preachers designing their sermons in line with the richness of Biblical forms and literature, with a significant re-emphasis on narrative theology and sermon forms (Buttrick, 1987:484). Craddock (2001) has been instrumental in calling preachers to experiment with inductive designs for sermon structure and to rediscover an emphasis on narrative preaching.

African homiletics, however, grapples with different questions. In stark contrast to the West, the African church is exhibiting significant quantitative growth and vibrancy (Galgalo, 2018:75,82; Mbewe, 2017:189). This numerical strength is however often characterised by what Galgalo (2018:78) calls 'a psychopathic personality disorder' and what Tutu (1987:47-58) calls 'religious schizophrenia'. Galgalo (2018:78-79) and Ikenye (2018:37) highlight that African Christians are curiously accommodating of beliefs and ethics that are irreconcilable so that in moments of crisis they often revert to systems and solutions proposed by African Traditional Religion. African homiletics speaks into the continuing dehumanising legacy of generations of colonial subjugation, racial discrimination and economic inequality. African homiletics challenges notions of human identity and value where the image of God (*imago dei*) has been undermined and belittled so that the notion of African inferiority is imprinted onto the human psyche (Battle, 1997:23). African homiletics cannot escape its context of grinding poverty and political corruption (De Wet & Kruger, 2013; Galgalo 2018:90; Kruger & Pieterse, 2016). It must also grapple with Biblical interpretations that have been derived to justify Western oppression (Mitchell, 1990:21) and which contain ongoing blind spots that fail to acknowledge Western bias (Brown, 1984; Richards & O'Brien, 2012). African homiletics speaks to worldviews that are characterised by Ubuntu⁴², which challenge individualism and emphasise respect of others (Cilliers, 2008:2); seeing the individual as a part of relational community in communion with others (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:48-52) who are not only living but also dead (Nhiwatiwa 2012b:14). Tutu defines Ubuntu as a worldview when he says (Battle 1997:38-53),

⁴² Gade (2012:488-492) concludes that Ubuntu is sometimes defined as a positive moral quality and at others as a philosophy, ethic and worldview.

A person is not basically an independent solitary entity. A person is human precisely in being enveloped in the community of other human beings, in being caught up in the bundle of life. To be is to participate.

Ikenye⁴³ (2018:33,48) calls for the contextualisation of pastoral theology which he calls 'reframing' in order to meet African Christians at their point of need. He says that contextualisation is rooted in a dissatisfaction with traditional models (Ikenye, 2018:36). He suggests that African pastoral theology has neglected the African complexity of being (Ikenye, 2018:39) and recommends a research paradigm that applies the essentials of the Christian faith in the African context (Ikenye, 2018:48). Nhiwatiwa (2012:b:18) calls for a 'village theology' that hears the realities of African daily life and results in an 'in-depth connection' with one another. Fleming (2005:297) asserts that the New Testament witness to Christ is not a theological monologue but a chorus of voices sung in different keys that allows the gospel to be expressed in a variety of ways and flexible forms in order to engage differing contexts. He calls for preachers to consider how to articulate the gospel in ways that resonate with their particular audience (Fleming, 2005:321). In responding to post-modernism, Fleming calls for different understandings of community, story and the use of imagination (2005:316-317). Similarly, Mbiti (1994:27-38) notices that storytelling has always resonated within oral cultures, and reminds that orality has been "the central vehicle of African culture." He calls for this fact to be, "appreciated, exploited and sustained" (Mbiti, 1994:31).

This research seeks to take further the challenge issued by Ikenye (2018), Nhiwatiwa (2012b) and Fleming (2005). It seeks to understand the shape of REACH-SA's preaching praxis, endeavouring to understand whether and how it might be shaped by Western philosophical, sociological, cultural and historical considerations so as to perhaps be mono-cultural, Eurocentric and possibly egocentric (Ikenye 2018:41) which might in turn contribute to limitations in church development.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Research Problem

Faithful preaching requires obedient-listening to the voice of God via the text of Scripture, leading to a deep, incarnational listening of South Africa's complicated and multi-faceted diversity. This obedient-listening by the preacher who operates in community then gives rise to appropriate sermon forms and styles which facilitate the obedient-listening of the congregation. This research seeks to examine REACH-SA's preaching praxis in order to better understand whether REACH-SA's preaching displays these two forms of obedient-listening. It then seeks to understand if

⁴³ Ikenye writes in the context of 'pastoral care'

deficiencies in obedient-listening might be contributing factors to REACH-SA's uneven praxis of church planting and church development.

1.4.2 Research Question

The question to be answered by this research is:

Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a *heard word* and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a *heard people*?

Further questions that arise from the Research Question are:

1. What is the present situation in REACH-SA preaching praxis?⁴⁴ (Descriptive-Empirical Perspective).
2. How do REACH-SA preachers demonstrate obedient-listening to God via the text of Scripture?⁴⁵ (Interpretive Perspective).
3. How does the ethnographic analysis shown in sermons preached by REACH-SA preachers reflect a heard people?⁴⁶ (Interpretive Perspective).
4. Does the demand for Obedient-Listening resonate throughout the Scriptures and how does this shape homiletical praxis (Normative Perspective)?
5. What cognitive, affective and behavioural changes in REACH-SA preaching praxis should emanate from the conclusions derived (Pragmatic Perspective)?

1.4.3 Research Aim

The aim of the research is to investigate whether sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a *heard word* and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a *heard people*.

1.4.4 Research Objectives

In order to achieve the research aim, the following objectives will form the basis of this study:

⁴⁴ Further questions to be considered here include: What is preaching? What is good preaching? What historical and theological influences have led to the present preaching situation in REACH-SA?

⁴⁵ Further questions to be considered here include: Do REACH-SA preachers show an awareness of their own worldview presuppositions and how these influence their homiletical choices?

⁴⁶ Further questions to be considered here include: Do the engagement components of sermons preached by REACH-SA preachers, seen in the introduction, illustration and application components, display 'over-listening' or 'under-listening' to the voice of the assembled congregation in the post-apartheid South African context? What 'Cultural Intelligence' (Kim, 2017) and incarnational sensitivity is displayed by REACH-SA preachers?

1. The Descriptive-Empirical research has the objective of providing descriptive and empirical perspectives on the state of preaching within REACH-SA.
2. The Interpretive research will investigate the personal presuppositions of preachers with the objective of ascertaining whether REACH-SA preachers show an awareness of their own worldview presuppositions and how these influence their hermeneutics.
3. The Interpretive research will furthermore seek to analyse the present preaching praxis of REACH-SA with the objective of understanding whether preachers *hear* their congregations and whether they display an awareness of the influence that historical community plays upon their homiletical praxis.
4. The Normative component of this research has the objective of developing whether the demand for obedient-listening resonates throughout the Scriptures and how it ought to be applied in the preaching praxis of REACH-SA preachers.
5. The Strategic/Pragmatic perspective has the objective of making proposals for cognitive, affective and behavioural change in REACH-SA preaching praxis.

1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this research is that God calls humanity to obedient-listening of his living voice which should then give shape to REACH-SA preaching so that a *heard word* is spoken to a *heard people*.

1.6 INITIAL HYPOTHESIS

It is the initial hypothesis of this study that REACH-SA preachers display a commitment to hearing the voice of God shown in a broad commitment to expository preaching. It is further surmised that REACH-SA preachers show a comfort with a deductive approach to preaching and prefer argument and teaching as their preaching styles of choice. REACH-SA preaching, while displaying a commitment to Scripture, may often exhibit Eurocentric and western bias shown in language usage, rhetorical praxis, choice or lack of illustrations and in the applications proposed. It is furthermore assumed that preachers are often unaware of the presuppositions that they bring to the preaching task and this possibly prevents them from exhibiting a deep, incarnational listening to South Africa's complicated and multi-faceted diversity. These deficiencies may be significant hindrances to ministry in South Africa's complexity.

1.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This research seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of the state of preaching within REACH-SA in order to lead to improvements in the training of preachers so as to improve church development.

Secondly, by the ongoing development of normative Biblical foundations for preaching, this research seeks to allow God's call on humanity to obedient-listening to his living voice to shape REACH-SA preaching as a *heard word* spoken.

Thirdly, this research seeks to contribute towards the further development of an appropriate African, ethnographic analysis that must underpin the preaching task so that the *heard word* from the living God is spoken to a *heard people*.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Introduction

Practical theology is an interdisciplinary science, incorporating social and human sciences, which studies expressions of faith within their complex cultural contexts and aims at an improved understanding of lived religion and faith practices (Wepener, Dreyer & Meylahn, 2017:135-138). The goal of practical theology is to be both contemplative and transformative. It starts with inadequate practice, moves to theory and then returns to life. Pastoral theology seeks to better understand a concrete situation using social sciences to analyse human activity, in the light of Biblical norms and the faith community's historical reflections on the Scriptures; and then to apply these theological maxims to real world situations by developing models, actions, tools and strategies so as to bring healing (Wepener et al., 2017:136) and the gospel's transformational activity into the world (Smith, 2008:204) as it narrows the gap between what 'is' and what 'ought to be' (Woodbridge, 2014:95).

A variety of models are proposed for research in practical theology. Dingemans (1996) proposes an interdisciplinary model that begins with *description* and *analysis* of the situation, then seeks an *explanation* of that situation by hypothesis, followed by *normative* formulation and concludes with *improvements* seeking transformation (Dingemans, 1996:92). Browning's model begins with an *identification* of theory-laden practice, then *reflects* on the crisis perceived, leading to a *re-examination* of the sacred texts, events and norms, and concludes with *re-constructed* meaning and practice (Browning, 1996:6). Ballard and Pritchard's model formulates a 'pastoral cycle' of *exploration and description, analysis, reflection* and *response*. EDNA is a more recent approach proposed by Woodbridge (2014). This model involves a synthesis and reworking of other models which is, "grounded in evangelical theology, in which the Bible serves as the normative basis"

(Woodbridge, 2014:93). It seeks to develop four tasks namely *exploration*, *description*, *norms* and *application* with a strong emphasis on the Bible serving as the basis for normative formulation. All models of pastoral theology are grounded in a dissatisfaction, with a perceived deficiency in an existing *status quo*, leading to an investigation of the situation and an attempt to identify and define a better solution.

This research will use the model formulated by Richard Osmer (2008) because of its wide acceptance and because Osmer's model seeks not to over-simplify existing praxis. Osmer proposes four tasks for research in practical theology:

- The *descriptive-empirical* task of priestly-listening which asks, 'What is going on?'
- The *interpretive* task of sagely-wisdom which seeks reasons behind current praxis as it formulates, 'Why is it going on?'
- The *normative* task of prophetic-discernment which seeks a better way by asking, 'What ought to be going on?'
- The *pragmatic* task of servant-leadership which identifies areas for change and in asking, 'how might we respond?' seeks transformation of the current praxis.

The table below summarises the basic functions of each task as proposed by Osmer.

Area of Research	Descriptive-Empirical	Interpretive	Normative	Pragmatic
Question	What is going on?	Why is it going on?	What <i>ought to</i> be happening?	How might we <i>respond</i> ?
Function	Priestly-listening	Sagely-wisdom	Prophetic-discernment	Servant-leadership

Table 1: Osmer's four areas of research in practical theology

Each component of Practical Theological research, as described in Osmer's model, is distinct, but the four areas are closely interrelated and thus 'interpenetrate' (Osmer 2008:10). The process of research in Practical Theology is seldom linear but might more aptly be described as a hermeneutical circle or spiral where each task is distinct and separate so that they mutually interact and influence the other components, constantly circling back to re-explore and deepen understanding (Osmer, 2008:10-11; Smith, 2010:96; Woodbridge, 2014:97). The research

process moves between the tasks, revisiting and re-evaluating as each task sheds light and understanding on the others.

Osmer (2008:11) represents this interaction using the following diagram:

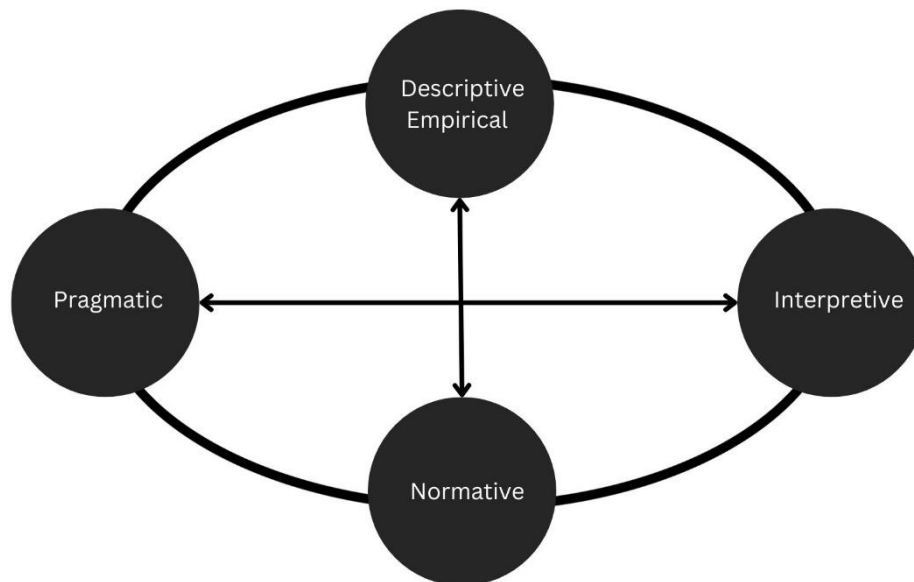


Figure 1: The four tasks of practical theological interpretation

1.8.2 Descriptive–Empirical Research: What is going on?

Osmer calls the task of Descriptive-Empirical research ‘priestly listening’ which is grounded in a spirituality of presence (Osmer 2008:33–41). Osmer references both Long (2005) and Tisdale (1997) who have emphasized attentive listening to the life situations of the hearers-of-preaching (Long 2005:55) by employing ethnographic analysis in order to exegete the congregation (Tisdale 1997:25). Keller similarly argues for a deep hearing of culture (2015:99). In seeking to understand, ‘what is going on’, the Descriptive-Empirical task formally attends to the problem (Osmer 2008:37–38).

This task will comprise the following components:

1.8.2.1 Descriptive Perspectives: Attend to the insights of the homiletical community

Having identified, defined and described the problem, the Descriptive-Empirical task will seek to contextualize the situation by attending to the insights of the homiletical community. This attention will begin by means of a critical review, analysis and summary of literature in order to gain insights into the nature of preaching. In order to do this, this component of the research will seek to develop answers to two fundamental questions:

- i. What is preaching?

ii. What is good preaching?

The first question, 'what is preaching?' is foundational. Broadus (1979:1) contends that preaching is both central and unique to Christian worship. It is necessary to clarify a definition of preaching before proceeding to the second question. Defining preaching is an immensely complicated question with a vast swathe of definitions proposed (Long, 2005:15). The Reformation asserted that preaching was a vocalization of the voice of God. Calvin's view was that when the gospel is preached, 'it is as if God Himself spoke in person' (Lawson, 2009:20). Bullinger summarised the Reformers' position with the phrase: *Praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei* – the preaching of the word of God is the word of God (Runia, 1988:528). In his lectures on preaching, Brooks (1877) defined preaching as 'truth and personality'.⁴⁷ Broadus (1979:3) surveys many definitions before defining preaching as,

The proclamation of God's message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity.

Barth's complex and comprehensive twofold definition (1991:44) draws a strong emphasis on preaching as a voicing of God's living word through exposition of the Biblical text in a relevant manner.⁴⁸ CH Dodd (1936) famously drew a distinction in preaching between proclamation to the Non-Christian world (*κηρυγμα*) and instruction to the church (*διδαχνη*). Brunner (1943:178) cautioned against an overemphasis on doctrine calling preaching (proclamation), 'faith-awakening, faith-furthering, faith-wooing address.' Stott defines preaching as 'bridge-building' involving both the exposition and exegesis of a text, as well as the conveying of this God-given message to living people who need to hear it, so that God's revealed truth might flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of people (Stott, 1982:137-138). Affixing the adjective 'biblical' Stott defines preaching as,

*to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and his people obey him (Stott 2005:24).*⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Expanding on this he said that preaching is, 'The communication of truth by man to men' (1881:5).

⁴⁸ Barth (1991:44) defines preaching as:

"1. Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission

2. Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God's Word, through one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God himself."

⁴⁹ Stott (1982:139–44) sagely notices that preachers often either commit to Biblical faithfulness or contemporary relevance as if they are mutually exclusive and argues that the preaching task embraces both a faithfulness to the text and a sensitivity to the 'modern' world (Stott 2005:26–27).

Wilson, (2016:4), grappling with the decline of the church in the West argues for a restoration of, 'preaching as a dual art of teaching and proclamation'. He argues that teaching provides information while proclamation introduces people to God so that they personally hear God speak (Wilson 2016:2–8). Long (2005:15), uses Moltmann's definition of preaching which intertwines congregation, preacher, sermon and the presence of Christ.⁵⁰ Robinson (2001:21) concurs, calling preaching a 'living interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation'.⁵¹ Cilliers (2004:32), similarly defines preaching as a dynamic interaction initiated by God's voice, through the text of Scripture, via the voice of the preacher to the congregation.⁵² Keller (2015:15-23) defines preaching using the categories of exposition and application. Drawing from 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 he argues that the central focus of the Biblical testimony is Jesus Christ and that preaching draws the proclamation of Christ faithfully from the text of Scripture, in order to inform the mind, engage the culture and touch human hearts. It does this by capturing human interest and imagination, and then persuades the hearers towards repentance and action (Keller, 2015:15–23).

Some areas of consensus emerge from these diverse definitions. Preaching looks in two directions. It looks upwards to God and outwards to the people addressed. These directions of focus will guide an initial and tentative definition for this research that *preaching is a heard word, spoken, to a heard people*. Preaching cannot occur without a listening-obedience to God's voice recorded, and a deep hearing of a particular people by the preacher-as-member-of-historical community, so that the present community may also hear the living voice of God. Tisdale (1997:28) describes the two directions that homiletics looks by using the terms 'faithful' and 'fitting'.

Having arrived at an initial definition of preaching it will then become possible to explore the second question, 'what is good preaching?' Additional and supplementary to this question is the pedagogical question, 'what are preachers being trained to do when they preach?' Long (2005:15) rightly argues that unless we are aware of what we are doing when we are preaching it makes little sense to define the steps necessary for the creation of a good sermon. Willimon (1981:15) reflects that when congregants were asked to define good preaching, they found it difficult to do, instead many answered by naming people they regarded as good preachers. They were often

⁵⁰ "One person or more gets up in front of the congregation in order to preach the gospel...These people come from the community but come forward in front of it and act in Christ's name." (Moltmann 1977:303)

⁵¹ Robinson (2001:21) defines expository preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."

⁵² "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 voices become one voice, then the sermon is indeed *viva vox evangelii*." (italics original).

unable to describe distinct components and characteristics of good preaching. Chatteris (2001:113) concurs when he says,

The content might be quite adequate, the words might be audible, sentences complete. However, the talk or sermon as a whole might be dreary and uninteresting. Even so, it is not so easy either to point out exactly why or say categorically that the speaker has not, in some way, done the job. Public speaking is one of those arts where people recognise when it is good or bad but expressing why this is the case can be problematic.

In the researcher's own experience (Gertzen, 2016), listeners often define good preaching under the category of 'enjoyment' shown by the response, 'I really enjoyed that sermon.' They subliminally define 'good' preaching as something that affects their emotional state. At its crassest level the good-preacher is perceived as someone who has entertained and engaged them for a period of time; but congregants often mean more than this when they declare, 'I enjoyed that sermon'; they are often implying an appreciation for clarity which has led to understanding; or their sense of joy has come from an emotional connection with the content of the sermon (i.e. they are appreciative that the words have engaged them and moved them to a response); they are appreciative that the words are neither cerebral nor lifeless (Lischer, 1981:128); or they are appreciative that they have encountered the living God in the midst of deep-seated human needs (Mitchell, 1977:54–62). Reflection on what constitutes good preaching is a moving target. The answers given on the constituent parts of good preaching often contain stylistic and rhetorical assumptions that are culturally and historically conditioned. As society changes so do expectations, sometimes even rapidly. Sermons preached a few decades ago might be considered as quaint, dated or perhaps even dismissed today as bad preaching. This research will recognise that sermon expectations are conditioned by worldview and cultural presuppositions which require ethnographic analysis but it will also argue that any definition of good preaching must include elements that are universally regarded as components of good preaching. Gordon (2009:13–14,24–28), following Dabney (1870) argues that universal components for good preaching do exist. These will include:

- Textual fidelity⁵³,
- Unity/order,
- Christ-centredness,

⁵³ Witherington (2005:ix) argues that "For an Evangelical there is an ultimate litmus test for good preaching and teaching: is it well grounded in and illuminating the biblical text and teaching?"

- Instructiveness
- Clarity.

He correctly argues that all cultures regard sermonic unity as better than disunity; order and clarity as better than chaos; and understand-ability as better than incomprehensibility. Mitchell (1990:50) calls these fundamentals, “simplicity, clarity and practicality.”

1.8.2.2 Empirical Perspectives: Attend to REACH-SA preaching in order to describe ‘what is going on?’

Having attended to the insights of the homiletical community this research will then address the preaching of REACH-SA in order to understand ‘what is going on’ at the present time (Osmer, 2008:31–78). It will use a method of sermon analysis based upon the Heidelberg Method developed by Bohren and Debus (Pieterse, 2020:350). This method must be subjected to scrutiny and evaluation to ensure that it transculturally answers the question of good preaching. In order to achieve this Woodbridge (2014:105) suggests that the empirical task comprises:

- Recording data
- Examining phenomena
- Collecting information
- Observing patterns and trends
- Reconstructing using empirical and literary methods
- In order to describe

1.8.2.2.1 Sample Selection

This research proposes to use content analysis and participant observation (Osmer, 2008:54; Smith, 2008:104) as the primary method of empirical research. This study will collect, analyse and evaluate sermons preached by REACH-SA preachers, during the period October 2020 to March 2021, in order to discover patterns and trends (Osmer, 2008:54) that will lead to a better understanding of what is actually happening in pulpits within REACH-SA. These sermons are available as a result of the unique circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic when many preachers were forced to make their sermons available via digital media. These sermons will be collected from websites, podcasts, YouTube channels, Facebook/WhatsApp posts and other social media that have been utilized by preachers for distribution. This method of data collection will have the weakness that not all preachers (particularly those in impoverished communities) have the resources, data and technology available to publish material electronically. In order to address this difficulty, personal and electronic contact will be made with preachers in poorer communities and smaller churches in order to intentionally assemble sermons that were not published online. These sermons will be collected either via sermon notes or recordings for

analysis. A second limitation of this study will come from the reality that these sermons are preached in the artificial context of media production rather than the lived context of a church congregation. Conclusions about delivery, style and rhetoric will have to be tempered as a result of this limitation.

It is proposed to use a non-random stratified sample by acquiring sermon sets (each comprising three sermons) from each of the following contexts where REACH-SA has churches.

- i. Suburban, English speaking – Western Cape
- ii. Township, Xhosa speaking – Western Cape
- iii. Suburban, English speaking – Gauteng
- iv. Suburban, English Speaking – KwaZulu Natal
- v. Rural/Peri-urban, Zulu speaking – KwaZulu Natal
- vi. Township, Zulu speaking – KwaZulu Natal
- vii. Suburban, English speaking – Eastern Cape and/or Free State

In some instances, it will not be possible to acquire complete sermon sets from some of the proposed contexts because REACH-SA does not have sufficient preaching stations within the Eastern Cape nor sufficient Xhosa-speaking stations within the Western Cape. In total it is hoped to assemble approximately 75 sermons from 25 preachers for the purposes of this research. This sample size has been determined using three criteria. For the sample to be statistically significant it needs to be meaningful, manageable and diverse. In order to be meaningful, the largest possible sample size should be selected. The target population of all preachers preaching regularly within REACH-SA is estimated to be approximately 150. However, not all preachers will have preached and recorded their material during the pandemic – some churches have simply closed for the time. Estimating a 10% return would bring the sample size to around 15 sermon sets. This sample size would be too small to reflect the required diversity of preaching situations within REACH-SA and too small to achieve the necessary saturation.

1.8.2.2.2 Process of sample recruitment

All possible participants will be identified from denominational databases. These will then be divided into the sub-categories stated above. Some categories will have a larger number of potential participants than others by virtue of the denominational demographics that exist.

1.8.2.2.3 Sampling inclusion/exclusion criteria

It is proposed to use a non-random stratified sample. Sermons will be included based upon their availability for analysis. In instances where a large number of sermons are available in a particular

stratum it will be necessary to develop sub-strata such as age/experience/geographic distribution in order to ensure a representative sample.

The period of October 2020-March 2021 was chosen because it broadly constituted the second wave of Covid-19 in South Africa. It is surmised that many preachers might have uniquely addressed the pandemic in topical, doctrinal or occasional preaching during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic which means that this preaching might not reflect their normal activity. It is further surmised that they will have returned to patterns closer to their normal practice by the latter stages of 2020. The research will omit sermons preached in the early part of 2021 as pastors may uniquely preach on themes and plans for a new year. The intention is to focus on sermons that might normally be preached within a REACH-SA church community.

1.8.2.2.4. Trustworthiness of qualitative studies

In order to ensure rigour and trustworthiness qualitative studies require credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Treharne & Riggs, 2015).

Credibility is established when participants being researched recognise that the findings of the research represent their experience (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). Non-random, stratified data collection will give a selection of sermons from the existing ministry contexts, both geographically and demographically, that presently exist within REACH-SA.

Transferability is established when the research findings are applicable in other contexts and situations (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). This research will provide examples from the sermons preached, as well as the researcher's interpretations of these examples, in order that transferability can be evaluated.

Dependability is established when similar conclusions would result if the research were undertaken by another researcher (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). The use of the Heidelberg method of sermon analysis is widely accepted and gives confidence in establishing dependability.

Confirmability is established when it is recognised that the research findings are the result of the participants' responses and not the bias of the researcher (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). Research without bias is impossible and 'will always be *partly* dependent on the describer's own theological presuppositions.' (Astley, 2017:110). This research recognises that a Reformed, Evangelical viewpoint contains within it the assertion that there are objective norms for preaching. These norms will influence the evaluation. This research will seek to transparently reflect upon the researcher's bias by keeping a journal throughout the descriptive-empirical task of the research.

This journal will be periodically examined by the researcher in order to reflect on motivations, directions, intentions and potential bias.

Authenticity is established when differing viewpoints are valued and there exists some community ownership of the research's transformative potential (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). The researcher will present workshops to preachers/trainees in order to ascertain the transformative potential of this research and to create opportunities for community ownership as preachers develop their individual praxis.

1.8.2.2.5 Method of Data Analysis

Having assembled the data this research proposes to describe and analyse these sermon sets using the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis developed by Bohren and Debus (Pieterse, 2020:350). This research is concerned primarily with the sermon as given. Its chief concern is not the process of preparation. As a result, this research will primarily use content analysis, directed by the Heidelberg Method, with the goal of noticing differences in preachers' sermon construction, content choices and communication forms. Pieterse (2009:125-133) lists a number of potential models for sermon analysis and correctly argues that the research question will influence the model chosen for analysis. The Heidelberg method has been selected because it proposes a twofold analysis that will expose preachers' obedient-listening to God via the text of Scripture and their ethnographic analysis of South African complexity. The Heidelberg Method, firstly, analyses the sermon *superficially* in order to reveal the explicit and implicit language signs (Cilliers 2006:11). This will be done by using the following questions:

- i. What is the course/agenda of the sermon mapped out in the introduction?
- ii. Is there a discernible emphasis, central thrust(s) or big idea(s) to the sermon?
- iii. What is the form/shape of the sermon?
- iv. What conditional sentences are present in the sermon as they reveal its active power?
- v. What does the sermon negate and confront? What does the sermon affirm and praise?
- vi. What conclusions does the sermon develop?

This superficial analysis is followed by a *depth* analysis that seeks to systematize and understand the inner theological motives of the sermon (Cilliers 2006:9, Pieterse 2020:350-351) by answering four further questions:

- i. Which God is named here? Which God is at issue here? What are the characteristics and behaviours of this God revealed in the sermon?

- ii. How is the Biblical text included/used in the sermon? In keeping with this study's emphasis on obedient-listening, how has the text been heard? How is the text applied in the sermon?
- iii. What kind of listeners does the sermon appeal to and imply? What is their relation to the world and to other groups? What clues are given in application, illustration and analogy as to the historical and societal context of the listeners being addressed?
- iv. How does the preacher function in the sermon?

Cilliers (2006:12) rightly points out that this methodology makes no claim to untainted objectivity but instead attempts a careful listening to what has been said in order to gain insights into, 'what is going on?' in REACH-SA pulpits. It is anticipated that this research will find differences in the way that urban, English preachers structure and develop their sermons, and in the way that they apply passages of Scripture in comparison to township and rural, Zulu and Xhosa preachers. It is anticipated that this difference will shed light on the research questions.

1.8.2.2.6 Role of the Researcher

The researcher will be responsible for obtaining ethical clearance and informed consent from all participants. All data that is to be analysed is in the public domain which mitigates the need for permissions from local congregations and councils. For the purposes of the research, participants will be identified using confidential codes allocated by the researcher. All data will be maintained in password controlled electronic formats and discarded twelve months after the research is completed.

1.8.2.2.7 Ethical Risk

The study is of a minimum ethical risk as all data to be analysed is in the public domain. No direct benefits from this research will accrue to participants but significant indirect benefits will be derived. Due to improved insights into the state of preaching within REACH-SA, better strategies for training and support of preachers can be implemented as well as better church planting and development strategies.

1.8.3 Interpretive Research: 'Why is it going on?'

The interpretive task of sagely-wisdom seeks reasons behind the current praxis as it formulates answers to the question, "Why is it going on?". Osmer (2008:81-128) suggests that the task of sagely-wisdom is an interaction between *thoughtfulness*, as priestly-listening exposes inadequate current responses, and *possible theories* that have been formulated by neighbour sciences as to the reasons for these inadequate responses. Sagely-wisdom seeks *wise-judgement* as it reflects

on the identified components of the problem, discerns their consequences and seeks an effective redemptive strategy (Osmer 2008:84).

The interpretative component of this research will be divided into three areas that are articulated in the research question and the initial, tentative definition of preaching. These are, firstly the preacher-as-listener; secondly, the preacher as listener-to-the-word and thirdly, the preacher as listener-to-the-world. In each of these, perspectives from neighbour sciences will be investigated in order to facilitate Osmer's *wise-judgement*.

1.8.3.1 Interpretive Research: Perspectives on the preacher-as-listener from African Studies and Sociology

Having identified the essential components of preaching in the descriptive-empirical task these will be developed using perspectives from African Studies and Sociology. The preacher stands between text and hearers listening to both. Homiletical research has added to this the unique voice of the preacher themselves to form a communicative triangle (Brueggeman, 2005a:495). By using perspectives from the neighbour science of African Studies, this research will posit the recognition of a fourth voice notably that the preacher cannot, and indeed must not, be viewed in Western categories as an individual alone but must instead be viewed as a member of present *and* historical community. By contemplating the richness of African anthropological worldviews, homiletics is motivated to view people holistically as members of community. The preacher must never be perceived as an individual distinct from their community but rather as representative from their present context coming to the Scriptures in order to return to their people (Long, 2005:48). Preachers carry with them the conclusions of generational, historical-theological and communal reflections that have been described by sociologist Hervieu-L  ger as a chain-of-memory (Urbaniak, 2015:2). This communal, collective memory is heard by the preacher and then brought to bear upon the preacher's hermeneutical and homiletical conclusions (Bartholomew, 2015:114). The preacher is then a listener to four distinct voices and to this four-fold, intersectional listening must be added the final question of priority and primacy. The Reformation asserted that the preacher listens asymmetrically, giving pre-eminence to the living voice of God heard through the Scriptures. Justification for this perspective must be developed in the normative component of this research. This asymmetrical, fourfold intersectional listening now gives shape to the interpretive research's attempts to evaluate REACH-SA preaching. It will attempt to evaluate whether preachers give primacy to the voice of God through the Scriptures and are thus listeners-to-the-word, and then secondly to evaluate whether REACH-SA preaching listens-to-the-world by giving attention to the subordinate voices of historical community, present community and personal pre-understanding.

1.8.3.2 Interpretive Research: Perspectives on the preacher as listener-to-the-word from Hermeneutics and African Studies

The second component of the interpretive research will, in an inter-disciplinary engagement with hermeneutics and African studies, seek to investigate aspects of preachers' hermeneutical commitments, focusing especially on the preacher's pre-understanding and how it influences their homiletical praxis. By further developing how the preacher uses the Biblical text in the sermon, this component of the research will aim to identify how the preacher hears the text, what the preacher brings to the text and what the preacher brings out of the process. In evaluating the preachers' pre-understanding, this research seeks to identify whether this pre-understanding is acknowledged, embraced and positively used, rather than ignored or expunged in the task of textual listening. The preacher's obedient-listening should lead to a restructuring and reformation of pre-understanding, culminating in an alteration of praxis (Browning, 1996:38) seen in the applications and exhortations proposed. Osborne (2006:352) describes this hermeneutical process underlying the preaching task,

The answer is a proper "hermeneutical circle" or spiral within which the text is reconstructed on the basis of our theological system yet challenges our pre-understanding and leads to a reformation of our tradition-derived categories.

This research will seek to identify where the preacher's pre-understanding affects the preacher's outcomes and applications. Gadamer (Browning, 1996:39-41) argued that application does not follow understanding but instead saturates the interpretive process. He argued that history influences hermeneutics, that people always act from a viewpoint and that the events of the past shape human praxis in the present. Rose (1997:80) concurs when she says,

Few homiletical scholars expressly acknowledge the claim that the preacher's wrestling with or interpretation of a text is always particular, historically conditioned and vested with self-interest.

Praxis then, can never be neutral, because present interpretations are products of past experiences and this past continues to bring influence on the answers that are presently articulated. Browning (1996:41) says, "The past lives in the present whether we realize it or not." This research recognises that the homiletical journey begins with preachers who come to the sermon event as human beings with a complex and unique collection of presuppositions, experiences, history, values, sin, memories, hurts, desires, dreams and beliefs; and who come to the interpretative task as members of a community which itself represents a unique history and worldview. By attempting to notice what has been said, what is assumed, as well as what has been left unsaid, the research hopes to discern something of how this pre-understanding has

influenced the sermon. This component of the research will seek to interpret this pre-understanding by analysing and evaluating the sermon's introduction, applications, illustrations, negations, emphases, exhortatory content and conclusions with perspectives from African Studies, in order to thoughtfully review some of the influences that this pre-understanding exerts upon the sermon. In seeking to investigate REACH-SA preachers as listeners-to-the-word this component of the interpretive research will endeavour to gain perspectives on whether preachers have actually listened to the Biblical text and allowed it to shape their praxis. This research will seek to thoughtfully articulate what constitutes listening to the text by interacting with the methodologies of listening and sermon preparation articulated by Cilliers (2004), Long (2005), Nhiwatiwa (2012), Quicke (2003) and Robinson (2001).⁵⁴ Tyagi (2013:1) suggests that listening is comprised of hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding. Kruger (2019:9) highlights the place of the emergence of listening as a focus of study where scholars are seeking to differentiate, "between mere hearing and effective (mindful) listening." This study is concerned not with congregational 'hearing' but with whether REACH-SA preachers are applying obedient-listening to the living voice of God as recorded in the Biblical text; and whether the pre-understanding of the preacher or congregation is overwhelming the voice of God. This component of the research seeks to evaluate whether the sermon is derived from the specific Biblical text and is the *word* of that text, or whether Western or African worldviews might overshadow the conclusions presented. It will seek to assess whether what has been said by preachers is faithful to the Biblical text or whether it is outdone by historical and contemporary power cues. It will seek to interpret whether the preacher has profoundly listened to the text and sought to allow the voice of God emanating from the text to be heard by themselves and the congregation. It seeks to ask, has the preacher brought out of the text what is in the text and exposed it to view (Stott, 1982:126) shown by accuracy of exposition and exegesis.

1.8.3.3 Interpretative Perspectives: Perspectives on the preacher as listener-to-the-world from Business Communication Studies, African Studies, Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric

Using the image of a Mexican wave travelling across the earth, Milne (2006:9-12) describes the staggering international diversity of the Christian church. He highlights that the early-church communities, as they 'burst into life across the Roman Empire' (Milne, 2006:12), reflected an astonishing counter-cultural, unity-in-diversity that fuelled their mission (Milne, 2006:12). Apartheid separated peoples both physically and relationally so that diversity within church communities in South Africa was legislatively flattened.⁵⁵ Tisdale (1997:1-30), drawing from her

⁵⁴ Long and Robinson were chosen because they are seminal works, consistently influential and formative in many preaching environments (see Lake (2003) on Robinson's influence). Quicke has a particular emphasis on listening. Cilliers and Nhiwatiwa will be used because they are African attempts at defining the preaching task.

⁵⁵ The church was often complicit and willing to embrace these separations and divisions.

own experience, highlights the diversity that does and should exist within Christian communities. Similarly, Kim (2017:3-12) calls for preachers to exhibit 'cultural intelligence' as they build bridges (Stott, 1982:9) between the Scriptures and the complex cultural contexts in which they minister. Tisdale (1997:17) argues that few congregations are culturally homogenous; that they may be loosely held together by a perceived commonality but significant differences exist. Allen (1997), Lose (2003), Quicke (2003) and many others draw attention to the dramatic changes in Western thought brought about by shifts associated with post-modernism. In addition, the South African context also includes changes precipitated by the removal of Apartheid and South Africa's re-integration into the international community. This final leg of the interpretive research seeks perspectives on whether REACH-SA preachers are *hearing* their world and understanding the context of the audiences to which their preaching is directed. Long (2005:48) has argued that the preacher is to represent the congregation in the hermeneutical process. He says,

If the preacher is to be the one sent to listen for God's truth in the Bible, the preacher must not only be willing to listen to the Bible but must also know how to listen. If the preacher is to be sent on behalf of the congregation, the preacher must also know how to listen to them.

Craddock (1985:92) argues that in the process of determining what the preacher will say it is vital that the preacher interprets their listeners and exegetes the congregation. Tisdale (1997:30) comments that preachers are often unaware or unprepared for the task of congregational exegesis.

This final section of interpretive research will seek to use perspectives from the neighbouring sciences of Business Communication and African studies in order to investigate the preacher as listener-to-the-world. By focusing on African realities like music, dance and storytelling this research will consider whether REACH-SA preachers prioritise the cerebral over the emotional. In using perspectives from Discourse Analysis, Rhetoric and Pastoral Theology the research will endeavour to notice the influence of Western considerations in the thinking of REACH-SA preachers.

This component of the research recognizes that preaching is not simply the provision of information. The apostle Paul in writing to Timothy called his charge to, "Preach the Word"⁵⁶ as well as to teach, reprove, correct, rebuke, exhort and train.⁵⁷ The apostolic understanding and practice of preaching went beyond the indicative (the simple presentation of information) and the

⁵⁶ 2 Tim 4:2

⁵⁷ 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2

didactic to an urgent imperative - a prophetic call, demanding and enabling people to respond.⁵⁸ In this, the apostles were building on the teaching and discipleship examples of Jesus, articulated in his commission,⁵⁹ that his church is not only to baptise and make disciples but also to teach them to observe/obey all that he commanded. This research will seek to gain insight into REACH-SA preachers' understanding of their respective audiences' context, by analysing the application components of the sermons, in order to identify what attempt was made by preachers to speak the outcomes of the scriptural text to their audiences (Willimon, 1981:22–23).⁶⁰ In particular three questions will be focused upon:

1. Do REACH-SA preachers make any appeal to the emotional/experiential/heart components of the hearers or is the appeal only cerebral?
2. Do REACH-SA preachers display 'Cultural Intelligence' (Kim, 2017) by demonstrating an awareness of African worldviews and African concerns in their rhetorical praxis? Does the preacher confront the depth and complexity of human sin both individually and corporately (Willimon, 1981:84)?
3. Does the sermon display an understanding of the multi-cultural reality of the South African context? Is the post-apartheid South African context heard and taken into consideration? Is there some understanding of the lived experience of racism, the inequality of power, the anguish of injustice and the ongoing consequences of coloniality? Is there an understanding of the context of violence, fear, poverty and desperation in the midst of plenty? Do preachers display some recognition of the development of a post-apartheid South African identity?

In seeking to investigate whether REACH-SA preachers demonstrate an adequate ethnographic analysis, the research will seek *wise-judgement* on whether preachers have heard the voice of their community, culture and congregation.

1.8.4 Normative Research: What ought to be going on?

A norm is an authoritative standard. It is an objective principal that serves to guide, control, or regulate proper, appropriate and acceptable behaviour (Merriam-Webster.com, 2021). Normative research attempts to define how things should be and how things should be done. It seeks to ask, "What should be happening?" (Woodbridge, 2014:109). A norm answers the question of 'ought' and entails a prejudgement on whether this 'ought' can be determined, and if so, the place where

⁵⁸ See Wilson (2008)

⁵⁹ Matt 28

⁶⁰ Some writers regard application as unnecessary, as a preacher's interference with the work of the Holy Spirit, or as even potentially heretical emanating from a deficient view of the text. See Barth (1991:45); MacArthur (2005); Overdorf (2009:35–53).

it may be found. Osmer (2008:137) suggests three sources for the normative task of prophetic discernment. He suggests that the task begins with sympathy; that it requires an identification with the pathos of suffering brought about via pain and sin (Osmer, 2008:137), which then leads on to discernment and the pursuit of God's guidance by a deep attending, listening and prayerful reading of Scripture in the midst of lived community (Osmer, 2008:129-173). Osmer suggests that norms can be derived via theological interpretation, ethical interpretation as well as the analysis of good practice.

This research will use Reformed, Evangelical presuppositions in seeking normative perspectives. Reformed, Evangelical presuppositions give ultimate priority to the Scriptures (Erickson, 1998:267; Grudem, 1994:83). They assert that valid insights can be derived from the human consensus whether by human reason or experience but that these insights, whether historical or present, are always submissive to, and interpreted by Scripture. A Reformed, Evangelical perspective declares that truth is fundamentally personal, found in God the Trinity and revealed through Jesus the Son (Holmes, 1988:695).⁶¹ Truth is vested in God's existence, dependability, greatness and the uprightness of his character.⁶² God's existence, his Trinitarian nature and his redemptive activity shown in human history give definition and shape to ultimate truth, which being rooted in the person of God himself, is then known by his self-disclosure. He is not silent. He has spoken.⁶³ God's word was incarnated and inscripturated. He continues to speak⁶⁴ so that De Young (2010) says,

God does not just communicate through his word; he is present in his word. God's speech doesn't simply describe God; it is the instantiation of God. God is where his word is.

God has ensured that his self-disclosure has been recorded and preserved.⁶⁵ This inscripturated word presents a self-consistent, unified, perspicuous and understandable foundation of truth. A Reformed, Evangelical perspective assumes that since God sees and knows everything as it truly is, what he communicates in his word is an objective and trustworthy foundation for knowledge which can be appropriated for praxis. This necessitates that the Scriptures provide the norm, the ultimate standard and the objective reference point for theological research (Grudem, 1994:83).⁶⁶

⁶¹ John 14:6

⁶² Psa 145:3; Rom 11:33

⁶³ Heb 1:1

⁶⁴ Heb 1:6,7,8,12

⁶⁵ 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21

⁶⁶ By asserting the theological primacy of the Scriptures in no way negates the contributions that can and must be made by the social sciences, by theological reflection, by historical theology and by the existential and present experience of the people of God. It simply establishes a hierarchy of authority and a fixed point for the definition of truth.

The normative component of this research will seek, firstly, to establish the validity of describing preaching as asymmetrical, intersectional, quadrilateral listening. It will survey the Scriptures and conduct detailed exegesis of selected critical texts (Smith, 2008:208–9). As the establishing of the priority of listening to the voice-of-God in homiletical praxis develops, the normative research will then develop whether it is valid to argue for the preacher to be a listener-in-community. In these normative perspectives this research will seek to provide direction in evaluating between the differing emphases in recent homiletical theory. Rose (1997) and Lake (2003) collate and survey approaches to the homiletical task that have dominated the homiletical conversation in recent years.⁶⁷ They notice firstly, ‘The Traditional Approach’ (Rose 1997:13-33) rooted in Augustine’s synthesis of Christian preaching and classical rhetoric (Lake 2003:27). Broadus (1870, 1940, 1979), and later Davis (1958), developed this approach which emphasised ideational unity and didactic purpose (Lake 2003:28). It contains a high commitment to the Scriptures and the primary function of the sermon is to teach and transmit Christian beliefs (Rose, 1997:21). Secondly, Rose (1997:37) elucidates an emphasis that developed in the 1960s-1980s, which she designates as the ‘kerygmatic understanding of preaching’. Kerygmatic theory adds an emphasis on the sermon as an event in which God speaks. Drawing from Dodd (1936) and Barth (1991) this approach sees the preacher as a herald mediating the voice of God. Thirdly, Rose (1997:59) identifies recent ‘transformational voices’, which Lake summarises under the label ‘the New Homiletic’ (Lake, 2003:34). The ‘New Homiletic’ is a broad variety of claims rather than a unified theory that shares ‘common convictions, emphases and presuppositions’ (Rose, 1997:59). Amongst these is an emphasis on what the sermon *does* rather than on what the sermon *is* (Gibson, 2005:477). The sermon is seen primarily as an event or an experience and the preacher’s task is to facilitate this event (Gibson, 2005:477). Rose (1997:60) succinctly summarises the discussion when she says that,

In kerygmatic theory, the dominant focus is on the divine side of the divine-human encounter...in transformational views of preaching, the dominant focus shifts to the human side of the encounter.

Normative research must provide direction in evaluating between these differing emphases postulated in homiletical theory in order to provide servant leadership in the pragmatic/strategic task.

Osmer (2008, 152-153) also suggests ‘existing good practice’ as a valid approach for normative research where models from ethics and church history are investigated to help shape present

⁶⁷ Rose’s analysis which forms the basis for Lake’s analysis suffers from the significant weakness of not interacting with insights from the Reformation.

praxis. The second aspect of this normative component will, in keeping with the second section of the research question, seek to establish norms for the preacher as listener-to-the world. Using considerations from the preaching of Moses the Proto-Preacher, Israelite history, Jesus, as well as the preaching praxis described in the New Testament, this research will seek normative perspectives on how the preacher's homiletical praxis should be shaped by their listening to the hearers to whom they preach.

1.8.5 Pragmatic/Strategic Research: How might we respond?

Practical theology aims to be transformative. Interacting with the descriptive-empirical, interpretive and normative tasks, practical theology asks, 'how might we respond?'. It seeks to formulate and enact strategies of action for change (Osmer, 2008:176). It endeavours to bring the world into greater harmony and submission to the word of God (Smith, 2008:205). Practical theology seeks to provide guidance and servant-leadership for transformation by offering guidelines to orchestrate the desired change (Osmer, 2008:176). These guidelines are developed into an action plan which provides potential solutions for the initially identified problem (Smith, 2008:206–7). In order to facilitate this, the pragmatic component of this research will seek to integrate insights from Ballard and Pritchard's (1996) 'pastoral cycle'. The 'pastoral cycle' concludes by moving from reflection to action. Ballard and Pritchard (1996:92) warn against truncating the process of practical theology by incorrectly considering that reflection is action. They urge completion of the process leading to graceful action which results in mission (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:162). This research will seek to lead change in three areas:

1.8.5.1 Cognitive Change

Cognitive change occurs in the intellect. New things are learned and understood in order to be applied (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:166). As preachers better understand the process of sermon preparation that they embark on, it is possible to identify when and how their pre-understanding overshadows the voices of God and the congregation addressed. It is an essential goal of this research to develop a practical tool to aid preachers in the assessment of their own preaching praxis. Every preacher has some form of evaluation – this is usually informal, intuitive and often unarticulated. It is a goal of this research to supply a tool for growth in personal assessment of preaching which it is hoped will give confidence to African preachers in the development of their preaching praxis.

1.8.5.2 Affective Change

Affective change involves emotions and attitudes that derive from experience (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:166). Cognitive thinking is reinforced or destabilized by an emotional response derived from practical experience (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:170).

1.8.5.3 Behavioural Change

Behavioural change happens via the refinement of skills leading to new competencies and corrective action where required (Ballard and Pritchard, 1996:166-172). Ballard and Pritchard (1996:172) suggest that an institution is more likely to require corrective action by changing structures, practices and policies leading to new action or activity. This component of the research will seek to make proposals for improved preacher training within REACH-SA to better facilitate church development in South Africa's complexity.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

1.9.1 Estimated risk level and precautions required

Participants in the study will be exposed to minimal risk. All data to be analysed is in the public domain. No precautions are necessary.

1.9.2 What will be expected of participants during data gathering?

Participants will be required to supply written, informed consent for their sermons to be analysed. If these sermons are published in public forums (e.g., YouTube, podcasts, websites) they will be retrieved from these forums after the informed consent has been obtained. If sermons are not available electronically then participants will be requested to supply a written copy, sermon notes or an audio file containing the sermons for analysis.

1.9.3 Benefits for participants

Direct benefits for participants	Indirect benefits for society at large or for the researchers/institution
No direct benefit for participants will accrue as a result of this study	• This study will provide improved insight into the state of preaching within REACH-SA • As a result of this improved understanding better strategies for training and support of preachers can be implemented • As a result of this improved understanding better church planting strategies can be planned and implemented

1.9.4 Expertise, skills and legal competencies

The research will be conducted by the researcher who has lectured and assessed preaching at a tertiary level in excess of 15 years. During that time, the researcher has also trained intern preachers in a local church context. In addition, the researcher has personally preached over 1200 sermons over a period exceeding 25 years.

1.9.5 Facilities

The project will be implemented in Claremont in Cape Town. The sermons analysed will be derived from preachers working in communities in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth/Gqeberha, Klerksdorp and Bloemfontein.

1.9.6 Legal authorization

None required

1.9.7 Goodwill permission/consent

No permissions required. REACH-SA authorities will be electronically informed for the purposes of goodwill.

1.10 CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

Inclusion criteria:	Justification:
Participants will be included by virtue of having preached a set of sermons during the selected time frame.	Not applicable
Exclusion criteria:	Justification:
Only preachers with significant and regular preaching experience will be approached.	Preachers take time to develop a preaching identity and voice.

1.10.1 Participant recruitment

Participants will be recruited between January and September 2022. Each participant will be personally approached. This initial approach will be via email, telephonic conversation or personal contact.

1.10.2 Informed consent (Consent, permission, assent and dissent)

Informed consent will be obtained by means of participants completing the attached consent form - Appendix A. All participants are literate, fluent in English (although this may not be their first language) and tertiary educated. When participants are approached to provide their sermons for

analysis they will be asked to complete the informed consent forms which will be kept electronically for verification of the consent process.

1.10.3 Incentives and/or remuneration of participants

No incentives or remuneration are offered to participants. There is only a minor time inconvenience. No expense is incurred by participants in the study.

1.10.4 Announcement / Dissemination of study results to participants

The conclusions of this study will be electronically available to participants and denominational authorities upon completion of the study.

1.11 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Privacy: No personal information on participants will be collected in order to ensure privacy. Only the researcher will have access to the sermons used for this research. Where translation or transcription services might need to be employed no identifying data will be attached to the material translated or transcribed.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be ensured in the study by participants being given anonymous identifiers.

1.11.1 Management, storage and destruction of data

All data will be stored in a password protected Dropbox account accessible only by the researcher. This data will be deleted 12 months after completion of the project.

1.12 PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF HEADINGS / CHAPTERS

The proposed dissertation/thesis outline is listed as follows:

- List of tables
- List of figures
- List of appendices
- Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and research method.
- Chapter 2: The Descriptive-Empirical Task
- Chapter 3: The Interpretive Task
- Chapter 4: The Normative Task
- Chapter 5: The Pragmatic/Strategic Task
- References
- Appendices

CHAPTER 2: DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER AND ON REACH-SA PREACHING

2.1 WHAT IS GOING ON? INTRODUCTION

Practical Theology wrestles with the tension created by a disruption in equilibrium (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:85). A problem presents itself which requires understanding, interpretation, and response (Osmer, 2008:4). Practical Theology provides a method to guide this process as it seeks to develop tools and strategies to bring about a transformed solution to an unsatisfactory situation (Smith, 2008:24). This research uses the model for Practical Theology developed by Richard Osmer (2008). The initial question posited in Osmer's method asks, "What is going on?". It seeks to gather information via Descriptive-Empirical research to comprehensively discern patterns and dynamics that can lead to interpretation and response (Osmer 2008:4, 37-38). Osmer calls the initial task 'Priestly Listening' and roots the Descriptive-Empirical task in a 'spirituality of presence' where researchers 'attend' to people in their otherness (Osmer, 2008:33-41).

In seeking to attend to the preaching praxis of REACH-SA preachers, the Descriptive-Empirical task must, define the problem in order to clarify the direction of research, leading to an articulation of the problem, which is summarised in the research question. The research question thus seeks to elucidate the focus of research and the reasons behind the research.

Secondly, the Descriptive-Empirical research will seek to establish the appropriate context for the research by attending to the insights of others. It will achieve this via a literary review focusing on definitions of preaching and the criteria for good preaching. This review will consider trends in the Western homiletical conversation that have been noticed by Rose (1997) and subsequently followed by others.⁶⁸ Rose groups preaching theory into "three dominant voices" (Rose, 1997:13) that she calls Traditional, Kerygmatic and a broad collective which she calls "Transformational Voices". This third group is often described under the heading of 'The New Homiletic'. In developing the homiletical discussion this research will notice that the Western homiletical conversation pivots on the question of the direction of appropriate and prioritized listening. In Traditional views, the preacher's task is to hear God via the text, while in Transformational views, "the dominant focus shifts to the human side of the encounter" (Rose, 1997:60). Having established Western concerns, this review will then consider trends in African theological conversation where decolonization, coloniality and Africanisation are pressing concerns. This research will argue that the preacher's challenge is to obedient-listening which is characterised by an asymmetry. The preacher is to hear God (via the text) as well as the presenting human context and the influence of preacher as a member of communities. Immink (2019:6) reminds of

⁶⁸ See Gibson (2005); Lake (2003)

God as 'Holy Other' whose greatness directs and prioritizes human listening. The preaching task is grounded in attention given to both text and audience but God via Scripture must take priority (Van Rensburg et al, 2015:23). This research will argue that this God-prioritized 'double-listening' (Stott, 1995:27-29) must define good preaching rather than the symmetric listening of equal voices, in order that God may be heard in a personal word-event and experienced by the listeners (Gibson, 2005:476).

Having completed this preparatory foundation, the Descriptive-Empirical research will then address REACH-SA preaching via a qualitative study using content analysis and participant observation. The research will assemble data by collating sermons preached by REACH-SA preachers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research will analyse these sermons using the Heidelberg method of sermon analysis developed by Bohren and Debus (Pieterse, 2020:350). This method analyses sermons using both a *superficial* scrutiny which maps the sermon's agenda and emphasis, and is followed by a *depth* analysis that attends to the theological motives of the sermon.

2.2 DESCRIPTIVE PERSPECTIVES ON A DEFINITION OF PREACHING

2.2.1 Descriptive Perspectives on Global Christian Transformation

"Things are not as they were," is how Noll (2009:19) describes the transformation in the demographics of the Christian church and the composition of global Christianity. Carson (2007:180) highlights the stunning pace of change in 'ethnic diversity' that has characterised major Western cities in the latter decades of the 20th Century. Johnstone (2011:65) says that the 21st Century will see the erosion of dominance in the Christian church by what he calls 'EuNAPa' nations, coupled with the corresponding rise of 'AfAsLA' societies.⁶⁹ Jenkins (2011:1) argues that the present day is a "transforming moment" in the history of global religion as the centre of gravity in the Christian world has moved away from the West. Christianity is growing at such a rate in Africa, Asia and Latin America that Jenkins (2011:3) notes,

By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world's 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites.

Other scholars concur. Mandryk (2010:216) notices the staggering growth of the church in China from around 3 million evangelicals in 1975 to over 75 million in 2010.⁷⁰ This growth has happened despite significant obstacles and persecution. He describes similar growth in the church in South

⁶⁹ Johnstone (2011:101) uses EuNAPa and AfAsLA to describe continents in preference to what he calls patronizing and less accurate descriptors: - First, Second and Third World; West/Non-West; Developed/Developing and Global North/South.

⁷⁰ Johnstone (2011:145) estimates 99,5 million Chinese evangelicals by 2050.

Korea (2010:510) making it presently the second-largest, foreign-missionary sending nation on earth. Speaking of a similar explosion of growth on the African continent Mandryk (2010:33) says,

Christianity has grown to become the religion of almost half of Africa's population and nearly two-thirds of sub-Saharan Africa. From 1900 to 2010, Christian numbers grew from 9.1% of the population to 48.8%, and from 7,5 million to 504 million.

Describing the situation in South Africa, Schoeman (2017:3) notices that in the 2013 census a statistically significant majority (84.2%) of South Africans described their religious affiliation as 'Christian'. This number has increased to 85,3% in the 2022 census (Mitchley, 2023). Schoeman (2017:5) concludes that South African churches enjoy a high level of trust. The statistics are inevitably open to significant interpretation and debate, what is unquestioned is the reality that the face of global Christianity has changed. No longer do most world Christians approach life and the Scriptures through a Western lens of values, presuppositions and concerns (Johnstone, 2011:119). However, Christian scholarship and theological reflection are often still dominated by the Western academy. Decades ago, Mbiti (1975:16-17) highlighted the disproportional 'one-sidedness' of theological study where the overwhelming majority of research, publishing and training comes from writers, preachers and scholars operating from within a Western paradigm. Theological research often operates with predominantly white, often male, well-resourced and significantly Western worldviews (Richards & O'Brien, 2012:21). Brueggemann (2005:25) notices this and warns that the trusted Enlightenment script, the, "old givens of white, male, Western, colonial advantage," are now recognised as unreliable. Mpofu and Steyn (2021:1-24) highlight the dominant narrative of Euro-modernity founded on expressions of power which result in inequality and oppression. They notice an implicit racism in Western thought which they argue is largely concealed (2021:5) and ensures Western prosperity as it also keeps others fixed in their poverty (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021:9). They argue that this colonisation, labelled 'empire', is present in the academy even as it defines humanity and knowledge (2019:11). Hlabangane (2021:164) highlights the seductive connection between knowledge and power. Wessels (2020:188), citing a variety of authors, elucidates decolonizing as the exposing of the myth of Western privilege, while simultaneously 'validating other ways of thinking, knowing and existing in the world.'

Academic conversation in hermeneutics and homiletics is increasingly seeking to acknowledge some of the inbuilt presuppositions that have been brought to the tasks of theology and ministry (Richards & O'Brien, 2012:15). Some theologians have called for increased recognition of Western, colonial and imperial influences, with the corresponding and consequent call for the 'decolonizing of preaching' (Travis, 2015:47-55). Knoetze (2021:1-5), in recognising the radically changing ecclesial landscape calls for attention to contextualisation, worldviews, hermeneutics

and theological curricula so as to decolonise and Africanise in order to be contextually appropriate (Knoetze 2021:1). This decolonising seeks to increasingly recognise the place that power has historically exerted, and still continues to exert (Hlabangane 2021:164-185). The sheer weight of the Western academy ensures that Western presuppositions are not always adequately questioned, sufficiently investigated or sometimes even noticed.⁷¹ Buttrick (1987:226) in his important work on preaching, says “the common mind of our age is surely secular,” while that assertion is undoubtedly true for the Western world it hardly describes the worldview held by the majority of the world’s population.⁷² Wilson (2008:7), similarly calls for new directions in homiletics, giving as his reason “the church is in decline.” Again, while that is certainly true in the West, it does not describe the reality in Africa, where the church is exhibiting significant quantitative growth and vibrancy (Galgalo, 2018:75,82; Mbewe, 2017:189). Johnstone (2011:95). says that Africa is unique in being the first continent to become majority Christian in a single century. African, Asian and Latin American theologians are however often uprooted from their own contexts and ‘don’t write for their own audiences’ (Nhiwatiwa, 2012:17) where only small markets exist. Alcantara (2019:6) has noticed this bias in Western scholarship which he summarises using the descriptors “method-centred, single author, monocultural, monolingual, text based” and then argues for a “collaborative, diverse, multilingual, interactive” and “practice” based approach to preaching. Wepener (2020:483-484) notices a shortage of research on preaching in Africa. He suggests that research done in South Africa often exhibits Western paradigms and seldom takes cognisance of “African worldviews, sources and preaching methodologies” by focusing on transcribed texts which are far removed from the lived realities of faith practice on the continent. The missiological call to global contextualisation, and to addressing the concrete situations of Christians in circumstances far removed from the debates and agendas of the West is urgent. Troeger (2007:68) calls for empathetic imagination in order to see the world through the eyes of someone that is ‘utterly unlike ourselves’ Sadly, however, Rah (2009:13) says that Western Christianity is seldom able to grasp the implications of such dramatic worldwide changes. Quicke (2003:28) expresses a similar lament when he says,

Dominant cultures are characterized as being numb to the possibilities of newness.

This research concerns itself with only one small subset of this enormous missiological project. It seeks to confine itself to preaching within REACH-SA – a uniquely South African denomination. This research seeks to bridge the gap between the REACH-SA denominational commitments to reaching all of South Africa’s complicated diversity and the limited praxis of church planting and

⁷¹ One example of this assertion will suffice. The ESV Study Bible is a major work in English produced by Crossway in 2008. It has 95 contributors (Lane and Grudem, 2008:10) staggeringly there is not one single contributor from Africa, and only 1 from Asia.

⁷² Mohler (2008:16) in his survey of the state of preaching today speaks entirely from a Western and American perspective with no reference to the rest of the world.

development by the denomination in township communities within the denomination in recent decades. This study investigates whether preaching praxis might be one contributing component in what is probably a multi-faceted and complex problem comprising questions of legacy, history, power-structures, perceptions, economics and money, denominational and church models, as well as language and culture.

2.2.2 Descriptive Perspectives on Western and African Worldviews

Western homiletics seeks to provide homiletical direction as it navigates through Post-Modern disruptions of Modernist certainty (Lose, 2003:1-29). Western homiletics operates in a prevailing worldview which is suspicious of absolute truth claims and has been described as a 'post-truth' world (Kruger & de Klerk, 2021:1-2). Western homiletics is unavoidably shaped by Enlightenment individualism (Nell, 2017:2), what De La Torre (2009:60) calls hyper-individualism, and human autonomy (Fleming, 2005:316; Williams, 1988:224) so that the individual is perceived as hero. It grapples with societal movement away from coherent and logical argument (Kruger & de Klerk, 2021:3) towards media as the primary source of authority for a post-literate, visually-orientated society that is increasingly characterised by secondary-orality (Quicke, 2003:43;78-85), over-stimulation and 'continuous partial attention' (Troeger, 2007:70). Battle references Tutu's observations that Western thought is preoccupied with power (Battle, 1997:59) and that it determines human value in materialistic terms (Battle 1997:36) as it prioritises material accumulation (Hlabangane 2021:166-167). Western homiletics operates in the context of significant economic prosperity while simultaneously being ignorant of the suffering that Western economics continues to unleash on impoverished peoples (Hlabangane, 2021:168). Western prosperity has not however produced a corresponding improvement in human happiness so that Santomauro (2021:1701) indicates that depressive and anxiety disorders are especially significant and increasing health burdens. Kruger and de Klerk (2021:1-2) argue that people listen to sermons grappling with feelings of meaninglessness. Western homiletics grapples with Christian decline (Johnstone, 2011:95; Quicke, 2003:34-36; Wilson, 2008:8) and the rise of people claiming to be non-religious (Johnstone, 2011:69). It presents solutions to these challenges by calling preachers to better congregational or cultural understanding (Tisdale, 1997) and to giving attention to historical and sociological aspects of preaching (Long, 2008:15). The 'New Homiletic' has emerged which challenges the monotonous similarity of much preaching birthed within a Western framework (Craddock, 2001:143-44; Greidanus, 1988:16-23). The 'New Homiletic' has reimagined preachers designing sermons in line with the richness of Biblical forms and literature, with a significant re-emphasis on narrative theology and sermon forms (Buttrick, 1987:484).

African homiletics grapples with different questions. In stark contrast to the West, the African church is exhibiting significant vibrancy and quantitative growth (Galgalo, 2018:75,82; Mbewe, 2017:189) particularly in African Independent Churches (Schoeman, 2017:2). However, this numerical strength is often characterised by what Galgalo (2018:78) calls 'a psychopathic personality disorder' and what Tutu (1987:47-58) calls 'religious schizophrenia'. Galgalo (2018:78-79) and Ikenye (2018:37) highlight that African Christians are curiously accommodating of beliefs and ethics that are irreconcilable so that in moments of crisis they often revert to systems and solutions proposed by African Traditional Religion. African homiletics speaks into a context of coloniality which is defined as the continuing dehumanising legacy of generations of colonial subjugation, racial discrimination and economic inequality that continues after colonialism has ceased (Hlabangane, 2021:166; Olusanya, 2019:18-20). Pui-lan (2015:10-11) calls for postcolonial preaching which dislodges hearers from their existing *status quo* in order to create a subversive alternative that challenges the "legacy of colonialism and the logic of empire". African homiletics is confronted with notions of human identity and value where the image of God (*imago dei*) has been undermined and belittled, so that the notion of African inferiority is imprinted onto the human psyche (Battle, 1997:23). African homiletics speaks to the 'double consciousness' of the oppressed (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021:14), where the oppressed judge themselves by the imposed standards of the oppressor. African homiletics cannot escape its context of grinding poverty and political corruption (Galgalo, 2018:90; Kruger, 2019a:70-85), as well as inequality (De Klerk, 2007:177-202), racism, misogyny, violence and the corresponding anger that results (Wepener & Pieterse, 2018:13). It must also grapple with Biblical interpretations that have been derived to justify Western oppression (Mitchell, 1990:21) and which contain ongoing blind spots and subliminal prejudices that fail to acknowledge Western bias (Brown, 1984; Richards & O'Brien, 2012). African homiletics encounters the pain caused by what Obama (2018:79) calls the unexamined, "ancient tide of superiority". African homiletics reflects worldviews that are shaped by Ubuntu and communality (Hlabangane, 2021:168) as it challenges individualism and values communal harmony (Tutu, 2011:24). Tutu defines Ubuntu when he says (Battle, 1997:38-53),

A person is not basically an independent solitary entity. A person is precisely human in being enveloped in the community of other human beings, caught up in the bundle of life. To be is to participate.

Cilliers (2008:3) stresses that Ubuntu is an expression of African epistemology so that truth and meaning are found primarily in community with others. African identity emphasises the individual as part of a relational community (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:48-52), who are not only living but also dead (Nhiwatiwa 2012b:14).

Ikenye⁷³ (2018:33,48) calls for the contextualisation of pastoral theology which he calls 'reframing' in order to meet African Christians at its point of need. He says that contextualisation is rooted in a dissatisfaction with traditional models (Ikenye, 2018:36). He suggests that African pastoral theology has neglected the African complexity of being (Ikenye, 2018:39) and recommends a research paradigm that applies the essentials of the Christian faith in the African context (Ikenye, 2018:48). Nhiwatiwa (2012b:18) calls for a 'village theology' that hears the realities of African daily life and results in an 'in-depth connection' with one another. Fleming (2005:297) asserts that the New Testament witness to Christ is not a theological monologue but a chorus of voices sung in different keys that allows the gospel to be expressed in a variety of ways and flexible forms in order to engage differing contexts. He calls for preachers to consider how to articulate the gospel in ways that resonate with their particular audience (Fleming, 2005:321).

This research seeks to take further this challenge issued by Ikenye (2018), Nhiwatiwa (2012b), Fleming (2005) and others. It seeks to better understand the shape of REACH-SA's preaching praxis, endeavouring to understand what cultural voices REACH-SA's preachers are listening to and thus reflecting when they speak. This research seeks to consider whether the dominant voices *heard* by REACH-SA preachers is that of Western philosophical, sociological, cultural, theological and historical considerations and whether this might contribute to limitations in church planting and development.

2.2.3 Descriptive Perspectives on Asymmetric Listening

The Bible introduces a God who speaks in contrast to the false gods who do not. Speak.⁷⁴ God's words give expression to his existence even as they reveal his essence (Hendrickson, 1954:70). Pelikan (2005:9) says, "On this, at least, Jews and Christians agree...the God of the Bible is the God who speaks." Reformed theology holds that God's voice has been historically recorded in Scripture which when preached voices not a historical word but instead the *viva vox evangelii* - the living voice of God. The Second Helvetic Confession declared that "The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God" (Baines, 2015:35-42). God's word contains an obligatory call on humanity, which is developed throughout the Biblical meta-narrative, for humans to respond to the speaking God with obedient-listening. Rainey (2010:10) notices that obedient-listening is a dominant theme in Scripture present in almost every book. Snodgrass (2002:11) concurs when he says,

*The Biblical text itself gives priority to hearing...The **biggest** (emphasis added) complaint in Scripture is that people do not listen to God...of all the commands,*

⁷³ Ikenye writes in the context of 'pastoral care'.

⁷⁴ Ps 115:5, 135:16; Is 46:7; Jer 10:14; 1 Cor 12:2; Rev 9:20. Blanchard (1987:6) estimates that the Old Testament contains over 4000 phrases like 'the LORD spoke/commanded/said'. Carson (2007:176) concurs when he says, "Perennially we read, 'The word of the Lord came to such-and-such a prophet.'"

expectations, and desires that God has for humans, the most frequent and important is hearing, the recognition of God as the Other to whom we should give attention and listen.

Homiletics is birthed in the twin theological propositions that God speaks, and that he expects to be heard and obeyed by human listeners. Carson (2007:176) calls preachers to an understanding that their task is a 're-revelation' of the voice of God through the written word. Keller (2015:14) says that preaching has two objects, "the Word and the human listener." De Klerk (2007:188) reminds that a preacher is to proclaim God's word 'as a listener amongst listeners'. Bonhoeffer called for preachers to have the attitude of an obedient hearer rather than an analytical critic (Niedenthal & Rice, 1980:10). Stott (1982:137) famously described preaching as 'bridge-building' when he said,

(The) task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of men and women of today.

Kruger and De Klerk (2021:3) have called for preachers not simply to tell truth, aiming at human cognition, but instead to aim at 'active listening' by their hearers. Kruger (2019:236-237) calls for preachers to aim at purposeful communication that reframes their listeners' narratives of reality recognising that people listen not only with their ears but also with their feelings and emotions. He calls preachers to aim for 'active listening' resulting in listener participation that transfers ownership of the sermon to the hearer's life (Kruger, 2019:250-251). He poignantly reminds that, "people's minds are not mere debating halls, but rather picture galleries" (Kruger, 2019:246) and so preachers act as 'Remembrancers' stirring and re-stirring memories (Kruger, 2019:245) for active listening.

The 'New Homiletic' has highlighted preaching as 'event' (Niedenthal & Rice, 1980:9; Rose, 1997:60) and seeks to emphasize human response, relationship and understanding in the speech-event (Gibson, 2005:476). Much research is being done on the response of listeners to preaching.⁷⁵ Rose (1997:60) notices that, "The dominant focus shifts to the human side of the encounter." Gibson (2005:477) summarises this movement as, "The central concern is not what the sermon *is* but what the sermon *does*" (*italics original*). This movement in homiletics, highlighting anthropocentric concerns, contributes to a re-evaluation of the listening priority for the preacher. Pasquarello (2005:135) notices a tentativeness in homiletics which he describes as a 'homelessness'. He attributes this to a homiletic emphasis on 'effective communication strategies, techniques and 'how-to' ideas.

⁷⁵ See Allen, 2009:7-13.

Homiletics must seek to clarify the synthesis-in-emphasis that is required of the preacher, who must listen both to God via the text of Scripture *and* listen to the voice of context and culture. Cilliers (2004:22-37) helpfully argues for preaching as a blending of the voices of God, text, preacher and congregation. He intentionally uses 'voice' in his definition to emphasise the relational and personal expression of identity, which can result in proper communication between persons (Cilliers 2004:30). Cilliers (2004:32) significantly declares that the listening required is asymmetric when he says, "God's voice initiates...He takes the initiative," in order that people might encounter *him* (Cilliers, 2004:40). He furthermore observes (Cilliers, 2004:101) that preachers 'deviate too soon from the text, or perhaps have never truly visited the text.' He argues for preachers to prioritize a deep hearing and adherence to the text, for them to stay with it, visit in it, meditate on it and especially linger in 'the strange subversive word of God.' (Cilliers 2004:102). In this, Cilliers echoes Day's observations, when he reflects on the writings of J.J. Von Allmen that preaching is a movement from trusted Word to congregation (Day, 2005:11). Snodgrass (2002:9) calls for less self-centred speaking and more attention to be given to a deep hearing of the inscripturated voice of God. This demand necessitates that homiletics be shaped by a commitment to *asymmetric listening* whereby the preacher gives priority to hearing God's voice, and a subservient and submissive ear to the voices of culture and context.

This research is necessary because no research has been undertaken on the preaching praxis of REACH-SA preachers in order to determine what listening is actually being practiced by preachers and whether the listening practiced is asymmetrically shaped. This research seeks to better understand the shape of REACH-SA's preaching praxis, endeavouring to understand what voices REACH-SA's preachers are listening to and how these voices are reflected in their speaking.

2.2.4 Research Question

This research seeks to investigate preaching within REACH-SA to establish whether the obedient-listening demanded throughout the Biblical meta-narrative characterises REACH-SA preaching and whether REACH-SA's preaching displays an adequate understanding of its cultural context in order that the living voice of God is heard. This gives rise to the research question to be answered by this research: *Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?*

2.2.5 Descriptive Perspectives on a Definition of Preaching

Before preaching can be evaluated, it must first be defined. Once defined, a method of appraisal and assessment becomes achievable. Long (2005:15) calls homileticians to, 'know what we are doing when we preach.' In his homiletics anthology Lischer (2002:xiii) concurs, asserting that,

How one defines any activity will dictate one's attitude toward the task and its execution.

Two millennia after the life of Jesus, one might expect homiletics to have reached some consensus on the question, 'what is preaching?' but agreement is elusive. The debate can be seen in the reality that preaching titles are often prefixed with a descriptor.⁷⁶ Similarly, preachers themselves show no consensus when they address a gathered audience. A superficial survey of sermons preached on any given Sunday will reveal topical preaching, doctrinal preaching, conversational preaching, homilies, expository preaching, motivational preaching, prophetic preaching and (sadly, all too often) incoherent preaching. The diversity in definitions of preaching can be seen both in what is attempted as well as how it is attempted. Some preachers dress in casual clothing, sit on a bar-stool and in conversational tones attempt to communicate life lessons as one amongst equals; others dress in formal religious attire and speak in a patterned and religious style from an ornate pulpit; while still others peripatetically march around the assembled congregation using their voices in loud demand of an audience's participation and emotional response. At a superficial level it becomes obvious that these preachers are attempting vastly different things and hoping for markedly different outcomes. The Pew Research Center (2019) studied 49,719 sermons that were preached in the United States of America and then subsequently published online. The research found vast differences in the typical length of sermons (2019:3) as well as in the vocabulary used by preachers (2019:6). Lischer (2002:3) describes the complexity of the task of defining preaching when he says,

The universal association of preaching with the Christian faith has not led to a uniform definition of the task.

Additionally, some scholars are not necessarily convinced that a single definition of preaching is possible or even advised. Coggan (1987:105) argues for movement, growth and point-of-view in definition. Hill (1983:113), in his own attempt to define preaching, says that,

the resolution will be no more than the suggesting of one tentative and heuristic theory or model...this is to acknowledge explicitly that several such theories – all of them viable - are available.

This complexity and diversity in the task of definition does not however mean an absence of broad areas of consensus. Preaching definitions typically notice five integral components to preaching:

⁷⁶ A brief survey of preaching titles will reveal 'Biblical Preaching', 'Christ-Centred Preaching', 'Expositional Preaching', 'Integrative Preaching', 'Liberation Preaching', 'Power Preaching', 'Prophetic Preaching', 'Worldly Preaching' and many others.

- God (in Trinity)⁷⁷
- Scripture
- Christ
- Preacher
- Listeners/Congregation.

Cilliers (2004:32) interlaces these components in his definition of preaching when he says that,

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 voices become one voice, then the sermon is indeed viva vox evangelii." (italics original).

Although Christ is not expressly stated in his definition, Cilliers (2004:53) elaborates his understanding of God's voice to be the declaration of the Trinitarian God's saving acts in Christ. In this, he reflects the central claim of apostolic preaching; it is a proclamation of 'Jesus Christ and him crucified'.⁷⁸ Nel (2019), is influenced by Cilliers definition,⁷⁹ and argues that good preaching occurs as the "horizons" of divinely-authored Biblical text (taken in context (2019:414-417)) merges with the preacher's incarnational discipleship (2019:411), humanity and integrity (2019:406-410), in collaboration with the congregation (2019:413-414).

Scharf (2010) uses the image of a pyramid to picture the relationships that exist between the component parts of preaching. He places God at the apex of the pyramid with Scripture, listeners (congregation) and preacher at the base (Scharf, 2010:2). The elements at the base interact with each other in relationship as they interact with God at the apex. Scharf assumes Christ as the central preaching message (2010:139) and defines preaching as bearing witness to Christ's death and resurrection (2010:138).

Long (2005a:15-18) leans on Moltmann's description of preaching, which also articulates these integral components,

One person or more gets up in front of the congregation in order to preach the gospel...These people come from the community but come forward in front of it and act in Christ's name (Moltmann, 1977:303).

⁷⁷ Often language of the 'Holy Spirit' is used here. See for example Craddock (1985:22-30) who defines preaching as a participation between a preacher, listeners, the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁸ 1 Cor 2:2

⁷⁹ He is also significantly influenced by J. Cornelius-Bundschuh. 2011. Wann is eine Predigt gut? In Praktische Theologie. Zeitschrift für Praxis in Kirche, Gesellschaft und Kultur, (46), p39–52.

Long affirms the interconnected components of congregation, preacher, sermon and the presence of Christ. He asserts that preaching ‘in Christ’s name’ integrates human words with “the word that God in Christ, in the power of the Spirit is already speaking” (Long, 2005a:17). He later argues that Biblical preaching is normative (Long, 2005a:52-56), thus developing the fifth component suggested in an initial definition of preaching. In a later work, Long (2008:7-11) searching for an organising framework to integrate the components of preaching, notices the movement in homiletical thought from Brooks’ (1881:5) “truth through personality,” with its emphasis on the preacher’s personality; through the Neo-Orthodox emphasis on God speaking via the Biblical text in relevant words; to Craddock’s emphasis on sermon form, language and vocabulary; to Niedenthal and Rice’s (1980:9) definition of preaching as ‘event’ which attempts to coalesce, preacher, listener, message and social environment into ‘shared story’.

Haddon Robinson’s (2001:21) influential definition summarises preaching as a ‘living interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation’. Robinson (2001:21) defines expository preaching as,

the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.

Robinson’s definition emphasises the place of God, the Scriptures and the congregation. This definition suffers by assuming the centrality of Christ (Robinson, 2001:32). In common with many Western definitions, individual application is emphasised over collective or corporate application.⁸⁰

Michael Quicke (2003:44-63) argues for a completion of the circle in preaching. He argues that preaching begins with God in Trinity, who addresses his world, through the Scriptures of Christ. The Spirit empowers the preacher, and then convicts and transforms people who return to God the actions of worship, witness and service. Quicke calls this 360° preaching, which he says is untidy, multidimensional and risks confusion. His model is profoundly Trinitarian, incarnational and mysterious (Quicke, 2003:50-51) as it seeks power and efficacy in preaching.⁸¹

Some broad areas of consensus can be seen emerging in these preaching definitions.⁸² The Trinitarian God is the primary agent who initiates preaching, stands behind preaching, empowers

⁸⁰ See Schaeffer (1968:151-157), who notices an emphasis on individual application.

⁸¹ Quicke’s model suffers from a Western validation of productivity over relationships.

⁸² Many other definitions incorporate the five elements of preaching. See for example:

1. Adams (2005:33) defines a preacher as, “A herald (*keryx*) whose task is to convey God’s Word to his people and to call the elect from the world into the church.” On another occasion (Adams 1982:8) he defines preaching more fully, highlighting four components used by the Holy Spirit to bring blessing. These components are, “the message, delivered to an audience by the preacher, on a particular occasion” (*italics original*)

preaching and speaks to his creation through preaching. Preaching is thus a ‘Spirit-activated’ event (Brown & Powery, 2016:2) in which God’s voice is mysteriously heard through the agency of the Scriptures. God’s voice is both indicative and imperative. It is the word of God’s historical activity through his Son Jesus Christ and a present call to ‘hear his voice’ today.⁸³ Brunner (1943:178) called preaching (proclamation), “faith-awakening, faith-furthering, faith-wooing address.” Preaching is mediated through the agency of a human preacher who is member of historical and present community, and whose own voice is unavoidable and potentially dangerous. Preaching is presented to specific people who inhabit a context, different from that inhabited by the Scripture’s original audience. Preaching is thus rooted in listening and hearing. It grapples with weighing these diverse and competing voices (Hermelink, 2013:16) in what has been described as a homiletical triangle (De Cavel, 2019:2). A significant part of the discussion provoked by the ‘New Homiletic’⁸⁴ revolves around the appropriate weight to be given to the competing voices of God and Scripture, and that of congregation, culture and community (Tisdale, 1997:45). Pasquarello (2005:135-136) argues that this uncertainty sometimes results in an elevation of forms of rhetoric and communication strategies over obedient-listening to God.

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2. Brown and Powery (2016:1-24) endeavour to define preaching as Spirit-driven event in Spirit-created communities when they call it more “verb than noun” (2016:5). They dialogue between Reformed and Baptist-Pentecostal theological convictions arguing narrowly that preaching is rooted in the outpouring of the Spirit at the Pentecost preaching event. In further defining preaching as a manifestation of the incarnated Christ, through the Scriptures, as living word of the living God in dialogue with the world, they incorporate some of the integral components of preaching.
 3. Bonhoeffer defined preaching through the incarnation (Fant, 1991:101). He viewed preaching as the word of the church but as also an expression of incarnation imbued with humanity (Fant, 1991:102). He viewed Christ as present in preaching when he said, “The proclaimed word is the incarnate Christ himself” (Fant, 1991:21,101). Bonhoeffer’s preaching was dependent upon Scripture (Fant: 1991:13). His sermons insisted upon a single-minded devotion to Christ (Fant, 1991:13). He saw the purpose of the church as the preaching of the gospel (Fant, 1991:36,43). He argued that preaching has the dual objectives of establishing the congregation (*kerussein and euaggelizethay*) and building it up (*didaskein*) (Fant, 1991:99). In Bonhoeffer’s explorations of preaching, we see all five elements present.
 4. Coggan (1987:105-116) suggests seven components for a preaching definition. 1. The personality of the preacher. 2. The centrality of Christ. 3. The activity of the Spirit. 4. The preacher as pointer. 5. The place of Scripture. 6. Preaching as activity of the church. 7. Preaching achieves the activity of God.
 5. Immink (2019:1) defines excellent preachers as those who, “know how to present the world of the Bible in the present-day situation as a living Word that touches the congregation.” He later (2019:1) names the central content of preaching as the ‘living Christ.’
 6. Lamb’s (2014) elucidation of preaching begins with the centrality of the Bible in preaching because through the Scriptures the living Christ is encountered (2014:20,165). He argues that the preacher is to do, obey, live and embody the Word preached (2014:123). He notices further elements of preaching when he argues that Biblical preaching involves the congregation, is applied, depends on the Spirit and proclaims God’s grace in Christ (2014:135-171).
 7. Long (2005b) argues for four essential components to preaching – Bible, congregation, preacher and sermon. He concludes that preaching is a journey/story taken by the preacher in the Scriptures who then witnesses to an authentic personal experience and guides the congregation along their respective journeys.
 8. Meyer’s (2013:21) definition of word ministry “Stewarding and heralding God’s word in such a way that people encounter God through his word.” includes four of the five components.
 9. Olford and Olford (echo Bonhoeffer when they) emphasise the incarnational nature of preaching (2003:3). They argue for an “inextricable union between the preacher and...(the) message” (2003:2) which they regard as ‘Christ’ (2003:2). They argue that authentic preaching is expository preaching recognising with Augustine and the Reformers that when Scripture speaks God speaks (2004:4).
 10. Packer (1996:144) begins with application, calling preaching, “An applicatory declaration, spoken in God’s name for his praise, in which some part of the written Word of God delivers through the preacher some part of its message about God and godliness in relation to those whom the preacher addresses.”

⁸³ Heb 4:7

⁸⁴ The term ‘New Homiletic’ was first used by David Randolph (1969) to describe the emphasis on preaching as an event actualized in the life of the hearer/congregation rather than preaching as the provision of information or meaning. Preaching is thus defined as a co-created event where both preacher and congregation contribute (Gibson, 2005:478; Park & Wepener, 2016:2).

2.2.6 Descriptive Perspectives on God as Author of Preaching

Theology is about God. Aquinas (Wright, 1988:681) defined theology as “taught by God, teaches of God and leads to God.” Thompson (2006:49) says, “Christian theology at its most basic is talk about God.” Erickson (1998:22) similarly describes theology as “the study or science of God.” The Bible opens with the metaphysical and ontological declaration, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”⁸⁵ The Bible does not argue for God but simply introduces him by announcing his presence and showcasing his creation activity (Matthews, 1996:113). He is the, “creator (who) creates creation” (Brueggemann, 1989:17). As the opening chapter of Genesis unfolds, initial glimpses are given into the essence and character of God:

- i. God speaks.⁸⁶
- ii. He speaks of himself in the plural, ‘Let us make man in our image.’⁸⁷
- iii. God creates through his speaking.⁸⁸
- iv. God uniquely creates humans as verbal beings and then communicates with them (Shaeffer, 1968:92).⁸⁹

The creation is thus defined by its ‘spoken-out-ness’ and by its ‘spoken-to-ness’.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Bible declares the theological conviction (Ellingworth, 1993:91) that God continues to speak ‘at many times and in various ways,’⁹¹ culminating in the superior revelation given through God’s Son (Lane, 1991:9). Humanity is called to hear and respond to the God who spoke. Brueggemann summarised the response demanded of creation when he said (1989:18), “Creation is to listen and answer.”⁹² Kruger (2019a:71) defines preaching as “placing listeners in the presence of the living God” in order to enable them to approach life differently (2019a:78). Laubscher (2020:171) argues that the ‘acid test’ of Christian preaching resides in its focus on the present hearing of God’s living voice by both congregation and preacher. Homiletics is birthed in the declaration of a God who spoke, continues to speak, and expects to be heard and obeyed by human listeners. Homiletics is thus initiated in a *heard divine word*.

The emphasis on preaching as voicing God’s speech is evident in Augustinian thought. Pasquarello (2005:20) says that in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine offers “a vision of the Triune

⁸⁵ Gen 1:1. See Hamilton (1990:103f), Skinner (1930:12f), Wenham (1987:11–13) for differing ways in which the initial sentence of Genesis has been understood.

⁸⁶ Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,22,24,26,28,29.

⁸⁷ Gen 1:26. See Wenham (1987:27-28) and Grudem (1994:227) for differing conclusions on the use of the plural in Genesis 1:26. Grudem argues that the church fathers and early theologians almost universally regarded the plural as indicative of the Trinity.

⁸⁸ God does not create by combat, sexual union or by re-manufacturing already existing elements (Jensen, 1991:85), he simply speaks.

⁸⁹ Gen 1:26-30.

⁹⁰ Gen 2.

⁹¹ Heb 1:1.

⁹² Brueggemann (1989:18) perceptively points out that the opening narrative of Genesis ends in 11:1-9 with the terrible declaration that “they did not listen.”

God as the source, means and goal of all we are, do, and say.” Augustine declared that the Scriptures given historically are not dead works but God’s living and present word by which he presently speaks (Van Oort, 2009:6). Augustine drew this implication from Christ’s promise of continued presence given to the Apostles,⁹³ arguing that God continues to speak presently through the gospel of Christ proclaimed by the internal work of the Spirit (Van Oort 2009:6).

The Reformation asserted that preaching was a vocalization of God’s voice. Calvin viewed preaching as a visitation from God (Schulze, 1998:52). In the Institutes (1975:24), when speaking of the Scriptures, he says that,

God therefore bestows a gift of singular value, when, for the instruction of the Church, he...opens his own sacred mouth.

Calvin declared that when the gospel is preached, “it is as if God Himself spoke in person” (Lawson, 2009:21). Schulze argues that Calvin regarded preaching as a sure sign that Christ has not deserted his world but instead extended his hand to people; God is present in preaching and his voice is audible to draw humans to himself (Lawson, 2009:21; Schulze, 1998:52). Bullinger, summarised the Reformation’s view of preaching with the phrase taken up in the second Helvetic Confession: *Praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei* – the preaching of the word of God is the word of God (Runia 1988:528).

Barth (1991:44) emphasised God as primary in preaching. He said (Barth, 1991:41), “Unless God is truly present, preaching is not preaching.” His complex and comprehensive twofold definition of preaching, highlighted preaching as a voicing of God’s living word through the exposition of the Biblical text in a relevant manner so that people may hear God himself. In the first part of his definition Barth (1991:44) defined preaching as,

Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission.

Barth (1991:37-39) approvingly quotes Fezer’s definition of preaching which emphasises that God is the subject, and God is the primary actor in preaching,

Preaching is the ministry, commanded to the church, of passing on to contemporaries the witness to revelation that is entrusted to it in the Scriptures, in obedience to the God who acts with us in this word of Scripture and in faith that

⁹³ Matt 28:20.

this God in his grace and faithfulness, in, with, and under its poor human word, will himself be present among us as the living God, and will use our human word to speak his own Word.

Stott (2005:24) views the goal of preaching as rooted in the hearing of God's voice. Through the Scriptures, a God-given message is heard by living people, so as to result in obedience in their lives (1982:137-138). He affixes the adjective 'Biblical' to his definition of preaching when he says,

to expound Scripture is to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and his people obey him (Stott, 2005:24).⁹⁴

Griffiths (2017:4-5) seeks to establish a New Testament basis for the practice of preaching in a Biblical-Theological survey of the 'word of God'. He defines preaching (2017:120-121) as the public, authoritative proclamation of God's Word by a commissioned leader. He concludes (2017:129) that the New Testament presents God as the primary agent behind preaching who is personally involved and personally present so that preaching leads to an encounter with God where the present voice of God is heard (Griffiths 2017:120–33). Carson (2007:176) echoes this emphasis when he calls preaching a revelatory event. He says that in preaching, the preacher aims for God to disclose himself afresh so that the people of God know that they have met with the living God when the Spirit applies the word to their hearts (Carson, 2007:172-189).⁹⁵

Wilson, grappling with the decline of the church in the West (2016:7-9), argues for a restoration of, "preaching as a dual art of teaching and proclamation" (Wilson, 2016:4). He argues that teaching provides information while proclamation introduces people to God so that they personally hear God speak (Wilson 2016:1–8). He suggests that preaching has had this dual focus throughout history but that presently proclamation has "become a lost art" (Wilson, 2016:1). Wilson suggests proclamation makes God the centre of the sermon and consists of an announcement of both God's condemnation of human sin and failure (which Wilson calls 'trouble'); as well as a loving, life affirming, Spirit inspired proclamation of grace, forgiveness and restoration (which Wilson calls 'gospel'). Wilson argues that sermons are not only to talk about things; they are also to do things. Preaching is to offer the gospel, highlighting what God is

⁹⁴ Stott (1982:139–44) sagely notices that preachers often either commit to Biblical faithfulness or contemporary relevance as if they are mutually exclusive and argues that the preaching task embraces both a faithfulness to the text and a sensitivity to the 'modern' world (Stott 2005:26–27).

⁹⁵ Similar emphases can be seen in:

1. Coggan (1987:75) says, "When true preaching takes place the main actor is the Holy Spirit."
2. Meyer (2013) who attempts a Biblical theology of preaching. He emphasises the received nature of the message and argues for the preacher as steward and herald in order that people may encounter God through his word (2013:21).
3. Packer (1996:141) says the proper aim of preaching is to mediate meetings with God. He calls preaching human communication through which God himself communicates (1996:142). He defines preaching as an applicatory declaration, spoken in God's name and for his praise, in which some part of the written Word of God delivers through the preacher some part of its message about God and godliness in relation to those whom the preacher addresses" (Packer, 1996:144).

accomplishing in Jesus Christ (Wilson 2016:247). Wilson suggests that in proclamation, people hear God say, “You have sinned,” as well as “I forgive you. I love you.” (Wilson, 2016:85-88). Proclamation thus facilitates a personal introduction to God (Wilson, 2008:2-3).

In assessing the preaching praxis of REACH-SA, this research begins with the assertion that God is the primary preacher (Packer, 1996:145-146) and that preaching proceeds from him. Taylor (2002:48-49) summarises when she says, “Every sermon begins and ends with God...God is in it”. God initiates the word-event calling humanity to hear and obey which gives rise to the initial component formulated in the research question: *Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word?* This research will use the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis which reflects this concern in its *depth* analysis. Its initial and foundational question asks, “Which God is named here? Which God is at issue here? What are the characteristics and behaviours of this God revealed in the sermon?”

2.2.7 Descriptive Perspectives on Scripture as Basis of Preaching

Preaching is derived from Scripture, emerges from Scripture, and is true to Scripture. Its content is never primarily the thoughts of the orator but instead the thoughts of the Scriptures. Lischer (1981:76) says, “The Bible is the test of preaching”. Long (2005a:54) concurs when he asserts that, “Faithful engagement with Scripture is a standard by which preaching should be measured.” Witherington (2005:ix) asserts that there is an “ultimate litmus test for good preaching” which is its grounding in the Biblical text. Long (2005a:53) notices that preaching has been derived from Scripture throughout church history. He references Brilioth’s historical survey of preaching who concludes that the Scriptures have been an integral and consistent feature of preaching throughout church history.⁹⁶ Similarly, Keller (2015:29-32) cites Old’s enormous survey of the history of preaching⁹⁷ in which Old concludes that there are essentially two ‘basic forms’ of preaching that have been reflected in every section, age and national expression of Christianity. These forms Old calls ‘Expository’ and ‘Thematic/Topical’ preaching. Expository preaching is rooted in a single text of Scripture and seeks to hear God from that specific Scripture. Topical/Thematic preaching has a broader agenda in that it seeks to communicate Biblical ideas which have been derived from several places in Scripture and are then organised around an

⁹⁶ Brilioth, Y. 1965. *A Brief History of Preaching*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁹⁷ Old, H. O. *The Reading and Preaching of the Scripture in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Eerdmans. Grand Rapids. 1998. *The Biblical period* vol 1; 1998. *The Patristic Age*, vol 2; 1999. *The Medieval Church*, vol 3; 2002. *The Age of Reformation* vol 4. 2004. *Moderation, Pietism and Awakening* vol 5. 2007. *The Modern Age* vol 6. 2010. *Our Own Time* vol 7.

evangelistic, catechetic, festal or prophetic moment (Keller, 2015:30). This preaching is reflected in Paul's oratory on Mars Hill,⁹⁸ where the content of his address is derived from the Scriptural meta-narrative, and the method of presentation is not tied to a single Scriptural passage or text but rather elucidates broad Scriptural themes. Long (2005a:55) concludes that despite Christian history's many controversies over inspiration and hermeneutics, that,

There is a surprising consensus about what the Bible does. The church has discovered that when it goes to the Scripture in openness and trust, it finds itself uniquely addressed there by God and its identity as the people of God shaped by that encounter.

Pasquarello (2005:41), notices this commitment to Scripture in the monastic voice of Gregory who posited that "Preachers are simply called to sow the word". He argues that Gregory was following in the interpretive tradition of the early fathers Jerome, Ambrose, Origen and Augustine when he, "viewed exegesis and the exposition of Scripture as the primary medium of preaching" (Pasquarello, 2005:42). Similarly, Pasquarello (2005:69) says that in the Medieval voice of Bonaventure there was a recognition that the preacher,

Must first of all learn to be a devout listener: The origin of divine speech is the Triune God; sacred Scripture is the "heart, mouth, tongue and pen of God."

The integration of preaching and Scripture was compellingly reaffirmed prior to the Reformation in the testimony of Erasmus who regarded sacred rhetoric as derived from the pages of Scripture (Pasquarello, 2005:89). The emphasis on Scripture was to be further highlighted during the Reformation when Martin Luther's rediscovery of Scripture sparked the Reformation. He regarded proclamation as central; as the very "speech of God derived from Holy Scripture and enlivened by the Holy Spirit" (Pasquarello, 2005:110). The *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* affirm preaching to be of the "pure Word of God" preached to faithful people (article 19). The Scriptures were embraced as sufficient for faith and doctrine (articles 6 and 20).⁹⁹ The underlying foundation of John Calvin's preaching was his unwavering commitment to the authority of Scripture itself which

⁹⁸ Acts 17

⁹⁹ 6. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation. Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture, we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

19. Of the Church. The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

20. Of the Authority of the Church. The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

permeated his preaching (Lawson, 2009:21). Calvin regarded his main task as “the systematic exposition of the Bible - book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse” (Schultze, 1998:50). Schultze (1998:51-52) further notices the emphasis on the necessity and authority of Scripture in Calvin’s Institutes (1.6.2) when he said (1975:25),

If true religion. is to beam upon us, our principle must be; that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching. It is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture.

Barth (1991:44) similarly in his two-part definition of preaching, demarcated it as consequent upon Scripture,

1. Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming the exposition of a biblical text in free human words relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission.

2. Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God’s Word, through one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God himself.

This integration of preaching and Scripture continues into the present.¹⁰⁰ The Pew Research Center’s (2019) study referenced earlier found significant Biblical content in American sermons.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Other writers emphasising the Scriptures as the content of preaching include

1. Black (1977:77) says, “The accepted source of our preaching material is the Bible...It is the Revelation of God’s heart to us...”
2. Chapell (1994:51) says “The text itself is the source of the truths we ultimately present. In the pulpit we are expositors not authors. The sermon explains what the Bible says.”
3. Jensen and Grimmond (2010:43) say that “Ultimately, the preacher has no other agenda or goal but to make God’s word clear to the church.”
4. Lloyd Jones (1971:187) articulates his understanding of the source of preaching when he says, “In preaching the message should always arise out of the Scriptures.”
5. Nhiwatiwa (2012a:18) says, “Sermon ideas should come from a biblical text.”
6. Perkins (1996:9) argues for a commitment to the content of Scripture when he says “The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching.”
7. Piper (1990:88) discussing the preaching of Jonathan Edwards says, “Good preaching is ‘saturated with Scripture’ and not ‘based on Scripture’ because Scripture is more (not less) than the basis for good preaching.”
8. Richardson (1969:264) defines preaching as, “Preaching consists in one thing only: the exposition of the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures in such a way as to bring home its saving and liberating truth to the hearers...”
9. Spurgeon (1954:72) says, “The discourse should spring out of the text as a rule, and the more evidently it does so the better.”
10. Sunukjian (2007:9-10) says that “the preacher’s task is twofold: to present the true and exact meaning of the biblical text...in a manner that is relevant to the contemporary listener.”
11. Vines and Shaddix (1999:24), “Preaching has a specific content-the Word of God as revealed in the Bible.”
12. Wiersbe (1999:24) speaking to preachers says, “We can’t do the job apart from the Word of God...we don’t preach the Bible so much as allow the Bible to preach through us.”

¹⁰¹ Pew Research Center (2019:18) concluded that “The sermons that American churches share online are heavily laced with Scripture: 95% reference at least one book, gospel or epistle of the Bible by name, and more than half (56%) cite particular books from both the Old Testament and the New Testament (which includes the Christian gospels) in the same sermon.”

As Long (2005b:12) surveys changing trends in homiletics he argues that the primacy of the Bible in preaching has in recent years solidified in preaching praxis.

Some voices have become less confident about the connection between preaching and Scripture. Rose (1997:16-17) posits that a central tenant of this position is that truth is objective, certain and clear. Truth is to be discovered in the Biblical texts before being formulated into the sermon and then transmitted or communicated to the congregation for their acceptance.¹⁰² Writers in the 'New Homiletic' grappling with the complexity of the Scriptures are not always comfortable with a text being reducible or limited to a single idea which then leads to a propositional sermon (Long, 2005a:100–108). Long surveys the debate; from the idea that the purpose of exegesis was to pluck out the main theological nugget; through Craddock's (2001) contention that the sermon should be an inductive adventure with its resulting call for sermons to be essentially narrative journeys; onto his own proposal that 'biblical preaching' will endeavour to be faithful not only to the message but also the intention of the text. Long argues for a 'Big Idea' that makes a difference in the present (2005:107). Brueggeman (2005:18) argues that texts are polyvalent and open to various legitimate and faithful meanings: A claim which is clearly valid in prophetic genres as well as the Psalms where the text obviously has different horizons-of-fulfilment. Despite these expressions of complexity there remains a universal commitment to preaching as being derived from Scriptural texts.

Any definition of good preaching will thus demand that preaching has the Scriptures as its wellspring. Good preaching will demand a commitment to textual integrity and ideational faithfulness.¹⁰³ Charles Simeon (quoted in Stott, 1982:129) summarised preaching's endeavour as, "to bring out of the Scripture what is there," and to, "without prejudice or partiality, to give to every text its just meaning, its natural bearing and its legitimate use." The Heidelberg method evaluates preaching praxis with its question, "How is the Biblical text included/used in the sermon? In keeping with this study's emphasis on obedient-listening, this emphasis is reflected in the initial portion of this study's research question: Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a *heard word*?

¹⁰² Rose (1997:21-33) critiques 'traditional homiletical theory' by:

- i. Pointing to the gap that exists between preacher and congregation.
- ii. Suggesting that sermons are an expression of power/authority and imply a one-directional movement.
- iii. Highlighting the complexity of language.
- iv. Noticing an emphasis on rationality over imagination and mystery.

¹⁰³ Wilcock (2001a:49) references an obituary that describes a clergyman as "a good preacher though he seldom referred to the Bible."

2.2.8 Descriptive Perspectives on Christ as the Content of Preaching

The Scriptures are never a destination, instead they serve as a conduit to God in Christ.¹⁰⁴ Lamb (2014:165) references Luther who called Christians to worship the Christ child in the cradle, not the cradle of Scripture itself. Nell's (2017:313) discussion of Christ's incarnation declares that preaching points to the central character of the theo-drama who is Christ. Bonhoeffer (Fant, 1991:28) called for clarity in preaching content when he said, "The preacher must 'know' what he preaches: Jesus Christ the crucified...There may be no uncertainty here." Richard Lischer (1981:78) identifies the proclamation of Christ as central when he says, "We preach not the Bible, but the Christ of the Bible." James Black (1977:6) concurs when he says, "In its simplest and most diluted form, preaching is telling someone else about Jesus Christ." Allen, Blaisdell and Johnston (1997:75) summarise,

Christian preachers...are called to proclaim the truth and the truth that preachers have to speak is Jesus Christ.

The centrality of Jesus in the Scriptural testimony is derived from the very thought and teaching of Jesus himself. He declares the Old Testament Scriptures to be about himself (Goldsworthy, 2000:20) when he reproaches the hearing crowd for searching these Scriptures, thinking that in them is eternal life; but for not recognising that these same Scriptures bear witness to himself.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Luke records the risen Christ, teaching about himself, as the subject of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁰⁶ The New Testament writings interpret the Hebrew Scriptures through Christ (Keller, 2015:57) and are themselves a proclamation and explanation of, "Jesus Christ and him crucified".¹⁰⁷ Preaching thus finds its content (Knowles, 2008:247),¹⁰⁸ coherence (Goldsworthy, 2000:21), centre (Goldsworthy 2000:33) and substance (Griffiths, 2017:121) in the person and

¹⁰⁴ The centrality of Christ in preaching is often assumed in preaching manuals, not always overtly discussed. See for example:-

1. Robinson and Larson (2005), *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids.
2. Lischer (2002), *The Company of Preachers*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.

¹⁰⁵ John 5:39-40.

¹⁰⁶ Luke 24:27,44-45.

¹⁰⁷ John 1:2, 4:14, Rom 5:6-8; 1 Cor 2:2, 15:1-3, 2 Cor 4:5, Gal 2:16, Eph 3:8, Phil 1:27, Col 1:28, 4:3; 1 Tim 2:5-7; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:2, 4:14.

¹⁰⁸ Christ is the central proclamation of every New Testament document: In Matthew, Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfilment of Old Testament Scripture. In Mark, Jesus is the suffering Messiah (Mark 8:27-31). Luke presents Jesus as the saviour of the world (Roberts, 2002:117) challenging humans to respond (Bock, 1996:17). John reveals Jesus as the Son of God, the giver of life (John 20:31). Acts shows Jesus proclaimed as the crucified and risen Christ (Acts 2:36, 12:30; 17:31). Romans shows Jesus as the righteousness from God (Rom 3:21). 1 Corinthians declares Jesus Christ and him crucified as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24; 2:2). 2 Corinthians declares Jesus as the reconciler (2 Cor 5:18). Galatians shows Jesus as the sufficient Christ who fulfils the law (Gal 3:25). Ephesians declares Jesus as the one who reconciles and unites divided humanity with God (Eph 2:16). Philippians declares Christ as the humble slave (Phil 2:7). Colossians proclaims Jesus as the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and that it is Christ (him) that is preached (Col 1:28). 1 Thessalonians reveals Jesus as the returning one (1 Thes 4:14). The Pastorals remind that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:18). Hebrews emphasises Christ as superior (Heb 1:4). 1 Peter reveals Jesus as the hope in suffering (1 Pet 1:13). The Johannine epistles remind that Jesus was seen, heard, and is proclaimed (1 Joh 1:3). John's Revelation graphically portrays Jesus as the reigning, returning king (Rev 5:6;19:16).

work of Christ. Griffiths (2017:121) completes his study of New Testament preaching by concluding that,

The substance of preaching is consistently the person and work of Christ from Scripture. Although Jesus and the apostles were not always explicitly expounding a biblical text in their preaching...their proclamation was always of Christ as the one who fulfils the institutions and promises of the Old Testament.

Wilson (2008:63) concurs when he says that “Christ is central...Christ is the starting point of faith, the returning reference point, the ultimate end point.”¹⁰⁹

The Scriptural meta-narrative is intentionally selective and focused. Its primary interest is a presentation of God-in-Christ who chooses to relate to his creation by speaking so that humans may know him through his words and his actions (Goldsworthy, 2000:36). This speech climaxes in the incarnation (Greidanus, 1988:114-121), death and resurrection of Christ (Lischer, 1981:30).¹¹⁰ Lose (2003:73), commenting on the theology of the early church, says,

*They looked not simply to Jesus, but particularly to God’s activity in Jesus’ cross and resurrection for **the** hermeneutical key to explicate their Scriptures (the Old Testament), their faith, and the significance of Jesus life and ministry.*

Pasquarello (2005:98) notices the centrality of Christ in Erasmus’s work when he says, “The business of preaching is simply Christ, the eloquent sermon of God.” This emphasis permeates Reformation preaching. Schultze (1998:57) summarises Calvin’s preaching as Christ centred. Similarly, Bonhoeffer argued that the purpose of preaching is a presentation of Christ who is incarnated and present in that preaching (Fant, 1991:21,43,101-104,116-118).

¹⁰⁹ Other writers expressly stating this emphasis include:-

1. Adams (1982:147) says, “Preaching...is distinctive. And what makes it distinctive is the all-pervading presence of a saving and sanctifying Christ. Jesus Christ must be at the heart of every sermon you preach.” Later Adams (1982:150) says, “Christ...is the subject matter of the whole Bible.”
2. Brown & Powery (2016:31) when discussing the “collaborative interaction” between Spirit and the Word call Christian preaching, “A discussion of Jesus the Christ as Word of God.”
3. Chapell (1994:263-286) argues for the identification of the Fallen-Condition-Focus (FCF) in the Biblical text and then to seek the solution in Christ. He says (1994:271), “The Scriptures present one, consistent, organic message. They tell us how we must seek Christ...”
4. Lischer (2002:8) surveys Schleiermacher’s thought and concludes, “in the evangelical church this happens only through an effective communication of Jesus Christ.”
5. Olford & Olford (echo Bonhoeffer) when they emphasise the incarnational nature of preaching (2003:3). They argue for an “inextricable union between the preacher and...(the) message” (2003:2) which they regard as ‘Christ’ (2003:2). They later (2003:87) emphasise that the central message to be preached is ‘Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Cor 2:2).
6. Ogunlana (2017:88) says, “The centre of preaching should be Jesus Christ.”
7. Robinson (2001:32) calls preachers to ask, “How does the centrality of Jesus Christ affect the way that I handle the biblical texts?”
8. Wiersbe (2002:39) calls preachers to have a spiritual intuition in order to preach Christ from all the Scriptures.

¹¹⁰ Lischer (1981:30) contends that Christian preaching, “Is born in the resurrection of Jesus.” He contends that human questions of epistemology, ethics, anthropology, and eschatology are answered in the Scripture’s declaration of the death and resurrection of Jesus (Lischer, 1981:31).

Keller equates Biblical accuracy with Christo-centricity (2015:22). He defines preaching using the twin categories of exposition (drawing out of the passage) (2015:20) and application to individual human lives (2015:21). He draws from 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, calling it the most important Bible passage on preaching (2015:15). In it, he says that Paul defines the central focus of the Biblical testimony (and thus of all preaching) as 'Jesus Christ and him crucified'. Keller (2015:15) says that Paul understood that all Scripture ultimately pointed to Jesus who is the central theme and the substance of the Bible's message (Keller 2015:16). Keller defines preaching then as a faithful drawing from the text of Scripture (2015:29), the proclamation of Christ (2015:70) in order to resonate with culture and yet to defy it (2015:99) by touching human hearts, capturing the hearers' interest and imagination, and then persuading those hearers' towards repentance and action (2015:157).

Preachers are often drawn to anthropocentric concerns in what Chappel (1994:23) calls,

An endless search for topics, therapies and techniques that will win approval, promote acceptance, advance a cause or soothe a worry.¹¹¹

Mayhue (2005:16) calls this temptation, "consumer satisfaction and contemporary relevancy." Sociologists Smith and Denton have researched American teenagers.¹¹² They noticed that teenagers expressions of belief equated to what they dubbed 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism' (Mohler, 2005:1-6). Primary amongst their expectations was happiness. Preaching is drawn to anthropocentric concerns in an effort to satisfy what Lewis (1952:118) described as the unfulfilled human desire for another world. In addition, human pain and its consequent quest for relief permeates human concerns (Carson, 1990:15-17). Preaching can also tragically be drawn to anthropocentric concerns when it is weaponised and used as an expression of power to advance economic or political causes (Cilliers, 2006).

Preachers are constantly tempted to exalt humanity instead of exalting Christ (Adams 1982:150). Keller (2015:60) perceptively notices that there are only two ways to read the Bible, asking, "Is it basically about me or about Jesus?" Mbugua (2015) says, "The Bible and the gospel itself relentlessly point us to God." Good preaching will thus be defined by a commitment to the revelation of God in Christ. This will occur not simplistically and trivially; of somehow clumsily thrusting Jesus into every sermon, what Goldsworthy (2000:xi) calls "The Predictable 'Jesus Bit,'" but in a profound exploration of the testimony of the Scriptures to God's activity in Christ (Greidanus, 118-119). McGrath (1992:28-29) summarises this position when he argues that

¹¹¹ It might be appropriate to add, "generate revenue" to this list.

¹¹² Smith, C., Denton, M L. 2005. Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers. National Study of Youth and Religion. University of Notre Dame: Notre Dame.

through the words of Scripture believers encounter, experience and feed upon Jesus Christ. Ridderbos (1975:253) emphasised that the Bible declares the indicative -God at work in his Son- before it presents any imperative call for human obedience. Preaching must include imperatives to obedience, without which it becomes an irrelevant abstraction (Chapell, 2020) but these imperatives are consequent upon Scripture's central declaration of God at work in the incarnation, death, resurrection and exultation of Jesus Christ (Lewis, 2001:19). Manning (1944:138) poignantly defines preaching as a "manifestation of the incarnate word, from the written word, by the spoken word." As the definition of good preaching develops, it will be necessary to substitute the indefinite article. Preaching is not simply rooted in 'a heard word' but begins in ***'the heard word'*** of Jesus Christ.

2.2.9 Descriptive Perspectives on the Preacher

God-the-preacher mediates the written word and announces his kingdom through fallible human-beings (Alcantara, 2019:53). Preaching is a person-to-person event at a particular time and place (Cilliers, 2004:181) so that there is a 'tension of balance' between the 'what' of preaching and the 'who' of preaching (Nel, 2021:157). The presence of the preacher's unique, fallible humanity unavoidably permeates the entire event. Phillips Brooks (1881:5) articulated this in his influential definition,

Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements truth and personality.

Broadus (1979:3) also noticed the unavoidable presence of the preacher when defining preaching as,

Preaching is the proclamation of God's message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity.

The preacher brings to the preaching event their background, education, biases, political leanings, mood (Nel, 2021:158), diversity, persona (Nell, 2014:7; 2017:314) and uniqueness (Cilliers, 2004:181), which are a part of the shared story of the activity of God (Niedenthal & Rice, 1980:19-36). Importantly, they preach as a local member of a unique community that is both present and historical (Long, 2005:50). These communities exert influence so that the preacher carries convictions and a framework of ministerial understanding which influences what they attempt when preaching (Long, 2005:18–19). Long says that the preacher goes to Scripture and emerges from Scripture, for a unique community as a member of that community (Long, 2005:50). Buttrick (1987:456–59) describes his 'secret astonishment' that sermons are the Word of God to human communities despite preachers' obvious inadequacies and demonstrable humanity.

2.2.9.1 Descriptive Perspectives on the Preacher: Communication cannot be divorced from Integrity

Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric noticed that communication extends beyond the words spoken. It comprises the words that are spoken (*logos*) but also how they are said (*pathos*) and by whom they are said (*ethos*) (Eclov, 2005:82). Aristotle noticed that human communication extends significantly beyond the words vocalized to include nonverbal, social and relational communication cues. Communication is always comprised of encoding and decoding which facilitates (or hinders) the communication process. Aspects of nonverbal communication are the subject of significant psychological study¹¹³ these include vocal volume and cadence, appropriate emotion, eye contact, facial expressions, as well as gesture, posture, body language and others.¹¹⁴ Mitchell (1990:76) argues that most Americans practice religion in their heart language with its corresponding frame of reference, images, sounds and vocabulary into which the preacher must communicate. Speaking of African American preaching in the USA, he states (Mitchell, 1990:81) that,

The church will reject the preacher...if cultural indexes suggest a fundamental loyalty to a White reference group rather than to their religious culture.

Wilson (2008:3-4) notices that most preachers struggle to be good orators and calls for the development of preachers in content, style, and in communication strategies, which he calls 'voice', for better engagement, joy and excitement by listeners. Kruger (2021a:54) calls for preachers to know their communities in order to address them in appropriate forms of rhetoric so as to facilitate 'active listening'.

Significant amongst nonverbal communication cues is the very life of the preacher. Jesus issues a stinging denunciation of hypocrisy¹¹⁵ against those who "preach but do not practice".¹¹⁶ The Apostle Paul argued that the message and the messenger cannot be divorced as he consistently called his readers to "Imitate me as I imitate Christ."¹¹⁷ The Pastoral Epistles urge the teaching

¹¹³ See Mehrabian, Albert. 1971. *Silent Messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

¹¹⁴ Many authors give attention to the physical requirements for communication during sermon delivery. See:

1. Low (2017:235-248) on oral style.
2. Lloyd Jones's (1971:81-99) discusses the 'act' of preaching.
3. Olford and Olford (1998:236-240) discuss physical aspects of preaching.
4. Spurgeon discusses voice, the ability to command attention, human weakness (1954:110-174) as well as posture action and gesture (1954:272-304).
5. Sproul in Logan (1986:108-112) suggests that the preacher's physical appearance is a critical factor in nonverbal communication.
6. Tisdale (2010:42) references Tillich in suggesting that a challenge for preachers is to get rid of "Wrong stumbling blocks" that obstruct hearing.
7. Vines and Shaddix (1999:71-90) call for preachers to have healthy hearts, minds, bodies and routines.

¹¹⁵ Matt 23:1-36

¹¹⁶ Matt 23:3

¹¹⁷ 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9; 2 Tim 3:10-12

overseer to be above reproach¹¹⁸ and to set a visible example of progress in godliness as the necessary backdrop for preaching.¹¹⁹ Augustine called for preachers to know how to speak in changing times and circumstances as they listen to the Scriptures and are shaped by prayer, study, devotion and *conformity to Christ* (Pasquarello, 2005:25). He regarded the fundamental task of learning to read Scripture, as the transformation of the preacher, so that they become a living interpretation and eloquent sermon (Pasquarello, 2005:20). The concern for the formation and holiness of the preacher has been evident throughout the centuries (Troeger, 2005:119) and exponents of preaching have persistently called for preaching's content to be lived out in the preacher's personal and domestic life (Mbewe, 2017:74-75,163). Wilson (2008:86) quotes Ebeling who argues that the preacher needs to have 'felt the claims' of the Christological event. Quicke (2003:89-97) argues for spirituality occurring at the intersection of skill, knowledge and character. He insists that the message and messenger are inseparable (Quicke, 2003:94) and says that preaching is an overflow of who the preacher is (Quicke, 2003:89).¹²⁰ Nel (2014:3-4) calls for preachers to preach with integrity as they exemplify continuous personal change (2021:166-168), to both *be* and *become* (2021:160), born out of a 'love of God and for God' (2014:3-5). He calls preachers to exhibit credibility and forgiveness (2021:162-164) as they view their listeners through a lens of hope and listening-shaped, incarnational love because 'when we love we listen' (2014:3-4). He notices that listeners cannot separate 'the person in the pulpit from the person that they know' (Nel, 2021:162). Olusanya (2019:21) also calls for preachers to model their message, to rise up above ungodliness so that their lives repeatedly preach the same message as their words. Biwul (2019:129) and Ajibade (2021:20) similarly argue for a deep spiritual transformation in the life of the preacher. Postmodern society's deep suspicion of modernity's quest for certitude (Lose, 2003:26) has led to a suspicion of inauthentic dogma developed in the commercial superficiality of ubiquitous media messaging. Postmodern society is intensely impatient with inauthentic hypocrisy. Troeger (2005:121) has indicated that it is not the accuracy of doctrine but the genuineness of the preacher's humanity that has become the standard of homiletical trustworthiness. The nonverbal communication cues seen in the outcome of the preacher's life graphically displays their personal obedient-listening, as they exemplify an authentic discipleship (Nel, 2021:167). The preacher then is a person who both speaks and incarnates *the heard word* to others.

¹¹⁸ 1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:6-9

¹¹⁹ 1 Tim 4:6-16

¹²⁰ Other authors to argue for preaching to derive from an authentic life include

1. Hawkins (2013:43) says, "Who you are in Christ, will speak more powerfully than what you say for Christ."
2. Olford and Olford (1998:29-64) argue for an authentic walk. They summarise when they say (1998:30), "The life of the preacher matters! God is far more interested in what we are as preachers, than in what we do."
3. Wiersbe (1999:84-92) who calls for preachers to preach from their overflow.

2.2.9.2 Descriptive Perspectives on the Preacher's Pre-understanding and Presuppositions

In addition to flawed and redeemed communicator, the preacher is Scriptural interpreter and sermon creator. The preacher brings to these tasks a pre-understanding (*vorverständnis*) (Bultmann, 1964:347) and a set of presuppositions derived from historical community (Thiselton, 2009:13). Osborne (2006:29) articulates this when he says that,

Every person brings to the task (of hermeneutics) a set of “pre-understandings,” that is, beliefs and ideas inherited from one’s background and paradigm community.

These pre-understandings form the basis of a personal theology and worldview. So that Hilbert (1997:48) can say, “Every preacher has a theology even if that theology remains implicit.” This pre-understanding contains elements that are personal, cultural, historical as well as theological. Preaching requires that preachers exhibit a humility and cautiousness in the task of sermon formation, recognising that their hermeneutical and homiletical activity begins with this unavoidable composite mixture of theological presuppositions, worldview understandings, personal pain, theological traditions, sinful motivations, as well as godly desires. Buttrick (1987:55–68) articulates this by affirming that a preacher stands somewhere and takes a point-of-view to direct the audience's gaze (Chatteris, 2001:84). Long (2005a:59–64) references Beker's ‘catalytic reading’ of Scripture in which Beker argues that the goal of the interpreter is to hear the Biblical text through the cultural static of the text's own cultural world as well as the static of the interpreter's own culture (Long, 2005a:57). The point-of-view taken by the preacher comprises stance, orientation and distance, attitudes and perspectives taken towards the text. Long (2005a:59–64) says that every preacher comes to the tasks of hermeneutics and sermon creation as a member of a community. They go to the text influenced by the cultural assumptions of the community and seek to listen as representative of that community. The pre-understanding includes an understanding of God; an opinion on the source, place and possibility of deriving truth; an assessment of humanity's condition noticeable in the human paradox of *Imago Dei* and abominable corruption,¹²¹ as well as any potential solution proposed to the human predicament. Nel (2021:167) perceptively notices that these presuppositions are often characterised by prejudice and subtly contain ‘an animosity to the other’. Kruger (2019:239) warns that humans often harmonise their memories even to the point of inventing detail so as to not be required to change their current beliefs. Richards and O'Brien (2012:122) challenge Western exegetes to recognise the habits and cultural assumptions that they bring to the text as Western readers,

¹²¹ Ps 14:1

¹²² See also Brown (1984:11–14)

which can easily blind them to understandings that other readers might more naturally see. The influence of post-colonial theory on homiletics in recent decades has reminded preachers to examine their sermons in the light of notions of empire and power with what Ricoeur has called a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Pieterse, 2021:2).

These pre-understandings affect *inter alia* areas comprising cherished values, understandings of race, the usage of language, the place of individualism vs community and the missional categories of honour/shame, guilt/innocence, power/fear (Richards and O'Brien, 2012). Scholars have noticed that the hermeneutical process resembles a circle. The process begins with pre-understanding; study that leads to improved understanding, which in turn should modify the initial pre-understanding. Osborne (2006:22) argues that a spiral is a better metaphor for the process. He argues that the process should not be a closed circle but rather a process whereby the exegete, in obedient-listening, moves closer towards the text's intended meaning and its significance for the congregation to which it is to be delivered. The exegete's initial theology should then be provisional and submissive. In practice, however, it is often dangerously undisturbed by an inadequate listening to Scripture. It becomes what Campbell and Cilliers (2012:63-66) call an 'iron theology' that is set in stone so as to resist liminality and change. As a result, preachers often enter and exit the world of the text with little if any movement, transformation or development. Osborne (2006:29) perceptively argues that Christians often read the Bible not to discover its truth (nor to listen to God) but rather to harmonise it with their own belief systems. Instead of a commitment to obedient-listening to God in the text, Christians seek from the text a justification for their own desires. Schlafer (1995:75) notices that people have "an inveterate tendency to create the world in their own image."

In order for preachers to exhibit obedient-listening they should exhibit an awareness of these inherent presuppositions that are resident in their own hermeneutical processes and constantly subject them to Biblical scrutiny. The preacher must constantly listen to their own voice and display a personal self-awareness in order to understand how the culture, history and the theological heritage¹²³ of previous generations has influenced their exposition and sermon creation process (Kim, 2017:45). Schlafer (1995:75–77) calls preachers to an 'inter-subjective check' whereby they submit their understandings and experiences to the control of immediate, cultural, geographic and historical community.¹²⁴

¹²³ This heritage can prevent distortions but it also has the potential to prevent the preacher from hearing the word of God afresh.

¹²⁴ Schlafer provides a helpful set of questions to enable an in-depth personal analysis which include:

- Who got me going?
- What have I been about?
- How do I tend to operate?
- When do I resonate most clearly?
- With what can my preaching be compared?

A lack of this presuppositional awareness has ravaged South African history as theologians have provided justifications for oppression, colonialism¹²⁵ and apartheid. Vosloo (2015:212) noticing this practice in some churches' defence of apartheid, calls for an awareness of this pre-understanding when he says,

It seems to me too easy to challenge the proponents of the biblical justification of apartheid as simply immoral or evil, or bad exegetes, or people who were merely pawns in the hand of politicians. The more haunting questions for me became: Why were these ideas received so favourably in the church? And: Why were the dissenting voices not heard more widely and, when they were, often scapegoated? And: Are we aware of our own ideological distortions as we appropriate the Bible for our seemingly good causes today? The need remains to grapple with these questions as we reflect on the uses and abuses of the Bible in public discourse today.

In reflecting backwards, Vosloo (2015:212) turns the challenge to the present and then forwards to the future. De Wet and Kruger (2013) grapple with the ubiquitous, endemic and pervasive presence of corruption in South African society.¹²⁶ Theologians often endorse politicians with significantly different ethical norms.¹²⁷ De Wet and Kruger (2013:2) postulate that preachers succumb to political correctness while others cower in silence. They call preachers to be conscious of their pre-understanding, and to, “come to terms with the painful consciousness that they may be affected by the attitude and mindset underlying corruption” (2013:2), as they recognise that, “The church...forms a unique relationship with society; a relationship of antithesis and solidarity” (2013:4).

A preacher's pre-understanding and worldview can often be perceived in the introduction, illustration and analogy in the sermon but particularly in the applications communicated throughout the sermon. In analysing the preaching praxis of REACH-SA, the Heidelberg method seeks to systematize and understand how the preacher functions in the sermon while noticing the sermon's inner theological motives (Cilliers 2006:9, Pieterse 2020:350-351). It does this by using the following questions:

- 1) What is the course/agenda of the sermon mapped out in the introduction?

-
- Where do I feel connected?
 - Why do I bother?

¹²⁵ See for example Colenso's (1855) unseen colonial and racial pre-suppositions.

¹²⁶ See for example News 24 reported on 17 Nov 2021 that more than 6000 employed government officials fraudulently applied for and received Covid-19 grants intended for the poor. <https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/thousands-of-govt-employees-received-fraudulent-covid-19-grants-parly-hears-20211117>.

¹²⁷ See for example <https://www.news24.com/witness/news/pietermaritzburg/traditional-healers-and-church-leaders-show-their-support-for-zuma-20210526>

- 2) Is there a discernible emphasis, central thrust(s) or big idea(s) to the sermon?
- 3) What does the sermon negate and confront? What does the sermon affirm and praise?
- 4) What conclusions does the sermon develop?

In asking these questions and noticing the preacher's pre-understanding, this research seeks to formulate answers to the initial portion of the research question proposed, which is whether, "sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from the *heard word*."

2.2.10 Descriptive Perspectives on Listeners

Preaching recognizes that its listeners are not just recipients but significant participants in the sermon.¹²⁸ Bartholomew (2015a:51) calls the sermonic process 'dialogical' and a 'two-way street'. Cilliers (2004:132) says that "Preaching is directed at the congregation, but...also...originates from the congregation." Kruger profoundly calls for sermons to be "smudged with the tears" and fears of the hearers (2019a:84) so as to reframe their experiences for integration (2021:2) and hope (2019a:84).

Craddock (1985:09) highlights the importance of 'local soil' for the sermon to take root in and to flourish. Allen and Herin (1980:151-161) describe the creative and contemplative process that the preacher undergoes with the congregation in mind, as they prepare to speak into a 'local situation' (1980:158). Steimle (1980:169) challenges the validity of the timeless, generic sermon addressed to no context in particular, calling it 'poor'. He argues that sermons should dialogue with the questions actually being asked by the people listening (1980:169-170). Prill (2020:174-175) reminds preachers to know their congregations so as to be able to differentiate between 'low' and 'high' context audiences which require different homiletical constructions¹²⁹. Long (2005:101) says,

*The preacher is part of the congregation, a part of the culture in which the congregation lives, and the preacher goes to the biblical text from the congregation, on behalf of the congregation, and, in important ways, with the congregation.*¹³⁰

This contextualising dialogue between preacher and listeners is manifested in at least three areas:

¹²⁸ Pui-lan (2019:13) disagrees saying that 'preaching a sermon is monological' rather than 'dialogical' but even an audience sitting in complete silence contributes to the preaching with their silence.

¹²⁹ Prill (2020:174-175) defines low context sermons as focusing on what the Bible says with less emphasis on the felt needs of the hearers; while high context sermons are typically topical, draw on the Scriptures and emphasise the hearers' present needs.

¹³⁰ In Africa many preachers do not have the privilege of preaching to a single congregation but are often responsible for multiple congregations that extend over large areas.

- Rhetorical expectations
- Congregational worldviews
- Applications and Implications

2.2.10.1 Descriptive Perspectives on Listener's Rhetorical Expectations

The congregation has unique rhetorical expectations derived from cultural and denominational cues that influence the sermon's delivery.¹³¹ Nell (2017:309) and Laubscher (2019:3-4) have highlighted recent interest in preaching as 'performance' and incarnational embodiment of living speech, which results in word event, as opposed to mere delivery. Wepener (2020:481) has importantly called for the study of preaching in Africa as an enacted performance because African homiletics reflects different epistemologies and ontologies resulting in different rhetorical expectations. Pui-lan (2019:10-11) calls preachers to question Eurocentrism and to instead construct preaching with a diverse range of elements from a diverse range of traditions. Nhiwatiwa (2012a:51-88) lists rhetorical expectations noticeable in African contexts different from Western cues; these include the use of proverbs, imagination, language, storytelling, illustrations, song, voice and gesture. Prill (2020:175-176) suggests that 'high context churches' have lively and passionate delivery that is often focused on felt needs. 'High context' audiences often exhibit energetic call-and-response, body movement and enthusiastic audience participation. Tomlin (2019:83-139) similarly describes some aspects of African-Caribbean preaching, which Western preachers seldom use, including improvisation, language, voice, call and response, overlapping and repetition. Mitchell (1990:123) insists that pastors create sermons in a creative partnership with their congregations, identify with their people (1990:106) and exhibit linguistic flexibility in order to speak the mother-tongue of the people addressed (1990:76-81). He argues that American 'Black Preaching' is imbued with hope and celebration (1990:130-133) and that it exhibits specific rhetorical aspects that include engagement, storytelling, dramatization, music, cadence, dialogue and audience participation (1990:88-100).

2.2.10.2 Descriptive Perspectives on Listeners' Worldviews

The congregation's voice is to be heard by the preacher who "truly listens to the people in their context" (Cilliers, 2004:144) and then allows this voice to affect their preparation. Mbewe (2017:117) identifies that listeners usually listen concerned about their personal circumstances. Immink (2019:5) concurs when he says that hearers expect preachers to address them so that the sermon connects with their lives. Stott (1982:137) speaks of 'living people' who need to hear God's message. Tisdale (1997:27) warns that preaching theory often lacks an in-depth

¹³¹ Writers, in an effort to articulate rhetorical expectations, don't always articulate that these expectations are culturally unique. See for example Vines and Shaddix 1990:229-354), and Fant (1987:275-292) who both have helpful aids for their particular contexts.

exploration of congregational subcultures and their role in sermon formation. She calls for 'greater contextuality' (1997:33), urging preachers to exegete their congregations (1997:56-90) as they embrace the role of ethnographer (1997:55) and seek to understand their congregation's worldview,¹³² values and ethos (1997:77).¹³³ Tisdale's (2008:79-82) 'congregational exegesis' challenges preachers to a listening-understanding of the universals of human experience as well as to the particulars of 'these people's' unique experience. She calls preachers to recognise that people are (Tisdale, 2008:79–83):

- In certain respects, like all others
- In certain respects, like no others
- In certain respects, like some others

Long (2005a:64) echoes this, calling preachers to an awareness of the circumstances of their hearers so that the word preached is a personal word and a 'word on target'. Farley (2005:66) calls the congregation, its cultural setting, and its members' problems the '*that-in-the-light-of-which* of preaching'. Jang (2007:196–97) calls it audience analysis. Kim (2017) similarly calls preachers to cultural intelligence, to understand the groups to whom they speak and with whom they might not share a common cultural understanding. He calls preachers to understand their audience's way of living, way of thinking, and way of behaving in the world to guide them towards Christian maturity (Kim, 2017:5). Nel (2014:3) calls for incarnational listening. He calls preachers to show respect for their listeners' dignity by knowing them, which can only be achieved through deep listening. He cites McClure (2009:108-113) who calls this preaching "from, with and for." This process is facilitated by the preacher understanding a congregation's beliefs, rituals, idols, dreams, view of God and their lived experiences (Kim, 2017:18–23). Tisdale (2008:75) calls preachers to 'know' their congregation and argues that this congregational exegesis happens by preachers listening to stories, evaluating archival material, by demographic analysis, and observing arts, rituals and the daily activities of people (Tisdale, 1997:56–90). Long (2005:65) develops this call, urging preachers not to sit distant from their congregations, "as if people were strange, remote and difficult to understand," but rather to be attentive and open to people's lives in order to sharpen and shape sermons (Long, 2005:153). Mitchell (1990:11) concurs when he observes that, "Preaching is carried out in the idiom, imagery, style and world view of a particular people," which then shapes the sermon.

William Perkins, in his classic text, *The Art of Prophesying* (1996), called preachers to consider seven groups of listeners (1996:56–63):

¹³² A worldview is a set of basic assumptions about reality that underpins thought and action which comprises at least 5 primary questions (Gertzen 2011): What is truth? What is (the) ultimate reality? What does it mean to be human? What is time? How should humans live?

¹³³ Scharf (2010:167) calls these 'culture, language, thought form and life experience'.

- unbelievers
- the teachable yet ignorant
- the knowledgeable but not humbled
- the humbled
- those who do believe
- those who are fallen
- the mingled people

Adam (1996:133) similarly urges preachers to ask what God wants to give *these* specific people from this text. He suggests focusing on representative people, considering the theological thought strands present in the hearers and then lovingly applying the text to them. He urges preachers to meet with, listen to and pray for their sermon recipients. Nel (2014:7) similarly calls preachers to prepare sermons visualising the faces of their listeners, focusing on what they desire God to enact in their listener's lives. Keller (2015:181) suggests that the sermon's application should arise from the preacher's conversation partners. He urges preachers to diversify these conversation partners in order to improve their understanding and application. Scharf (2010:168) sets the high goal of calling preachers to know as much about their listeners as possible. Astley (2002:146) says that,

What clergy really most need, and what they usually most lack, is a large dose of careful, reflective experience of people and a wide variety of people. Along with academic theological content, insights from other disciplines, and training in skills of care, communication and leadership, they need to meet people in their own context and to listen to them.

Pieterse (1987:75) concurs when he says,

The main problem is that preachers do not know precisely what their congregations' needs, ideas, and reflections are. Their world is too far removed from that of the congregation.

The emphasis, of what Rose (1997:59-88) calls "Transformational Voices", has moved the homiletical conversation onto preaching as an 'event' or 'experience' which is sensitive to human experience (Rose, 1997:71) and seeks to transform its listeners (Rose, 1998:59) bringing them to spiritual maturity, discernment and wisdom (Cilliers, 2004:144).¹³⁴ Craddock (1974:43) has emphasised the preacher as a genuine listener to the Word of God, on behalf of people, with whom the preacher has a relationship (Craddock, 1974:83). Preachers attempt their task recognising that they speak to a specific people, in a specific time and context, who are both

¹³⁴ Lischer (2002:3-4) quotes Alan of Lille's definition that preaching is spiritual 'formation'.

individuals and corporately a part of a prevailing culture - what Harris (2008:90–100) calls the “larger social context”.

As preachers hear their congregations, they should recognise that the global church is spectacularly diverse. Milne (2006:11) describes this diversity when he says,

What contrasts of race and ethnicity are here! What ranges of generation and gender, language and culture, customs and worship styles, social status and wealth indices, educational levels and forms of employment; what degrees of freedom, involving in some places intrusive restrictions and even persecution; what varieties of personal faith stories, and levels of comprehension and commitment!

Preaching notices and celebrates this diversity. It does not seek to flatten it. Having embarked on ‘obedient listening’ to God via the text of Scripture, the preacher seeks to share its truths with a specific and unique people, who inhabit a specific context, which is different from that inhabited by the Scripture’s original audience. Preaching rejects human suspicion of the *other* and instead celebrates the unique human context for each sermon. It rejects generic sermons that paint simplistic pictures (Tisdale, 1997:23) and instead actively seeks communication that celebrates the particular and the appropriate (Tisdale, 1997:40) as it is proclaimed out of, and on behalf of, a local community (Tisdale, 1997:41) for the specific purpose of Christ conforming transformation and maturity.¹³⁵ Preaching that is shaped by congregational diversity seeks to act as a midwife to *!ke e: /xarra //ke*¹³⁶ facilitating the process of reconciliation to God and the consequent reconciliation of humans to each other.¹³⁷

A significant part of the preacher’s listening to their people is to notice the vast differences in worldview understandings and cultural codes (Knoetze, 2021:6). In recent centuries, enlightenment-shaped, western thought has rejected revelation, emphasised human autonomy (Bartholomew, 2015a:42) and fundamentally altered its long-held epistemological and ontological answers. A move from the primacy of divine revelation to the primacy of human reason with its subsequent confidence in the scientific endeavour has resulted in an assumed atheism and hostility to Christianity in Western thought (Bartholomew 2015a:43; Roberts, 2016). Hlabangane (2021:176) notices that Western thought devalues other knowledge systems as inferior, arguing that Western science models itself as,

universal, objective, logocentric, a-political, and impartial, effectively casting itself as having a god-eye view of the world, outside and above world power dynamics

¹³⁵ Rom 8:29, Col 1:28

¹³⁶ The South African motto means ‘diverse people unite’.

¹³⁷ Eph 2:18; 3:6

and other worldly concerns, except to add knowledge in aid of human civilization and progress.

Postmodern, western worldviews display an 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Stevenson, 2005:104). The Biblical declaration of God as the ultimate reality is replaced by pseudo gospels such as 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism', nationalistic gospels, prosperity gospels and works centred gospels (Alcantara, 2019:23-35; Horton, 2008:29–64). This movement has transformed how both reality and humanity are perceived and has given rise to the celebration of profound individualism where individual identity is defined in competition with others (Battle, 2009:2).

The preacher is called to active-listening, to not assume that listeners think like they do (Scharf, 2010:168). This listening leads to a cultural analysis in order to understand the values and 'cultural codes of conduct' (Knoetze, 2021:6) that emanate from a worldview. These values reflect a people's interests and preferences; they represent what a people worship, what they deem to be desirable and valuable (Tisdale, 1997:77). A preacher will need an understanding of how these views have led western thought to esteem money over people; to esteem the superiority and centrality of western civilization and thought; and the unexamined supremacy of western expressions of democracy over other forms of government (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021:9-10). In contrast to these western assumptions, African worldviews make no division between sacred and secular (Mitchell, 2005:197), they assume the spiritual and the centrality of community. A belief in a supreme being is almost universal so that atheism is virtually unknown (Mbiti, 1969:35; Nyirongo 1997:25; Biwul, 2019:72). Idowu (1973:138) asserts that belief in a supreme God is a central element of an African worldview. Although God is assumed, he is usually distant, uninvolved and occasionally capricious. He is unapproachable by humans who require the mediation of divinities (Ogunlana, 2017:92). The presence of non-human spirits, divinities and ancestors is deeply ingrained in any analysis of life (Nyirongo, 1997:25). Human life begins at birth, moves through various stages, one of which is death, where people move into the realm of the ancestors, and then continues after death. The communion between the living and the ancestors, is regarded as normal and necessary (Nyirongo, 1997:27). Life in Africa is communal with individuals defined in relation to their relationships and community (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:51; Ogunlana, 2017:93). Ubuntu defines humanity with reference to the community, the tribe or the clan (Gehman, 2005:57). Campbell and Cilliers (2012:50) quote Kaunda,¹³⁸

Let the West have its technology and Asia its Mysticism. Africa's gift to world culture must be in the realm of human relationships.

¹³⁸ Kaunda, Kenneth D. 1967. A Humanist in Africa: Letters to Colin Morris from Kenneth D. Kaunda. London Longman p22.

An Ubuntu-shaped worldview asserts that humans are interdependent and interconnected in community so that the interdependence of persons is assumed (Battle, 2009:1–3). Life is not possible without other people, and the individual is secondary to the community,¹³⁹ so that the community is the arbiter of ethics and communal unity is regarded as the highest value (Gehman, 2005:59; Thorp, 1991:110–12). Chatteris (2001:177) notices that Westerners have to be intentional to become group members but “Africans simply belong.”

The listening preacher notices that African life is characterised by orality with a preference for oral communication and the importance of story (Ajibade, 2021:71-124). The listening preacher is conscious that Africa’s ethos has been deeply wounded by its violent, colonial, and oppressive past. The African colonial context of generational subjugation, slavery, apartheid, colonial rule, war, genocide and post-colonial corruption have left deep scars and feelings of inadequacy ingrained in the ethos of people (Olusanya, 2019:18-20). Listeners in South Africa hear and experience sermons in a context of coloniality (Hlabangane, 2021:166), generational racism and pain; unequal opportunities and ubiquitous poverty; political and corporate corruption (De Wet & Kruger 2013) and changing tribal and clan identities. In reflecting on this legacy, Cilliers (2004:151) poignantly describes South Africa as a ‘bleeding community’. Music and celebration (Mitchell, 1990:119–22) have often served to salve these hurts enabling coping so that these are deeply ingrained in an African lived experience. In western thought a dualism exists where intellect and rationality are valued over emotion and intuition; sacred and secular are vehemently separated but in African thought, all of life is integrated so that intuition, emotion and cognition are essentially interconnected (Mitchell, 2005:198).

2.2.10.3 Descriptive Perspectives on Applications and Implications

The outcome of preaching’s asymmetric listening culminates in a collision between the living voice of God and the human context (Palmer, 2005:236). Chapell (1994:216) calls this the ‘breaking point’ of specificity. He calls preachers to creativity and courage because application invites rejection. This collision of asymmetric listening is developed by the preacher in the imperative and application components of the sermon. Runia (1983:26) argues that the homiletical task involves intersecting the text of Scripture with the situation of their listeners so that the congregational situation actualises the living Word of God heard in the text (Runia, 1983:65-67).¹⁴⁰ God’s living voice challenges human ‘iron theologies’ that reach for power (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:63-66) as he calls humanity to obedient-listening to his incarnated word. Sermon application, which some writers call *hermeneusis* (Van Rensburg, 2015:227), is the preacher’s attempt to articulate the ‘heard word’ of the text while fleshing out its implications to these ‘heard people’ in this specific

¹³⁹ Biwul (2019:77-78) notices that a woman is regarded as married to her husband’s family, clan and community not simply to him.

¹⁴⁰ Wiersbe (1999:69–79) suggests that application ‘folds together’ truth and life in order to make preaching, “practical, personal, precise and positive.”

demographic, time and cultural context. It is the preacher's attempt to allow God's living voice to reorganize thinking so as to challenge or affirm worldviews, to correct and modify subcultural assumptions, and to reinstall God's perspective into human hearts and action (Scharf, 2010:108). Kruger (2019:237) calls this moment the exchange of ownership which reframes reality. Cilliers (2017:1-13) calls preachers to see even as they invite others to see, to sigh and lament at the wrongs and then to sign forwards pointing to God's presence and activity in the world. Veerman (2009:15) says that,

Application focuses the truth of God's word to specific, life-related situations. It helps people understand what to do or how to use what they have learned. Application persuades people to act.

Brueggemann (2005:24) calls the development of application a journey of re-imagination where the preacher urges the listener to abandon the life-script in which they have exercised confidence and embrace a different life-script for a reimagined life.¹⁴¹ Deeg (2013:7) argues that the greatest problem with preaching in his German context is its conventionality and predictability which results in congregational boredom. He calls for God's voice to cause a personal and communal disruption (Deeg, 2013:8-11). Faithful application becomes prophetic as it elucidates the gospel-shock of an incarnated, crucified God remaining committed to rebellious humanity. Faithful application challenges human wisdom, what Alcantara (2019:80) calls the 'air...in my community', as it elucidates ways to move through change toward that which is instinctively unfamiliar even as it calls humanity to view the world from a divine and different perspective (Tisdale, 2010:42-49). Sadly, preachers often fail to personally grasp the confrontational shock of God's living voice in the text, resulting in them flattening it and speaking in support of a perceived *status quo*. Pui-lan (2015:10-11) calls for preaching that dislodges its hearers from their existing *status quo* in order to create a subversive alternative.

Broadus (1944:210) considered application to be the main thing to be done by the preacher. Perkins (1996:54) defined application as,

The skill by which the doctrine which has been properly drawn from Scripture is handled in ways which are appropriate to the circumstances of the place and time and to the people in the congregation.

Adams (1990:41) argues that the entire sermon should be aimed at application. He says that the preacher should abstract the principle in the passage and then apply it to a similar situation in the

¹⁴¹ Alcantara (2019:151) argues for preachers to help their listeners imagine ways to apply the passage as they answer the question 'what does that look like?'

present time (Adams 1990:47). Chapell (2018:199) defines application as, “The present consequence of scriptural truth,”¹⁴² which Simango (2018) calls ‘contextual relevance’. Greidanus (1988:157) reminds of preaching’s *telos* when he says,

Without genuine relevance there is no sermon. Relevance for the church here and now is the final goal of sermon preparation.

Application deserves particular scrutiny in homiletical study because of its importance but Doriani (2001:vii) notices that studies devoted exclusively to the task of application are rare. Many homiletical texts give extensive treatment to the process of exegesis and hermeneutics, but only minor treatments of the skills required to navigate application even as they insist that the sermon ‘bridge the gap’ between text and contemporary situation (Long, 2005c:36). Bartholomew (2015a:6) says that it is in the area of application where problems most clearly surface. Robinson (2001:306–7) concurs when he says that,

More heresy is preached in application than in Bible exegesis...the long-term effect is that we preach a mythology. Myth has an element of truth with a great deal of puff, and people tend to live in the puff.

Veerman (2005:284) says the complexity involved in application often results in many preachers making no attempt at application at all. Other preachers make the opposite mistake. They are so focused on the outcomes that they desire from their sermon, that they fail to hear the ‘living voice of God’ and thus fail to reorient human thinking with a careful emphasis on the persuasive logic of the divine word (Eclov, 2005a:317-319).

Overdorf (2009:13-14) speaks for many preachers when he says that sermon application frightens him and that he seldom enters the pulpit confident in his application. Allen (2005:241) and Quicke (2003:154) notice that preachers often do a good job of explaining and clarifying the text, as well as of ordering and systematising Biblical doctrine, but they suggest that preachers often fail to connect that text to their listeners lives. Preachers consider the problem of the listener to be a didactic problem which can be solved by further information but Sunukjian (2007:93) estimates that congregations already know 90% of Biblical instruction that they receive. He suggests that listeners do not translate their knowledge into obedient action because they do not believe it. He argues that the problem of obedient-listening is not usually a problem of knowledge but rather a problem of faith. Kruger (2019:245-246) argues that one of the preacher’s primary responsibilities

¹⁴² Chapell (2018:204–11) suggests that the preacher must attempt to answer four questions:

- What does God now require of me?
- Where does he require it of me?
- Why must I do what he requires?
- How can I do what God requires?

is to enable listeners to remember ‘in order to re-chew and celebrate the new perspectives.’ Sunukjian (2007:88) suggests that application is made up of the three components of understanding, belief and behaviour. As a result, in the application process, the preacher must answer the questions of what is said, why it is true and where it operates in the hearers’ lives (Sunukjian, 2007:111). Veerman (2005:285) concurs suggesting that application must answer two questions, “So what? and Now what?”. Chapell (1994:204-211) suggests application must answer what, where, why and how.¹⁴³ Quicke (2003:153-167) helpfully emphasises the question of “Yes, but How?” calling preachers not simply to tell their hearers what to do but to model, exhort and explain how they can listen and obey. These components of application correspond with the apostolic emphasis in Acts on repentance, faith and action/obedience;¹⁴⁴ and the exhortations given in the Pastoral Epistles for preachers to teach, encourage, exhort, inspire, motivate, rebuke and reprove.¹⁴⁵

Doriani (2001:81) argues that the Biblical texts are full of applications. He suggests that the main task, is not finding something to say, but instead identifying the one chief application that drives home the central theme of the text. Greidanus (1988:157–174) similarly, in calling preachers to recognise both the discontinuity and the continuity between the text’s situation and the congregation’s situation, calls preachers to understand the question or the underlying principle that called the text into being and then to use that knowledge to derive the application.

Some writers are less confident that a single application is even possible. Long (2005c:34-35) when surveying developments in Biblical hermeneutics notices what he calls a movement from

¹⁴³ Overdorf (2009:101-142) develops a ten-point tool to facilitate both Biblical faithfulness and contemporary relevance:

- What did God originally teach through this text? (Not isolated elements of the text but the text’s specific message)
- How did God intend this text to affect its original readers?
- How do the present listeners compare with the original readers?
- What listener need, does the text address?
- What should listeners think, feel or do differently as a result of this text?
- If the sermon accomplished its purpose in specific listeners dealing with specific life situations, how might this look?
- Does the application exalt God?
- Is the application consistent with the texts teaching and purpose?
- Will the application motivate and equip listeners to respond?
- Does the application give expectations or promises only where the text does?

Robinson (2005:308) argues for a control on application when he says (2005:308), “A text cannot mean something today that it did not mean in principle in the ancient world.” He (2005:308–9) suggests using an abstraction ladder as a model for application. The preacher abstracts upwards asking,

- “What does this text teach about God?”
- “What does this text teach about human nature/people?”

Veerman (2009:51–61) lists four areas for preachers to consider in moving from the principles of the passage towards application,

- Consider the present
- Look for parallels
- Determine priorities
- Develop a plan

Vines and Shaddix (1999:181–89) elaborate on the ladder of abstraction proposed by Robinson. They suggest that some texts can and should be directly applied. Robinson (2005:308) gives the example of a text such as, “Love your enemies.” (Matt 5:44) which can be directly applied to any context. Other texts however need to be abstracted upwards on the ladder towards the principle that they are teaching where after that principle is applied to the congregational context. Robinson (2005:309) calls preachers to work through the grid of necessary, probable, possible, improbable and impossible applications.

¹⁴⁴ Acts 2:38, 3:19, 20:21, 26:18-20

¹⁴⁵ 2 Tim 3:16; 4:2

‘village simplicity to urban complexity.’ In this he agrees with Day (2005:3) who sweepingly declares that ‘homiletics has accepted the hermeneutical principle that texts are polyvalent, that is, they are open to many meanings.’ Long (2005c:36) notices that preachers often make the jump to application by analogy – loosely comparing present situations to ancient questions. Other preachers, encouraged by the Pauline exhortation in 1 Corinthians 10:11, that Old Testament events “happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction” have resorted to exemplification, moralism or allegory as the keys to application. Some texts, particularly didactic texts, undeniably present an abundance of applications that are easily discerned. In other texts it would be hard to make a case for polyvalence in meaning while still acknowledging a broad depth of ethical particulars.¹⁴⁶ Some texts have no present application at all other than the provision of information for the development of the larger Biblical narrative.¹⁴⁷ Narrative texts present a particular complexity in application. The accounts presented are selective and brief omitting much detail (Mathewson, 2009:268). Narratives usually take the shape of background, crisis, resolution/un-resolution and conclusion. They build on a conflict or collision of forces (Mathewson, 2009:267; Borden & Mathewson, 2009:277). Narratives operate at the different levels of God’s meta-plan, Israel/Judah’s story as well as the story of the individual character (Fee, 1982:74). They teach truths indirectly, implicitly, by inference and by example. Preachers often attempt application from a portion of the story instead of extracting meaning from the subtle interplay between crises and resolution (Mathewson, 2012:98). They sometimes identify with a participant in the narrative (usually the hero or anti-hero) and call their hearers to do/not-do what they did.¹⁴⁸ The Poetic and Prophetic Old Testament writings do especially reflect polyvalence as the horizons-of-fulfilment are intertwined. The writers speak to the present national context of Israel/Judah, to a Messianic context, to the ongoing story of the people of God, as well reflecting on the eschatological context. Doriani (2001:82) summarises the complexity in the task of application when he says that Biblical texts instruct using rules, ideals, doctrines, redemptive acts in narrative, exemplary acts in narrative, Biblical images, songs and prayers. This complexity leaves some writers content to leave a wide space for listeners to draw their own conclusions in order for God’s voice to be heard (Deeg, 2013:13-16). Jensen (quoted in Rose, 1997:116) argues that preachers are to ‘give up final control over the content of what we preach’ in order to allow their hearers to complete and apply the story. Other writers are far more hesitant suggesting that listeners usually do not make these applications themselves (Sunukjian, 2007:111).

¹⁴⁶ For example, “You shall not murder” has a clear meaning but a multitude of applications.

¹⁴⁷ See for example Num 20:1 where the death of Miriam is reported. No present-day application is commanded, suggested or implied.

¹⁴⁸ E.g., David killed the giant in his life and so we should kill the giants in our lives. David committed adultery and murdered Uriah we should not do what he did.

The final question in the depth analysis of the Heidelberg method asks, what kind of listeners does the sermon appeal to and imply? What is their relation to the world and to other groups? What clues are given in application, illustration and analogy as to the historical and societal context of the listeners being addressed? In examining the sermon's application components, this research seeks to discover whether sermons preached within REACH-SA display a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a *heard people*.

2.2.11 Summation

Willimon (1981:15) reflects that when congregants were asked to define good preaching, they found it difficult to do. They were often unable to describe distinct components and characteristics of good preaching but instead many answered by naming people they regarded as good preachers. Chatteris (2001:113) reports a similar sentiment when he says,

The content might be quite adequate, the words might be audible, sentences complete. However, the talk or sermon as a whole might be dreary and uninteresting. Even so, it is not easy either to point out exactly why or say categorically that the speaker has not done the job in some way. Public speaking is one of those arts where people recognise when it is good or bad but expressing why this is the case can be problematic.

Paul (2021) found that people universally have opinions about good and bad preaching. His research found that people often defined good preaching by focusing on content, while similarly defining bad preaching by focusing on delivery. Listeners instinctively define good preaching in categories of 'enjoyment' shown by the oft repeated response comment, "I really enjoyed that sermon." They subliminally define good preaching as something that affects their emotional state. At its crassest level the good preacher is someone who has entertained and engaged them for a period of time but congregants often mean more than this when they declare, "I enjoyed that sermon"; they are often implying an appreciation for clarity which has led to understanding; or their sense of joy has come from an emotional connection with the content of the sermon; they are appreciative that the words have engaged them and moved them to a response; they are appreciative that the words are not cerebral and lifeless (Lischer, 1981:128); or they are appreciative that they have encountered the living God in the midst of deep-seated human needs (Mitchell, 1977:54–62).

Gordon (2009:13–14,24–28), following Dabney (1870) has argued for universals in good preaching to include textual fidelity, unity/order, Christ-centredness, instructiveness and clarity.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Paul (2021) suggests similar categories for good preaching. He omits Christ-centredness.

Some broad areas of consensus have emerged in this literature review to guide a definition of good preaching. Preaching is rooted in a devout obedient-listening (Pasquarello, 2005:69) to the Trinitarian, speaking God, who is the primary agent that stands behind preaching. This God speaks through the agency of the Scriptures, which Bonaventure called the ‘heart, mouth, tongue and pen of God’ (Pasquarello, 2005:69). The Scriptures declare the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that the central content of good preaching must be a faithful commitment to ‘Christ and him crucified’ (Pasquarello, 2005:98). The historical word of Christ contains a present call from God to ‘hear his voice’ today.¹⁵⁰ Preaching is spoken, mediated and incarnated through the agency of a human preacher who is member of community, whose own voice is unavoidable and potentially dangerous. Preachers must themselves hear the word of Scripture so that the preacher’s life and testimony speak alongside the words declared. Preaching is addressed to a specific people who inhabit a context, different from that inhabited by the Scripture’s original audience. The present hearers are heard, and then engaged, with order and clarity, so as to facilitate obedient-listening by them, resulting in maturity in Christ.¹⁵¹ Good preaching thus listens in four directions. These will be developed in the interpretive perspectives. Preaching listens to God, to the preacher’s voice, to historical community and to the people addressed so that good preaching can be defined as *the heard Word spoken to a heard people*.

This research now turns to the preaching praxis of REACH-SA in order to determine whether sermons preached within REACH-SA *display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?*

-
- i. Engagement with Scripture.
 - ii. An appropriateness to people and context by drawing on their lived experience.
 - iii. Clarity in aim and structure.
 - iv. Appropriate delivery.

¹⁵⁰ Heb 4:7
¹⁵¹ Col 1:28

2.3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON REACH-SA PREACHING

2.3.1 Introduction.

The Descriptive-Empirical task aims for careful listening. Osmer (2008:34) calls this 'attending'. He defines it as connecting to the other with openness, attentiveness and prayerfulness of the 'them' in their particularity. Osmer (2008:31-40) argues that practical theological research dares not make generic conclusions of undefined problems because of a failure of priestly listening which is born from an inadequate 'spirituality of presence'. This research attends to REACH-SA preaching through participant observation as well as content and document analysis of sermons preached by REACH-SA preachers during the period of 2020-2022 in order to describe 'what is going on?' in the preaching praxis of REACH-SA (Osmer, 2008:31–78; Smith, 2008:104). The period selected broadly corresponded with the COVID-19 pandemic but was extended slightly to provide a fuller and more representative sample set. The research, collected and recorded sermon data, and then examined these sermons using the Heidelberg Method so as to observe patterns, trends, inclusions and omissions leading to the production of information (Woodbridge, 2014:105).

2.3.2 Sample Selection

2.3.2.1 Introduction to Sample Selection

The research was conducted using a non-random stratified sample to reflect the complexity and diversity inherent within REACH-SA. The apartheid divisions namely Black, White, Coloured and Indian are still widely used in South Africa today. Posel (2001:51) calls this practice a habit of 'thought and experience'. These divisions were rejected in this research as both immoral and inadequate in representing REACH-SA's complexity. Apartheid's racial project with its desire for order (Posel, 2001:52) quickly abandoned biological categorisation as impossible and sought to group people based on "self-evident 'facts' of experience" (Posel, 2001:63). These 'self-evident facts', which chiefly comprised human appearance and societal acceptance (Posel, 2001:58-63) were anything but facts; they were largely indefinable, untenable and were thus inconsistently applied. Apartheid's immorality and political expediency was furthermore shown in its inability to sustain its own stratification requiring a category known as 'honorary whites'.¹⁵² Although apartheid's categories are still routinely used in South Africa these were rejected as wholly inadequate for a sample that accurately reflects REACH-SA preaching.

¹⁵² People of Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese background were classified 'white' but those from mainland China and other parts of Asia were classified as 'coloured'.

2.3.2.2 Geographic Distribution

REACH-SA comprises a multitude of ethnolinguistic identities largely associated with geographic distribution. This geographic distribution was used as the primary criterion in determining the non-random stratified sample. Participants were identified in geographic regions of South Africa where REACH-SA churches are present. REACH-SA's unique history has resulted in a significant weighting of churches in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the urban areas of the Western Cape and in Gauteng.

Treharne and Riggs (2015) suggest that in order to ensure rigour and trustworthiness qualitative studies require credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. Credibility is established when participants being researched recognise that the findings of the research represent their experience (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). The data sample collected via geographic distribution establishes credibility by representing the diverse nature of REACH-SA preachers.

Participants were identified and approached in each region where significant numbers of preachers were available. Preachers were approached with a weighting being given to seniority and experience. Participants were approached in approximate proportion to the number of churches represented in each geographical area.¹⁵³ In addition within each area an attempt was made to represent a diversity of contexts that are present in that region. The geographical spread applied is presented in Figure 2.¹⁵⁴ No participants were available from the Northern Cape or Mpumalanga as REACH-SA has no churches in these regions.¹⁵⁵ Although REACH-SA lists two churches in Limpopo Province neither of these churches had preachers that were contactable. Participants were approached either personally or via email or telephonic communication. They were asked to supply up to three sermons, either in the form of recordings, or via sermon notes that were preached during the COVID-19 pandemic years of 2020-2022. Preachers were also asked to provide consent for their sermons to be included in the study. The period was initially chosen because it broadly constituted the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The intention was to focus on sermons that might normally be preached within a REACH-SA church community. The COVID-19 years presented a unique opportunity for homiletical research as a result of lockdowns and gatherings being restricted in a variety of ways. As a result, preachers made their sermons available via digital and other media which created an opportunity for research. A significant limitation of this study was that some of these sermons were preached in the artificial context of media production or empty church buildings rather than the lived context of a church

¹⁵³ Churches are difficult to define. In some communities' multiple small groups may meet in informal settings but organisationally constitute only one single church.

¹⁵⁴ Figure 2 totals 27 research participants. Three women preachers were also selected who are all resident in the Western Cape. This unique sample subset is addressed in section 2.3.2.6

¹⁵⁵ A church has recently been established in Mbombela in Mpumalanga but this happened too late to be included in the research.

congregation. Conclusions about delivery, style and rhetoric have had to be tempered as a result of this limitation.

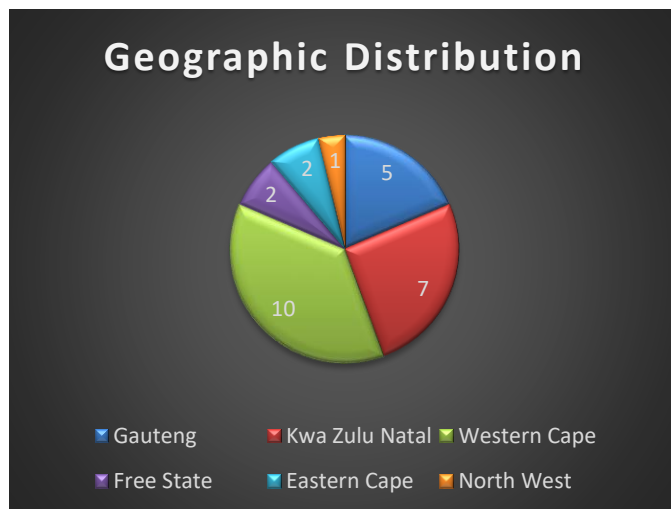


Figure 2: The geographic distribution of participants approached.

2.3.2.3 Sample Size

Qualitative research aims for saturation in sample size. Saturation is the point when additional data does not provide additional information (Mason, 2010:1). Qualitative samples must thus be large enough in order to provide sufficient information so as to be meaningful but not too large so as to be repetitive, resulting in additional effort providing no further information (Mason, 2010:2). Mason (2010:3-5) argues that saturation is difficult to define at the practical level of sample size. He noticed a vast array of sample sizes used in qualitative research but concludes that the most common sample sizes used in qualitative research were between 20 and 30 participants (Mason, 2010:13). Thirty preachers were approached to provide up to three sermons. All thirty preachers approached agreed to be a part of the study but three preachers failed to produce sermons having initially indicated their willingness to be included. After unsuccessful follow up these preachers were then omitted from the research. Each sermon was allocated a unique number for the purpose of identification. This number was comprised of five components –

- geographic region in which the preacher operates e.g., KZN for KwaZulu Natal.
- language in which the sermon was preached e.g., E for English.
- heart language of the preacher (if different from the language in which the sermon was preached). e.g., X for Xhosa.
- unique preacher number.
- sermon number.

REACH-SA lists 110 churches in South Africa on its website (REACH-SA, 2022) with a recognized, ordained and deacon compliment of 179 preachers. This number is impossible to verify as many preaching stations are serviced by trainee, unlicensed, itinerant or lay preachers

who are not formally recognised. Teams of preachers often pastor suburban and township churches. Weighting was given to more experienced preachers who hold higher denominational office, who lead churches and pastoral teams and who exercise influence in preacher training and development. The sample size of 81 sermons was adequate to establish credibility and meaningfully represent the preaching of REACH-SA.

2.3.2.4 Heart Language

In order to better understand what is actually happening in pulpits within REACH-SA a second criteria other than geographical distribution was used in identifying the preachers selected, namely language. One of the associated consequences of apartheid's legislative removal has been rapid urbanization in South Africa. People who were previously prevented from moving to cities have migrated to urban centres for better opportunities. South Africa has been rapidly transitioning from a significantly rural society to an increasingly urban one, giving rise to a crisis in housing that is manifest in informal settlements. This urbanization together with the influences of internationalisation, technology, education and media has resulted in traditional and rural African communities transitioning. These communities are embracing different language usage. Younger generations are adopting different languages from their elders resulting in township, student and suburban churches increasingly operating in English, even though members of these congregations speak a variety of Southern African languages. Languages operate in a fluid manner and quickly integrate aspects of other languages so that communication often occurs in a mosaic of interconnected languages. Language usage is often determined by the specific context and the goals of a communication event. Missiologists have identified the concept of a heart language which can be different to the language spoken. At least eight of the participants selected were preaching in another language (usually English) to their heart language. This represented the transition occurring in South African society which is reflected in church demographics that are transitioning as apartheid spatial constraints are dismantled. In addition, although English is overwhelmingly the language spoken in REACH-SA, preachers were intentionally selected who spoke in six of South Africa's official languages as represented in Figure 3.

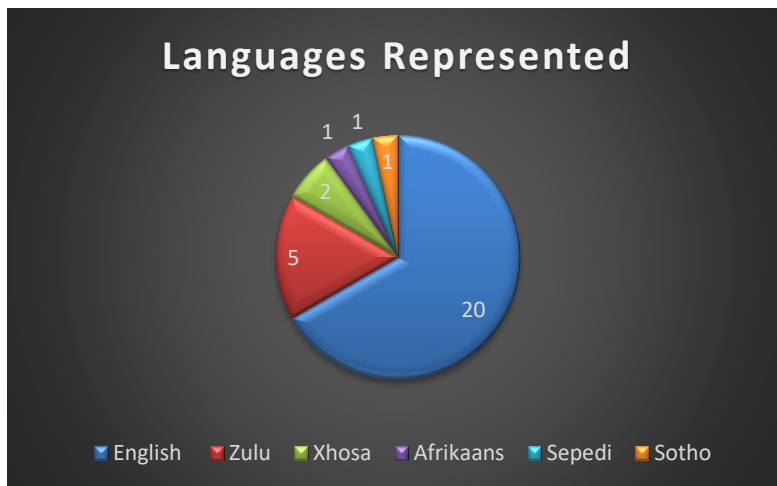


Figure 3: Languages represented

2.3.2.5 Context Differentiation

The geographical regions first identified were then further subdivided into township, rural and suburban contexts so as to further ensure a representative spread of preachers. The preachers selected were preaching in suburban, university, township and rural contexts as represented in Figure 4.

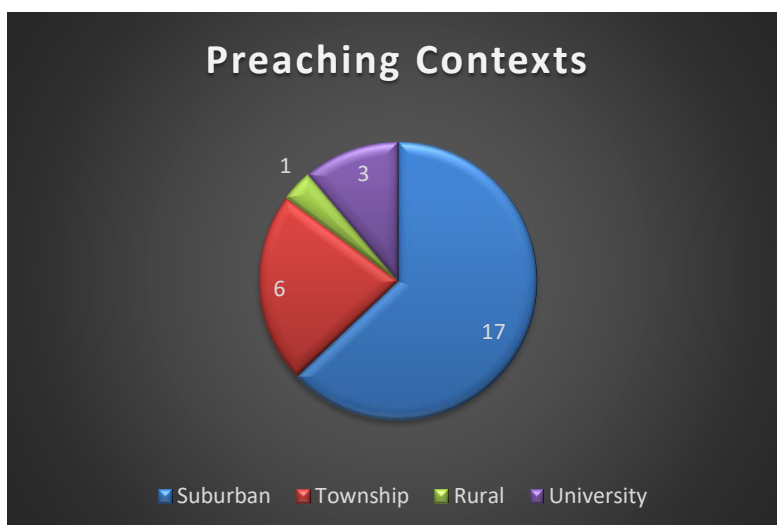


Figure 4: Preaching contexts

2.3.2.6 Women

REACH-SA holds a complementarian position on gender roles. This position simultaneously affirms the equality and dignity of both men and women while also recognising difference in roles. REACH-SA affirms, trains, recognises, employs and encourages women as preachers in specific contexts (Ronne & Palmer, 2000). Three women preachers were intentionally identified, approached and included as a significant sub-group in the sample selection. In practice there were difficulties in obtaining data from this sub-group as the training, development and deployment of women preachers in appropriate contexts is still in its initial stages in REACH-SA.

The availability of data from senior women preachers in REACH-SA is at this stage relatively limited. These preachers were all English speakers operating in the Western Cape in suburban contexts.¹⁵⁶

2.3.3 The Heidelberg Method of Sermon Analysis

The Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis is a well-established method of content analysis used in empirical homiletics (Pieterse, 2020:350).¹⁵⁷ Treharne and Riggs (2015) argue that qualitative studies require dependability which is established when similar conclusions would result from similar research conducted by another researcher (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). The use of the Heidelberg Method gives confidence in establishing this desired dependability. Initially developed by Bohren and Debus (Lee, 2017:11), the Heidelberg Method is a qualitative analysis which comprises a network of questions that are put to the sermon (Pieterse, 2020:350) in order to linguistically evaluate preaching so that its motives are revealed (Cilliers, 2006:8-11). Pieterse (2009:125-133) lists a number of potential models that can be used for sermon analysis. He perceptively argues that the research question being attempted will influence the model chosen. The Heidelberg Method has been selected for this research because it proposes a twofold analysis of sermons, which will expose the obedient-listening of preachers both to God via the text of Scripture as well as their ethnographic analysis of South African complexity, in keeping with this research's objectives. It has furthermore been selected because it contains an inherent flexibility in analysis (De Klerk et al, 2009:54) so that it can be used in conjunction with the conclusions developed in the definition of good preaching that has been proposed.

Cilliers (2006:12) affirms that the Heidelberg Method makes no claim to untainted objectivity but instead attempts a careful listening to preaching. This research seeks careful listening to the preaching of REACH-SA preachers, which will then offer the opportunity to gain a theological interpretation of the sermons and an elucidation of motives (Cilliers, 2006:11-12). The Heidelberg Method provides the shape for the 'formal attending' that characterises Osmer's (2008:38) systematic and intentional, priestly-listening. Its intention is a loving, hearing enquiry so as to allow the collective wisdom displayed by preachers and the differences noticed in sermons to stimulate the discourse on preaching for the purpose of development and growth. The questions put to the sermons are elucidated in Appendix C and elaborated in the research.

¹⁵⁶ A 'W' was used instead of a region to identify this specific sub-group.

¹⁵⁷ Some scholars use the alternative name 'Heidelberger Method' see for example Vaessen (1999)

2.3.4 Superficial Analysis

The Heidelberg Method begins with a superficial¹⁵⁸ linguistic analysis of the sermon in order to reveal its explicit and implicit language signs (Cilliers, 2006:11). This initial analysis focuses on words but also seeks to discern the sermon's shape because this shape is influenced by communicational presuppositions. It seeks to interrogate what the preacher says and how this communication has been shaped, while simultaneously noticing, that communication happens not only by what is said but also by what the preacher omits and implies (Park, 2010:37).

2.3.4.1 What is the agenda of the sermon mapped out in the introduction?

Robinson (2001:165-174) suggests that introductions have disproportional significance because they introduce both message and speaker. Introductions engage (Knecht, 1986:296), they command attention and they uncover need while orienting the listener to the central emphasis of the sermon. Hawkins (2013:80-82) argues that preachers must understand where the worlds of the Bible and their listeners intersect. He furthermore argues that preaching fails when preachers assume that their listeners want to travel to the destination that the preacher is proposing (Hawkins, 2013:83-92). Biwul (2019:182) argues that introductions get attention and arouse interest. Long (2005:173-177) is more hopeful. He argues that listener attention can be assumed and that introductions should aim instead not to lose this attention. He describes the sermon introduction as a promise to the listener of where the sermon is headed. It is to foster anticipation and lead the listener into the body of the sermon as the preacher seeks to fulfil the promise made (Long, 2005:186). These descriptions of introductions, while helpful are inadequate as they over-emphasise the *task* of preaching while simultaneously under-emphasising the *relational purpose* of preaching. A sermon introduction is an invitation to a person. It is an invitation to *hear the living voice of God*. It is an invitation to relationship with God through hearing his voice and knowing Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures. It is an invitation to ongoing life through faith, manifested in obedient-listening.¹⁵⁹ Introductions should emerge from the ultimate solution to human depravity initiated by God which is a return to relationship with him. The preacher also hears the yearnings birthed from human need and, in the introduction, motivates the hearers to remain engaged so that they may be delighted by Christ (Low, 2017:172). Introductions highlight hope-filled relevance for the human condition from the God who speaks (Low, 2017:174) which is contained in the central thrust of the text (Brown & Powery, 2016:178). De Klerk et al., (2015:273) suggest that the introduction acts like a funnel to bring the hearers from their situation toward the central theme of the sermon. They argue that the introduction should call the hearer to say, "Wait this involves me," even if the introduction does not necessarily always expose the outcomes of the sermon.

¹⁵⁸ Cilliers (2006:9) notes that the terms 'superficial' and 'depth' used to analyse sermon structure are well established terminology indicating 'a particular linguistic content and definition'.

¹⁵⁹ John 15:1-17

Introductions thus invite listeners to hear the living voice of God. This research seeks to notice some of the linguistic cues presented in the introductions of REACH-SA preachers as they invite their audiences into relationship with the speaking God.

REACH-SA preachers consistently used four types of introductions namely context, question story or statement.

i. Sermon/Biblical Context

A significant group of preachers began their sermons by referring back to previous sermons preached (WCE4-2, WCEA8-1, WCEA8-2, GEX11-1, GEX11-2, WE28-3). They used statements like, “We have been working through...” “We saw last week...” which was followed by a brief recap of previous material. GEZ14-1 said, “We have come to the end of...” Others (WCE7-2) began with a recap of their text’s Biblical Theological context.

ii. Questions

Preachers regularly began their sermons with a question or a set of questions. KZNE18-2 asked,

*Have you ever wondered why we rage against evil? Why we despair at disease?
Why a little bit of us gets riled up when we see emotive pictures of jungles being
torn up and burnt down? Why injustice bugs us? Why most people, even those
who hold no religious beliefs, feel that life is not the way it was meant to be?*

WE28-2 said, “I would like to ask you a question as I begin...are you ready, here it is?” GE13-3 began, ‘Be blessed. What does it mean to be blessed?’ KZNEZ21-3 and KZNEZ23-3 asked, “Have you ever wondered...?”

iii. Story

Stories were consistently used as introductions by preachers to intersect their listeners’ worlds with the world of the Bible. Stories from movies and media (GEZ15-3, WE30-1), news items (WE29-2, WE30-3), church history (WCE2-3), personal and familial stories (WCE3-2, FSE25-3) and even hypothetical stories (WE30-2) were used to create interest and tension, and to draw the listeners towards the text. GE13-2 told two stories and then posed a question from them in order to create tension which he then proceeded to answer during the course of the sermon.

iv. Statement

Many preachers began with a statement or quote which aligned with the sermon’s theme and conclusions (WCE3-3, KZNE17-3, KZNE18-3, KZNE21-2, FSE24-2, WE29-3). Occasionally the statement led to a personal story (ECE26-3), question (ECE27-3) or illustration (WE29-3) which

served as an elaboration of the introduction or even as a second introduction. WCE4-3 issued a challenge in his introduction when he declared,

A mature Christian wants to serve rather than be served; immature Christians simply go to church; there they complain if the music is not good enough and if the experience wasn't good enough. They critique the sermon rather than put it into practice...

One preacher (WCEX10-2) began his sermon with a joke to establish warmth which led to a statement of desire for the audience, while another (GEZ14-3) began with a song. A few sermons (WCE3-2 and WCE3-3, KZN19-3) had no discernible introduction.

2.3.4.2 Is there a discernible emphasis, central thrust(s) or big idea(s) to the sermon?

Buttrick (1987:24-26) has reminded of the differences inherent in modes of human communication. He notices that individual conversations can proceed at a rapid pace and cover a multitude of subjects. He furthermore notices that 'group consciousness cannot handle rapid shifts in subject matter' (Buttrick, 1987:25) and that this necessitates that preaching contains fewer ideas which are then presented at a slower pace. In public address, meaning is communicated by moves that should be summarised into a single emphasis. The parts and moves of the sermon present a single idea or concept (Buttrick, 1987:34). Robinson (2001:35) has argued that the largest complaint of listeners is that preaching contains too many unrelated ideas. He argues that it is an established consensus in communication theory that public discourse should contain a central, unifying idea (Robinson, 2001:37). Furthermore, Robinson (2001:35) argues that congregations often receive no message to live by because it has not occurred to the preacher to preach one. Various terminologies with slight differences are used by different homileticians to express this thought, these include 'theme sentence' (Ajibade, 2021:7-9), 'main idea' (Alcantara, 2019:120), 'argument' (Charles Simeon Trust, 2020:9), 'dominating theme' (Olford, 1998:75), 'homiletical idea' (Robinson, 2001:66-72), 'theme' (Van Rensburg et al, 2015:257) and 'central idea' (Vines & Shaddix, 1999:129).

A significant number of REACH-SA preachers attempted to articulate a central thrust at the outset of their talks. Preachers were uniformly most comfortable with a deductive approach that mapped the central thrust early on and then proceeded to explain and elucidate it (WCEA8-1, WCEA8-2, WCEA8-3, WCEX10-3, GEZ14-1, NWS16-1, KZNEZ20-3, KZNE21-2, KZNEZ23-1, FSE25-3, WE28-2, WE30-3, WE30-2). Preachers regularly aimed to establish the central theme by issuing questions (FSE24-2, ECE26-3, ECE27-3) which they subsequently attempted to answer during the course of the sermon. A significant subset of preachers had multiple thrusts which were not always clearly elucidated. Some had two or more central thrusts (WCE6-3, WCE7-2, WCE7-3,

KZNE18-2, WE28-3) and occasionally the announced theme bore no resemblance to the sermon content (KZNE19-3).

2.3.4.3 What conclusions does the sermon develop?

Buttrick (1997:97) highlights that ‘conclusions are governed by intention’. He argues that preaching is performative; that it intends to do something. A sermon aims to be persuasive (Knecht, 1986:295-296) and to achieve a moment of decision (Biwul, 2019:232). A sermon aims for an appropriate transformational response (Hawkins, 201:167) in congregational consciousness (Buttrick, 1997:97-103) which is derived from the central emphasis of the sermon. Conclusions have the purpose of concluding the sermon but in so doing they intend a continuing impact. They seek to propel the hearers from a hearing of the living voice of God to the obedience of action derived from viewing the world from a divine perspective (Tisdale, 2010:42-49). Conclusions seek to move hearers to a reframed reality (Kruger, 2019:237), evidenced in motivated, enacted, responding obedient behaviour (Low, 2017:187-188).

Sermon conclusions are multifaceted as they reflect the widespread applicatory call to obedient-listening expounded in Scripture. They will include command, celebration, encouragement, motivation, persuasion, repentance, confession, doxology, rebuke, training, teaching as well as reminder. Kruger (2019:245-246) argues that one of the preacher’s primary responsibilities is to enable listeners to remember ‘in order to re-chew and celebrate the new perspectives.’ By noticing the conclusions developed by REACH-SA preachers, this research seeks to identify the intentions and interests (Cilliers, 2006:9) presented by preachers as they seek this obedient-listening response.

The most prominent conclusion used by REACH-SA preachers, which featured widely, was an evangelistic call to repentance and faith in Christ. Preachers used vastly divergent language to issue this call; they invited their listeners to accept Jesus (WCE3-3, NWS16-1), to believe in Christ (WCE2-2, WCX9-2, ECE27-3), to trust Christ/God (WCE7-2, GE12-1, KZNEZ20-3, KZNE21-2, KZNEZ23-1, ECE26-3), to bow before Jesus as king (WCE4-2), to appropriate Jesus (KZNE5-2), to call out to Jesus (WCEA8-2), to take one more step (WCE6-2), to see with the eyes of faith (ECE27-2), to trust the promises of God (GE12-3), to be born again (WE28-1) and to surrender to God (ECE26-2). WCX9-3 called his hearers to ‘fix your relationship with Jesus when he said,

Noba imali anayo okanye awunayo, uyazana na no Thixo? (Whether you have money or not, do you know God?) Lungisa indaba yakho no Yesu (Fix your relationship with Jesus).

Preachers urged their listeners to turn to God in repentance (GE13-3, KZNE17-2, FSE24-2) and to be ready when the Lord returns (KZNEZ21-3) often issuing a heartfelt plea to come back to Jesus (WCEX10-2, NWS16-1).

KZNE5-3 asked,

What is your plan for judgement day? What will you say to God? Have you responded to the death of Jesus?

One preacher (WCE4-3) issued a direct challenge to Christians to repent when he said,

Shame on you...Today change! Stop living for yourself it's just not Christian. Stop being a consumer of Christianity become a servant to all, being willing to serve, even if it means sacrificing your own life.

There was noticeably little emphasis on the constant New Testament call to remain in Christ (GE13-2 and WCE2-3 were exceptions).¹⁶⁰

A significant technique used by preachers to emphasise their conclusions was the issuing of a set of questions or statements in rapid-fire (WCEA8-3, WCX9-1, GEZ15-2, KZNE17-3, KZNE18-3, FSE25-2, WE28-3).

GEZ14-1 asked (in this instance the answers were interspersed within the questions)

- “How can we come near to God?
- How will they live up to God’s standard?
- How was your Christian life this week?
- What now?
- What does it mean?”

KZNE19-1 said, “My neighbours, friends, colleagues will not read the Bible they will read you.

- Am I reflecting what the Bible teaches?
- Is my life a light shining in the darkness?
- Am I salt that is ready to savour and ready to flavour...that is all the Lord is asking...when people read you what are they reading?”

WE28-3 asked,

- “Have you thought through how you are going to be compassionate?
- Will you give money or food?
- Will you support organisations who work with street people?

¹⁶⁰ Heb 2:1, 3:6, 3:12, 4:1 et al.

- Will you support people who work for upliftment in communities?
- Do you treat people with dignity or are we rude and offhand?"

WE30-1 asked,

- "Have you let go of your self-rule?
- Are you trusting your Father knows best?
- What areas do you still self-rule?
- In what areas do you not deny your time, your comfort, your pride?
- What does that hardness of heart mean about your relationship with Jesus?"

One preacher KZNE17-1 did not ask questions but instead told the congregation what he expected them to do,

We are engaged in a war. Our weapons disarm and demolish any teaching that is contrary to God's word. We must rely on the power of God's Spirit at work through His word to produce obedience. Listen to God's word; obey God's word. Don't follow leaders who commend themselves. Rather follow humble servants who teach truth faithfully and long for God's commendation – not the untrustworthy commendation of themselves or others. Rather boast in what God accomplishes.

2.3.4.4 What is the form/shape of the sermon?

Sermon form provides a structure for the content that the preacher seeks to communicate (Vines & Shaddix, 1999:147). It provides a pathway for listeners to follow (Brown & Powery, 2016:152) and thus contains assumptions within it about those listeners. Sermon form has garnered significant attention in homiletical study (Long, 2005:122). Brown and Powery (2016:152) highlight two basic sermon forms often used – deductive and inductive. Deductive sermons articulate their core ideas early and then move out from them, while inductive sermons lead listeners through a series of moves building towards their core affirmation often allowing listeners to draw their own conclusions (Ajibade, 2021:31,34). Craddock (1974:53) has emphasised inductive forms but has also argued for preachers to embrace a variety of different preaching forms as varied as the Biblical material itself. Western preaching has often tended to a monotony of form which is didactic, cerebral, modelled on Graeco-Roman logic and emphasises ordered, propositional truths while simultaneously underemphasising narrative, image and emotion (Greidanus, 1988:18-20). It contains assumptions about high levels of literacy, confidence in science and reason, an assumed materialism, an expectation of freedom and human rights, and the primacy of individualism. It also assumes low levels of spiritual interest and a lack of confidence in the spiritual (Quicke, 2003:69-70). Western preaching has often been *about* the Scriptures (Greidanus, 1988:18) rather than an invitation to hear the voice of God in all its profound Scriptural

diversity. Greidanus (1988:18) calls preachers to “forms of preaching that do justice to the Biblical text”. Ajibade (2021:45) as well as Brown and Powery (2016:158) urge preachers to allow the genre of the Biblical text to suggest the shape of the sermon. Long (2005:135) concurs when he argues that the Bible demonstrates diverse genres and literary forms arguing that it is too rich, complex and varied to be proclaimed using a single form.

Long (2005:124,135) highlights that the form of a sermon is not ‘innocent or neutral’ but that sermon form is part of the communication of meaning (2005:129) as it contains assumptions about listeners and listening styles. Sermon form significantly affects communication and efficacy because it requires the hearers to hear content shaped in a particular way (Greidanus, 1988:19) as it ‘influences what happens to the hearer in and through the sermon’ (Long, 2005:124). Humanity’s incredible diversity includes learning and listening styles (Long, 2005:169). Preachers who emphasise the task easily confuse what they can say with what can be *heard* by their listeners. Preachers ought to be constructing sermons birthed in listening, incarnational service; asking how hearers can best hear and appropriate this material (Long, 2005:123,131-136) rather than asking, how can they best order their material (Long, 2005:169). Brown and Powery (2016:160) remind that preaching should be written in order to be heard (2016:177), so as to activate cognition, emotion and imagination. Augustine (Van Oort, 2009:6) asserted that preaching is for education, it is to teach but also to persuade and delight as it edifies and converts. Preaching is to be both ‘theology-based and audience-directed’ (Seo & Meylahn, 2021:8) as it aids different kinds of listeners to obedient-listening of the living voice of God. A sermon’s ‘vitality’ (Seo & Meylahn, 2021:1) and rhetorical power are created in this interwoven coherence of form and content.

By noticing the form/shape of the sermon this research identifies the aims and interests (Cilliers, 2006:9) of sermons presented by REACH-SA preachers. It notices and understands some homiletical assumptions made by preacher’s regarding their hearers.

i. Sermon Length

Sermons presented were routinely between 20 and 30 minutes. A few were noticeably longer at 35-45 minutes (WCE6-3, WCE7-3, GE13-2, GE13-3). In one instance (GEZ15-2, GEZ15-3) this was due to the preacher preaching in English and then translating the same content into Zulu. A few sermons were shorter having been truncated in order to facilitate electronic distribution (WCE4-2, WCE4-3, FSE25-3).

ii. Sermon Shape

Sermon construction was largely deductive and expository. Preachers consistently attempted to allow the passage of Scripture to shape the sermon. One preacher (KZNE18-2) provided a map

when he said, “Here are the points I am going to make.” Preachers routinely aspired to a three-point sermon (WE29-2) often stating their intention to do so as if this was an ideal to aim for. There was a noticeable difference however between what many preachers stated and what they actually delivered. Some examples amongst many were:

- WCE2-2 promised and announced three points but then made five.
- WCE3-3 stated two points but then made six distinct points.
- WCE7-2 promised three but had five distinct thoughts.
- GE12-1 said three points but then preached four.
- KZNE17-2 said that he had five points but articulated four.
- KZNE18-2 promised two points but had four points.
- KZNEZ20-2 promised “Our first point and only point” and then proceeded to make four points.
- KZNEZ21-2 promised three points but had five.
- WE28-1 had seven points but called them four.

Some preachers disguised additional points by articulating sub-points (WCE3-2, GE12-2, GEZ14-1, GEZ14-2) while other preachers (KZNE19-2) hid points by not articulating a number for an additional point that they then elucidated. A number of sermons reflected structural vagueness characterised by points, sub-points and tangents (WCE6-3, GE13-3, GEZ15-3, KZNE18-3, KZNEZ23-3, ECE26-3). On occasion it felt as if two distinct sermons were being preached while in one instance (KZNEZ23-3) the projectionist was not even sure when the points started and ended. Occasionally this lack of clarity was exacerbated when the preacher articulated a numerical marker such as “secondly” on multiple occasions (GEZ14-2). KZNE17-3 used ‘lastly’ mid sermon without careful consideration that he was not in fact concluding.

Sermons routinely (GEX11-2, KZNE20-1, KZNEZ23-1) followed the shape of

- An introduction (sometimes punctuated by a prayer)
- Context of passage
- Points
- An explanation of the place of Christ
- Applications

A few preachers used significantly different sermon forms:

- GE11-2 briefly stated four points from the passage and then elucidated three points of application.
- GEZ14-3 asked one question and then cross referenced three passages making three points.

- WCEA8-1 and ECE27-1 made a single point which was then explained and applied.
- WCEA8-2 and KZNEZ20-3 retold a story which was followed by application.

2.3.4.5 What conditional sentences are present in the sermon?

In seeking to reveal a sermon's language signs the Heidelberg method interrogates the sermon's conditional sentences so as to reveal emphasis and power. Conditional sentences use the conjunctions 'if' and 'when' to display possible conditions and results. Conditional sentences display differing degrees of certainty.

- Zero conditional sentences are sentences where one thing always causes another. An example might include 'if you heat ice, then it melts.'
- First conditional sentences indicate a high degree of certainty even though the outcome is not certain. An example might include 'If I study really hard, I will pass this test.'
- Second conditionals indicate outcomes that are unlikely but still possible and contain the word 'would' to indicate this uncertainty; they thus often reflect optimism and desire, "I would faint, if I met someone famous."
- Third conditionals are situations when the outcome is impossible because the events described have already occurred and thus cannot be changed. An example might include, "I would have obeyed, if I had known what God wanted' (Gunner, n.d.).

Preachers use conditional sentences to speculate about outcomes either present or future. They are used to postulate about what could happen and what the preacher wishes would happen as a result of the sermon. Conditional sentences are intended to be active and persuasive. They are used to move hearers, to give advice and to express regret at perceived inadequate action. On occasion logical inconsistencies can be displayed in conditional sentences when preachers depart from the argument of the text in order to present personal bias (Park, 2010:37-40; Chifungo, 2013:83). Conditional sentences must be interrogated because they reveal convictions, beliefs and hypotheses that are articulated by the preacher (Park, 2010:19).

REACH-SA preachers used conditional sentences in differing degrees. Some talks featured no conditional sentences. In these talks preachers made no attempt at persuasion simply attempting the presentation of Biblical content. Other preachers made significant use of conditional sentences. WCE3-2 had more than thirty conditional sentences using them to structure the talk's application. GEZ15-3 made regular use of conditional sentences when he repeated the phrases, "If it is alive, it will grow," and, "If we trust in the Lord for righteousness and remain in him, we will bear fruit." WE29-3 fashioned her entire talk around four conditional sentences:

- If you want to be wise, be diligent.

- If you want to be wise, serve others.
- If you want to be wise, use your tongue for good.
- If you want to be wise, fear God.

WCE3-1 interspersed differing degrees of certainty when he said:

- If we come to him, he accepts us.
- If we are strong, we are to follow his example.
- If we say we cannot, then God is a liar.
- If we have the mind of Christ, then we will be united.
- If united in gospel and truth, God then fills us with peace and joy.

Conditional sentences were used to fashion the emphasis to which the sermonic goal was directed. NWS16-3 said, "If loyalty is absent then it can destroy love itself." GE13-1 evocatively said,

If you treat women as if they are less, your fight is not with feminism it is with God, this is not a fight you want to pick.

Conditional sentences were routinely used to influence behaviour either via encouragement or via warning.

- WCE6-2 said, "If you feel like...then God says to you...if you are acting like...God has a word to you."
- WCX9-1 said, "We hardly go to church we cannot tell our children if we are not going."
- NWS16-1 said, "If we return to God, he will have us back, heal and restore."
- KZNE21-2 encouraged his listeners saying, "When you place your confidence in him you have a shepherd waiting to die for you; would he not provide for your needs?"
- ECE26-3 warned,

If we as a church are reluctant to spread the Gospel, we are in danger of being lukewarm because we offer little healing and little refreshment to the unsaved...if anyone opens the door, Jesus will come in and have fellowship with us. Share our lives with us. But only if we are repentant, and zealous for him.

- WE30-2 warned and encouraged when she said,

If we puff ourselves up and consider our debt is some way less than what others have done to us, we have not grasped grace at all! If, however, we understand the depths of our sin, then we have to be as merciful as God has been to us.

2.3.4.6 What does the sermon negate and confront? What does the sermon affirm and praise?

Sermons stand against things even as they stand for things. Patterson (2005:254) notices that, 'Every yes contains a no.' Often negations and affirmations run parallel as they express similar outcomes in alternative language.¹⁶¹ Negations warn against what to avoid, while affirmations encourage what to attempt (Larson, 2005:257). Negations are often used as stronger warnings against error and danger¹⁶² while affirmations seek to teach, encourage, build, resolve and affirm (Larson, 2005:257). Negations are often attempted by dualism and contrast for the sake of human understanding so that one side is approved of, while simultaneously the opposite is disapproved of (Park, 2010:20). As preachers negate and affirm, they attempt to intersect the text of Scripture with the situation of their listeners so that the living Word of God that is heard in the text is actualised in the listener's life (Runia, 1983:65-67). Preachers challenge established 'iron theologies' (Campbell & Cilliers 2012:63-66) and call humanity to obedient-listening of an alternative voice describing an alternative outcome. The preacher negates and affirms, hoping to facilitate God's living voice in reorganising human thinking, so as to challenge faulty worldviews, subcultural assumptions and to reinstall God's perspective into the human narrative (Scharf, 2010:108). Brueggemann (2005:24) calls this a journey of re-imagination where the preacher urges the listener to alter the life-script in which they have exercised confidence and instead to embrace a different life-script for a reimagined life. The sermon's negations call humans to abandon the script of human supremacy, and instead to view the world from a divine, gospel-shaped perspective (Tisdale, 2010:42-49). The Heidelberg Method examines the negations and affirmations of preachers in order to evaluate their attempt at adjusting their listeners' perspectives as they seek to move their listeners to an alternative narrative and the reframing of a trusted story. This examination is important because it can highlight preachers' backgrounds, agendas, perspectives and biases.

REACH-SA preachers issued widespread and divergent affirmations and negations. These included:

- A widespread affirmation of relationship with God and knowledge of him as integral to successful human living. Preachers negated disbelief and doubt, and affirmed faith and trust (WCE2-2, KZNE18-2, KZNE21-2, KZNE21-3, WE29-3).
- Preachers called their hearers to live by and under Scripture (GEX11-3, NWS16-2, KZNE17-1, WE29-1, WE29-2) warning against the folly of not doing so (WE29-2).

¹⁶¹ To argue against stealing is the same as to argue for not-stealing.

¹⁶² A parent shouts, "Don't!" or "Stop!" when their child is in danger.

- Holiness, change and growth were widely affirmed; sin was negated. This included broad applications relating to patience, the killing of sin, comparisons, lack of service, commitment, loyalty and selfishness (WCEA8-1, WCX9-2, GEZ15-2, NWS16-3, KZNE17-2, KZNE18-2, KZNEZ20-2, KZNEZ21-3, FSE25-3, WE29-3).
- Preachers strongly affirmed evangelism negating a lack of concern for the outsider (WCE3-3, WCEA8-2, GE12-2, KZNE17-2, KZNEZ20-3, ECE26-3).
- Suffering was commonly addressed (possibly as a consequence of the COVID pandemic) (WCE2-3, GEX11-3, GE12-3, GEZ14-3, KZNE19-3, KZNEZ20-2, KZNEZ20-3, WE30-3). Suffering was affirmed as useful and important in the life of the believer. GEX11-3 said,

*Don't turn away from God in suffering rather go to his word and trust his promises.
Don't harden your heart to God and his word.*

- Racism, judgementalism, partiality and prejudice were challenged; equality was affirmed (WCE3-1, WCE6-2, KZNEZ23-2, WE28-3).
- Unity was affirmed, disunity negated (GE12-2, KZNEZ23-3).
- Work was affirmed and laziness confronted (WCE2-3, WCE7-3, WCX9-3, KZNE18-2, WE29-1, WE29-3).
- Worry and anxiety were negated; the victory of God was affirmed (GE13-1, WE30-3).
- Foolish speech and grumbling were confronted; wise words and gratitude were affirmed (ECE27-3, WE29-3).
- Selfishness was negated and service affirmed (KZNE19-3, WE29-3).

Some ethical considerations were strongly negated without affirmations. These included:

- Money, love of money and greed (of tele-evangelists) (WCX9-3, GE12-3, GE13-2, KZNE17-3, KZNE18-3, KZNE21-1).
- Corruption, violence, aggression, gender-based-violence, arrogance, injustice, conflict (GE12-2, KZNE17-2, KZNE17-3).
- Titles, status, leaders who commend themselves and pride (KZNE17-1, KZNE19-3).
- Extra marital sexuality, homosexuality, pornography, adultery, and abortion (WCE2-3, KZNE17-3, KZNE21-1, WE29-1, WE29-2).
- Chauvinism and patriarchy (GE13-1).
- Gambling, theft and false prophets (WCX9-2, WCX9-3).
- Alcohol and drug consumption (KZNE17-2, KZNE21-1, WE30-3).
- The consultation with sangomas and ancestors (WCX9-1, KZNEZ23-1, ECE26-2).

Preachers affirmed:

- The importance of marriage, family and clan (WCE2-3, NWS16-3, KZNE18-2, KZNE21-1, KZNEZ23-1, WE29-1).
- Prayer (WCX9-3, GE12-2, NWS16-2).
- Church attendance (NWS16-2).
- Love of God and others (GEZ14-1, NWS16-3).
- The value of humanity. WCE6-2 said, “You are not a mistake and it’s not a mistake that you are at ...”
- Care for foreigners, the poor and vulnerable (KZNE20-3, WE28-1).

Although a wide diversity of ethical considerations was negated and affirmed the practice of application was not uniformly developed amongst preachers. An overwhelming majority of preachers devoted the vast majority of their preaching time to textual considerations. A few talks had no application attempted at all (ECE26-1) while others gave only a small percentage of the talk to these considerations. A few noticeable examples gave a significant treatment to application (WCX10-3, GEX11-2, GE12-2, GE13-2, GEZ14-2, FSE25-3, KZNE19-2, WE30-3).

Noticeable, by its widespread absence, was the lack of articulation of the “Yes but how” (Quicke, 2003:154). Preachers consistently challenged their listeners, raising divergent considerations in application but provided almost no practical elaboration of how their listeners were to achieve the considerations raised. A few noticeable exceptions (KZNE17-2, KZNE20-2, FSE25-3) raised possible applications and then provided practical methods for achieving a positive outcome.

2.3.5 Depth Analysis

Having evaluated the sermon’s linguistic contents so that its superficial structure is evident, the Heidelberg method seeks to appraise the theological relationship between these components in order to reveal the sermon’s motives reflected in the preacher’s purpose (Cilliers, 2006:9; Pieterse 2020:350-351). This inquiry is directed in four areas:

2.3.5.1 God

The Bible opens with an introduction of God (Wenham, 1987:5). Into the complexity of the human meta-narrative, the Bible announces God by declaring that he exists (in Trinity),¹⁶³ he speaks, he creates, he takes joy and he rests. Calvin, in the *Institutes* (1975:7), highlights knowledge of God and the knowledge of humanity as the central quests for true wisdom. Knox (1992:11) reminds that everyone has an understanding or doctrine of God and the preacher purposes to shape their hearer’s knowledge of God. The depth analysis of the Heidelberg method seeks firstly to explicate

¹⁶³ See Wenham (1987:27-28) and Grudem (1994:227) for differing conclusions on the use of the plural in Genesis 1:26. Grudem argues that the church fathers and early theologians almost universally regarded the plural as indicative of the Trinity.

how the preacher names, reveals and acknowledges God. Which God is named here? Which God is at issue here? What are the characteristics and behaviours of the God that is revealed in the sermon? Christian theology is inherently Trinitarian. This necessitates that investigation into how the sermon names God must notice how the preacher names God the Father, as well as God the Son, and God the Spirit. Christianity's central declarations are of the oneness of God *and* of the deity of Jesus. It is a declaration of redemptive-history by the Father, through the Son, empowered by the Spirit. It is a revelation of the sovereign God progressively and organically orchestrating human history so that estranged humanity can be redeemed (Seo & Meylahn, 2021:3). These declarations are not merely of God's activity in history they are also of his present and continuous workings.¹⁶⁴ They are the declaration of God's Spirit-led, advancing kingdom, with its consequent call on humanity to obedient-listening to the Son.¹⁶⁵ The depth analysis seeks to investigate how the Trinitarian God is named in the sermon. How is Jesus Christ revealed in the sermon? What role does the Holy Spirit play in the theology of the sermon (Pieterse, 2020:350)? Does the sermon sound like celebration and gospel resulting from God's activity (Mitchell, 1990; Wilson, 1999)?¹⁶⁶

The following descriptors of God emerged in REACH-SA preaching:

i. God as holy judge

A significant number of preachers referenced God as holy judge (WCE3-3, WCE7-2, WCX9-2, GE12-1, ECE26-1, WE 30-1) who punishes sin (KZNE5-3, NWS16-1; KZNE17-3; KZNEZ23-3; FSE25-3, WE30-2). GE12-1 said,

And let's remember the greatest warning that God gives us - warning of his judgement. And we see a messy world, when we live in times of uncertainty, it's a great time to heed his warning. And you see, the worst thing we can face, worse than a virus, is that God should withdraw his presence from us.

ii. God speaks

God was regularly referenced as the God who speaks (WCE3-2, GEX11-3, WCEX10-2, NWS16-3, KZNE17-1, KZNE17-3, WE28-2), revealing himself through his historical word (GEZ14-1, KZNE17-1, KZNEZ23-3, ECE27-2), through the revelation of his Son (WCEX10-2, WE28-2) and who continues to speak through his Spirit (WCE2-2).

¹⁶⁴ Acts 1:1

¹⁶⁵ Luke 9:35

¹⁶⁶ Wilson (1999:21) says, "Sermons need to major in God and in grace. Social justice liberals and evangelicals alike tend to give us shoulds, musts, and have-tos...Preachers avoid grace because it 'lets people off the hook.'...but God does it...Let the sermon show God's work in the world...Preach some gospel...That's where our focus should be because that's where the Bible's focus is."

iii. God as creator

Echoing Biblical Theological themes, God was described as an artist (KZNEZ23-2) who created (GE12-1, KZNE18-2, WE30-1) and sustains (GE12-1, KZNEZ23-1) humanity (WCE7-3) and the universe by his Word (WCEX10-2, KZNEZ23-1, ECE26-3, WE29-2). God was also described as the one who makes things new (WCEX10-3).

iv. God as sovereign

God was named as the only God (NWS16-1, WE30-1), eternal (GEZ14-2), glorious (WCEA8-1) and all powerful (WCEX10-2, KZNE21-2, KZNEZ23-1, ECE26-3, ECE27-1). He was described as sovereign (GEX11-2, GE13-1, KZNEZ20-3, KZNEZ21-3, ECE26-2, ECE27-1, ECE27-3), ruler (KZNE18-2, KZNE21-2) and king (WE30-1; WCE4-2 KZNE18-3).

v. God as promise keeper

Preachers significantly referenced God as a promise maker (GEZ14-1, GEZ14-3, KZNE17-3) and faithful, promise keeper (WCE7-2, GE12-3, GE13-1, GEZ14-3, KZNEZ20-3, KZNEZ21-2, KZNEZ21-3, ECE27-3).

vi. God as saviour/redeemer

God was regularly described using salvific themes. He was called merciful (KZNE5-3), saviour (KZNE18-3, WE28-1), redeemer (WCE3-3; WCE7-3, GEZ15-2; WE29-2), deliverer (WCE7-2), rescuer (WE30-3), provider of grace (GE13-3, ECE26-1), substitute-provider (KZNE5-3, WCE7-2) and the forgiver of sins (WCE3-3, WCEA8-2, KZNE18-3, WE30-3).

vii. God as father

God was referenced in familial and relational terms as father (GEZ14-2, KZNEZ20-2).

viii. God loves and serves

God's character was designated as loving and caring (KZNE5-2, WCE7-3, WCEX10-1, WCEX10-3, GEZ14-2, FSE25-2). God was described as gathering his brood (KZNE5-2). He was described as grieving, serving and strengthening (WCEX10-3, GEZ14-2, NWS 16-2); and designated as counsellor, comforter (KZNE18-3) and healer (NWS16-1).

ix. God as generous giver

God was regularly named as kind provider (GEZ15-2, KZNEZ20-3; KZNEZ23-3, ECE26-2, ECE27-3) and a generous giver of beauty, plenty, relationship and moral guidelines (KZNE18-2; KZNEZ20-3, ECE27-3). He was described as giver of the Spirit (KZNEZ20-2), of wisdom (WE28-1) and as the giver of good gifts (WCEA8-1, ECE27-3, WE28-1).

x. God as present

God was declared to be present with his people in relationship (WCE3-3, WCEX10-1, GEZ14-2, WE28-1). He is present in suffering (GE12-1, WE28-1; WE30-3). He dwells with his people (WCE7-3, KZNE21-2, ECE27-2). God is a good and loving shepherd (WCE4-2, KZNEZ23-1) who leads and guides (KZNE21-2). God remembers (ECE27-2) and does not abandon his people (GEX11-3) so that he is refuge, strength, shelter and help in trouble (GE12-1, GEZ14-3). God's present presence foreshadows his future presence in heaven with his people (ECE26-1).

xi. God as faithful

God was named as faithful (NWS16-1, KZNE17-3, KZNE21-2), truthful and (WE28-2) and unchangeable (KZNE17-3, WE28-1).

xii. Jesus as God

REACH-SA sermons were profoundly Christocentric (GE13-2, WE28-2) so that Jesus was constantly referenced as God. Preachers regularly intermingled Jesus and God in their sentence construction (KZNEZ21-3, KZNEZ23-3, ECE27-3, WE29-1). Jesus was described as redeemer (WCX9-2, GEZ14-2, KZNE18-3, KZNEZ21-3, KZNEZ23-3, WE29-2), Lord (KZNE18-3), as the wisdom of God (WE29-1), as provider (ECE27-3), as provider of life (WCEX10-2, GEZ14-3, FSE25-3, WE29-1), as the true Moses (GE13-3), as healer (NWS16-1) and as filler of the famine in our hearts (KZNEZ20-3). Jesus was described as God in the flesh, king of the Jews, who suffers and dies to save his people (WCE2-3, WCE4-2).

xiii. The Holy Spirit as God

In comparison to the Christo-centricity of REACH-SA preaching there were few references to God the Holy Spirit. GEX11-1 mentioned the Holy Spirit as the agent behind salvation, GE12-2 named the Holy Spirit as humanity's teacher and called for confidence in the work of the Spirit. NWS16-1 asked people to "Let the Holy Spirit into your life" and WCEX10-3 spoke of the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

2.3.5.2 Scripture

Reformed theology presupposes the Bible as the Word of God (Robinson, 2005a:23). It posits that the text has been intentionally inspired (Stott, 2005:24) so that God's living voice may be presently heard. Biblical preaching is thus normative preaching and the 'standard by which preaching should be measured' (Long, 2005:52-56). The Scriptures are the primary source for preaching (Biwul, 2019:43) which is to be derived from a Biblical text so as to faithfully expose the principles inspired by the Holy Spirit in that text, for knowledge of God and faithful living (Chapell, 2005:31). The Heidelberg method seeks to understand how the Bible functions in the

sermon and what the preacher has done with the Scriptural text. It asks, is the text of Scripture included? Has the text of Scripture been heard so as to determine the agenda of the sermon? How has the sermon interpreted the text? Does the homiletical aim of the sermon accurately reflect the aim of the passage? What hermeneutic is functioning in the sermon - is it Christocentric or anthropocentric? In keeping with this study's emphasis on obedient-listening to God via the text of Scripture, as it is elucidated in the research question, this component of the research asks, how has the text been heard and how is it being applied in the sermon? Is there a discernible obedient-listening primacy given to Scripture or do the other components of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral – the illumination of tradition, the confirmation of reason and the existential reality of experience – overshadow the primacy of Scripture in the preaching praxis?

i. Preaching as exposition of Scripture

Expository preaching is ubiquitous in REACH-SA preaching. Preachers uniformly embraced the exposition of Scripture as normative. All talks reflected a confidence in Scripture, were biblically centred and discernibly shaped by the text of Scripture. GEZ14-1 said, "God's word is God's word to be obeyed." Preachers took time and effort to contextualise, explain and apply the passages chosen. Occasionally talks were announced as topical (WCE7-3) but even then they were an exposition of a passage (WCE7-3) or constructed around multiple passages (WCX9-3 referenced at least nine New Testament Scriptures). The scope of Scripture that was covered was broad including both Old Testament as well as New Testament expositions. The Old Testament expositions included a significant number of Psalms which were used to address appropriate responses to the COVID pandemic.

ii. Biblical expectation and Biblical interest

Preachers displayed a constant expectation that their audiences are literate and would attend to the Scriptures with them. Preachers assumed a high level of Biblical interest and ability to understand. Many preachers called their audiences to look at the Scriptures with them (WCE2-2, WCE7-1, KZNE19-3, ECE27-2, WE28-1, WE28-3, WE29-2). Others called their hearers to open their Bibles (WCX10-2) or to keep their Bibles open (WCE7-2, KZNE20-1, KZNE21-2, WE29-1). WE30-1 exhorted her audience to read with her when she said, "Let's read that passage again". WCE6-2 urged his audience to "Always bring your Bible to church..." and then encouraged them to look intently into the Scriptures when he said, "See it in v14...there again in v20 and again in v..." KZNE23-2 and GEZ15-2 expected a high level of education when they spoke of English and Hebrew grammar. Preachers displayed little empathy or consideration of low educational levels, oral communities, difficulties in reading, differences in reading engagement between genders or cultural shifts towards secondary orality. KZNE5-1 summarised his Biblical

expectations when he said, “Hearing God’s word and responding to it in faith and repentance is the primary Christian experience.”

iii. Biblical theological content and cross referencing

REACH-SA preaching displayed a high level of Biblical content across all contexts (see for e.g., WCE4-2, FSE25-2). One set of sermons delivered in a rural township context (NWS161,2,3) was much simpler but this was the exception. Preachers explained and expected a high level of Biblical theological understanding from their listeners. WCE7-1 drew Biblical theological conclusions from Abraham, the Exodus and the monarchy. GE13-1 gave a deep explanation of the story in its Biblical theological context. WE30-1 spoke of the reversal of Genesis while GE13-2 referred back to the Patriarchal context and forward towards the work of Christ which he concluded was mirrored in the life of Moses. It was normative for preachers to include significant Biblical cross referencing as they linked their chosen passages with other Biblical theological themes (WCE4-2, WCEX10-3, GE12-2, GE13-3, GEZ14-1, GEZ15-2, KZNE17-3 (used eight cross references), KZNEZ23-1, ECE26-2, WE29-1).

iv. Biblical languages

A number of preachers referenced both of the major Biblical languages – Greek and Hebrew (KZNEZ20-3, KZNEZ21-3). WCEX10-2 said, “in the Greek...” GE12-2 said, “The Greek means really, really upset.” Hebrew references were made by GE13-2, GEZ15-2, KZNE17-3, KZNEZ23-1 and ECE27-2 as a part of their explanations.

2.3.5.3 Hearers

Asymmetric listening necessitates that preachers listen, not only to God via the text of Scripture, but also to the ‘lifeworld’ (Pieterse, 2020:351) that their listeners inhabit. The third set of questions in the Depth Analysis of the Heidelberg Method seeks to ask, what kind of listeners does the sermon appeal to and imply? How is the audience described and addressed in the sermon? What is their relation to the world and to the ‘other’ (Cilliers, 2006:11)? What clues are given in application, illustration and analogy as to the historical and societal context of the listeners being addressed (Pieterse, 2020:351)? Do the listeners addressed reflect the complex and changing realities of South Africa or are the preacher’s assumptions infused with Eurocentric and western concerns? Are racism and coloniality ever addressed? What educational assumptions does the preacher make regarding orality and the congregation’s literacy? Are applications made only to individuals or are people addressed as a collective and a community? Is there an attempt to develop understanding as well as belief and behaviour? Is there any appeal to the emotions or is the appeal only cerebral? In examining the sermon’s understanding of listeners this research seeks to discover whether preachers are *hearing* their listeners and whether sermons preached

within REACH-SA display a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from this *heard* people.

i. Audience worldview

Preachers used diverse expressions to indicate their perceptions of their audience's worldview. ECE26-2 spoke of sangomas and ancestors, while GEZ14-1 powerfully referenced, "Blood on your best wigs and weaves". WCX9-1 referenced Xhosa culture and KZNEZ20-3 referenced Zulu township life. KZNEZ23-2 expressed the personal pain of apartheid. GEZ15-2 courageously spoke to the delicate issues of 'wet dreams and menstruation'.

Suburban preachers universally assumed a middle-class audience. KZNEZ22-3 referenced middle-class society by speaking of plane travel, credit cards and malls. FSE25-3 spoke of meat on the braai with marinade. KZNE17-2 spoke of when he was in the apartheid military and called his listeners to join a club to do evangelism. KZNEZ23-3 referenced BREXIT assuming an interest in world affairs. KZNE5-2 identified South African culture as Western when he said,

Ours is the first civilization in the history of civilizations to organise itself without a deity.

Applications made by preachers were overwhelmingly personal rather than communal, and spiritual rather than collective. Poverty, corruption and racism were often referenced, and the solutions proposed were to be found in individual repentance and action rather than in structural change. Coloniality was never addressed. Applications were made relating to suffering and the appropriate Christian response (KZNE5-1, KZN19-3). Preachers routinely assumed that audiences were primarily Christian (WCE3-2 used lots of examples relating to Christian activities – baptism, confirmation, Sabbath, Lent, Palm Sunday) but they also assumed that non-Christians were present. Applications broadly reflected the communities they were addressing with a predominance of Eurocentric and western concerns. Subliminal prejudice was noticeable in the hypothetical names used for illustration purposes which were Western rather than African (WCE6-2), in the usage of 'man' rather than humanity/people (KZNE5-3, KZNE23-1) and in the way groups were referenced (e.g., English, Afrikaans and Xhosa were routinely referenced in this order).

ii. Illustration

A significant sample of preachers presented sermons that were Biblically dense with little or no illustration (GE12-1, GE12-2, KZNE19-1, KZNE21-2, ECE27-2, ECE27-3, WE28-2). These preachers trusted the Biblical content and the personality of the preacher to carry the weight of communication to their hearers. Often the sermons contained a high degree of complex argumentation with little relational or emotional connection. Others contented themselves with a

single illustration for multiple points (KZNE17-3, KZNE18-2). This illustration was often used as a content break rather than an integral part of their communication strategy.

Some noticeable exceptions had many illustrations, quotes from authorities and allusions to aid their communication process to their hearers (WCE6-2, WCEX10-3, GE13-3, KZNE18-3, KZNE19-3, KZNEZ20-2, FSE24-2, FSE25-2, FSE25-3, WE29-2). A few sermons attempted audience connection with alliteration or repetition. GE12-3 made four points all built around a central theme 'comfort, clash and challenge'. KZNE18-3 had a significant number of illustrations and allusions designed to connect with his audience. Illustrations were derived from the preacher's personal life (WCEX10-2), from life in the community (WE29-2), from music (GEZ15-3), church history (KZNE18-3), Bible stories (GEZ15-3), and from the media (WCEX10-2, GEZ15-3, WE30-1).

iii. Language usage

Suburban preachers showed little linguistic flexibility (Mitchell, 1990:87) in contrast to township and rural preachers who routinely adjusted their language usage in an effort to communicate effectively (GEZ14-2, GEZ14-3, GEZ15-2, GEZ15-3, NWS16-2, NWS16-3, KZNEZ23-2). GEZ15-2 preached the entire sermon in both English and Zulu interspersing sentences. "Bazalwane," and "Nkulunkulu" were phrases regularly used by preachers who displayed linguistic flexibility (WCX9-2, GEZ14-1, GEZ14-2). One preacher assumed audience familiarity with Afrikaans when he said WCE3-2, "Maak nie saak nie."

iv. Music

Music was a feature used by some preachers to facilitate emotional engagement. Songs and hymns were occasionally quoted and referenced by preachers (WCX9-2, WCX9-3, GEZ14-3, KZNEZ23-3, FSE 24-2). Preachers in township and rural communities included significantly more music as well as personal singing in their preaching (WCX9-2, WCX9-3, GEZ14-3, KZNEZ23-3) while suburban preachers simply quoted the songs referenced (see for e.g., FSE 24-2).

v. Diatribe and dialogue

Preachers regularly structured their talks as catechetical diatribes. Many preachers constructed their talks as a dialogue of questions and answers with imaginary interlocutors. Questions or hypothetical objections were used to transition the talks from one subject to the next (KZNE5-3, WCE6-3, WCEA8-2, GE13-3, KZNE18-3, KZNE21-2, ECE26-2, ECE27-2, WE28-3). Many talks contained rhetorical questions which were occasionally used by the preacher to dialogue with their hearers. WCEA8-2 posed multiple questions to the hearers:

- Is that right?
- We don't like tax collectors.

- Who would agree with that?
- How could you know...anyone?
- Isn't that good news?
- Fascinating isn't it?
- Is that how we see it?
- Are you drawn to them?

Other preachers used questions as a communication technique to encourage hearer engagement and to attempt a 'call and response' dialogue with their hearers (Tomlin, 2019:107-123) (WCE2-2, KZNE17-3, KZNEZ20-2, KZNE20-3, KZNEZ23-2, FSE25-3, ECE26-2). WE28-1 urged her hearers,

We do need to remember, don't we? Have you heard that? I find it a relief, don't you? I need a bigger "mmm"!! We are knocking on his door, aren't we?

Occasionally preachers would foster personal engagement amongst their audiences by encouraging them to dialogue with each other. WCE6-2 said, "Turn to your neighbour and repeat after me". WE28-3 said "Turn to your partner and discuss..."

vi. Repetition

Tomlin (2019:134) suggests that repetition is a stylistic device used by preachers to create dramatic effect, to sway the audience and to stir the emotions as the preacher makes their point. WE30-1 used dramatic repetition when she said,

For Peter, denying himself would mean acknowledging God knew best, even if that meant pain and death. Denying himself would mean believing Jesus' words when others mocked. Denying himself would be declaring Jesus as the Promised king when it was dangerous to do so. Denying himself would be preaching the resurrection when the government powers wanted to silence Jesus followers. For him the cross wasn't just a metaphor of suffering, it happened!

WCEX10-3 used repetition to motivate his audience when he said,

When Christ served us; he saw us as is, accepts us as is, loves us as is, saves us as is, by his grace never leaves us as is.

KZNE19-3 similarly used repetition for dramatic emphasis when he said,

A fool enslaves, slaps you; a fool exploits; a fool takes everything you have; a fool takes advantage; a fool puts up heirs; a fool takes control; a fool slaps you and strikes...you...

vii. *Emotive language*

Emotive language was used by some preachers as a rhetorical device to elicit an emotional response in their hearers. Preachers used words to empathetically narrow the distance between themselves and their hearers, recognising that people *feel* as an integral component of knowing. WCE7-3 said, "Spreadsheets don't work, spanners break". GEZ14-3 spoke of "A life without pain or miscarriages, pain of cancer, poverty, sin, sickness, divorce and even death itself" and he also emotively said, "Jesus tested positive for the sin virus". WCEX10-2 said, "Bones mend but souls remain shattered". GE 13-3 said,

We all desire happiness...some in marriage others in divorce; some in busyness other in laziness; some in food others in diet; some in safety others in recklessness...

Emotive phrases were used by preachers to elucidate and explain theological complexity. WCE3-1 said,

Jesus did not wait for us to first become perfect. He did not wait for us to become likable. He did not wait for us to first turn to him. He did not wait for us to be nice, good people. NO! It was while we were sinners, while we rejected him, while we wanted to have nothing to do with him, that he died for us.

KZNE5-3 said, "The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God; the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man". WCE2-2 said, "God in the flesh pitched his tent among his people but they pulled out the pegs and drove them through his hands and feet."

Most notably, emotive language was used to communicate a call to obedient-listening. KZNEZ23-1 exhorted, "live not a cushioned life but a well-armed one". WCX9-2 said, "Wear the blanket of love". WE28-2 said, "Grace is root; godliness is fruit". ECE27-3 challenged when he said, "We don't believe God is big enough to help or good enough to care!!" WCEA8-1 used emotive phrases to motivate his hearers when he said,

- Grow inwardly as I deteriorate outwardly;
- Not giving in, not giving up, not giving over;
- From sadness and madness and badness;

- When people are good, you add goodness, when people are bad, you add goodness, when people are sad, you add goodness, when people are evil, you overcome it with goodness;

Similarly, GE13-3 used the emotive phrases:

- You are before you do.
- Character before conduct.
- Blessing comes before bidding.
- Indicative before imperative.
- Identity before ethics and both are defined by grace.

2.3.5.4 Preacher

The final question for investigation concerns the identity and role of the preacher when it asks, how does the preacher function in the sermon? The Bible uses nuanced and complex descriptors to describe the preaching task which have been extensively researched.¹⁶⁷ The main identifiers of preaching in the New Testament include:

- *Κερυσσο* – the public proclamation, of a message on behalf of a monarch or master (Greidanus, 1988:4; Griffiths, 2017:27; Meyer, 2013:21-30).
- *Διδασκο* - teaching and explanation.
- *Ευαγγελιζομαι ευαγγελιζεσται* - good/significant news being spoken (Griffiths, 2017:20).
- *Κατανελλο απανελλο* - proclamation and announcement.
- *Μαρτυρεο μαρτυρειν* - bearing witness to or testifying to what has been personally seen or heard about an event or a person. It implies communicating, “truth from one who has a first-hand knowledge.” (Long, 1989; Mayhue, 2005:6).

The Heidelberg method of sermon analysis seeks to understand the part that the preacher’s self-identification plays in the sermon. Does the preacher identify as herald, teacher, pastor, storyteller, witness (Long, 1989:23-47), steward (Meyer, 2013:21-30), confessor (Lose, 2003:63-110), servant (John 13:1-17), prophet (Tisdale, 2010), father or any other? What influence does the preacher’s self-identification exercise on the sermon as delivered?

i. Preacher as teacher

REACH-SA preachers primarily identified themselves as Bible teachers and Biblical theologians with the corresponding task being the communication of Biblical knowledge (see for e.g., KZNE5-

¹⁶⁷ See for example Friedrich, 1965:703; Greidanus, 1988:6; Long, 1989:23-47; Mounce, 1993:735; Runia, 1988:527; Stott, 1982:135-136.

2, GEZ15-2, KZNE18-2). This was regularly communicated by their self-identification as teachers, a high quantity of cross references, the majority of sermon time being given to detailed and careful explanations of the text and their use of Biblical languages. There was an implied assumption by many preachers that their hearers had not previously heard the presented information.

Conclusions that are drawn in this research from the voice usage and public presentation of sermons must be carefully tempered as a result of many of the sermons being preached in the artificial situation of video production. This caution does not however mean that no observations are valid. A significant group of preachers used quiet, carefully modulated, serious communication as their norm for delivery (FSE25-2, ECE27-1). On occasion the preacher even appears unconnected from their hearers taking little audience feedback into consideration (WCE7-3, GEX11-3). KZNE17-2 spoke at a constant and rapid pace leaving little space for hearers to pause and absorb the content.

ii. Preacher as herald

A number of preachers attempted to communicate via powerful and commanding delivery. Some appeared stern and even angry, suggesting they felt their hearers were in need of rebuke (KZNE17-3). Occasionally the preaching tone was in stark contrast to the sermon content (GE12-3 spoke of grace but the tone appeared to be that of rebuke and might even be construed as angry). KZNE5-3 and KZNEZ23-3 were stern and earnest when the passages presented were joyous celebrations. Some preachers used significant vocal tones and energetically communicated with passion (KZNEZ23-2).

iii. Preacher as Christian

A group of preachers used personal allusions, anecdotes and stories (WCE2-2, GEZ14-1, KZNE18-3, FSE25-3, ECE26-1) in order to develop warmth and likeability so as to communicate that they were a Christian amongst Christians, and a pilgrim amongst pilgrims. KZNE19-3 spoke conversationally and approachably. Others spoke using painful self-disclosure (WE30-1). Some used colloquial expressions, KZNEZ20-3 spoke of “lots of chow folks” while WCEX10-2 joked about “Beyoncé, the theologian”. WCX9-1 and WCEX10-1 allowed their personalities to be visible using much call to application and much exhortation to pray.

iv Preacher as hero/villain

A noticeable factor in preacher self-identification related to the role of hero/villain. Occasionally preachers portrayed themselves as heroes (WCE6-3, KZNE17-2, ECE26-1) while far more portrayed themselves deprecatingly as villains (WCEX10-3, GEZ14-3, KZNE18-3, FSE25-2, FSE25-3); WCE2-3 said, “I was not prefect material”. KZNEZ21-3 said, “I don’t like waiting,” identifying himself with his congregation’s impatience. KZNEZ23-1 said, “It is a miracle our

marriage is still together because I am not good.” ECE26-3 said, “I was spiritually lukewarm shallow and undecided.” WE28-3 portrayed herself as the villain in dealing with poverty and judging the appearance of people.

2.3.6 Reflexivity, Metatheoretical Perspectives and the Role of the Researcher

Reflexivity is an essential component for establishing rigour in qualitative research. Reflexivity helps to establish confirmability in the findings presented. Confirmability occurs when it is recognised that the research findings are the result of the participants’ input and not the bias of the researcher (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). Research without bias is impossible and is always dependent on the researcher’s own presuppositions (Astley, 2017:110). Reflexivity is the process whereby the researcher self-assesses, displays personal awareness and exercises self-critique. This enables the researcher to acknowledge their personal experiences, assumptions and beliefs and to consider how these have influenced the research process (Haynes, 2012:1). Reflexivity is thus, critical reflection on the personal positions held by the researcher, in order to evaluate how these have influenced the research process. It involves the examination of judgements, practices, and belief systems used during the research process and then assessing how these may have influenced the research findings. Reflexivity involves giving attention to the personal, philosophical, cultural, political and ideological perspectives of the researcher and their effect on the research process.

Osmer (2008:59) highlights the complexity of ‘attending’ when the researcher operates from the perspective of an insider. Insiders have already formulated perceptions, perspectives, interpretations and judgements which they must endeavour to suspend for the purpose of description. The researcher is conscious that he operates as an insider within the REACH-SA denomination. As a teacher of homiletics, an ordained pastor and as a regular preacher within the denomination, the researcher brings preconceived judgements which must be considered (Osmer, 2008:59-60).

The first presupposition that influences this research is that of the Reformed, Evangelical viewpoint applied. This viewpoint contains within its metaphysical conclusions concerning truth, ontology, origins, essence and meaning which confront Western assumptions. Western metaphysical and philosophical convictions are unavoidably shaped by post-enlightenment certainties. Kant proposed a world that can only be understood by the senses so that true knowledge can only be derived from human experience (Kenny, 1998:253). Western worldviews supremely value the conclusions of empirical and quantitative science while subordinating metaphysical conclusions derived from faith, history, community and tradition. Darwin argued that life is unavoidably shaped by an evolutionary process of conflict and competition for survival which

leads to natural selection (Kenny, 1988:305). Post Darwinian conclusions have challenged a literal acceptance of the Biblical accounts of creation and original sin (Kenny, 1998:306-307) resulting in presuppositions that embrace an impersonal ontology. In contrast to this, Biblical ontology is inherently personal and relational being derived from the Trinitarian character of God. The Reformed, Evangelical perspective assumes God as the source of truth claims and whose character is the ontological foundation from which existence, becoming, and reality are derived. While not discarding the metaphysical conclusions of Western presuppositions, the Reformed, Evangelical perspective subordinates them to the Biblical meta-narrative.

A second perceived bias noticed by the researcher concerns conclusions that are derived from subliminal worldview assumptions. Worldviews are by definition implied truth claims. They are characterised by (often) unarticulated, subliminal prejudices that shape hermeneutical conclusions. These conclusions influence and determine a definition of the 'other'. Western society defines itself in categories of competition. It prizes accomplishments and production, materialism and wealth, as well as intellect and competency, in contrast to the African emphasis on consensus, relationship, family, people, clan and tribe (Miller, 2009:15-16). Western assumptions have given rise to an assumed racial superiority displayed in colonial and imperial practices which historically viewed the racist colonial project as a paternalistic obligation for biologically superior peoples to rule and civilise inferior peoples (Narayan, 1995:133). This assumed superiority was not only historical but continues into the present. It is still manifested in the assumptions displayed in viewpoints that regard Western ethical, moral and democratic ideals as superior to African (and Asian) expressions. Western metaphysics are also rooted in an implied atheism, being suspicious of theistic claims, while African worldviews assume both God and a spiritual dimension. Kierkegaard objected to humans being characterised as part of a movement of universal history and instead argued for free will, freedom of choice and self-expression. He suggested that these occur as the individual embraces the transition from an aesthetic life, through the ethical and into the religious sphere (Kenny, 1998:298-300). Western society esteems individual independence, autonomy and consequent rights. It does not emphasise the contingent and dependent nature of human existence (Niebuhr, 1964:201). Scharfstein (1998) has accused Western philosophy of being insular and unable to expand beyond its own certainties. The researcher acknowledges a contradictory worldview position which encompasses both a personal suspicion of Western conclusions while being unavoidably influenced by them. The researcher seeks to facilitate increased African confidence in its own worldview conclusions where these are rooted in Biblical foundations.

Thirdly, the researcher acknowledges that he occupies a liminal space (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012). He is a multi-generational South African descended from European settlers. His

educational qualifications are Western and reflect the urban thought patterns of suburban South Africa which views itself in Western rather than African categories. The researcher lived through the collapse of apartheid but was conscripted by the apartheid military. His opposition to apartheid conscription however resulted in him being an outsider in his own community. The theological worldview articulated by the researcher emanated from a Reformed, Evangelical framework but the researcher's community articulated diametrically opposite conclusions from the same Scriptures. The outcome of this liminality in the researcher is a suspicion of unquestioned Western metaphysical certainties. These certainties include the primacy of the individual over the community, the value of power over consensus, the saturation of atheism within Western paradigms and the approval of intellect over emotion. In this research the researcher has been continually confronted by an unquestioned acceptance of Western homiletical shapes and their applications in rhetoric.

The researcher has attempted reflection on his personal biases by means of a reflexive journal kept throughout the attending of the descriptive-empirical task. This journal was an attempt to log thoughts, reflections, motivations, directions, observations and potential bias in order to facilitate dependability (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58). As the sermons were assessed using the questions posed by the Heidelberg method, the researcher attempted to categorise descriptive conclusions and reflect on observations made. The journal included procedural notes on decisions and observations, and how the researcher attempted to make meaning from the sermon data as well as an attempt to notice how these values and beliefs have impacted the research process. Upon completion of each sermon assessment the authors were contacted with one appreciative comment from the researcher so as to encourage community ownership of the research's transformative potential in preachers (Treharne & Riggs, 2015:58).

2.3.7 Ethical Risk

The researcher was responsible for obtaining ethical clearance and informed consent from all participants. This was initially achieved orally and then finalised via signed and witnessed consent forms. The study was of a minimum ethical risk as all data that was analysed resides in the public domain which mitigated the need for permissions from local church congregations and councils. All data was maintained in password controlled electronic formats and will be discarded 12 months after completion of the research. No direct benefits from this research accrued to participants but significant indirect benefits will be derived. Due to improved insights into the state of preaching within REACH-SA better strategies for training and support of preachers can be implemented.

CHAPTER 3: INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVES ON REACH-SA PREACHING

3.1 INTRODUCTION: WHY IS IT GOING ON?

Having described the current praxis of REACH-SA preaching in the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task seeks to gain understanding by formulating reasons for the patterns and dynamics noted by interacting with theories presented by neighbour sciences. It seeks to better understand the current praxis as it answers the question, “Why is it going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). This interpretation can then lead to insights on possible paths to improvement (Osmer, 2008:80). Osmer (2008:81-128) suggests that the task of interpretive research, which he calls *sagely-wisdom*, is an interaction between thoughtfulness and proper consideration, leading to well-founded judgements on inadequate current praxis. This sagely-wisdom is enhanced and develops as it draws on and interacts with theories which contain important insights that have been formulated by neighbour sciences and are thus able to shed light on the complexities of the current praxis. Sagely-wisdom attempts wise judgement as it reflects on the identified components of the problem, discerns the possible consequences of praxis and allows neighbour sciences to enhance understanding in order to seek effective redemptive strategies (Osmer, 2008:84).

The interpretive process in this research attempts to use insights from Browning’s (1996) model of practical theology. Browning embraces a revised correlational approach which is similar to the listening process of the preacher. He posits a conversation between interpretations of the Christian message and interpretations of the existing situation which then interact with each other. This conversation is a dialogue where interpretations influence and shape each other in contrast to a simple correlational approach where experiences raise questions to which theology then provides solutions (Browning 1996:44-47). Browning (1996:45) suggests that Christian theology always has a ‘confessional beginning’, which when heard, generates a conflict with contemporary practice. Browning (1996:7) affirms that knowledge, truth and understanding are then developed in a conversation, beginning with a pre-understanding, which he called ‘theory-laden practice’, which is then shaped by perspectives from neighbour sciences as well as normative considerations leading to the creation of new ‘theory-laden practices.’ (Browning, 1996:7).

The research question, posited in this research namely, *‘Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?’* will shape the interpretive task attempted here. In the first part of this chapter, the definition of preaching developed in the descriptive perspective will be further refined and elaborated on, using perspectives from the neighbour sciences of African Studies and Sociology. These sciences provide important insights

into the place of historical community as a necessary voice for the preacher's listening consideration.

In the second part of this chapter, perspectives will be developed around the first phrase of this study's research question. It will, in an inter-disciplinary engagement with the neighbour sciences of Hermeneutics, Philosophy and African Studies, seek to investigate some aspects of the pre-understandings of REACH-SA preachers and their hermeneutical commitments, in order to gain perspectives on how their homiletical practice is being shaped. By further developing how preachers use the Biblical text in their sermons, this component will, in line with the research question, aim to identify how the text of Scripture has been *heard* by attempting to investigate what the preacher brings to the text and whether this pre-understanding is acknowledged, embraced and positively used, rather than ignored or expunged in the task of listening. The preacher's obedient-listening should lead to a restructuring and reformation of their pre-understanding, culminating in an alteration of praxis (Browning, 1996:38) seen in the applications and exhortations proposed.

In the third part of this chapter, perspectives will be developed from the second component of the research question so as to develop Osmer's (2008:81-128) sagely-wisdom. The perspectives of Business Communication Studies, African Studies, Rhetoric, Discourse Analysis and Pastoral Theology will be used to explore how REACH-SA preachers are listening to their hearers in order to investigate whether preachers have displayed '*a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people*'. As the preacher turns to hear their community, their ethnographic analysis, their personal presuppositions and their historical perspectives will influence their understanding of their hearers' perceived needs and thus shape their homiletical praxis. A preacher's perceptions of their people's context, abilities, interests and hopes will influence the conclusions derived and the sermon delivered.

3.2 INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER-AS-LISTENER FROM AFRICAN STUDIES AND SOCIOLOGY

In the descriptive-empirical task the essential components of good preaching were identified. The Trinitarian God initiates preaching, stands behind preaching, empowers preaching and speaks to his creation through preaching. Preaching is a declaration of Jesus, the crucified Christ,¹⁶⁸ empowered by the Spirit (Brown & Powery, 2016:2), in which God's voice is mysteriously heard via the agency of the Scriptures and the efforts of the preacher who speaks to a unique and particular context. It was noted that good preaching listens in three directions. It listens to God, to the preacher's voice, and to the people addressed. This led to preaching being defined as, *the*

¹⁶⁸ 1 Cor 1:23

heard Word spoken to a heard people. As a result, preaching and the success thereof, is fundamentally rooted in listening. The listening of the preacher is never a unilateral listening to the text of Scripture alone. Fant (1987:68) argues that preaching stands between, “the historical given of the eternal Word,” and “the existential given of our own contemporary culture.” He goes on to define preaching (Fant, 1987:81) as,

The interpretation of a historical event to a contemporary situation by a person who must be intimately familiar with both.

In this definition, Fant references two essential components of the preacher’s listening. He notices that the preacher stands at the intersection between the text and the hearers. Buttrick (1987:251) concurs, describing preaching as a mediation. Ogunlana (2017:84) calls preaching an in-between-ness. Stott (1982:136) has highlighted the ‘givenness’ of the message entrusted to the preacher which then needs to be related to a unique context (Stott, 1982:136-137). He develops the metaphor of preaching as ‘bridge-building’ where the preacher stands between exposition and communication (Stott, 1982:137). Faced with the deep divide between Biblical culture and the contemporary world the preacher’s task is to listen and hear both worlds so that contemporary hearers are enabled to appropriate Biblical truth in their vastly different contexts to the one in which the text was written. Preaching is thus the *heard* word of Christ spoken to a *heard* people. The preacher must listen both to what the text meant historically *and* to their present, particular context in order to speak the message of God in Christ into the lives of these particular people. We might graphically present this intersection using the following diagram (Figure 5) where *theta* represents God; the *book* represents the Bible. Preachers stand in-between God and their hearers as they listen both to God via his word and to the audience to whom they speak.

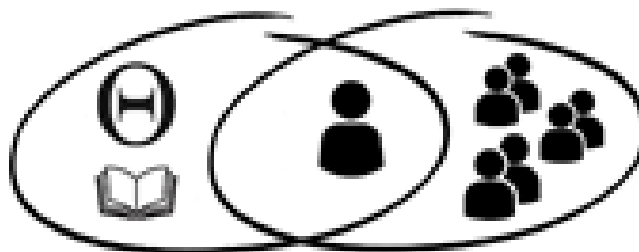


Figure 5: The intersection of God, the Bible, preacher and listeners

The representation of preaching in figure 5 is however incomplete. Homiletic scholarship has recognised a third voice to be heard, which is the voice of the preacher themselves. Preaching then involves a threefold listening to:

- i. God via the text of Scripture.
- ii. Hearers in their unique context.
- iii. The voice of the preacher themselves.

This relationship between text, hearers and preacher is often represented in homiletical literature as a communicative triangle (Brueggemann, 2005a:495; De Wet, 2012:1-9; Tisdale, 2010:49).

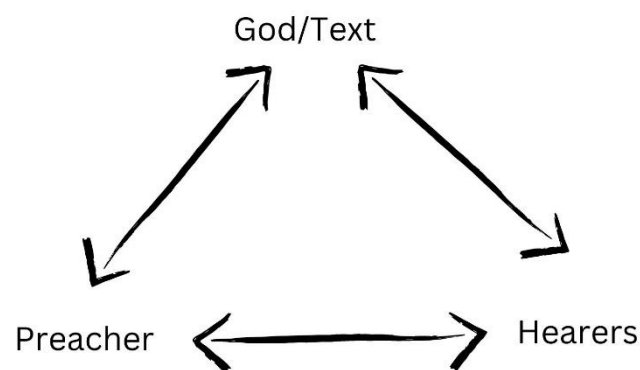


Figure 6: The communicative triangle

Homiletics recognises that preaching is always mediated through the agency of a unique human preacher whose own voice is present, unavoidable and also potentially dangerous. God via the text is represented at the top of the triangle to indicate precedence and priority (De Wet, 2012:1-9) a vital consideration which will be further elucidated later in this section. The voices of both hearers and preacher are situated at the base of the triangle interacting with each other, as they are together addressed by God, and subordinate to the voice of the living God heard in the text of Scripture. This dynamic is infused with the struggle between distance and proximity, continuity and discontinuity, as well as alienation and participation (Pieterse, 2010:3).

In addition, to these above-mentioned three voices, visualized by Brueggemann's idea of a communicative triangle, this current research now argues for a *fourth* voice to which the preacher must also listen. By using perspectives from the neighbour science of African Studies, this research posits that the preacher cannot and indeed must not be viewed in Western categories as an individual alone but must instead be viewed as a member of community, both present and historical. This community voice asserts a significant influence on the preacher's homiletical process.

The term worldview is widely used. It derives from Kant's phrase *Weltanschauung* in which he described the power of the human mind to have a comprehension of the world as a whole (Conradie, 2014:1). Kuyper described this as a 'life-system' (Conradie, 2014:2) which is a set of tacit assumptions and a social construction that people harbour about the world and reality. This life-system is derived from their particular lived experience in the world (Conradie, 2014:1-12). A worldview is a set of fundamentally held first truths, commitments (Sire 2009:20), beliefs and presuppositions that humans trust, in an attempt to provide a unifying perspective (Olthuis, 1989:26). Worldviews are comprehensive ideas of order, conceptual schemes, perspectives and filters (Yeats & Blasé, 2006:15) that undergird human judgements of reality and thus shape human activity by defining ethics (Holmes, 1983:31). Olthuis (1989:29) defines a worldview as that which,

Tells us both what is (and is not) the case and what ought (and ought not) to be the case. A worldview is both a sketch of and a blueprint for reality; it describes what we see and stipulates what we should see...

These beliefs constitute an orientation of the heart (Sire 2009:20). They provide an ontological understanding, epistemological perspectives, a view of human identity and provide ethical and behavioural direction as they underscore hermeneutical practice (Mburu, 2019:23). Van Der Walt (1991:13) defines a worldview as,

An integrated, interpretive set of confessional perspectives on reality which underlies human activity, shapes it, motivates it and gives it direction and meaning...

A worldview attempts to provide some coherence to the questions of ultimates; but worldviews are always incomplete and evolving, often broken, distorted and misshapen (Conradie, 2014:11), not always rationally or consistently applied, often driven by need and desire, even as they are infused with complexity, paradox, liminality, journey, struggle and mystery (Wessels, 2020:361).

Scholars debate whether it is even appropriate to speak of a singular worldview (Conradie, 2014:11) and especially whether a single African worldview is possible given the complexity and diversity noticeable on the continent (Thabede, 2008:237).¹⁶⁹ Recognising that all worldview analysis is infused with generalisations that are in specific circumstances invalid, it is nevertheless appropriate to recognise the significant differences that exist in Western, Asian and sub-Saharan

¹⁶⁹ Thabede (2008:237) unhelpfully dismisses alternative African worldviews when he says, "the Arabs of North Africa are not Africans...the white people of Zimbabwe or South Africa are not Africans." It would be far more appropriate to acknowledge complexity, paradox, liminality, struggle and mystery in worldviews.

African worldview understandings (Van Der Walt, 1997). Some of these are noticeable in the following primary areas:

i. God

African worldviews assume an ontological belief in a supreme being as self-evident (Mburu, 2019:26). Atheism is virtually unknown (Gehman, 2005:315, Mbiti 1991:35, Nyirongo 1997:25). There is a universal belief in a hierarchical spiritual world composed of divine, spirit, human, animate and inanimate elements, which are related and constantly interacting (Conradie 2014:9). These powers have to be in balance requiring the ongoing engagement of the spiritual world with the present world via the mediation of ancestors (Thabede, 2008:238-240). In contrast, recent Western worldviews assume an ontological emptiness. They are confidently atheistic, assume impersonal origins and are rooted in evolutionary paradigms. African worldviews are holistic and assume the interconnectedness of all things especially the spiritual and temporal realms in contrast to Western worldviews that are dualistic and separate spiritual from secular (Thabede, 2008:238).

ii. Community

African worldviews hold robust anthropological beliefs in which humans exist only as a part of community, in relationships, which extend beyond life. Family is defined as comprising not only the living but also includes dead ancestors. Mbiti (1969:75) coined the phrase the 'living dead' to describe recently deceased ancestors. The dead and the living are seen as having the same level of existence so that there is communion between them (Nyirongo 1997:27). Tutu (1999:31) defines the African understanding of individuals-in-community as *Ubuntu* when he says, "I am human because I belong. I participate. I share." Van Der Walt (1997:33-34) notices that Western thought moves from individual to community, and thus community is often optional, while African thought moves in the opposite direction from community to the individual. Van Der Walt (1997:34) elaborates that in Western thought, "The *our* is an addition, while it is an essential and innate component for the African."

African worldviews exhibit a holism in which the world is perceived as an interactive unity rather than divided into the separate compartments that characterise Western worldviews (Meenan, 2014:271). The priority, interdependence and harmonious balanced interconnectedness of all things are prized in African worldviews in contrast to Western worldviews where humans prize things over people. In Western worldviews people compete to own, strive for greater income at the expense of others, operate independently and value personal gratification over communal contentment (Mburu, 2019:28; Van Der Walt, 1997:28,31,43).

iii. Time

Western worldviews view time as chronological, linear, measurable, objective and absolute. Life is task orientated, activity is primary and future-focussed for the purpose of individual material prosperity. As African worldviews are community, relational and people-centred, time is always subservient to human interaction. The present and the past take precedence in African worldviews because stability is to be found in community (Van Der Walt, 1997:56-70).

These African worldview perspectives remind that preachers cannot and indeed must not be viewed as individuals divorced from community but instead exist within communities both current and historical. The preacher is not an individual distinct from their unique context but is instead someone who comes as a representative from their present context to the Scriptures in order to return to their people (Long, 2005:48).¹⁷⁰ In addition, the preacher's theological understanding is never separate and unique, divorced from a tradition or historical community. The preacher's theological, homiletical-liturgical understanding never begins with a *tabula rasa* but always carries within it the conclusions of generational, historical-theological and communal reflections that have been heard by the preacher and are then brought to bear upon the preacher's hermeneutical and homiletical conclusions (Bartholomew, 2015:114). Urbaniak (2015:2) cites sociologist Hervieu-Léger's insights that religion be understood as a chain-of-memory or as a communal-collective memory and that tradition could be well described as 'the authorised version of a church's collective memory' (Urbaniak, 2015:2). Vosloo (2017:12) reminds that this memory is always fraught with complexity. It is shaped, reshaped, figured and reconfigured by a collective and communal dance. Stott (1982:139) recognises that the preacher stands in a long succession of bridge-builders who build on their predecessors' labours so that present preachers are not always building new bridges but sometimes adapting and refurbishing old ones. De Wette (Bartholomew, 2015:216) has argued that philosophical and epistemological frameworks are always present when hermeneutical activity is attempted. Browning (1996:45) argues for a 'confessional beginning' to knowledge. Knowledge, truth and understanding are developed in a community of conversation (Cahalan, 2005:70) beginning with a pre-understanding resulting in what Browning (1996:7) calls 'theory-laden practice'. The preacher's conclusions are often dangerously undisturbed by inadequate attention to the voice of this historical pre-understanding which is often unaltered by the hermeneutical process. The preacher's conclusions can be resistant and immovable becoming what Campbell and Cilliers (2012:63-66) call an 'iron theology'. Osborne (2006:29) notices that Christians often read the Bible not to listen to it, but rather to harmonise it with their own pre-understandings and thereby justify their personal conclusions. A lack of this

¹⁷⁰ It is essential to recognise the significant place of the itinerant preacher in Africa. It is commonplace for pastors to preach to multiple congregations of which they are not regular members. Pastors routinely care for multiple congregations that they only occasionally visit.

presuppositional observation has been noticeable in South African history where theologians have imposed interpretations in order to provide justifications for oppression, colonialism and apartheid. This is much more easily noticed in retrospect than in prospect but preachers must develop the ability to hear their historical community and to acknowledge how it has influenced their own presuppositional considerations and hermeneutical conclusions. De Wet and Kruger (2013) grapple with the present ubiquitous, endemic and pervasive presence of corruption in South African society. They postulate that preachers succumb to the lure of political influence by endorsing present political popularity (De Wet & Kruger, 2013:2-4). They thus over-hear the voices of present community and under-hear the voices of Scripture and historical community resulting in a repeated cycle where the voice of God is dampened.

The preacher then listens to four voices. This listening can be described as an intersectional, fourfold quadrilateral listening which is represented in figure 7. In this intersectional listening the preacher listens to the voice of God, heard through the voice of the text of Scripture; aims to listen to their present, contemporary context; and listens also to their own unique voice (represented by the lightbulb) while simultaneously hearing the voice of a historical faith-community (represented by the clock).

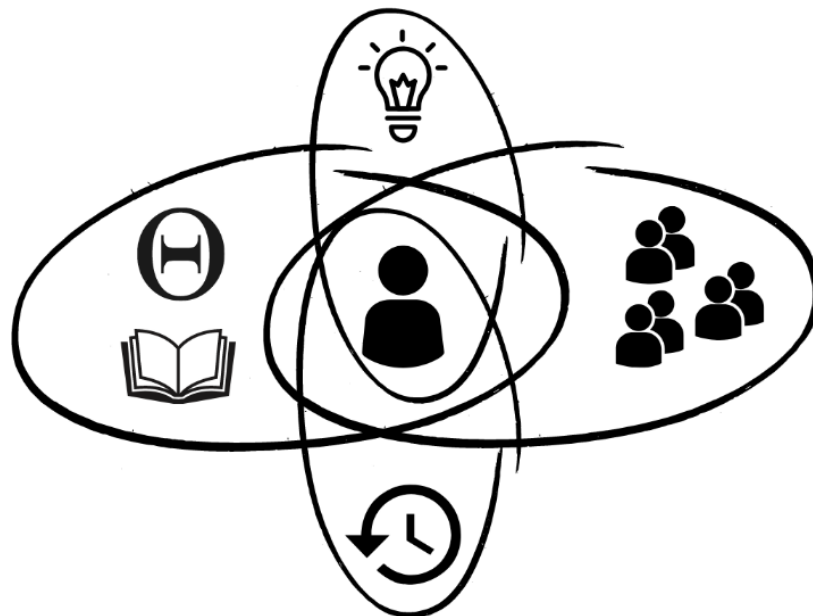


Figure 7: Intersectional listening.

To this four-fold, intersectional listening must be added one final set of questions. These are the questions of priority and primacy noted briefly in the earlier section on the communicative triangle.

- Are the voices to be treated equally?
- Which voice is allowed primacy? Which voice is allowed to speak the loudest?

- Which voice is permitted or required to carry the greatest authority when the voices conflict?

Preaching, theology and traditions have long grappled with weighting these competing and diverse voices (Hermelink, 2013:16). Catholic and Medieval hermeneutics (Bartholomew, 2015:153) gives primacy to historical traditions. Liberation and Prosperity Theologies give primacy to congregational context. Liberalism favours the human-scientific context. The 'New Homiletic' grapples with the appropriate weight to be given to the competing voices of God through Scripture, and that of congregation, culture and community (Tisdale, 1997:45). The Reformation as well as Neo-Orthodoxy re-asserted the listening primacy of Scripture (Bartholomew, 2015:232). The Reformation asserted that the preacher listens asymmetrically, giving pre-eminence to the living voice of God heard through the Scriptures. Cilliers (2004:32) asserts that preachers are people who listen to the right voices in order to hear what really matters. This final perspective on preaching is represented by figure 8.

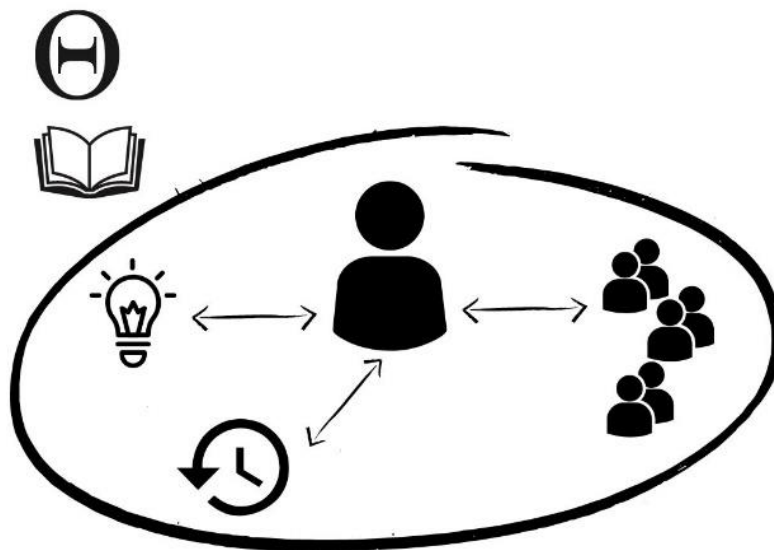


Figure 8: Asymmetrical listening

This description of preaching as rooted in asymmetrical listening is reflected in the research question posited for this study which gives direction for the interpretive perspectives on the preaching of REACH-SA preachers. The research question namely, *Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?* seeks to firstly, evaluate REACH-SA preaching as it attempts to give primacy to the voice of God through the Scriptures, and then secondly to evaluate REACH-SA preaching as it gives attention to the

other subordinate voices of historical community, present community and personal pre-understanding.

3.3 INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER-TO-THE-WORD FROM HERMENEUTICS AND AFRICAN STUDIES

Hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation of texts and other acts of human communication (Thiselton, 1988:293). Hermeneutics seeks to answer questions relating to the very nature, scope and validity of interpretations via considerations of language usage, meaning and understanding. Prior to the nineteenth century, Biblical hermeneutics proceeded on the understanding that Scripture is a corpus of God given words (Packer, 1983:333). The early church affirmed the primacy of the historical sense in hermeneutics. They also affirmed typology but debated the place of allegory (Bartholomew, 2015:126). Origen argued for a threefold sense which included deeper spiritual and moral meanings in the text than the literal sense alone (Bartholomew, 2015:134). Medieval hermeneutics reasserted allegorical interpretations because of its commitment to tradition (Bartholomew, 2015:153). The Medieval period argued for the four senses of interpretation namely literal, allegorical, moral/tropological and anagogical/spiritual (Thiselton, 1988:294-295). The Reformation asserted the maxim of *Sola Scriptura* which led to a re-affirmation of the grammatical and literal sense as primary in hermeneutical considerations (Bartholomew, 2015:200). The Reformation affirmed typology but rejected allegory (Bartholomew, 2015: 198). It also rejected Origen's anagogical and spiritual reading of the text (Bartholomew 2015:134) instead prioritising the historical and literal sense as the foundations of all interpretation of Scripture (Bartholomew, 2015:126).

Schleiermacher began a new era in hermeneutics by arguing that the goal of the interpreter is empathy with the author in order to achieve understanding (Packer, 1983:333). The interpreter attempts to reach behind the text to the mind and experience of its author (Thiselton, 1988:295). Dilthey, Heidegger, Bultmann and Gadamer developed on Schleiermacher's insights. They argued that the interpreter comes with foundational commitments, bringing a pre-understanding when approaching a text (Bultmann, 1964:342-351). They argued that understanding is never value-free and totally impartial but is shaped by the interpreter (Thiselton, 1988:296) who is embedded in history and brings their own prejudices, prejudgements and traditions to the text (Bartholomew, 2015:114). Heidegger argued for the impossibility of enquiry without a pre-understanding which results in a consideration of the interpreter's pre-understanding being a major hermeneutical issue (Thiselton, 1988:296).

African Biblical hermeneutics grapples at the three poles of Biblical text, African context and appropriation (West, 1991:1). African hermeneutics is unavoidably shaped by socio-critical,

interest-based hermeneutical considerations (Thiselton, 1988:296). It is drawn to interpretations that contend with Africa's history and its present lived experience of oppression, imperialism and colonization which have seriously marginalised, "African ways of being, knowing and doing" (Resane, 2018:5). African hermeneutics contends with its ongoing realities of ubiquitous poverty and corruption (Kruger, 2019a:73-76; Kruger & Pieterse 2016:94; Pieterse, 2013:1-6). Meenan (2014:271), arguing with a significant Western bias, contends that African hermeneutics faces, "a distinct lack of ability to hear the text." He argues that African interpreters often blur the original and present meanings of the text.¹⁷¹ Meenan (2014:268) describes some of the complexity that is present in Africa as,

a range of factors, including tribal biases, ideo-theological orientation, ecclesio-theological missionary heritage, engagement with territorial communities, accepted community mores and a wide variety of issues unique to Africa.

In the first part of this section which provides interpretive perspectives on the preacher as listener-to-the-word, this research takes perspectives from hermeneutics and uses them to develop the interpretation of the preaching praxis of REACH-SA preachers. This section explores whether REACH-SA preachers were actually listeners-to-the-word or whether their hermeneutical pre-understanding overpowered their hermeneutics. In the second part of this section perspectives from the neighbouring discipline of African Studies are used to consider whether REACH-SA preaching contained an overwhelmingly Western or African pre-understanding and how this affected the hermeneutic applied.

3.3.1 Interpretive Perspectives from Hermeneutics on the Preacher as Listener-to-the-Word

A vast smorgasbord of styles, aims and activities are attempted by preachers in diverse contexts. Prominent amongst this sermonic variety are preachers who develop a topic or doctrine from Scripture. Preachers attempt this via the combination of an argument presented, together with an emotional component, hoping for an outcome. Other preachers develop a topic with little connection to the Scriptures. They springboard from the Scriptures towards a theme using an allegorical or spiritual hermeneutic, or they simply develop a thesis from their own theological and philosophical persuasions. These preachers use a hermeneutic characterised by orthopraxis (Bray, 1996:507-508). They begin with 'socio-critical-interests' (Thiselton, 1988:296) and seek to create solutions for perceived contemporary problems. They seek relevance, action, immediacy and satisfaction for their hearers often using entertainment and rhetoric to achieve their aims

¹⁷¹ Meenan (2014:268) describes these as unique to Africa but they appear to apply in all hermeneutical contexts.

(Ash, 2009:111-115; Mayhue, 2005:16). These preachers are drawn primarily to anthropocentric concerns in what Chapell (1994:23) calls,

*an endless search for topics, therapies and techniques that will win approval,
promote acceptance, advance a cause or soothe a worry.*

A third form of preaching displays a commitment to the text of Scripture. The preacher attempts to speak what the text says, rather than what the preacher deems necessary to say, or what they perceive the congregation desires to hear, by bringing out of the Scriptures, what God by his Spirit has breathed into them (Ash, 2009:107-108). This preaching assumes that the Scriptures are God's personal self-disclosure; that they are 'God revealing God' (Packer, 1983:335) and that they contain the power for spiritual change (Chapell, 1996:22). In agreement with Reformation hermeneutics, it accepts the plain sense (Bartholomew, 2015:198) and seeks to allow the text of Scripture to be, "the leading force in shaping the content and purpose of the sermon" (Long, 2005:52). This expository preaching commits to explaining, elaborating and articulating how the Biblical text intersects with, and seeks to influence, the immediate human context.

The preacher's first task then is to hear God as he speaks through the text, and to listen to his voice leading to obedience of it. The preacher is to stay close to the text and to go wherever it leads (Bartholomew, 2015:225). A vast array of exegetical methodologies has been developed to facilitate this textual listening. Significantly influential in Western homiletics have been those methodologies proposed by Long (2005) and Robinson (2001). Quicke (2003) has presented a 360-degree, circular method which he calls a 'preaching swim' that has a particular emphasis on listening (Quicke, 2003:126). African methodologies presented have come from Cilliers (2004) and Nhiwatiwa (2012). These methods and many others proposed have significant commonality. They emphasise the selection of the scope of the text that is to be presented by first dividing it into literary units (Long, 2005:70-75; Nhiwatiwa, 2012:18; Robinson, 2001:51-54). They uniformly emphasise careful listening to the text via 'concentrated and conscientious' effort (Cilliers, 2004:100) through creative and imaginative questioning (Long, 2005:81-89; Nhiwatiwa, 2012:20) so that the preacher is personally affected. Quicke (2003:130) describes the preacher's personal journey as 'immersion'. Kruger (2019:9) highlights the emergence of listening as a focus of study where scholars are seeking to differentiate, "between mere hearing and effective (mindful) listening." Cilliers (2003:105) says,

*The text demands our listening to it with rapt attention, that we study it, wrestle with
it...broken, crippled, saturated with prayer...into the night.*

The attentive listening to the text includes observation of literary conventions used by the author (Quicke, 2003:131). It includes considerations of genre and textual forms where it is noticed how the pericope has been shaped and how this shape influences language and meaning (Cilliers, 2004:104-107). Language and meaning are always contextual, influenced by the literary, cultural, historical and Biblical contexts (Long, 2005: 79-95; Robinson 2001:59-60). The hermeneutical process leads to understanding and interpretation of the text for the current context which in turn leads to purpose, relevance and response (Long, 2005:97; Quicke, 2003 131). Tyagi (2013:1) suggests that listening is comprised of hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding. In this Tyagi has emphasised the importance of personal appropriation of information. During this hermeneutic the preacher is attempting to bring out of the text what is in the text and expose it to view (Stott, 1982:126) firstly for themselves and then for their hearers. The preacher is fighting to prevent their own pre-understanding from overwhelming the voice of God, which is expressed in the common application errors of moralising, spiritualising, patterning, trivializing or normalizing (Overdorf, 2009:73–100).

REACH-SA preachers display a commitment to the Bible as God's Word. They display significant influence by Reformation hermeneutical principles and thus exercise a commitment to a literal hermeneutic as well as to expository preaching (2.3.5.2.i). Preachers display respect for the text, they attempt to stay close to it and then encourage their listeners to personally hear and submit to it (2.3.5.2.ii). Preachers aim to go where the text of Scripture leads by giving primacy to authorial intention over traditional interpretations as they take its written character seriously. REACH-SA preachers attempt to listen to the whole Bible and not simply parts of it so as to foster relationship with Jesus by determining the text's meaning for its original hearers before applying these applications to the present context (Bartholomew, 2015:225-232). These commitments were initially noticeable in the Heidelberg Method's superficial analysis of sermon introductions (2.3.4.1). A significant group of preachers began their sermons by referring back to previous expositions of Scripture thus seeking to establish a Biblical and homiletical context for their present address. Sermon construction consistently allowed the emphases of the Scriptures being opened to become the shape and content of the sermon (2.3.4.4). Preachers consistently saw themselves as Bible teachers (2.3.5.4.i) and constantly called their listeners to a personal engagement with the Scriptures presented (2.3.5.2.ii). This call to engagement with the Scriptures was present both during the talk as well in the preachers' regular calling on their hearers to personally read the Scriptures and to live under them outside of the context of the present talk. God was routinely presented as a Trinitarian God who speaks through the Scriptures in order to reveal himself and to reveal his plan for the universe. God was offered as immanent, presently speaking through his Holy Spirit, using the agency of Scripture (2.3.5.2.i). The expositions that were studied came from a wide range of Biblical genres indicating a confidence in all of Scripture

and not merely parts of it (2.3.5.2.i). This confidence in Scriptural integrity was furthermore displayed by extensive cross-referencing where links between Scriptures were routinely articulated and presented (2.3.5.2.iii). Preachers also displayed an assurance in a holistic Biblical meta-narrative centred on Jesus Christ crucified (2.3.5.1.xii). They routinely attempted to root the particular portion being preached upon in that particular sermon into the larger totality of Scripture, seeing Old Testament fulfilment in the life and work of Christ (Bartholomew, 2015:85,109).

3.3.2 Interpretive Perspectives from African Studies on the Preacher as Listener-to-the-Word

In this second part, further considerations of the hermeneutic applied by REACH-SA preachers were examined using perspectives from African Studies in order to ascertain what pre-understanding influenced their hermeneutic and whether these pre-understandings reflected an overwhelmingly Western or African worldview. As these worldview expressions were investigated in conversation with African studies this research noticed how the pre-understanding of preachers influences their actual hearing of the concerns of the text of Scripture. This was achieved by an examination of the applications presented, the affirmations and negations drawn by preachers, as well as by attempting to notice what applications were routinely omitted. Gadamer (Browning, 1996:39-41) argued that application is not exclusively an outcome but that it permeates the entire interpretive process. He argued that people act from a particular viewpoint resulting in historical events shaping a preacher's present praxis. Rose (1997:80) agrees, arguing that when preachers interpret a text they always do it from a specific place which is historically conditioned and vested with self-interest. Hermeneutical and homiletical praxis are thus the product of past experiences even as that past continues to exert influence onto the present. This research recognises that homiletical praxis begins with preachers who come to the Biblical text and to the sermon event as unique individuals with a particular worldview and who come to the interpretative task as members of communities – both historical and present – which themselves represent worldviews. By attempting to notice what is articulated in the applications, as well as what has been omitted, the research discerns how this pre-understanding has influenced the homiletical process.

Particularly significant amongst worldview considerations are power cues which unavoidably impact hermeneutical practice. Western worldviews have for centuries exercised power by confidently assuming their own pre-eminence derived from a perceived racial superiority as well as supremacy in both knowledge and technology (Hickey 2019:17). The colonial scheme advanced on military and industrial superiority, fuelled by theological, anthropological and sociological justifications of dominance based on skin colour and racial pre-eminence. Questions of power are unavoidable in homiletics. Worldviews endeavour to impose some order and are therefore an exercise in the use and abuse of power (Conradie, 2014:11). Preachers inescapably

exert power in shaping human behaviour. They exert theological power but also political, financial and cultural power which can reinforce the *status quo* of which they are often beneficiaries even as they restrict alternative dialogues. Homiletical expressions, seen in sermon and rhetorical forms exert normative power where *rightness* is held tightly together with the authority of the office and the institution. Social and linguistic power are also unavoidably exerted by the dominance of language, media and forms of church (Hickey, 2019:19-22; Myers, 2020:2-3). Preachers and churches choose a particular cultural expression, which may not be Biblically sanctioned, this cultural expression then exerts normative power over differing alternatives by becoming *the* accepted expression of collective identity. Hearers from diverse cultures are required to embrace the dominant identity in order to achieve acceptance. Van Der Walt's (1997:105) research noticed how Western cultures are often guilty of abuses of power by unnoticed and assumed racial superiority which then creates feelings of inferiority in outsiders who sit separate from the dominant culture. The apartheid worldview indoctrinated South Africans with what became an accepted paradigm of *can* and *cannot*. Apartheid asserted that whites *can* because of their racial superiority while other races *cannot* – a legacy that continues in worldview thinking to the present. Western missiological perspectives have often been binary, regarding the world as divided into, “white, civilized, rational and Christian; and the rest of the world (particularly Africa) has been viewed as non-white, primitive, irrational and pagan” (Tienou, 1991:6). Tienou (1991:4) argues that Christianity and westernisation are then regarded as synonymous. He quotes Kaplan (1986:167) who says that Western missionary approaches to African culture have often exhibited, “toleration, translation, assimilation, Christianisation, acculturation and incorporation.” Kau (2000:1) notices that Western attitudes have ridiculed and condemned African culture resulting in a loss of self-worth, confidence and identity. Western worldviews, which focus on individualism and competition, often consider power in Machiavellian terms to be a zero-sum game where only one party wins even as the other party loses (Hickey, 2019:12). Western worldviews value material productivity over relationships and give little attention to the relational deficit that they often bequeath. Western expansionism savaged families through slavery, migrant labour systems, the removal of land and the upheaval of existing communities by force. Even altruistic endeavours were often infused with notions of superiority and paternalism as colonisers sought to civilize indigenous populations without reference to their historical strengths. Late twentieth century thought patterns have also interacted with Marxist paradigms that perceive human interactions in economic categories where power resides in the ownership of the means of production and individuals are subservient to the agenda of the collective.

African and Western anthropological theories diverge in their understanding of human interconnectedness. African ontology is fundamentally relational, personal and interconnected. Meenan (2014:271) says that Africans have,

An innate propensity of seeing the world as an interactive whole with the parts contributing to the greater entity.

In contrast, Western ontology regards the universe as impersonal, accidental and existing outside of the direction and care of a deity. These ontological views result in Africa emphasising community while the West subordinates community to individualism (Van Der Walt, 1995:28). African worldviews are holistic rather than segmented (Kau, 2000:1). The individual never exists isolated or independent of relationships which necessitates social commitments. These social commitments are expressions of positive societal values and serve as norms for behaviour (Van Der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021:100); they include humaneness, equality, non-racism, non-sexism, respect, reconciliation, gentleness, hospitality, empathy, kindness, friendliness, generosity, vulnerability, toughness and compassion (Mangena, n.d.; Van Der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021:99). Scholars grapple with why these desirable values are not more obvious in South African society, which is inconsistent, unequal and often violent in nature. They grapple with why these values are not more obviously manifest in the daily interactions of ordinary people (Van Der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021:94-96). Scholars question whether speaking of an Ubuntu worldview might be to romanticize African worldviews and perhaps to be overly optimistic about the innate goodness of humanity. They furthermore question whether Ubuntu is an accurate and authentic expression that truly describes African ethical thought (Van Der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021:97). Ubuntu commitments to extended communities often hamper individual freedoms resulting in group pressure and corporate shame which can then lead to corporate acts of violence and inhumanity. Western individualism on the other hand prioritises freedom and independence so highly that Wayne (2010) describes it as 'obsessive individualism'. Sociologists have described Western individualistic thinking as even extending beyond the 'Me Generation' to now being characterised in the material categories of the 'Mine Generation' (Wuthnow, 1993:38). In so doing Western pre-understanding esteems self-sufficiency and regards personal success in financial rather than relational terms. So significant is this divergence in anthropological understanding between Africa and the West that Van Der Walt (1995:129) posits that this is *the* most important cause of intercultural difference, misunderstanding and conflict in South Africa.

The applications drawn by REACH-SA preachers were addressed to their listeners almost entirely as individuals rather than as members of communities. Preachers came to the text viewing it in individualistic terms and emerged from the text with little alteration to this pre-understanding. Applications drawn were seldom corporate, communal or collegial but were instead strongly personal and individual (Willimon, 1981:84). As an example of this, preachers regularly emphasised personal Bible reading by calling their listeners to live under and by the Scriptures, while simultaneously warning them against the folly of not doing so (2.3.4.6). This application

contained a number of unquestioned Western assumptions. It assumed that Bible reading is an individual activity performed alone. It also assumed personal literacy of a level that could elicit understanding in a country where reading for understanding cannot be assumed (Ndlovu, 2023). It assumed that individuals have personal access to the Scriptures as well as the necessary means to read them (e.g., Bibles, electricity, personal space to read, data and devices for electronic reading). REACH-SA preachers who endeavour to encourage this specific application, by thinking in African categories, might rather give consideration to encouraging Bible reading as a corporate or familial activity done in community; they should give consideration to educational techniques used in oral cultures like memorisation and not make assumptions regarding the resources prevalent in suburban contexts.

As noted in the descriptive perspectives (2.3.4.3 and 2.3.4.6) the dominant application drawn by REACH-SA preachers was an evangelistic call to 'repentance and faith in Christ'. This primary application was ubiquitous even as preachers articulated it in a wide variety of ways. In this particular application REACH-SA preachers consistently bring an assumed atheism to dominate their applications even as they attempted to challenge that *status quo* using an expository approach. In their emphasis on conversion, REACH-SA preachers reflect the influence of the evangelical revivals under Whitefield, Edwards and Wesley. While not questioning the legitimacy of desiring conversion (Tienou, 1991:6) there was little indication from preachers that they were attempting to speak to audiences who might operate in African worldview categories. If an African worldview sensitivity and African pre-understanding were evident in REACH-SA preaching, preachers would have affirmed the ubiquitous belief in God and sought to move their hearers away from a traditional understanding of God towards the Biblical God.

Noticeable by its under-emphasis in REACH-SA preaching was the Biblical call to *remain* (2.3.4.3). The Old and New Testament Scriptures resound with the theme of the people of God remaining with him or its New Testament equivalent to remain-in-Christ.¹⁷² Israel is urged to not forget the work of God, to listen carefully to him and to remain with him. The vast majority of the New Testament is written to existing churches as they are confronted with alternative expressions of the gospel. The apostolic call to remain faithful to the proclaimed apostolic gospel follows as consequence. REACH-SA preachers called their hearers to live by-and-under Scriptures and they called their hearers to individual holiness but there was hardly any discernible call to remain steadfast in Christ.

¹⁷² Deut 4; Josh 23:12; 1 Chron 16:11; Psalm 1; Jer 17; Hos 12:6; Matt 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13; Luke 8:15, 21:19; John 8:31-32, 15:1-7; Rom 5:1-5; 1 Cor 15:58, 16:13; Gal 6:9; Eph 6:11-18; Col 1:11-12, 23; 2 Thess 1:4, 2:15; 1 Tim 4:16, 6:12; 2 Tim 2:12; Heb 2:1, 3:6, 3:12-14, 4:1, 6:11, 10:23,35-36, 12:1-3; 2 Pet 1:5-10; Jam 1:2-4,12,25; 1 John 2:19,27; Rev 2:2-3, 10,19, 3:10-11, 14:12

A second noticeable under-emphasis in the REACH-SA preaching surveyed relates to the question of poverty and the poor. Liberation theology has long argued for “God’s preferential option for the poor” (Buffel, 2015:349-362). Liberation theologians can be guilty of a simplistic understanding of poverty (Turner, 1987) when they fail to recognise that the Bible often uses poverty to describe a spiritual state rather than temporal and material wealth (Seccombe, 2022). Buffel (2015:361-362), quotes Sobrino, when he challenges theology to contribute to “bringing the crucified people down from the cross.” In this he is calling for churches and theologians to courageously stand against the political power that perpetuates poverty but he fails to grapple with Jesus complex and nuanced teaching that praises spiritual poverty and includes an intentional daily choice to embrace the way of the cross.¹⁷³ Reformed Theologians on the other hand are often subliminally influenced by Western materialism which affects their pre-understanding. They can be guilty of failing to hear and apply both the Old and New Testament’s significant attention on the materially poor and to their plight (Bosch, 2008:436). They fail to hear Liberation Theology’s cry of pain in the midst of centuries of Western oppression. Vosloo (2017:70) cites Bonhoeffer’s important insight when he highlights the ‘view from below’. Bonhoeffer (1971:17) said,

We have for once learned to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled...from the perspective of those who suffer.

Jesus expresses some of his strongest praise for expressions of generosity to the poor as evidence of a whole-hearted devotion to him.¹⁷⁴ The New Testament Scriptures repeatedly emphasise the generous and appropriate responsibility of the people of God to share their wealth as they seek to care for the poor.¹⁷⁵ If REACH-SA preachers are carefully hearing the text of Scripture, then the plight of the poor should feature prominently, however, only two preachers made any mention of the subject (2.3.4.6). Six other preachers addressed the subject of the love of money and greed but did not develop their conclusions to addressing poverty and the poor. Bray (1996:508) reminds that hermeneutics seeking orthopraxis attempts to identify the perceived problems of the world and then seeks answers to them from the Scriptures, while traditional approaches run the danger of being irrelevant as they answer questions that no one is asking. This research asserts that poverty both spiritual and material are questions significantly addressed by the Scriptures and thus the expectation exists that this theme should feature prominently in REACH-SA preaching if preachers are actually hearing the text of Scripture.

¹⁷³ Luke 9:23

¹⁷⁴ Mark 10:21, Luke 19:8

¹⁷⁵ 1 Cor 16, 2 Cor 8:9, 9:11, Gal 2:10, Eph 4:28, 1 Tim 5:16, 6:18; Jam 2:5, 14-17; 1 John 3:17

The negations and affirmations of the sermons that were noted in the Heidelberg method's superficial analysis addressed a wide array of applications (2.3.4.6). As has already been elucidated, chief amongst these applications was a call to 'faith in Christ', this was followed by a consistent call to a life of holiness. This call focused on individual piety rather than corporate piety or community holiness. The individual holiness elucidated was widespread, covering a large variety of subjects, such as lack of service, selfishness, patience, sexuality, money, alcohol consumption, racial judgements, work, speech and many others. In these applications preachers almost always addressed their congregations as individuals and urged individual progress. Preachers seldom addressed their congregations as members of communities and strikingly never called for community repentance and holiness. This individual call stands in stark contrast to the vast majority of the New Testament's applications which are made in the plural. Preachers are guilty of missing this emphasis when they focus on individual concerns, personal spirituality and individual repentance. Trueman (2010) helpfully reminds of the danger inherent in this Western shaped hermeneutic when he says,

We have no special destiny in ourselves taken as isolated units, any more than bits of our own bodies do in isolation from each other. When I act, I act as a whole person; my hand has no special role of its own; it acts only in the context of being part of my overall body. With the church, the destiny of the whole is greater than the sum of the destinies of individual Christians.

In reflecting a Western hermeneutical preoccupation with individual destiny (Trueman, 2010), preachers unwittingly under emphasise the Biblical record that God has broken human divisions, is creating a new humanity, and that individuals have no destiny isolated or separated from the church.¹⁷⁶

The primary reason for REACH-SA preachers continuing to use Western categories was almost certainly that they perceived their audiences to operate from within Western worldviews even as they perceived themselves as Western. While this may be a valid assumption in some contexts, it is most certainly not true of all contexts addressed and will be decreasingly valid as South African congregations increasingly reflect a post-apartheid, emerging, South-African-worldview and pre-understanding. Van Der Walt's (1997:109-133) research (although now dated) clearly indicates some of this movement that is present in new emerging South African worldviews. Similarly, those congregations that do reflect Western paradigms must increasingly take

¹⁷⁶ Eph 2:14; 3:1-13; Rev 7

cognisance of how postmodern and atheistic considerations are changing worldview presumptions.

3.4 INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER-TO-THE-WORLD FROM BUSINESS COMMUNICATION STUDIES, RHETORIC, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND AFRICAN STUDIES

Smedes (2005:126-129) reminds that preaching is always to ordinary people “living not on the peak of success, but at the edge of failure” (Smedes, 2005:127). These people live with frustration, on the verge of exhaustion, sensing that things are wrong where it matters most (Smedes, 2005:127). Hawkins (2013) reminds preachers that they are to engage real people by developing an understanding of the world that their listeners inhabit and an understanding of their listeners’ motivations as they operate in a world that is rapidly changing (Hawkins, 2013:75-82). Some have suggested that in order to communicate within this context-of-change the sermon as monologue needs to be abandoned,¹⁷⁷ while others have contended for alternative rhetorical forms.¹⁷⁸ Keller (2016:99) contends that preaching must never be distant from its context and incomprehensible by its hearers but must instead reshape a culture’s concerns. It must attempt to redirect the hopes of its hearers, not adapting to their culture, but rather confronting it and seeking to change it. This reshaping is facilitated by contextualised communication which resonates with the culture even as it defies and challenges it. This contextualised preaching shows respect for its community yet also confronts it by comprehensible and convincing communication. Lucas (2005:461) calls preachers to, “wide sympathies and an interest in all things human.” The ‘New Homiletic’ has reminded preachers to pay attention to how their listeners experience the sermon and what the sermon does in them (Gibson, 2005:480). Tisdale (1997) has called for preachers to hear people; to listen attentively to their audience by ethnographic analysis; and to engage in ‘priestly listening’ so as to preach a theologically and communicatively ‘meaningful word’ in an idiom which resonates with their people (Tisdale, 1997:11,21,49).

The second component of the research question seeks to investigate whether REACH-SA preachers are listening to their particular hearers and understanding the contexts to which their preaching is directed. The research question asks, “*Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display...a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?*” The research question acknowledges the significant changes experienced in post-apartheid South African society. South Africa has reintegrated into the international community,

¹⁷⁷ See Rose (1997)

¹⁷⁸ See Stanley (2006:89)

undergone rapid urbanisation and experienced the exponential rate of technological change that has characterised recent history.

Milne (2006:9-12) notices that within the Christian community multi-culturalism has been normal from its beginnings. He describes the staggering diversity of the Christian church as it explodes into life across the Roman Empire (Milne, 2006:12). He highlights that early-church communities reflected an astonishing counter-cultural, unity-in-diversity that fuelled their mission (Milne, 2006:12). One of the great tragedies perpetrated by apartheid was that it legislatively separated peoples both physically and relationally so that diversity within church communities became illegal. As a result, South African preachers came to assume a mono-culturalism in their praxis simply because divergent communities were kept physically separate. Tisdale (1997:17) has argued that few congregations are ever actually homogenous even if they appear so; they may be loosely held by a perceived commonality but significant differences always exist. This diversity is apparent in education, socio-economic status; urban/rural divides; as well as language, worldview, racial and cultural differences. Preachers communicate to communities that are in constant flux as they are exposed to new ideas, trends and activity. Allen (1997), Lose (2003), Quicke (2003) and many others have drawn attention to the dramatic changes in Western thought brought about by shifts associated with post-modernism. A preacher's perceptions of their people; their needs, abilities, interests and hopes will influence the applications made by a preacher, the conclusions derived and the sermon delivered.

Into the ethnographic context must be added the other voices that are also heard by the preacher. The preacher inhabits both present and historical communities which influence their hermeneutical and homiletical praxis. As the preacher exercises ethnographic analysis and hears their present community they are historically influenced by the thoughts of previous generations. The preacher's personal presuppositions are shaped by their history which influences the way in which they perceive their hearers and shapes their homiletical praxis. This research endeavoured to interpret how REACH-SA preachers *hear* their communities by using perspectives from the neighbouring sciences of Business Communication Studies, Rhetoric and Discourse Analysis; as well as using insights from African Studies and Pastoral Theology in order to attempt Osmer's (2008:81-128) 'wise-judgement'. In particular, this research attempted this interpretation using three broad sets of questions:

- i. Do REACH-SA preachers make any appeal to the emotional/experiential/heart components of the hearers or is the appeal only cerebral?
- ii. Do REACH-SA preachers display what Kim (2017) calls 'Cultural Intelligence' by demonstrating an awareness of African worldviews and African concerns in their rhetorical praxis?

- iii. Does the sermon display an understanding of the multi-cultural reality of the South African context? Is the post-apartheid South African context heard and taken into consideration? (Is there some understanding of the lived experience of racism, the inequality of power, the anguish of injustice and the ongoing consequences of coloniality? Is there an understanding of the context of violence, fear, poverty and desperation in the midst of plenty? Do preachers display some recognition of the development of a post-apartheid South African identity?)

3.4.1 Interpretive Perspectives from Business Communication and African Studies on the Preacher as listener-to-the-world in which people are both Cerebral and Emotional

Chigumadzi and West (2022) describe African expressions of Christianity as, “heard, seen, and, most importantly, felt.” They call African expressions of religion,

Embodied theologies uttered, expressed, and en-fleshed in the call and response; the stomp, shout, sweat and scream; the breath and beat; the hurl, thrust and gesture; the leap, lift, and swing from silence to rapture in the religions of African peoples scattered across the world.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) have identified seven areas that cultures perceive in different ways.¹⁷⁹ Amongst these, African cultures appreciate public emotion over emotional neutrality as an expression of authentic, integrated community (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). Africa’s emotional expression is seen in music, song, celebration, spontaneity, dance, drumming, drama and rhythm (Smith, 1971:13). In Africa, it is not only welcomed to show emotion but expected. In contrast Western cultures emphasise personal individuality, freedom, privacy and personal achievement. In some Western cultures people make great effort to control and even hide their emotions. They give priority to personal reason and intellect; and endeavour publicly not to reveal their thinking and feelings, viewing faith as a personal and private matter. In contrast African cultures assume public expressions that are infused with emotion, energy and spontaneity. These differences of worldview were apparent in REACH-SA preaching. Suburban preachers spoke in quiet and measured tones using limited and controlled emotion. They primarily identified themselves as Bible teachers and thus regarded their task as the provision of

¹⁷⁹ Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) noted seven identifiable preferences in cultures as:

- Universalism and particularism.
- Individualism and communitarianism.
- Specific and diffuse.
- Neutral and emotional.
- Achievement and ascription.
- Sequential time and synchronous time.
- Internal direction and outer direction.

information (2.3.5.4.i). They seemed willing to attempt the gentle stirring of emotion by the usage of language (2.3.5.3.vii) but were reticent to stir emotion using rhetorical means. Sermons were routinely Biblically dense with little illustration, story or music (2.3.5.2.iii & 2.3.5.3.iv). Preachers assumed a high level of personal literacy and Biblical interest shown in the referencing of Biblical languages and complex argumentation (2.3.5.2.ii). They assumed and expected a high level of Biblical theological competency shown in constant references to the broader Biblical meta-narrative (2.3.5.2.iii). Preachers regularly spent significant time cross-referencing so as to provide additional rational justification for the information that they were presenting (2.3.5.2.iii). As has already been noted, conclusions drawn in this research in the areas of rhetoric and emotion must be carefully tempered as a result of the sermons studied being preached in artificial situations created by the COVID pandemic. In spite of this caution, it was apparent that preachers displayed homiletical praxis in keeping with anticipated worldview generalisations. Preachers in contexts that valued African worldviews were much more likely to use significant vocal tones, to speak with greater urgency, to speak with higher levels of energy and to embrace emotional embodiment of their theology than were preachers in suburban and western settings.

Music and dance feature prominently in all cultures (Rotimi, 2019:537) but are of particular importance in African expressions of identity (Biwul, 2019:225) where music is a significant part of everyday life (Ajibade, 2021:139). Music inhabits rites of passage and gives expression to beliefs, attitudes, norms and values (Biwul, 2019:225; Onwuekwe, 2009:171,177). In Africa music and dance are seldom separated (Ojetayo, 2016:115), they are seldom absent from social gatherings, and are thus collective and communal (Robotham & Kubick, 2023). They give expression to joy and pain in the existential realities of African lived existence (Ojetayo, 2016:112; Onwuekwe, 2009:183). In Africa, music and dance go beyond entertainment; they are used to tell stories; they shape identities by lived historical remembrance; they are educational tools communicating values; they are considered as medicinal and are even used to foster community by attempting to connect those living with the ancestors (Ojetayo, 2016:113). Songs are used for religious ceremonies, festivals and social rituals, to teach and give guidance, to tell stories, to mark the stages of life and death, to make work palatable, to close divisions, to provide political guidance and to express discontentment. The importance of song and dance in African worldviews is regularly seen in South African life where political leaders sing and dance to display identity and solidarity with their audiences.¹⁸⁰ Kotze (2020:3) has noticed the importance of music and dance in the South African political narrative when the Truth and Reconciliation Report was finalised. He says,

¹⁸⁰ Struggle song 'Umshini wami' was regularly used by South African ex-president Jacob Zuma.

The revival of dignity was performed at the hand-over of the Report, by Commission Chairperson Desmond Tutu and President Nelson Mandela. Together the two leaders revealed the life of the nation through dance. In a celebratory moment, they closed the confining previous period not through a coded record but in a way that cut through difference. Together they performed the expression of achievement; a celebration.

Music and dance feature significantly in African Christianity (Kau,2000:1). Rotimi (2019:537-538) makes this point, but overstates, when he says,

Music is the soul of African Christianity...It is so essential that there cannot be any meaningful activity within or outside the church that is not accompanied with the sound of music.

African preachers routinely use music and dance as significant components of their communication (Ajibade, 2021:134-139). Music and dance are used as a mainstay of argumentative power and emotional connection with their hearers. As preachers use music in their praxis they indicate that they have heard their particular context. African music is usually simple and repetitive. It engages listeners by reinforcing content, stimulating the body in physical response, removing fear of the subject addressed and aiding in memory by attaching melody and rhythm to the material (Van De Laar, 2000:180). As might be expected, REACH-SA preachers working in rural and township contexts, used music to facilitate their preaching. Songs were quoted, referenced and sung. In contrast, music was hardly present in suburban preaching. On a few occasions preachers did reference or quote from hymns (which were exclusively Western compositions) but these hymns were never sung. REACH-SA preachers operating in suburban areas allow a Western cerebral emphasis to take precedence in their preaching by insufficiently hearing the place of music in African culture.

Storytelling has been well researched in Business Communication Studies (Haven, 2007). These sciences remind preachers that people do not operate only through rational logic but that they are also deeply emotional. These emotions influence human action. People do things simply because they are fun and because they make them happy (Berger, 2023:144) not only because they make sense. Research has also noticed that humans often behave inconsistently, acting in contradiction to personally held rational positions and that the provision of additional information seldom persuades people to alter their irrational activity.¹⁸¹ Communication Studies argue that emotion is an effective and necessary tool in communication (Berger, 2023:127). Emotion can be

¹⁸¹ E.g., Doctors who tell their patients not to smoke but then do so themselves

generated by the use of storytelling because the telling and consuming of stories are an integral part of everyday life (Berger, 2023:127-128). Haven (2007:vi-ix, 3-5) argues that:

- i. Humans have always told, used and relied on stories.
- ii. Every human culture has stories. Stories dominate human communication across all cultures so that storytelling is an intrinsically human thing to do (Haven, 2007:4).
- iii. Stories transcend cultures so that cultures often have similar stories teaching similar truths. Stories can bridge cultural, linguistic and age-related divides.
- iv. Stories lie at the heart of human mental functioning (Haven, 2007:vi-ix). Humans rely on stories and story architecture for comprehension (Haven, 2007:90-97), to impose order (Haven, 2007:44), as a roadmap for understanding (Haven, 2007:98-104) and for enhancing meaning (Haven, 2007:104-108).
- v. Stories aid memory (Haven, 2007:67-73). They aid visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners to both learn and remember.
- vi. Stories hold human attention which is prone to wander; they foster enthusiasm for learning; aid attention, comprehension, memory and learning outcomes (Haven, 2007:113-118). Stories are remembered longer than material presented in other didactic forms.
- vii. Stories are effective and efficient vehicles for persuasion. They assist teaching, reduce resistance to change, motivate and convince even as they communicate information (Haven, 2007:8).
- viii. Stories forge connections between speaker and listener; they build trust and familiarity without which communication does not happen; they convey culture, history and values, they unite people and solidify relationships even as they create community (Haven, 2007:109-113).

McKee and Fryer (2003:2) have argued for storytelling in human communication when they assert that,

There are two ways to persuade people. The first is by using conventional rhetoric...It's an intellectual process...you build your case by giving statistics and facts and quotes from authorities. But there are two problems with rhetoric. First, the people you're talking to have their own set of authorities, statistics, and experiences. While you're trying to persuade them, they are arguing with you in their heads. Second, if you do succeed in persuading them, you've done so only on an intellectual basis. That's not good enough, because people are not inspired to act by reason alone. The other way to persuade people...is by uniting an idea with an emotion. The best way to do that is by telling a compelling story.

Theologians have also noticed that humans love stories which resonate deeply within human consciousness. Tripp (2010:16) calls the Bible a theologically annotated story; an origin-to-destiny story of redemption. Human life is narratively rooted. Humans think in stories, construct their lives and form their worlds in story terms. Humans are deeply aware that we live a story so that dreams, plans and hopes are visualised in story forms (Borden & Mathewson, 2009:271). Humans make sense of life in story terms, plan our lives in story terms and can be persuaded to action as a result of stories.

The ubiquitous nature of stories in human society has however not always resulted in consistent definitions of what constitutes a story (Haven, 2007:11-20). Stories are usually descriptive; they describe people, events or happenings. Stories are either U-shaped which begin in resolution, feature a crisis, and then end in resolution (called comedy); or they are linear which begin in resolution and descend into unresolved crisis (called tragedy) (Borden & Mathewson, 2009:271).

Despite the significant evidence presented by Communication Studies regarding the efficacy of storytelling as an influential method of communication, storytelling has not been widely incorporated into REACH-SA preaching. Preachers regularly used stories in introductions (2.3.4.1.iii), some noticeable preachers used stories as illustrations (2.3.5.3.ii) to aid their communication but these were the exceptions. The vast majority of sermons considered were didactically dense with little or no illustration and little effort spent on storytelling. No sermons were formulated around a story. Preachers were content to present a high degree of complex expository argumentation with little relational or emotional connection. Sermons were routinely composed of multiple teaching points even as preachers displayed a personal lack of communication clarity. This was especially noticeable when teaching points vastly outweighed the intended and stated number of points (see 2.3.4.4.ii). In their presentations, REACH-SA preachers embraced Western preaching models which contain little storytelling (Borden & Mathewson, 2009:271) rather than aspiring to communicate using storytelling techniques which Communication Studies have shown to be far more compelling and effective for persuasion and communication.

3.4.2 Interpretive Perspectives from Discourse Analysis, Rhetoric and African Studies on the Preacher as Listener-to-the-world

Studies in Discourse Analysis have noticed that the arrangement of ideas, in the construction of human speech, is significantly influenced by cultural considerations (Kaplan, 1980:399-418). Kaplan (1980) has argued that English discourse patterns are largely linear, direct and explicit which can result in them being perceived as confrontational. In contrast, European Romance languages, develop discourse by progression and digression. In these languages, human

discourse takes time to develop with tangential considerations facilitating relational development. Kaplan argues that Asian languages develop thought sequentially through nuance and indirection. In some Asian cultures, addressing an idea directly is considered to be rude, which results in discourse operating via an indirect, spiral format where the subject is considered from a variety of indirect considerations. The listener is required to develop their understanding by inference. A final group of languages noted by Kaplan were Middle-Eastern, Semitic languages. He argued that these develop discourse in a zig-zag format of question and counter-question leading to the development of communication. The specifics of Kaplan's conclusions have come under academic scrutiny but he rightly noted that discourse patterns are not absolute and universal; instead, they are significantly influenced by cultural considerations. Discourse patterns find expression in rhetorical forms and in the manner in which preachers construct sermons. Western rhetoric is significantly influenced by Greco-Roman considerations. It is often direct, sequential and linear, and reflects Western ontological priorities which emphasise persuasion through speech rather than through relational connection. This can be observed in rhetorical forms used by marketers which are motivated by profit, often disconnected from truth considerations and primarily aimed at sales. Marketers often display little consideration for the veracity of their claims or any affection for their audiences. In contrast African expressions of rhetoric are unavoidably rooted in theistic presuppositions and the fundamental importance of community relationships. God is experienced *together* in communal deliberation. African preaching mirrors African-American preaching when it is infused with dialogue, call and response, celebration, repetition and engagement (Mitchell, 1990:92-99; Tomlin, 2019:109). African preaching aims at holistic impact, affecting the whole person as a part of a community through both cognition and emotion (Mitchell, 1990:97). African rhetoric is essentially a dialogue where speaker and audience are aiming at corporate responsive action together for the benefit of community. The preacher indicates their authenticity and relational sincerity by energetic effort expended in the sermon delivery, which in turn is reinforced by congregational engagement and participation. African rhetoric values spontaneous and unrehearsed oral forms which build and prioritise relationships. African rhetoric is characterised by linguistic flexibility (Mitchell, 1990:87) as preachers move in and out of different languages in an endeavour to speak to the heart language of their hearers. It mirrors African discourse when it aims at appropriate communication in a less direct, more relational movement of hearers to a total response, avoiding direct confrontational approaches and giving people space to consider the ideas presented.¹⁸²

¹⁸² A subset of this research was a consideration of sermon evaluation tools used in training and academic contexts. Sixteen tools were evaluated from a broad variety of denominational and cultural contexts. Western models universally prioritise content rather than community. In all of these there is some consideration of delivery but almost no recognition of rhetorical models other than Western ones.

REACH-SA preachers in suburban contexts appeared unaware and uncritical of their Western rhetorical assumptions. These assumptions were seen in considerations of sermon length (2.3.4.4.i) and sermon shape (2.3.4.4.ii.). Preachers seemed unaware of the integrity considerations and the relational damage caused when they announced what they were attempting but then made no effort to do what they had said they were doing (2.3.4.4.ii). Some preachers made extensive references to culture indicating a significant attempt at listening to their South African context (2.3.5.3) but applications were uniformly individual rather than communal (2.3.4.6 & 2.3.5.3). Most preachers regarded their task as the provision of information and did not attempt to use the sermon to develop relationship and community (2.3.5.4.i). Communication practices used were predominantly mono-cultural rather than multi-cultural. Some preachers in township and rural communities displayed linguistic flexibility but this was materially absent in suburban contexts (2.3.5.3.iii).

3.4.3 Interpretive Perspectives from Pastoral Theology on the Preacher as Listener-to-the-world in the midst of Greed, Poverty and Corruption

The problems confronting the South African context, in which REACH-SA preachers operate, are enormous. Buffel (2010:36) identifies some of these when he speaks of poverty, hunger, homelessness, overcrowding, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS, crime, violence and inequality. Kruger (2019:77) highlights fear, hopelessness and despair; to which might be added injustice, and unemployment leading to hopelessness. Any hearing of the South African context must also include historical considerations and the ongoing legacies left by slavery, colonialism, apartheid and ubiquitous racism. Apartheid's enduring narrative that "You *can't* because you are inferior," has been ingrained in the mind-set of South African culture so that its legacy lingers. Most dominant amongst the problems that pastoral theologians grapple with are the deep-rooted problems of poverty (Pieterse, 2013:1-6) and corruption fuelled by greed (Kruger & Pieterse 2016:94; Kruger, 2019a:73-76).

Taking up Boesak's cry that preaching identifies evil and names it, in order to disempower it, (Kruger, 2019:84; Wessels, 2017:198-200) this study expected that these problems would be significantly manifest in REACH-SA preaching. Preachers who are listening to their context will identify the evils in their society and empower their hearers to participate with God in advancing the kingdom of God even as the gospel brings hope and some measure of progress, protest or resolution. This research expected to find these problems significantly featured in REACH-SA preaching, but this was not the case (2.3.4.3 & 2.3.4.6). When greed was addressed, it was only highlighted in the context of tele-evangelists and when money was spoken of, the conclusions were not developed to the problem of poverty and the poor. Staggeringly poverty was hardly addressed at all. Only two preachers spoke of corruption, violence, aggression, gender-based-

violence, arrogance, injustice and conflict (2.3.4.6). Preachers were far more inclined to speak to matters of individual and personal piety such as suffering, sexuality and marriage. They spoke often of behaviours that would benefit the church community like service, loyalty and commitment. Preachers seemed reticent to address issues affecting the national conversation.

In its submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1999:8), REACH-SA¹⁸³ confessed that it was passive and compliant in campaigning against the evils of apartheid. It said, “We should have been more aware, more vocal and more insightful” (1999:8). The church furthermore confessed that in an attempt to emphasise its commitment to the central message of the gospel that it had failed to truly understand that gospel and to apply it (1999:8-9). It acknowledged the ongoing struggle in South Africa to uplift the poor and needy, to think through the redistribution of wealth from a Christian perspective and it pledged a future commitment to develop programmes to address these problems (1999:9). In order for these commitments to be manifest, these matters ought to feature more prominently in the preaching of REACH-SA as preachers hear their lived context.

3.5 SUMMATION

In the interpretive perspectives presented in this chapter, three considerations have been identified. Firstly, building on the definition of preaching presented in the descriptive task, it has been argued with perspectives from African studies and sociology, that preaching can be described as asymmetrical intersectional, fourfold quadrilateral listening. To the three voices of God through the Scriptures, hearers and the preacher’s own voice it is argued a fourth area of listening must be recognised which is the voice of historical community. African worldview perspectives remind that preachers must not be viewed as individuals divorced from both current and historical communities.

Secondly, in evaluating REACH-SA preaching using perspectives from hermeneutics and African Studies in order to investigate the preacher as listener-to-the-word it was recognised that despite REACH-SA preachers displaying a commitment to Reformed hermeneutical perspectives that their preaching is infused with Western pre-understandings and conclusions resulting in an under emphasis of Biblical applications.

Finally using perspectives from Business Communication and African studies to investigate the preacher as listener-to-the-world it was noted that REACH-SA preachers under appreciate African realities when they prioritise the cerebral over the emotional and make little use of music, dance and storytelling. Using perspectives from Discourse Analysis, Rhetoric and Pastoral

¹⁸³ At that time REACH-SA was operating under the name Church of England in South Africa

Theology the conclusions of the previous sections were reinforced that REACH-SA preachers are over-influenced by Western considerations resulting in an under emphasis of major issues affecting the South Africa context.

CHAPTER 4 – NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Norms are authoritative standards that serve to guide, control, or regulate proper, appropriate and acceptable behaviour (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Normative research attempts to facilitate how things should be; it seeks to ask, “What should be happening?” (Woodbridge, 2014:109) which then leads to suggestions on how things can be improved. A norm answers the question of ‘ought’ and entails a prejudgement on whether this ‘ought’ can be determined, and if so, the place where it can be found. Osmer (2008:132-139) suggests that normative perspectives aim for ‘prophetic discernment’ which he describes as the application of God’s word, to his covenant people, in a particular time and place. This discernment often stands against official theologies and received traditions. Osmer (2008:152-153) argues that theological interpretation, ethical reflection and good practice are three approaches to deriving normative considerations. Theological interpretation focuses on interpreting present praxis with theological concepts, ethical reflection allows for praxis to be tested against universal ethical principles (Espinoza, 2013, Osmer, 2008:149) and good practice offers models from the past or present with which to reform present action as they challenge received tradition (Osmer 2008:152).

The normative component of this research will seek, firstly, to establish the validity of describing preaching as asymmetrical, intersectional, quadrilateral listening. It will survey the Scriptures and conduct detailed exegesis of selected critical texts (Smith, 2008:208–9) so as to theologically reflect on the place of listening in homiletical praxis. Building on Snodgrass’s (2002) call for a ‘hermeneutic of hearing’, with his corresponding and consequent call for a ‘hermeneutic of obedience’, it will seek to determine whether it is valid to conclude that preaching must be rooted in asymmetrical listening. This research will furthermore seek to establish whether Snodgrass’s (2002:9-11) call for less self-centred speaking and more deep hearing of the inscripturated voice of God is an essential directional marker for homiletical praxis. As the establishing of the priority of listening to the voice-of-God in homiletical praxis develops, the normative research will then develop whether it is valid to argue for the preacher to be a listener-in-community (both historical and present) in keeping with the definition of preaching presented in this research. In these normative perspectives this research will provide direction in evaluating between the differing emphases presently postulated in recent homiletical theory.

Secondly, the normative component of this research will, in keeping with the second component of the research question, seek to establish norms for the preacher as listener-to-the world. In his reference to good practice Osmer (2008:152) argues that this good practice can be either present models of good practice found in other Christian communities or that these models can be

retrieved from the historical praxis of the church throughout history (Osmer, 2008:152-153). Good practice seeks to offer normative guidance in imagining how things might be done differently or better (Osmer, 2008 152). It was resolved, in this research, to use considerations from the preaching of Moses the proto-preacher, Israelite history, Jesus, and the preaching praxis described in the New Testament to provide models of good practice.

4.2 NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE SPEAKING TRINITARIAN GOD AND THE PRIMARY CALL TO HUMANITY TO LISTEN

God is introduced in the opening pages of Genesis as the speaking, sovereign creator; who speaks out a good creation; and whose dominion and authority are shown by the efficacy of his word (Matthews, 1996:116–22). Three refrains echo repeatedly through the opening scene:

“And God said...” (Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26)

“And it was so.” (Genesis 1:7,9,11,15,24).

“And God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,20,25,31).

The scene builds through the days of creation towards its climax, culminating with the creation of the second main subject of the Scriptures - human beings (Wenham 1987:5). God speaks in order that men and women are created in his image and likeness.¹⁸⁴ All theology is concerned with these two main characters introduced in the opening scene of the Bible.

The God introduced in the Bible is revealed as Trinitarian. “Christian theology is essentially and unavoidably Trinitarian” (Thompson 2006:50) and this Trinitarian nature, “Is the incomprehensible glory of the Godhead.” (Berkhoff, 1958:88). The Trinitarian nature of God is affirmed and declared in the great creedal affirmations of Christianity. The Athanasian Creed summarises,

We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.

God’s existence in Trinitarian relationship gives ontological shape to the essential essence of the universe. *Being* is rooted in the Trinitarian God revealed through Jesus the Son¹⁸⁵ (Holmes, 1988:695). God in Trinity exists in relationship and he creates humanity in relationship, for relationship with him. For relationships to exist and flourish, persons must speak, they must listen, they must trust and they must act in response. The Bible reveals a God who speaks. God spoke

¹⁸⁴ Gen 1:26,27

¹⁸⁵ Joh 14:6

historically, “at many times and in various ways,” and he continues to speak presently (Knox, 1988:14–21) in contrast to the idols who are silent.¹⁸⁶ Schaeffer (1972:28) argues,

He is not silent...He has told us true truth about Himself – that He is the infinite-personal God, and that He is the triune God.

Pelikan (2005:9) said,

On this, at least, Jews and Christians are in agreement...the God of the Bible is the God who speaks.

It is the declaration of the Scriptures that God has generously condescended to reveal himself to humanity, that this revelation of himself is primarily recorded in the Scriptures and that these Scriptures are not merely a historical record but the present living voice of God.¹⁸⁷ God has chosen a deliberate disclosure of his person, his reality and his nature, for the purpose of relationship (Henry, 1998:8). Humans are a people that are spoken-out and spoken-to (Brueggemann, 1982:24). God desires to be known by his creatures and despite the inequality between created and creature, he desires to enter into relationship with them (Thompson, 2006:51). God irreversibly binds himself in relationship towards his creation by his speech (Brueggemann, 1982:24). *Being* and *truth* are then defined in relational rather than individual categories in keeping with African worldview understandings. When contemplating listening then, rather than this listening being perceived as the activity of an individual, it is to be perceived as a listening done in relationship and community rooted in the person of God himself.

The verb ‘to speak’ is usually defined as the utterance of words or sounds with the ordinary voice. It is to orally articulate thoughts, words or feelings (Merriam-Webster, 2020) but the Bible carries a much broader meaning to the word ‘speak’ than the utterance of sounds and words. It carries the sense of revealing and making known. Due to the inequality of an infinite God relating to finite humans, for these humans to know him, God must disclose and reveal himself in ways that humans are able to comprehend. To reveal is to unveil something that was previously hidden, it is to make known something that was previously unknown or unknowable (Packer, 1979:45). God’s speech carries within it a demand that it be heard by humanity. The divine speech carries within it a call for a human response of hearing and listening. The prophet Isaiah says,

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 1:2)

¹⁸⁶ Ps 95:7, 115:3-8; Is 41:21-28; Jer 10:5; Heb 1:1

¹⁸⁷ Ps 95:7; Heb 1:1-12; 4:12,13

Brueggemann (1989:22) says,

The God of the Bible is a God who speaks, one whose speaking is so sovereign and magisterial that it functions as decree, summons, invitation, order, command, assurance, and promise.

The Old Testament Hebrew has no separate words for listen and obey. The Hebrew word שמע means to hear, to pay attention to and to respond to what has been heard with action. It can and does simultaneously carry all the meanings of hearing, understanding, agreeing and obeying (Shead 2012:182). Similarly, the New Testament ηυπακοε which is usually translated as 'obey/obedience' is a compound word made up of, ηυπο, 'under', and ακουο, 'to hear'. It means to listen to, to attend to and so to submit to (Vine, 1939:796). Biblical thought carries no possibility of a separation or distinction between listening, hearing and obeying. In Biblical thought to listen is to obey and to 'not hear' is to rebel so that Snodgrass (2002:25-26) calls them synonymous. Sorge (2006:1) concurs,

To obey is "to hear under." Obedience involves listening attentively with a heart of compliant submission and, then, obeying his word.

This theme of God speaking to be heard, leading to respectful human listening, that results in faith, which in turn is manifested in agreement and obedience, is the pre-eminent articulation of human response posited in the Scriptures (Bartholomew, 2015:24). Ramey observes (2010:10) that it occurs in almost every book. The call is contained in repeated explicit commands from God as well as being exemplified both positively and negatively in the lives of prominent Biblical characters.¹⁸⁸ The Bible repeatedly urges humanity to listen/hear and to obey, and defines sin as being rooted in not listening or listening only partially. Martin (2006:96–100) and Snodgrass (2002:24) conclude that the command to hear (Heb שמע; Greek ακουει) permeates the Scriptures, occurring over 1500 times. This research develops these conclusions by considering the seminal importance of them in the Scriptural record and by particularly noticing that this listening/obedience is done in community. This will lead to a fundamental conviction that *obedient listening in community* sets the foundational parameters for all of human life which must then be reflected in the tasks of theology and homiletics.

¹⁸⁸ See Saul as an example of a king who doesn't listen contrasted with David as a king who does.

4.3 NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER-TO-THE-WORD (IN PRESENT AND HISTORICAL COMMUNITY)

4.3.1 Creation, Rebellion and Flood

The Biblical meta-narrative has been described as a four-part symphony (Dillard & Longman, 1994:51) with the first two movements being played out as a brief overture in the opening chapters of Genesis. This overture provides the foundational framework for the entire drama and sets the scene for the unfolding mystery to follow. In what has been described as the festive overture of the symphony Genesis introduces God (Wenham, 1987:38).¹⁸⁹ The book is about him (Kidner, 1967:43), describing him as the Trinitarian, powerful, speaking God who speaks out all creation as its sole cause (Dillard & Longman, 1994:51). The highly stylised narrative operates as a declaration of the true nature of God and the true nature of the universe as spoken-out and spoken-to. It also functions as a polemic against the alternatives proposed (Wenham, 1987:35). The opening narrative reaches its focal point in the creation of men and women in the image of God as the apex of the created order.¹⁹⁰ Humans are in their very essence God-shaped, carrying his image, and are thus to display this created god-ness to the universe (Wenham 1987:38).

With the completion of his powerful creating activity, God speaks vocation, permission and prohibition (Brueggemann 1989:46). God speaks to humanity a word of command and a word of blessing – they together are to be fruitful and they are to fill, subdue and have dominion over the earth.¹⁹¹ As this second movement rapidly unfolds, human blessing is shown in their location – the idyllic garden – which is filled with life, relationships and the presence of God.¹⁹² This blessing is contingent upon relationship with God himself. It is contingent upon them hearing and obeying the word from God.¹⁹³ Humanity is allowed to eat from the tree of life but expressly commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because that will lead to a fracture of relationship from God himself (Wenham, 1987:87), to moral discernment and autonomy, and wilful self-legislation.¹⁹⁴ Satan tempts humanity presenting God and his word as unreliable, untrustworthy and unkind.¹⁹⁵ Humanity usurps the divine autonomy, doubts the veracity of the word of God, chooses not to obey and instead to snatch at divinity (Dumbrell, 2002:23). Adam and Eve proceed to reverse the created order. Instead of listening to God and exercising obedient dominion over the creation they listen to the created serpent. In graphic detail the consequences

¹⁸⁹ Gen 1:1-2:4

¹⁹⁰ Gen 1:27

¹⁹¹ Gen 1:22-28

¹⁹² Gen 2:9; 2:23; 3:8

¹⁹³ Gen 2:17

¹⁹⁴ Gen 2:16

¹⁹⁵ Gen 3:1-5

of their disobedience are highlighted, their eyes are opened to their nakedness, and what follows is relational fracture, judgement, banishment, curse, and ultimately death.¹⁹⁶ Wenham says that,

Gen 2-3, then, offers a paradigm of sin, a model of what happens whenever man disobeys God. It is paradigmatic in that it explains through a story what constitutes sin and what sin's consequences are. The essence of man's first sin was his disobedience to the only divine command he had received (italics added). (Wenham, 1987:90).

The opening movements of the Bible thus establish the primary human responsibility as hearing and obeying the word of God.

The Noah account carries significant parallels with the creation narrative as if to establish it in similar categories to the creation accounts.¹⁹⁷ The earth is described as corrupt and violent,¹⁹⁸ Noah is introduced as righteous, blameless and walking before God.¹⁹⁹ God speaks to Noah calling him to hear the word of God and to act in obedience by building an ark.²⁰⁰ God expressly (re)establishes²⁰¹ his covenant with Noah and his descendants.²⁰² Noah is to obey the voice of God by populating the ark with animals and food.²⁰³ His listening obedience is repeatedly emphasised in the text so that four times Noah is said to have done all that Yahweh commanded him to do.²⁰⁴ He is shown as a model of faith and obedience in contrast to the world of wickedness.²⁰⁵ Wenham (1987:176) describes this repetition as an “Emphatic declaration of Noah’s total obedience.” Noah’s listening-obedience seems promising until his disobedience causes curse and conflict to return to the human story.²⁰⁶

4.3.2 The Covenant and the Patriarchs

The patriarchal narratives introduce the main storyline of the Bible namely the story of redemption (Kidner, 1967:113). Any analysis of the patriarchal narratives must rightly highlight the foundational promises from God that form the covenant; the promises of blessing, land and progeny (Dumbrell 2002:28). Following the spiralling escalation of sin which lead to the confusion and rebellion of Babel, Abram is selected as the recipient of the divine initiative.²⁰⁷ The story of

¹⁹⁶ Gen 3:7-19

¹⁹⁷ See Wenham (1987:207) for some of the similarities and differences.

¹⁹⁸ Gen 6:11

¹⁹⁹ Gen 6:9

²⁰⁰ Gen 6:13

²⁰¹ See Dumbrell (2002:25–26) for a discussion of whether this constitutes the establishment or reestablishment of an existing covenant.

²⁰² Gen 6:18

²⁰³ Gen 6:19-21

²⁰⁴ Gen 6:22; 7:5,9,16

²⁰⁵ Gen 6:5

²⁰⁶ Gen 9:18-26

²⁰⁷ Gen 12 & 15

redemption begins with God speaking (Kidner 1967:113). After hundreds of years of silence, following the barrenness and destruction of the primeval narrative, Yahweh selects an individual descendent of Noah and speaks to him in order that he might be the recipient of word leading to a restored creation.²⁰⁸ It is a word of sovereign election containing both command and promise. Abram is called to,

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

The divine word contains the integrated call to hearing and corresponding obedience. In faith Abram obeys.²⁰⁹ His life is subsequently defined by the constant reassurance and demand of the voice of Yahweh. Startlingly, almost every recorded event of Abram/Abraham's life is interconnected with the direct spoken word of God to him as individual.²¹⁰ Even in the three moments when Abraham fails to trust Yahweh, God still speaks. He speaks with Pharaoh by afflicting him with plagues, he speaks with Abimelech in a dream in order to protect Sarai the mother of promise and the angel of the LORD speaks with Hagar in her despair after her ill treatment by Sarah.²¹¹

No sooner have the covenant promises been expressly recorded than Abram and Sarai's story mirrors the Eden rebellion. During the extended delay in the fulfilment of Yahweh's promises Abram is presented with a test of faith. Sarai offers a human solution and Abram 'listened to the voice of Sarai'.²¹² The author of Genesis uses this phrase on only two occasions – in this moment of testing and in Genesis 3:17 to highlight the folly of listening to a voice other than that of Yahweh (Wenham, 1994:7). This failure to listen stands in stark contrast with the final climax of Abraham's life where he is once again presented with the voice of God speaking a word of supreme testing,

He (God) said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Gen 22:2)

²⁰⁸ Gen 11:10-26

²⁰⁹ Gen 12:4, Heb 11:8

²¹⁰ Gen 12:1f, Gen 13:14f, Gen 15:1f, Gen 17:1f, Gen 17:15f, Gen 18:1f, Gen 22:1f

²¹¹ Gen 12:10f, Gen 20:1f, Gen 16:7, 21:17

²¹² Gen 16:2

On this occasion Abraham listens. He answers with unflinching obedience and God proves himself able to provide.²¹³ Abraham is commended for hearing/obeying the voice of God when Yahweh says,²¹⁴

In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” (Gen 22:18,19)

Isaac is a somewhat lesser figure in the patriarchal narratives (Dumbrell 2002:30). The ‘son of laughter’ receives only one exclusive chapter - Genesis 26. His life functions instead as a bridge between Abraham and Jacob (Baldwin 1986:108). Brueggeman (1989:341) describes this when he says,

He is primarily remembered as the precious son of a great father and the beguiled father of a scheming son.

Yahweh appears to Isaac on only two occasions, in the face of famine²¹⁵ and in the face of prosperity.²¹⁶ On both occasions Yahweh reaffirms the covenant promises to make Isaac into a great nation through whom nations will be blessed (Waltke, 2001:625) and calls him to the voice-hearing obedience of his father Abraham.²¹⁷

Jacob’s life is a story of redemption. Where Abraham and Isaac are models of obedience, Jacob’s life is characterised by deception, conflict, family alienation, infertility and bitterness. His gestation, birth and early life are characterised by conflict, dangerous sibling rivalry over the birth-right and the deceptive theft of his father’s blessing at his mother’s provocation.²¹⁸ This conflict leads to his estrangement with his immediate family and he is forced to flee. Into this dysfunctional spiral Yahweh speaks the covenantal promise of grace. He meets Jacob at Bethel, intrudes into his human reality and binds himself to this treacherous figure in order to redefine everything (Brueggemann 1982:373–75). The promise given to Jacob’s fathers of land, offspring and blessing has the promise of protection added to it.²¹⁹ This encounter with Yahweh begins a journey of personal transformation for Jacob, the blessing of descendants,²²⁰ prosperity,²²¹ commitment to

²¹³ Gen 22:1-14

²¹⁴ Scholars have noticed that in the initial moments of this account God is referred to as God while in the latter moments the name Yahweh is used. Some have attributed this to differing authors (see Wenham, 1994: 101-102;111) however there may be theological movement hinted at in the text as a result of Abraham’s obedience.

²¹⁵ Gen 26:2-5

²¹⁶ Gen 25:23-25

²¹⁷ Gen 26:5;24

²¹⁸ Gen 25:22-29; 27:1ff

²¹⁹ Gen 28:13-15

²²⁰ Gen 29:31ff

²²¹ Gen 31

God²²² and human reconciliation²²³ which culminates in the second word from God.²²⁴ This word, as with Abraham, begins with a demand for listening obedience, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there...” (Gen 35:1). Jacob obeys, after which God speaks for a final time renaming Jacob to Israel and reaffirming his covenant.²²⁵

The patriarchs are foundational to the meta-narrative of redemption. They stand as unique in the Biblical narrative because they individually receive the direct voice of God calling on them to hearing obedience. This direct voice will reappear in the calling of Moses but will thereafter always be mediated. In addition, the patriarchs’ listening to God is individual and personal but this will be fundamentally altered upon the establishment of the people of God at Sinai following their redemption from Egypt.

4.3.3 Exodus and Sinai

Exodus is a book about God’s power and his presence (Dozeman 2009:44; Ndjerareou 2006:85). This power and presence are revealed in relationship with Moses but then move outward to the people of God. God is at work powerfully rescuing his people from their enemies through the agency of Moses, covenanting with them, taking up residence among them and calling them to be his special possession (Durham, 1983:xxiii).

The opening chapters of Exodus concern themselves with God’s activity in raising up a rescuer for the enslaved Israelites. Moses is born, is rescued, fails in leadership (Dozeman 2009:86) and flees to Midian.²²⁶ God hears the groaning of the oppressed Israelites and remembers his covenant.²²⁷ He appears to Moses from the flaming bush revealing himself as Yahweh, God all powerful (*El Shaddai*), the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God speaks, calls Moses to listen and promises to act in power in order to deliver his people from their groaning.²²⁸ He calls Moses to obey his command to go and be the agent of rescue for the nation.²²⁹ Moses is described as the man to whom God spoke face to face.²³⁰

In a demonstration of God’s power Moses is sent to speak God’s words to Pharaoh.²³¹ As the mighty acts of revelation and judgement unfold Yahweh demonstrates that he is the true God (Durham, 1983:99). Instead of listening to the word of warning sent from Yahweh, Pharaoh

²²² Gen 32:22-32

²²³ Gen 33

²²⁴ Gen 35:1

²²⁵ Gen 35:9-15

²²⁶ Ex 2:1-15

²²⁷ Ex 2:24

²²⁸ Ex 3:7,8

²²⁹ Ex 3:10

²³⁰ Ex 25:22, Ex 33:9-11, Num 7:89, Num 12:8, Deut 34:10

²³¹ Ex 2-4

hardens his heart and resists.²³² What follows is an epic battle between kings and gods (Dozeman 2009:45). In a staggering display of Yahweh's power and salvation he systematically overcomes the Egyptian gods.²³³ Pharaoh "must give way before Yahweh's manifested power" (Dumbrell, 2002:35) but his heart is hardened and he chooses not to listen. Yahweh struck down the firstborn of the Egyptians.²³⁴ He spared the firstborn in the houses covered with the Passover blood which resulted in the Israelites being chased from Egypt.²³⁵ Pharaoh continues the conflict and the Egyptian army pursues the Israelites camped at the Red Sea. God speaks to Moses and tells the nation to act by marching forward and in so doing he destroys the Egyptian army in the sea.²³⁶

With the destruction of Pharaoh complete, the focus in the book shifts from the power of Yahweh to his presence, from the conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh to the journey towards the fulfilment of the promise of land (Dozeman 2009:347). Central to the success of this journey will be restored relationship with God via listening obedience. The nation arrives at Marah where they find the waters bitter and proceed to grumble.²³⁷ God's power is again shown in his provision after which he expressly calls them to listening obedience. Exodus 15:25-26 says,

If you will diligently listen (lit. listen listeningly (Durham, 1983:211)) to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer.

Durham (1983:213) says,

They are to...pay close and committed attention to his voice, adopt his standard as the measure of what is right, obey his commands and meet his requirements.

As the nation arrives at Mount Sinai the call to listen and obey is cemented in the preamble to the Sinai covenant.²³⁸

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

²³² Ex 8:15,19

²³³ Ex 7-11

²³⁴ Ex 12:29

²³⁵ Ex 12

²³⁶ Ex 14

²³⁷ Ex 15:23,24

²³⁸ Ex 19:4-6. The covenant at Sinai is a specific covenant within the Abrahamic covenant (Fretheim, 1991:209)

Sinai serves as the moment where God again offers his presence to humanity (Durham 1983:259). Significant is that instead of this now being offered to an individual, as has happened in the patriarchal narratives, it is offered to the nation. As they make camp at the foot of Sinai, God calls them to remember what they have seen and experienced which provides, “the foundation of all that follows” (Fretheim, 1991:210).²³⁹ This is couched in the language of a personal commitment by God to them, “I bore you...and brought you to myself”. He has rescued *them* (Fretheim, 1991:210–11) with a corresponding call for *them* to return that personal commitment by *listening* (שמע) and *observing*. They are called to ‘שמע, שמע’ (hear/obey) the voice of Yahweh.²⁴⁰ The Hebrew text doubles the word שמע to emphasise the importance of listening-obedience to the words of Yahweh spoken at Sinai. The Israelites are called together to move their experience of God from a visual foundation to an auditory and obedient existence (Dozeman, 2009:443). They are called to remember and then to hear/obey/listen/heed/hearken after God’s voice/words and so to obey/keep his unfolding covenant together. This hearing/obedience will then result in their reward as God’s treasured/personal possession²⁴¹ and by them being tasked with a priestly role as holy witness to the nations.²⁴² The subsequent tabernacle construction is tragically punctuated with a description of the Israelite’s failure to remember, hear and obey when they both construct a golden calf and attempt to take possession of the land without the presence of God.

4.3.4 Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is a book of second chances. Israel has failed. There is no new word from Yahweh to the nation of Israel,²⁴³ only a renewed call to decision (Millar, 1998:47) and to obedient listening in covenant relationship. Scholars have long observed that the book has similarities to an ancient near-eastern suzerainty treaty between a conquering lord and his vassal people (Dillard & Longman 1994:97,98) but significant differences are noticeable.²⁴⁴ Firstly, Deuteronomy does not present itself as a treaty but rather presents itself as a series of sermons (Millar, 1998:42); secondly, the book deals with the renewal of a covenant rather than the initiation of a treaty (Dumbrell, 2002:57), thirdly, Yahweh has not conquered Israel but has instead freed her; and fourthly, Yahweh is not about to subdue Israel but instead desires to bless her by fulfilling his promises (Millar, 1998:43). All these factors point to the purpose of the book as a call to a re-established listening, obedient, love relationship. Israel is now called to act in the light of its

²³⁹ Ex 19:4

²⁴⁰ Ex 19:5

²⁴¹ See Dozeman (2009:436–37) for a discussion on the possible translations and meanings of the word *segulla* and the corresponding implications.

²⁴² Ex 19:6

²⁴³ This is in stark contrast to Yahweh who continues to speak to Moses. As an example of this see Deut 3:23f.

²⁴⁴ See Millar (1998:42–44) for a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses in the form-critical study of the ANE suzerainty treaty as a model for Deuteronomy.

historical mistakes; they are to remember them and to not repeat them. They are called to make different decisions to the rebellious ones that were made by their forefathers. Israel is exhorted and warned to a listening obedience (Millar, 1998:47) that looks backwards to the events of the Exodus which culminated at Sinai as the formative revelatory event of the nation²⁴⁵ and to look forwards towards the fulfilment of Yahweh's promises in the future.²⁴⁶ Their forefathers responded to the Exodus events with disobedience, grumbling and idolatrous worship and they are now called to remember and to act in covenant obedience.²⁴⁷ The hearing/obedience is not expressed in the language of servile submission but rather in the language of love-relationship and blessing.²⁴⁸ Deuteronomy is not a law code but is rather a national constitution intended to shape the hearts of the people of Israel in their current relationship with the covenant keeping God (Christensen 2001:lvii).

The book is structured around three sermons/speeches with a concluding blessing (Deuteronomy 1-4, 5-28, 29-32) (Miller, 1990:10–12). Each sermon has a theological distinctive, heralded by an editorial superscription (Miller 1990:10,11) but the entire book has one central thrust – it is an exhortation to listen.

4.3.4.1 The First Sermon - “These are the words” (Deuteronomy 1:1-4:40)

The first speech looks backwards to Israel's history of disobedience. Moses reminds them that they previously did not listen but instead they rebelled²⁴⁹ and were thus prevented from entering the land.²⁵⁰ During these wilderness years they have again seen the actions of God in the defeat of kings Sihon and Og²⁵¹ and the judgement of God in their own rebellion at Baal-peor.²⁵² With a hortatory imperative recorded in Deuteronomy 4:1-6 the sermon climaxes as, Moses calls the nation to “attention and adherence”, to listen, to keep and to do (Miller, 1990:54).

4.3.4.2 The Second Sermon - “This is the law” (Deuteronomy 4:44-28:68)

The second sermon rather than concluding with the imperative to hear and obey is impregnated with this central theme throughout. It begins,

Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. (Deuteronomy 5:1)

²⁴⁵ Ex 19:4; Deut 5:2

²⁴⁶ Deut 3:18-28

²⁴⁷ Ex 32; Num 13,14; Deut 1

²⁴⁸ Deut 6:4,24

²⁴⁹ Deut 1:26

²⁵⁰ Deut 1:35

²⁵¹ Deut 2,3

²⁵² Deut 4:3

The Decalogue is prefaced on their historical salvation which gives shape to their listening obedience.²⁵³ The sermon moves to the שמע of Deuteronomy 6:4,5 which is central to Israelite life, thought and identity. The Jewish nation's daily declaration of the exclusive and monotheistic essence of Yahweh begins with the command to hear/listen before moving to the love-shaped outworking of listening obedience.

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one (or the LORD is our God, the LORD alone). You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*²⁵⁴

Much has been written on the translation and interpretation of these foundational verses which Block describes as enigmatic (2012:181).²⁵⁵ Despite the discussion on the appropriate translation Block says that the first two words are clear - they are a call for Israel to listen. Having heard, the nation is then repeatedly called to respond in obedience with an undivided, complete and unqualified love commitment to Yahweh²⁵⁶ (Block, 2012:182) who has saved Israel and is about to bless them by giving them a land to be conquered and enjoyed (Millar, 1998:181). The call to exclusive allegiance (Block, 2012:182) stems from their listening which leads to a recognition of the essential character of God, then to covenantal renewal (Craigie, 1976:169–70) and is shown in a relational and total heart response (Block, 2012:183–84). The call to obedient listening carries with it the dual promise of life and blessing as a consequence of obedience, and destruction and punishment as a consequence of failing to listen and obey.²⁵⁷ Millar (1998:47–51) observes that a high degree of creativity and variety is used to express the call to listen. The Israelites are called to:

- Hear the law, to listen to the statutes and ordinances given by God, and then to teach them and live them out.²⁵⁸
- Listen to the voice of Yahweh as revealed historically at Sinai. This is so closely connected to listening to the law that Millar (1998:48) says these are fundamentally indistinguishable.²⁵⁹
- Collectively remember and not forget Yahweh's revelation through his actions and words²⁶⁰

²⁵³ Deut 5,6

²⁵⁴ Moberly (2013:24) proposes an alternative translation, "Hear O Israel: YHWH our God, YHWH is the one and only. So you should love YHWH your God with all your thinking, with all your longing, and with all your striving."

²⁵⁵ See Block (2012:181–82), Moberly (2013:7–40); McConville (2002:140–41), Weinfeld (1991:337–38) et al for a discussion of the alternative options.

²⁵⁶ Weinfeld (1991:338) says that "Love of God is most characteristic of Deuteronomy."

²⁵⁷ See Deut 4:1 as an example of this

²⁵⁸ See Deut 4:1,6,10; 5:1; 6:3,4, 6-9; 20-25; 7:12; 11:13,27,28;12:28;13:4; 27:9; 28:13; 30:17;31:12,13

²⁵⁹ See Deut 4:12,30,33,36; 5:23-27; 8:16,20; 9:23; 13:15,19; 15:5; 26:14,17;27:10; 28:1,2,15,45,62; 30:2,8,10,12,13,20.

²⁶⁰ See Deut 4:9, 23,31; 5:15; 6:12; 7:18; 8:2,11,14,18,19; 9:7,25;15:15;16:3;12; 24:18,22; 25:17,19; 26:13;32:18 and 32:7

- Serve, love, fear and commit to Yahweh²⁶¹

A significant moment in the shape of the listening required occurs in Deuteronomy 18:15 when Yahweh promises a subsequent prophet like Moses and calls his people to listen to him.

The sermon concludes majestically with a summary of the themes presented. It contains a final promise of blessing for faithful communal obedience to the voice of God and cursing if they do not obey.²⁶² Moses's second sermon establishes listening and loving obedience as the only appropriate communal response to Yahweh who speaks out of the fire²⁶³ and who acts in history by taking for himself a nation to bless.²⁶⁴

4.3.4.3 The Third Sermon - "These are the words of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 29:1-33:21)

The third and final speech²⁶⁵ has as its editorial superscription,

These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 29:1).

In the final exhortation Moses calls the nation again to covenant and relational faithfulness. He does so by retelling the nation's history and reminding them that they have seen the actions of Yahweh.²⁶⁶ Moses presents their obedient listening in the solemn language of life and death (Miller, 1990:235; Mohler, 2008:54).²⁶⁷ Powerfully present in the sermon is the recognition of failure and a call to repentance through a collective remembrance of their history.²⁶⁸ The sermon contains a gracious promise of restoration through national, heart re-circumcision²⁶⁹ resulting in a recommitment to listening obedience.²⁷⁰

4.3.5 Israelite History

Joshua succeeds Moses when Yahweh commissions him as leader of his people for the conquest of the land.²⁷¹ Joshua is to lead by listening obedience doing what was written in the law of Moses, by not turning from it and by speaking it having meditated upon it.²⁷² As his life ends Joshua calls

²⁶¹ See Deut 4:10,37; 5:29; 6:2,13,24; 7:8,9,13; 8:6; 10:12,15,18,20; 11:1,13,22; 13:5,14,15;14:23; 17:19;19:9; 25:18; 30:6,16,20;31:12,13.

²⁶² Deut 28:1,15

²⁶³ Deut 4:33

²⁶⁴ Deut 4:40

²⁶⁵ Some scholars divide this speech into two separate speeches with the final speech beginning at Deut 33:1. For an example see Miller (1990).

²⁶⁶ Deut 29:2,9

²⁶⁷ Deut 30:15, 31:19-21

²⁶⁸ Deut 30:1-2

²⁶⁹ Deut 30:6

²⁷⁰ Deut 30:2,8,10

²⁷¹ Jos 1:2

²⁷² Jos 1:7,8

the Israelite leaders to the same obedience characterised by a love devotion to Yahweh.²⁷³ The book ends with a call to serve God alone after which the people re-commit to obeying the voice of the 'LORD our God'.²⁷⁴ The nation establishes a stone-witness in recognition that God has indeed spoken to them and that they exist within a historical community who are called to obedience to his voice.²⁷⁵ The book of Judges begins with the writer lamenting the failure of Israel to obey the voice of the LORD.²⁷⁶

The historical records contained in the books of Samuel and Kings present the dramatic transformation of Israel from a loosely connected tribal grouping, to a centralised state ruled by a human king (Brueggemann, 1990:1), through the nation's rising to the zenith of its status, prestige and power under David and Solomon, and then its subsequent division, decline and destruction under succeeding kings. This history of both the Israelite monarchy and the nation are told theologically in relation to the various kings' and the nation's obedience to the covenant plans and purposes of Yahweh. Yahweh is always the central figure in the narrative even in the long stretches where he is scarcely mentioned.²⁷⁷ The history that is presented is intentionally selective with theological interpretations highlighted at selected points (Dumbrell, 2002:90).²⁷⁸ The narrative is occasionally ordered outside of its chronology so as to make theological truths visible (Firth 2009:21).²⁷⁹ The primary evaluation that the text gives of each king is their adherence to the word of God revealed in the 'law of Moses' because life in the land was to be lived in hearing obedience to the Deuteronomic code (Wray Beal, 2014:32). Bergen (1996:44) summarises this when he says that 1 and 2 Samuel reaffirm,

The central theological thesis of the Torah, namely that obedience to Yahweh brings about blessing while disobedience to him – even in the least detail - brings about judgement.

Alongside the development of the monarchy the books record the development of a distinct and separate prophetic office. In 1 Samuel, the principle is established that the ruler of God's people now hears the 'word of God' not directly but mediated through the prophet and the king is then evaluated based upon obedience to that word (Tsumura, 2007:73). The prophet must first hear and obey before calling the king to do likewise. Samuel is the prophet who hears Yahweh's rare

²⁷³ Jos 23:6,11

²⁷⁴ Jos 24:15,19

²⁷⁵ Jos 24:27

²⁷⁶ Jud 2:2,17,20; 6:10

²⁷⁷ 2 Sam 9-20

²⁷⁸ 2 Sam 11:27; 17:14

²⁷⁹ 1 Sam 21,22

and powerful word²⁸⁰ (Brueggemann 1990:26) in contrast to Eli and his sons who fail to listen and obey.²⁸¹

The nation asks for a king and rejects the voice and rule of Yahweh under Samuel mirroring the rejection of Eden.²⁸² They are warned of the consequences of obedience and disobedience.

If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king. (1 Samuel 12:14,15)

Saul is chosen,²⁸³ given the parameters of kingship²⁸⁴ and is filled with the Spirit of God.²⁸⁵ Both he and the nation are commanded to fear the Lord, serve him, obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD.²⁸⁶ The kingship is removed from Saul when he 'did not obey the voice of the LORD' in the destruction of Amalek.²⁸⁷ Samuel summarises the charge against Saul by emphatically²⁸⁸ reminding him that, 'the outcome of anointing is that the king must "listen".' (Brueggemann 1990:109).²⁸⁹

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22)

Saul is thus presented as the king who fails to hear and obey.²⁹⁰ Despite his protestations that he has listened to Yahweh²⁹¹ he listens instead to the voice of the people which leads to his repeated sins, his rejection as king and his death.²⁹² In contrast David is presented as the king who hears the mediated spoken voice of God and has an obedient heart.²⁹³ David's hearing submission to the promises of God²⁹⁴ brings victory²⁹⁵ and rest wherever he went;²⁹⁶ while his failure to listen to

²⁸⁰ 1 Sam 3:1; 3:19-4:1

²⁸¹ 1 Sam 2:27-36; 3:11-14

²⁸² 1 Sam 8

²⁸³ 1 Sam 9

²⁸⁴ 1 Sam 10:25

²⁸⁵ 1 Sam 11:6

²⁸⁶ 1 Sam 12:13-15; 15:1

²⁸⁷ 1 Sam 15:19

²⁸⁸ See Tsumura (2007:389) for a discussion of the unusual and seemingly redundant "listen to the voice of the words of the LORD" in 1 Samuel 15:1.

²⁸⁹ 1 Sam 10:2

²⁹⁰ 1 Sam 15:19-24, 28:18

²⁹¹ 1 Sam 15:20

²⁹² 1 Sam 13:8-13; 15:9,23-24, 28:7ff

²⁹³ 1 Sam 23:10f; 30:8f; 2 Sam 2:1; 5:23; 7:1-29

²⁹⁴ 2 Sam 7:8f

²⁹⁵ 1 Sam 30:17f; 2 Sam 5:25

²⁹⁶ 2 Sam 7:1; 8:1ff; 10:1ff

the Deuteronomic warnings²⁹⁷ and his disobedience to Yahweh's commands²⁹⁸ results in the decline and devastation of his family.²⁹⁹ It is significant to notice that in Yahweh's covenant with David,³⁰⁰ Yahweh's plans for David and his messianic descendant are presented unconditionally,³⁰¹ not as ultimately contingent on the king or the nation's obedience. Brueggemann (1990:257) says,

With David...the "if" has disappeared. Now it is "but" (v15), a conjunction that might be rendered "nevertheless. There are no acts of disobedience...which can make Yahweh terminate this profound commitment.

Although it is true to say that Yahweh demands listening obedience and that a failure to do so will result in sanction and punishment, it is not true to say that Yahweh's covenant faithfulness will be terminated as a result of human failure. Yahweh's promises to establish David's house are an articulation of that grace (Brueggemann, 1990:257).³⁰²

Solomon's enigmatic reign begins with love for Yahweh which issues in an initially obedient life.³⁰³ His defining prayer for a 'hearing heart' is often translated as an 'understanding mind.'³⁰⁴ Yahweh commends Solomon's request granting him wisdom, riches and honour if he continues in hearing obedience.³⁰⁵ This is re-emphasised upon completion of the temple when Yahweh appears to Solomon a second time and calls Solomon, "To walk before me," and, "Do all that I have commanded."³⁰⁶ The warning is repeated that if he does not, if the nation abandons Yahweh and pursues other gods then disaster will ensue.³⁰⁷ The subsequent narrative is punctuated by evidence of Solomon's failure to listen and obey,³⁰⁸ resulting in his heart being turned away from Yahweh towards other gods by his wives, with the consequent evil actions and Yahweh's promised judgement.³⁰⁹

After Solomon's death the kingdom is divided. Ten tribes are promised to Jeroboam and he is given the now familiar conditional promise of Yahweh's presence if he will listen, walk in God's ways and do what is right, keeping the statutes and commandments.³¹⁰ A significant portion of the narrative of 1 and 2 Kings follows the ministry of Elijah and Elisha who stand against the apostasy

²⁹⁷ 2 Sam 6

²⁹⁸ 2 Sam 11:2ff; 12:9

²⁹⁹ 2 Sam 12:10ff; 13:14,28f; 16:22; 18:15

³⁰⁰ 2 Sam 7

³⁰¹ 2 Sam 7:12f

³⁰² 2 Sam 7

³⁰³ 1 Kings 3:3

³⁰⁴ 1 Kings 3:9

³⁰⁵ 1 Kings 3:10-14

³⁰⁶ 1 Kings 9:2-4

³⁰⁷ 1 Kings 9:9

³⁰⁸ 1 Kings 3:1a; 4:20-28 7:1ff

³⁰⁹ 1 Kings 11:4-8

³¹⁰ 1 Kings 11:38

of Baal worship as the nation ceases to listen to Yahweh, goes after other gods and serves them ultimately resulting in the nation's destruction.³¹¹

Israelite kings were to develop a listening heart by reading and meditation upon the covenant law.³¹² As their reigns are evaluated they are judged on whether they 'did evil in the sight of the Yahweh'³¹³ or they 'did what was right in the sight of the LORD'.³¹⁴ A significant example of this is recorded by the author of 2 Kings. In summarising the reasons for God's judgement on the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians³¹⁵ the writer records an extensive list of sinful violations committed by God's chosen people.³¹⁶ In the face of all the evil committed, God had warned them repeatedly but, "they would not listen," and did not believe/trust his word.³¹⁷ As a result, the author summarises (Hobbs 1985:254) that God's judgement came because they, "did not obey the voice of the LORD their God".³¹⁸ This failure to listen and obey is powerfully contrasted with king Josiah who, "heard the words of the Book of the Law," tore his clothes and obeyed.³¹⁹

4.3.6 Psalms and Wisdom

4.3.6.1 Psalms

The anthologies collected into the book of Psalms are an enormous compilation covering a multitude of themes.³²⁰ Despite their diverse complexity, the book does develop significant theological themes.³²¹ The opening declarations speak of the possibility of a life of blessing³²² in the midst of a world that rages against God.³²³ Humanity is described as wicked and small³²⁴ in contrast with Yahweh who is sovereign and great.³²⁵ God's greatness is displayed in his creation³²⁶ and by his activity of salvation, rescue and redemption.³²⁷ God is described as holy, righteous³²⁸ and loving.³²⁹ God is described as just, and the bringer of justice; which leads the Psalmists to cry out for this justice as they lament the injustices of the world.³³⁰ The primary emphasis of the

³¹¹ 2 Kgs 17:7-18

³¹² Deut 17:18-19

³¹³ 1 Kings 11:4; 14:22: 15:3,25,34; 16:19;25,30 et al

³¹⁴ 1 Kings 15:11 et al

³¹⁵ 2 Kings 17

³¹⁶ 2 Kings 9-17

³¹⁷ 2 Kings 17:14

³¹⁸ 2 Kings 18:12

³¹⁹ 2 Kings 22:11

³²⁰ Bonhoeffer's (1970:28-63) devotional work lists creation, law, holy history, messiah, church, life, suffering, guilt, enemies and 'the end' as some of the themes present in the Psalter.

³²¹ While agreeing with Fee and Stuart (1982:171) that the Psalms are musical poems intended to generate a response by affecting the emotions rather than being "repositories for doctrinal exposition" it can still be asserted that the Psalms communicate consistent and real truths which are often developed by the sheer weight of their repetitive themes.

³²² Ps 1:1. See also Ps 19; 37; 40; 84; 92; 94

³²³ Ps 2:1-3

³²⁴ Ps 1; 5; 9; 11; 14-17; 37; 49; 50; 53; 58; 64; 73; 78; 83; 90; 97; 106; 107; 143

³²⁵ Ps 2; 8-11; 18-19; 24; 29; 36-37; 45-48; 59; 65-66; 68; 74-78; 86; 89-90; 92-99; 102; 104; 113-115; 123; 126; 135; 138-139; 146-148

³²⁶ Ps 19; 33; 74; 94-96; 100; 104; 107; 119; 135-136; 139; 146-148

³²⁷ Ps 18; 20; 21; 28; 37; 40-44; 55; 57; 60; 62-63; 65; 68; 71; 78-80; 94; 98; 105; 107-108; 111; 113; 116; 130; 136

³²⁸ Ps 5; 11; 15; 18; 22; 24; 25; 36; 60; 65; 86; 89; 93; 97-99; 101; 103; 107-108; 116; 129; 145-146

³²⁹ Ps 17; 31; 36; 89; 100; 103; 107; 109; 115; 117; 119; 136; 138; 143

³³⁰ Ps 18; 21; 37; 52; 56; 58; 60; 67-68;73; 75-76; 78-83; 88-90; 94-99; 102; 105-107; 110; 139-140; 146

Psalter, seen in the largest group of Psalms – the laments (Fee & Stuart, 1982:175), is a cry at the state of things as they are and a corresponding petition for the great God to mercifully save, redeem, ransom, deliver and vindicate his king and his people from their situation.³³¹ The Psalmists call God to see, hear and answer the cry of the afflicted and distressed³³² and then to ‘arise’ in action.³³³ There are repeated petitions for a return to blessing and ‘life’ in the midst of suffering and the oppression of enemies.³³⁴ Woven throughout the Psalms are constant Messianic shadows pointing forward to Yahweh’s ultimate solution for the world.³³⁵

The Psalms contain a recognition of the wickedness of humanity³³⁶ and acknowledgements of this guilt and sin.³³⁷ Listening is not a dominant theme in the Psalms, although the world, the nation and the shepherd are called to ‘give ear’.³³⁸ Three significant Psalms do echo the call to listen, trust and obey. In the “Trumpet Call” of Psalm 81 is contained “the reminder that God looks for listeners as well as singers” (Kidner 1975:292). God pleads with his people to hear and listen when he says, “Hear O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me.” (Psalm 81:8,13). This is followed by God bemoaning that, “My people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.” (Psalm 81:11)

Similarly, in Psalm 95 (*The Venite*), a Psalm that has been used for centuries in church liturgies (Potter, 2021:1–2) and was reaffirmed in the Reformation when it was incorporated into Anglican daily liturgies, there is a call to corporate listening. The Psalm begins with a joyful invitation to collectively celebrate the greatness of God³³⁹ and then leads the hearers to submissive worship.³⁴⁰ This worship is characterised by hearing the voice of God with soft hearts and lives of obedience.³⁴¹ The Psalmist urges the people of God not to respond to the voice of God with the hardness of heart, testing and disobedience as did their forefathers at Meribah and Massah.³⁴² The call of the Psalm is taken up by the writer to the Hebrews³⁴³ who recognises in it a present call, “Today,” to the people of God, to not act with unbelieving and disobedient hearts which hear but do not listen (Wilcock 2001b:95).

³³¹ Ps 3-7; 9; 11-12; 14; 22; 25; 31; 38; 40; 42; 44; 49; 54; 56-57; 59; 61; 64; 69-71; 74; 76; 78; 80; 83-86; 88-91; 94; 104; 106; 109; 118-120; 123; 125-126; 130; 137; 139-144

³³² Ps 4-6; 10-11; 13; 17-18; 22; 27-28; 30-31; 34; 39-41; 54-55; 61; 64; 84; 86; 88; 99; 102; 116; 118; 138; 141-145

³³³ Ps 9-10; 12; 44; 74; 82; 102; 132

³³⁴ Ps 13, 31, 35, 41, 44, 54, 55, 56, 61, 74, 79, 86, 88, 102, 105

³³⁵ Ps 2; 8; 16; 22; 24; 34-35; 40-41; 45; 68-69; 91; 102-103; 107; 109-110; 113; 118-119; 129

³³⁶ Ps 1; 5; 9; 11; 14-17; 37; 49; 50; 53; 58; 64; 73; 78; 83; 90; 97; 106; 107; 143

³³⁷ Ps 6, 14-15, 25, 31-32, 38-40, 51, 102, 106; 130, 143

³³⁸ Ps 49:1; 78:1; 80:1. More often in the Psalms the cry is for God to (*azan*) ‘give ear’ see Ps 5:1; 17:1; 39:12; 54:2; 55:1; 77:1; 84:8; 86:6; 140:6; 141:1; 143:1

³³⁹ Ps 95:1-5

³⁴⁰ Ps 95:6

³⁴¹ Ps 95:8-9

³⁴² Ps 95:6-10

³⁴³ Heb 3:17- 4:13

In Psalm 106 the Psalmist reflects on the goodness³⁴⁴ and salvation³⁴⁵ of Yahweh in the face of Israelite wickedness and rebellion.³⁴⁶ This unfaithfulness is described using the language of forgetfulness - they did not remember Yahweh's love,³⁴⁷ they forgot his works,³⁴⁸ his redemption and salvation³⁴⁹ and instead tested Yahweh,³⁵⁰ despised his provision,³⁵¹ embraced idols³⁵² and rebelled³⁵³ provoking him to anger³⁵⁴ all because they did not believe his word nor would they obey the voice of the Lord.³⁵⁵ Wilcock (2001b:140) asserts that the failure to listen is the underlying cause of all Israel's sin,

*Every other sin arose from their unwillingness to take seriously what God said.
Those who reject his word reject him.*

4.3.6.2 Wisdom

The theology of the Wisdom books is an elaboration of the human lived experience of God himself experienced through his Word, creation, covenant and kingdom (Goldsworthy 1987:129). Fee and Stuart (1982:187) define this wisdom as, "The discipline of applying truth to one's life in the light of experience." Human rule over the created order is always to be submissive to the word of the speaking God and rebellion from the 'Word of God makes fools of humanity.'³⁵⁶ Humanity is to live in the 'fear of God',³⁵⁷ ever cognisant of God's greatness.³⁵⁸ This 'fear of God' leads to repentance³⁵⁹ and obedience³⁶⁰ Qoheleth summarises,

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)*

Proverbs presents a contrast between the life of folly and the life of wisdom lived in the 'fear of God'. This contrast pivots around open-ears which leads to obedient-hearts. Proverbs calls the wise to hear wisdom,³⁶¹ to treasure it, receive it, to give attention to its words³⁶² with the corresponding promise of life, blessing, security and prosperity.³⁶³ Proverbs warns its hearers not

³⁴⁴ Ps 106:1

³⁴⁵ Ps 106:4

³⁴⁶ Ps 106:6,7

³⁴⁷ Ps 106:7

³⁴⁸ Ps 106:13,21

³⁴⁹ Ps 106:10

³⁵⁰ Ps 106:14

³⁵¹ Ps 106:24

³⁵² Ps 106:20,28,36

³⁵³ Ps 106:43

³⁵⁴ Ps 106:23,29,32,40

³⁵⁵ Ps 106:25

³⁵⁶ Rom 1:18-25

³⁵⁷ Job 28:28; Ecc 5:7; 8:12; Prov 1,7; 2:5; 3:7,9; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:27; 15:33; 16:6; 19:23; 23:17

³⁵⁸ Job 38-41

³⁵⁹ Job 28:28; Ecc 8:12; Prov 3:7

³⁶⁰ Prov 3:1,9, 27-32; 4:4; 5:20f; 7:1-3

³⁶¹ Prov 1:5-8, 4:1,10; 5:7

³⁶² Prov 4:5,20; 5:1; 7:1,24

³⁶³ Prov 1:33; 2:1-22; 4:22

to despise wisdom and instruction nor to turn from them³⁶⁴ and warns of calamity when the foolish will not listen.³⁶⁵ This listening is both to God's word and to the wise of the world.³⁶⁶

Wisdom is personified in Proverbs.³⁶⁷ She calls the simple to listen and turn.³⁶⁸ Gaining her is precious.³⁶⁹ Listening brings blessing and life.³⁷⁰ Wisdom exhorts the reader to listening obedience in Proverbs 8:32-36,

And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favour from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.

4.3.7 The Prophets

The prophets were God's chosen mouthpiece specifically selected, called, commissioned and given the 'Word of the LORD' to proclaim.³⁷¹ In the tenth and ninth centuries BC, the prophet is primarily the conduit through which God speaks to the developing monarchy but by the eighth and seventh centuries BC, the focus of the prophetic proclamation has shifted to the unfaithfulness of the nations of Israel and Judah. The 'Word of the LORD' was always a call back to the living God and to covenant faithfulness.³⁷² Amos says³⁷³, "For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: "Seek me and live." The prophets are sent to call the nations of Israel and Judah to return to Yahweh from their apostasy (Fee & Stuart 1982:150–55; La Sor, Hubbard & Bush 1982:303). They contain a consistent threat of judgement for the unfaithfulness of both the king and the nations of Judah and Israel (La Sor et al., 1982:305). The call to listen to the word from God³⁷⁴ with its corresponding condemnation for not listening and obeying, is a constant theme throughout the prophetic testimony.³⁷⁵ As Daniel (9:5-11) turns to God in confession he acknowledges that God's people have not listened to, nor obeyed the 'voice of the Lord' but have instead sinned, acted wickedly, rebelled and turned aside.³⁷⁶ Nehemiah concurs when he records a moment of

³⁶⁴ Prov 1:7; 2:13-19; 4:5-6

³⁶⁵ Prov 1:24; 4:19; 5:14f

³⁶⁶ Prov 13:1; 15:32; 19:20;27; 21:28; 22:17; 23:19; 23:22; 25:12

³⁶⁷ Prov 1:20

³⁶⁸ Prov 1:22-23; 8:1-6

³⁶⁹ Prov 3:13-16; 8:11,18-21

³⁷⁰ Prov 3:16-18; 4:13; 8:6-20; 32

³⁷¹ Isaiah 1:1 and 6:1f; Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1-3; Daniel 7:1; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1 and 7:14,15; Obadiah 1; Jonah 1:1 ; Micah 1:1, 3:1, 6:1; Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1;

³⁷² Isa 1:16-20, Jer 3:11ff et al.

³⁷³ Amos 5:4 (see also 5:6,14)

³⁷⁴ Hos 4:1; 5:1; Amo 3:1; 5:1,3-4,16; 7:16; Mic 1:2; 6:1,2; Mal 2:2

³⁷⁵ Hos 9:17; Amo 4:1; 8:4,11; Mic 3:1,9; 5:15; Zeph 3:2; Zech 1:4, 6:15, 7:11-13; Mal 2:2

³⁷⁶ A similar repentance is recorded in Nehemiah 9:16 (also in 9:26,29) when the people confess that their fathers, "Stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments." They confess that they would not 'give ear' (9:30) - a less common expression for listening used mostly in Isaiah and the Psalms.

post-exilic national repentance.³⁷⁷ The people are assembled together, they reflect on their history and confess the sin that lead to their exile. They declare the righteous actions of Yahweh and that their forefathers stiffened their necks, they were disobedient, rebellious and presumptuous because they refused to hear/obey (שמע).³⁷⁸ Stott (2005:28) summarises Israel's failure to listen when he says, "The epitaph engraved on the tomb of Israel was: "They refused to listen.""

This theme of Israel's failure to listen is developed in the major prophetic books.

4.3.7.1 Isaiah

The structure, unity and authorship of Isaiah have long been debated. Traditional interpretations view the book as a unity and the product of one author over an extended period, while critical scholarship has argued that the book was authored by two (or more) writers (or schools of writers) from vastly divergent historical situations. This latter view has arisen due to perceived differences in writing style and the language used within the book; as well as the divergent historical contexts presented in the different parts of Isaiah. The main argument however, for the separation of Isaiah into distinct books rests on the reality that the material appears to divide into (at least) two distinct sections with a 'narrative transition' separating them (Dillard & Longman 1994:269, 281). The first section (Isa 1-35) emphasises God's holy majesty³⁷⁹ which is contrasted with the wickedness of humanity. Isaiah describes God as "the holy one of Israel"³⁸⁰ (Oswalt 1986:33) in stark contrast with humans who have rebelled, forsaken, rejected, abandoned, and despised God.³⁸¹ Stubborn humanity (and Israel in particular)³⁸² have embraced religion,³⁸³ idolatry,³⁸⁴ hypocrisy,³⁸⁵ and wickedness.³⁸⁶ This rebellion is summarised in accusations like Isaiah 24:5

*The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws,
violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.*

This rejection of Yahweh brings the certainty of an impending judgement on Israel (as well as the nations)³⁸⁷ from a nation far away.³⁸⁸

³⁷⁷ Neh 9

³⁷⁸ Neh 9 see especially v16,17,29

³⁷⁹ Isa 6; 8:13; 19:1; 29:6; 30:30

³⁸⁰ The phrase, "the Holy one of Israel" occurs throughout Isaiah (1:4; 5:16,19,24; 6:3; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19,23; 30:11,12,15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:14,26; 42:3,14,15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 57:15; 60:9,14) and is an argument presented for the unity of the book.

³⁸¹ Isa 1:2b-3:5; 5:24; 30:9

³⁸² Isa 30:1

³⁸³ Isa 1:11-15

³⁸⁴ Isa 2:8,18-20

³⁸⁵ Isa 29:13

³⁸⁶ Isa 1:21ff; 2:7; 3:8-9,14-26; 5:7f, 20-f

³⁸⁷ Isa 1:7, 20-28; 2:11,17; 3:1f,13,17-26; 5:5-15, 25-30; 7:17; 13:1-22; 19:5-10; 22:5-8; 23:11; 24:1-3; 26:14,21; 28:22; 29:4,6; 30:28

³⁸⁸ Isa 5:26f; 9:12ff; also in 41:25

The second major section of Isaiah, chapters 40-66, emphasises not primarily the judgement of God on Israel for her wickedness (although it remains present) but instead Yahweh's comfort and restoration for a remnant through the ministry of the 'suffering servant'.³⁸⁹ This theme, the restoration of a chosen remnant, dominates the second half of Isaiah but it is also significantly present in the first half of the book.³⁹⁰ In this latter section the author interweaves a continuing vision of the uniqueness and greatness of God³⁹¹ who judges wickedness, with the constant promise and vision of his compassion and comfort,³⁹² resulting in a returned people gathered.³⁹³ In the second major section the author re-asserts themes from the earlier section³⁹⁴ and also introduces a vision of a different future and a different city from their present experienced crisis through the ministry of the obedient servant³⁹⁵ so that God reigns over a blessed,³⁹⁶ forgiven people³⁹⁷ who come to him in listening obedience.³⁹⁸

The book of Isaiah is thus essentially a book of contrasts (Oswalt 1986:32). It is an interwoven tapestry constantly interspersing the reality of judgement for evil with the ever-present glimpses of Yahweh and his promised restoration. It has both 'demolition and reconstruction, judgement and salvation' (Webb 1996:31). It is a book that contrasts the holiness of Yahweh with the depravity of humanity; the barrenness of human rebellion with the promise of a God-orchestrated, future-fulfilment and restoration. It begins with Israel's scattering and ends with a vision of a worldwide people of God gathered as a result of the Davidic servant-king.

Although listening is not *the* major theme of the prophecy it is essential to notice that in Isaiah (in common with the other prophets) the creation and, Israel and the nations are *repeatedly* spoken to, and called to listen (שמע) as a precursor to obeying the words of Yahweh.³⁹⁹ In addition, Israel is called to 'give ear'.⁴⁰⁰ God is shown to be the God who repeatedly speaks, revealing his purposes and shaping the future⁴⁰¹ in dramatic contrast with the silent idols.⁴⁰² The failure to listen and its resulting disobedience is the essential accusation that Yahweh levels at his people. It

³⁸⁹ Isa 42:1, 24-25; 50:1-3; 51:17-20; 54:8; 58:1-4; 59:2-13, 18-19; 60:10; 63:2-6,10; 65:2-15; 66:15-17,24

³⁹⁰ Isa 1:9; 6:13; 10:20-22; 11:12; 14:1; 25:6,7; 27:6,12-13; 30:19-26

³⁹¹ Isa 40:10,22-29; 42:5; 44:6-8; 45:5-12,18, 22; 48:12-13; 51:9-16; 52:7; 54:5; 55:9; 57:15; 63:15; 64:1-4; 66:1-2

³⁹² Isa 40:1; 49:13; 51:3,12, 22; 52:9; 54:7-10; 61:2; 66:13

³⁹³ Isa 49:6; 54:3,7; 56:8; 65:8-10; 66:18-23

³⁹⁴ Isaiah declares that Yahweh's people are gathered from the nations (2:2; 5:26; 11:12; 40:11; 49:6; 66:18-20), atoned for (1:18; 4:4; 27:9; 44:22), restored (1:26; 54:8-17; 57:18-19; 65:17-25), ransomed (51:11), redeemed (43:1; 44:22; 48:20; 52:3,9; 54:5; 59:20; 60:16; 62:12; 63:9) and saved (12:2,3; 43:12; 44:15-17, 22; 46:4; 49:25f; 51:5,6; 52:7)

³⁹⁵ Isa 49:1f; 50:5-10; 52:13f

³⁹⁶ Isa 30:18-26; 49:9-10; 51:2; 58:10-14; 60:1-22; 61:4-9

³⁹⁷ Isa 4:3,4; 43:25; 44:22

³⁹⁸ Isa 51:1,4,7

³⁹⁹ Isa 1:2,10, 18-20, 24; 2:1; 3:13,16; 6:4,8; 7:13; 8:1,5,11; 9:8; 10:24; 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 18:3; 19:1; 20:3; 21:10,17; 22:1,12-15; 23:1; 28:11,14,23; 29:13; 30:9-17,30; 31:6; 32:3,9; 33:13; 34:1; 35:5,6; 39:1; 40:1-5,21-28; 41:21; 42:16-18, 23; 44:1; 46:3,12; 47:8; 48:1,12,14,16; 50:10; 51:1,4,7,21; 52:6; 55:2,3; 56:2; 58:14; 65:12; 66:5

⁴⁰⁰ Isa 1:10; 8:9; 28:23; 32:9; 42:23; 51:4; 64:4

⁴⁰¹ Isa 41:26-27; 42:5,9; 44:8; 45:1,14-19, 21; 46:10; 48:3-6,16; 49:8,22; 50:1; 52:3f; 55:9-11; 56:1; 58:14; 62:8

⁴⁰² Isa 40:18f; 41:26-29; 44:9-20; 45:20-23; 48:5

begins with an obstinate failure to hear,⁴⁰³ leads to a failure to keep the law,⁴⁰⁴ results in the doing of evil,⁴⁰⁵ the rejection of the covenant⁴⁰⁶ and a despising of the word of the Holy One of Israel.⁴⁰⁷ This failure is contrasted with the listening obedience of the servant who has an open ear and is not rebellious.⁴⁰⁸ The prophet, the nation and the nations are repeatedly called to hear and see which then gives rise to obedience, blessing and life.⁴⁰⁹ This underlying emphasis on obedient listening is seen in the very commissioning of Isaiah himself in Isaiah 6. In the year in which the human king dies, Isaiah is shown a vision of the 'LORD of hosts'. In the midst of a wicked people he is shown the holiness of God. This exposes Isaiah's own wickedness and God's solution is the removal of Isaiah's guilt and the cauterising of his lips. Isaiah is then given a commission to hear the voice of the LORD and to speak, calling the nation to hear, yet being warned that they will not hear, see or perceive.⁴¹⁰

Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed (Isaiah 6:9).

The prophecy ends with a profound image of a humble, hearing, blessed people⁴¹¹ trembling at the covenanted word of Yahweh,⁴¹² and speaking his words that reside within them, in a newly created heaven and earth, in which Yahweh himself hears and answers them.⁴¹³ Yahweh says,⁴¹⁴

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant.

4.3.7.2 Jeremiah

Jeremiah is a book with Yahweh at its centre. Brueggeman (2007:56,57) says,

⁴⁰³ Isa 28:12; 30:9-11; 42:18-25; 48:4-8

⁴⁰⁴ Isa 24:5; 48:18

⁴⁰⁵ Isa 48:8; 59:2-8; 65:2-7

⁴⁰⁶ Isa 24:5

⁴⁰⁷ Isa 5:24; 30:12

⁴⁰⁸ Isa 50:5

⁴⁰⁹ It is important to notice that in the historical interlude (ch 36-39) between chapters 1-35 and 40-66, Hezekiah and the nation are presented with the choice to 'hear' the word of the king of Assyria (36:13; 37:10f) or to 'hear' the word of Yahweh (37:5; 38:4; 39:5).

⁴¹⁰ Motyer (1993:79) perceptively points out that when people fail to hear there is no alternative for God (and the prophet) than to speak again, presenting the truth again, which runs the risk of a further hardening and a repeated rejection until the imperceptible point of no return is reached.

⁴¹¹ Isa 59:21; 60:1-22; 61:1-9; 62:1-12; 65:9-10, 17f; 66:18-23

⁴¹² Isa 66:2

⁴¹³ Isa 58:9; 59:2; 65:24

⁴¹⁴ Isa 55:2,3

It is this YHWH - the incomparable God...who occupies and dominates the Book of Jeremiah. It is this YHWH who is the key character and agent in the book.

Yahweh is described as incomparable,⁴¹⁵ the creator,⁴¹⁶ who “fills heaven and earth”,⁴¹⁷ sovereign over history⁴¹⁸ and to whom all are accountable.⁴¹⁹ He is unlike the silent and false gods in that he speaks.⁴²⁰ His word comes as a mediated word through the prophet Jeremiah⁴²¹ and it is this mediated word from Yahweh that dominates both Jeremiah’s ministry and the book. Yahweh’s word causes Jeremiah to speak,⁴²² and when Jeremiah speaks then God speaks. So constant is God’s divine speech in Jeremiah⁴²³ that it constitutes a unique and major emphasis unparalleled in the other prophetic writings (Shead 2012:44).⁴²⁴ Yahweh speaks a word of complaint and judgement. God’s complaint is that the nation of Judah has been faithless,⁴²⁵ they have forgotten Yahweh,⁴²⁶ they have followed the ways of the nations⁴²⁷ and have rejected and forsaken him.⁴²⁸ From the devotion of their youth and the love of a bride,⁴²⁹ from following Yahweh and being holy⁴³⁰ they have roamed far away,⁴³¹ broken the covenant,⁴³² forsaken the law,⁴³³ pursued worldliness,⁴³⁴ defiled the land,⁴³⁵ spoken lies,⁴³⁶ committed injustice,⁴³⁷ desecrated the Sabbath,⁴³⁸ changed their gods⁴³⁹ and even sacrificed their children to false gods.⁴⁴⁰ This covenant betrayal constitutes the major charge laid by Yahweh against his people in Jeremiah. He calls his people to repentance and warns of the covenant curses revealed in Deuteronomy⁴⁴¹ in the event of no repentance (Longman III, 2008:11). In graphic language, the people of God are described as having betrayed

⁴¹⁵ Jer 10:6, 50:44f

⁴¹⁶ Jer 5:22-24; 8:7; 10:12-13; 27:5-6; 31:35-36; 33:2; 51:19

⁴¹⁷ Jer 23:23-24

⁴¹⁸ Jer 27:6

⁴¹⁹ Jer 25:17-29

⁴²⁰ Jer 10:5, 12-16; 51:16

⁴²¹ Jer 1:5-9

⁴²² Jer 1:9; 3:12; 5:14; 7:2,27; 11:2-6; 13:12; 14:17; 19:2,3; 21:11; 22:1,2; 25:30; 26:2; 30:2,4; 32:6; 39:16

⁴²³ Shead (2012:44–46) identifies the three most important phrases as

1. The Messenger Formula ‘Thus says the LORD.’

2. The Narrative Formula, ‘The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.’

3. The Disjunctive Formula, ‘The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD.’

⁴²⁴ Jer 1:2,4; 1:11,13; 2:1,4,31; 7:1; 9:17; 11:1; 13:2,3,8; 14:1; 16:1; 18:1,5; 21:1; 24:4; 25:1; 27:1 29:30; 30:1; 32:1,26; 33:1,19,23; 34:1,8,12; 35:1,12; 37:6; 40:1; 42:7; 43:8; 44:1; 45:1; 46:1,13,25; 47:2; 48:1; 49:1,7,12,34; 50:1; 51:1

⁴²⁵ Jer 3:6

⁴²⁶ Jer 3:21, 13:25

⁴²⁷ Jer 10:2f

⁴²⁸ Jer 1:16, 2:5-8,13,19; 15:6; 16:11; 17:5,13; 18:15; 19:4; 22:9; 26:5,19

⁴²⁹ Jer 2:2; 3:6f

⁴³⁰ Jer 2:2f

⁴³¹ Jer 14:10

⁴³² Jer 11:10; 34:18. Thompson (1980:59) affirms the importance of covenant in the book of Jeremiah. The word (*berit*) is used twenty-three times (11:2-3,9-10; 14:21; 22:9; 31:31-33; 32:40; 33:20f; 50:5) referring both to Sinai and the ‘New Covenant’.

⁴³³ Jer 9:13; 16:11

⁴³⁴ Jer 2:4

⁴³⁵ Jer 2:7

⁴³⁶ Jer 9:1-6; 29:33

⁴³⁷ Jer 5:1; 6:13; 17:11; 22:13f; 25:8; 34:17

⁴³⁸ Jer 17:19f

⁴³⁹ Jer 2:11; 44:3

⁴⁴⁰ Jer 32:35

⁴⁴¹ Deut 28:25-26, 64-68

their marriage covenant and played the whore with many lovers,⁴⁴² done evil,⁴⁴³ worshipped idols,⁴⁴⁴ and refused to return to their God.⁴⁴⁵ Yahweh longs to display his committed, covenant love but is repaid with indifference, stubborn hearts⁴⁴⁶ and rejection (Shead 2012:90,91).

This rejection of God is founded on the nation's rejection of the mediated voice of God – the Word of Yahweh. Israel is a nation called repeatedly to listen⁴⁴⁷ and this listening is to be the defining mark of Israel (Brueggemann, 2007:22) yet Yahweh consistently testifies that Israel have not listened, nor 'obeyed the voice' of the LORD,⁴⁴⁸ but have instead trusted lies,⁴⁴⁹ and listened to the voice of the false prophets.⁴⁵⁰ Shead (2012:147) observes that the verb to hear/obey (שמע),

Is used in all its forms more often in Jeremiah than anywhere else in the Old Testament.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate this constantly reaffirmed complaint. In Jeremiah 7:23 Yahweh says,

But this command I gave them: 'Obey (שמע) my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'

Later in Jeremiah 22:21 he similarly says,

I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not listen (שמע).' This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed (שמע) my voice.

Israel were to 'hear/obey the voice' of the LORD⁴⁵¹ which carried with it the promise that God would be their God and they would be his people but now instead of hearing the voice of God, Jeremiah prophesies that they will instead hear the noise of evil and destruction (Shead, 2012:147) because they have not heard/obeyed the voice of God. As a consequence of their

⁴⁴² Jer 2:1-37; 3:1-4:4, 29:23

⁴⁴³ Jer 7:30, 9:3, 32:30f; 44:3

⁴⁴⁴ Jer 8:19; 11:10,13,17; 13:10; 16:11; 18:15; 19:4; 22:9; 25:6; 32:34,35

⁴⁴⁵ Jer 3:7, 8:5; 44:5

⁴⁴⁶ Jer 5:23; 6:28; 11:8,10; 13:10,11

⁴⁴⁷ Deut 6:4,5

⁴⁴⁸ Jer 3:13, 25; 5:21; 6:10,19; 7:13, 23-28; 9:13; 11:3-14; 12:17; 13:10-17; 16:12; 17:20-27; 19:15; 22:2-29; 25:3-8; 26:3-13; 29:19; 32:23, 34:14; 35:13-18; 36:3; 37:2; 40:3; 42:21; 43:4-7; 44:5,23

⁴⁴⁹ Jer 13:27

⁴⁵⁰ Jer 6:13-15; 14:13-16; 23:9-25; 27:9-29:8

⁴⁵¹ Jer 7:23

rebellion, judgement is promised from the north.⁴⁵² God declares that he has abandoned them⁴⁵³ and will spoil them.⁴⁵⁴ This is solemnly summarised in Jeremiah 35:17,

Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened (שמע), I have called to them and they have not answered.”

The destruction of the nation will however not be a full end.⁴⁵⁵ The language of judgement is interspersed with mentions of a new covenant,⁴⁵⁶ continued commitment,⁴⁵⁷ and hints of grace and restoration.⁴⁵⁸ This restoration and pardon is contingent upon the nation's repentance.⁴⁵⁹ The call to repentance occurs over one hundred times in the book of Jeremiah (House, 2008:1366). The nation is called to amend their ways⁴⁶⁰ and deeds, to not trust in religion, to not be greedy for gain but instead to execute judgement, care for the vulnerable, release the oppressed, do mercy and flee idolatry.⁴⁶¹ Yahweh says,⁴⁶²

Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God and scattered your favours among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed (שמע) my voice, declares the Lord.

And later,⁴⁶³

Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey (שמע) the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you.

4.3.7.3 Ezekiel

Ezekiel is the prophet of the exile. The book is shaped around three revelations to Ezekiel of 'the glory of the LORD'.⁴⁶⁴ The book begins with a description of Ezekiel's personal revelation of the 'glory of the LORD'. Ezekiel is shown the divine presence and given the word of the LORD to

⁴⁵² Jer 1:14,16; 4:6; 5:15f; 6:1,22f; 7:13f, 20; 8:16; 9:9-11,16; 10:18,22; 11:11,16f; 13:20; 14:10-16; 15:2f; 16:3f; 17:4; 18:11f; 19:3f; 21:5f; 22:6f; 23:20; 25:9; 26:3-5; 27:6, 12; 29:21; 32:23; 33:5; 34:2,17f; 40:2,3; 44:6,23-26; 52:52f

⁴⁵³ Jer 10:7

⁴⁵⁴ Jer 13:8

⁴⁵⁵ Jer 4:27; 5:10,18

⁴⁵⁶ Jer 31:31-34

⁴⁵⁷ Jer 51:19

⁴⁵⁸ Jer 12:16; 16:15; 23:3; 29:10-14; 29:31; 32:15, 37ff; 33:7f; 48:47; 49:39

⁴⁵⁹ Jer 3:12-14; 4:1-4; 5:1; 8:5f; 12:16; 15:19; 18:11; 31:18-19; 36:7

⁴⁶⁰ Jer 7:3; 8:5f; 18:8f

⁴⁶¹ Jer 7:4-10; 22:3

⁴⁶² Jer 3:13

⁴⁶³ Jer 26:13

⁴⁶⁴ Eze 1-3; 8-11; 40-43

speak.⁴⁶⁵ He describes himself as one who heard the voice, as one spoken to and as one sent to speak to a rebellious people.⁴⁶⁶ Ezekiel's task is to stubbornly proclaim (with a face and forehead like flint) to Israel whether they listen or not.⁴⁶⁷ Ezekiel is to be a faithful watchman to the nation unlike the faithless shepherds.⁴⁶⁸ God accuses the nation of not being willing to listen to him and Ezekiel is called instead to not be like them but rather to hear (eat the scroll) and obey.⁴⁶⁹

In the second major section, Ezekiel sees the 'glory of the LORD' departing⁴⁷⁰ from the temple in Jerusalem because of the wickedness and guilt of the nation. The people of God had betrayed the covenant by rebelling against the revealed will of God, committing evil and had lived with a false presumption of eternal security (Habtu, 2006:933–34). As a result of this rebellion God promises and delivers punishment, judgement, destruction, scattering and death.⁴⁷¹ Tuell (2009:6) describes this section as a "harsh unrelenting word of judgement" on the nation's wickedness. Chapters 1-33 repeatedly speak of God's anger and wrath.⁴⁷² God's desire in his disclosure to Ezekiel is that people and particularly the nation might "know that I am the Lord".⁴⁷³ Ezekiel is called to speak and do various sign-acts⁴⁷⁴ in order to communicate the judgement of God. He is shown the LORD withdrawing his presence from Jerusalem⁴⁷⁵ and the city's ultimate fall⁴⁷⁶ which God lays on the nation and its leaders (Tuell, 2009:7).⁴⁷⁷

The final section of the book contains a message of hope and restoration (Tuell, 2009:235).⁴⁷⁸ Ezekiel is again shown "the glory of the LORD" this time returning to a new temple.⁴⁷⁹ As God destroyed the city so now Ezekiel is shown God returning and filling the temple where he promises to remain forever.⁴⁸⁰ The book contains the gracious promise of restored relationship,⁴⁸¹ of rule by the messiah king,⁴⁸² of a prosperous land and a Spirit-filled people with new hearts who will obey the words of God.⁴⁸³ The book ends with the glorious promise of God's restored presence brought

⁴⁶⁵ Eze 1:3-28

⁴⁶⁶ Eze 1:28; 2:3-4, 7; 3:7

⁴⁶⁷ Eze 2:5,7; 3:8,11,27

⁴⁶⁸ Eze 3:17; 33:1-9; 34:1-24

⁴⁶⁹ Eze 2:8; 3:1,10

⁴⁷⁰ Eze 8-11

⁴⁷¹ Eze 4-9; 11:5-12; 12:14-20; 13:10-16; 14:3-11; 16:1-52; 17:11,19-21; 18:4-31; 19:1-14; 20:8,13-38; 21:2-27; 22:2-31; 23:1-49; 24:1-14,21; 33:23-29

⁴⁷² Eze 5:13-5:15; 7:3, 8, 19; 8:17; 13:13; 20:8, 21; 21:31; 22:20-21, 31; 23:25; 25:14; 33:27-29; (also in 38:18-19; 43:8

⁴⁷³ Eze 5:13; 6:7,10,13-14; 7:4,27; 11:10,12; 12:15-16,20; 13:9,14,21,23; 14:8; 15:7; 16:62; 17:21,24; 20:42,44; 21:5; 22:16, 22; 23:49; 28:22; 29:6; 30:25; 34:27, 30; 35:4,12; 36:36; 37:6, 13-14; 39:6-7;22,28

⁴⁷⁴ Eze ch 4-7; 12-19

⁴⁷⁵ Eze 8-11

⁴⁷⁶ Eze 20-24

⁴⁷⁷ Eze 12-19

⁴⁷⁸ Hinted at in the opening sections Eze 6:8; 16:59-63; 17:22-24; 20:40-44; 28:25-26; 36:24-32; 37:11-28; 39:25-29

⁴⁷⁹ Eze 40-43

⁴⁸⁰ Eze 43:3-7

⁴⁸¹ Eze 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23,27

⁴⁸² Eze 37:24

⁴⁸³ Eze 36:24-28; 39:29

about by God's Spirit and the joyous declaration that the name of the city shall be "The LORD is there."⁴⁸⁴

Throughout the book God is shown to be a God who speaks. The prophetic formulas of 'Thus says the LORD',⁴⁸⁵ 'the Word of the LORD came to me'⁴⁸⁶ and 'hear the word of the LORD'⁴⁸⁷ appear nearly a hundred times in the book⁴⁸⁸ emphasising the character of God as a God who speaks, and who demands to be heard and obeyed by his covenant people.⁴⁸⁹

4.3.8 Jesus

The gospel writers give only brief glimpses into the domestic life of Jesus. Amongst these is the record of a deep friendship with the Bethany family of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Mary anointed Jesus' feet in deep gratitude for him raising her brother Lazarus from the dead while Martha served their table.⁴⁹⁰ This meal follows an earlier encounter which was less congenial.⁴⁹¹ During this earlier meal Martha is irritated with her sister. Martha is consumed with meal preparations and forcefully requests that Jesus instruct Mary to help her.

She (Martha) came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' (Luke 10:40).

Jesus replies by gently chiding Martha, and pointing her to something more fundamental. Bartholomew (2015:18) notes that Jesus reminds Martha of, "*the one thing necessary*; quiet attentive listening to Jesus."

The Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her (Luke 10:41,42).

Scholars debate the value to be ascribed to the textual variants and the corresponding possible ambiguity in verse 42 regarding, "the one thing that is necessary",⁴⁹² however the weight of the

⁴⁸⁴ Eze 48:35

⁴⁸⁵ Eze 2:4; 3:11,27; 5:5,7,8; 6:3,11; 7:2,5; 11:5, 7, 16, 17; 12:10, 19, 23, 28; 13:3,8, 13, 18, 20; 14:4, 6, 21; 15:6; 16:3,36,59; 17:3,9,19,22; 20:3,5,27,30,39,47; 21:3,9,24,26,28; 22:3,19,28; 23:22,28,32,35,46; 24:3,6,9,21; 25:3,6,8,12,13,16; 26:3,7,15,19; 27:3; 28:2,6,12,22,25; 29:3,8,13,19; 30:2,6,10,13,22; 31:10,15; 32:3,11,25,27; 34:2,10,11,17,20; 35:3,14; 36:2-7,13,22,33,37; 37:5,9,12,19,21; 38:3,10,14,17; 39:1,17,25; 43:18; 44:6,9; 45:9,18; 46:1,16; 47:13

⁴⁸⁶ Eze 1:3; 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1,8,17,21,26; 13:1; 14:2,12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 20:2,45; 21:1,8,18; 22:1,17,23; 23:1; 24:1,15,20; 25:1; 27:1; 28:1,11,20; 29:1,17; 30:1,20; 31:1; 32:1,17; 33:1,23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 37:15; 38:1

⁴⁸⁷ Eze 6:3; 13:2; 16:35; 20:47; 25:3; 33:30f; 34:7,9; 36:1,4; 37:4

⁴⁸⁸ Forty-Nine times in the book of Ezekiel the LORD is described as the one who has spoken and whose word leads to his actions ("I will do it"); together with another forty-nine times that Ezekiel uses the prophetic formula, "The word of the LORD came to me." (Taylor 1969:28)

⁴⁸⁹ Strikingly when the nations are addressed in judgement (ch 25-36; 38-39) there is no condemnation for their 'not' listening presumably because they have not been spoken to in the way that Israel has.

⁴⁹⁰ John 11:2, 12:1f

⁴⁹¹ Luke 10:38-42

⁴⁹² See Liefeld (1984:945), Marshal (1978b:453) for a discussion of the possibilities.

Biblical testimony makes it highly unlikely that Jesus is giving teaching on practical hospitality but is instead pointing Martha to the consistent Biblical theme which is the focus of this research. Mary chooses to prioritise listening to Jesus and is commended for choosing the 'one thing' that is ultimately needed. Nel (2014:3-4) echoes Tillich when he says that 'when we love we listen'. Tillich (1960:28) defined love as, "The drive towards the reunion of the separated." He argued that love manifests in three areas: listening, giving and forgiving. He said (Tillich, 1960:84),

Love listens. It is its first task to listen. No human relation, especially no intimate one, is possible without mutual listening...

Bartholomew (2015:18), with tongue-in-cheek, proposes 'the listening Mary' as the patron saint of hermeneutics.

4.3.8.1 The Synoptic Gospels

The Synoptic Gospels are primarily historical accounts (Tenney & Dunnett, 1985:130) announcing and identifying the person of Jesus, together with an explanation of his mission.⁴⁹³ Each writer emphasises different aspects of the same history. Matthew is concerned to show Jesus as the promised Messiah king who fulfils Old Testament prophecy (Guthrie 1990:32) and who ushers in the Messianic kingdom (Carson, Moo & Morris, 1992:81). Mark is concerned to show both the deity and the humanity of Jesus (Edwards 2002:12–16) while emphasising discipleship and its cost (Carson et al., 1992:101). Luke's primary concern is to write a carefully investigated, historical account as a certain foundation for the faith which leads to salvation (Carson et al., 1992:128).⁴⁹⁴

The synoptic writers present Jesus as the authoritative Son of God⁴⁹⁵ whose presence, actions and word demand a response. As Jesus concludes "the greatest sermon ever preached" (Hughes 2001:16) - the Sermon on the Mount – he closes with a claim to deity by placing himself and his words as the watershed of human destiny. Jesus appropriates the demand of God that runs throughout the Old Testament that humans are to listen to him and his words and respond in obedience.⁴⁹⁶

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock...and everyone who hears these words of

⁴⁹³ Matt 16:13-16, Mk 8:27-31, Luke 9:18-20

⁴⁹⁴ Luke 1:1-4. I Howard Marshall (1970:92) says, "the idea of salvation supplies the key to the theology of Luke."

⁴⁹⁵ Matt 7:29, 8:27, 13:54, 22:33; Mark 1:27, 4:41, 6:2; Luke 4:32, 8:25

⁴⁹⁶ Matt 7:24-27, Luke 6:46-49

mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand... (Matthew 7:24-27)

Jesus promises both survival and blessing to the wise person who hears his words (*ακουι μου τουσ λογουσ τουτουσ*) and puts them into practice (Luke *ποειο* does them). He calls humanity to build a life on that which is secure; or else to face 'ultimate calamity' (Seccombe 2002:260). In contrast the foolish person hears the words of Jesus and does not put them into practice leading to a life of destruction.

Similarly, in Jesus' foundational parable-of-the-sower⁴⁹⁷ he issues an injunction to listen.⁴⁹⁸ The imperative 'to listen' (*ακουο*) serves as parentheses in Mark's account framing the parable in Mark 4 verses 3 and 9 (Edwards 2002:130). The farmer is generous, even wasteful in his sowing of the 'word'.⁴⁹⁹ Insiders and disciples of Jesus are those who hear it, receive it, continue to receive it and bear fruit.⁵⁰⁰ Edwards (2002:137) is correct to notice the emphasis in the text indicated by the repetition of both 'word' (*λογος*) which occurs eight times in Jesus' explanation and 'hear' (*ακουειν*) which occurs four times. He also points out that Mark changes the tense of 'hear' from the aorist in Mark 4v14,16,18 to the present tense in v20 to indicate that those constituting the 'good soil' display an active and ongoing hearing participation in and with the 'word' which results in them bearing fruit (Edwards 2002:138). As if to emphasise the point and with a typical Markan intercalation, Mark follows the 'parable of the sower' by exhorting his readers even further with the parables of 'the lamp'⁵⁰¹ and 'the measure'. In Jesus' parable of 'the lamp',⁵⁰² Mark records him using the definite article to identify 'the' lamp with himself (Lane 1974:165) and follows this parable with the injunction to hear him (*ακουιεν*).⁵⁰³ This call is repeated three times with the corresponding promise of the blessing that comes with applied hearing and obedience.⁵⁰⁴

All three Synoptics place the foundational parable-of-the-sower in the context of opposition by Jesus' family.⁵⁰⁵ They come to 'take charge of him' (NIV seize, *κρατειν*) believing him to be "out of his mind."⁵⁰⁶ Jesus rebuffs their attempts by saying, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."⁵⁰⁷ Matthew and Mark do not record 'hear' and 'do' instead they summarise, "For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."⁵⁰⁸ Jesus

⁴⁹⁷ Mark 4:1-20

⁴⁹⁸ Mark 4:3

⁴⁹⁹ Mark 4:14

⁵⁰⁰ Mark 14:20

⁵⁰¹ NIV/ESV 'a' lamp

⁵⁰² A metaphor which in the Old Testament can be a metaphor for God (2 Sam 22:29), the Messiah (Ps 132:17) or the law (Ps 119:105) (Edwards 2002:139)

⁵⁰³ Mk 4:23,24

⁵⁰⁴ Mk 4:24,25

⁵⁰⁵ Matt 13:46-50; Mark 3:20-21, 31-35; Luke 8:19-21. Mark adds opposition by the religious authorities in Mark 3:22-30

⁵⁰⁶ Mark 3:21

⁵⁰⁷ Luke 8:21, also 11:28

⁵⁰⁸ Mark 3:35

affirms the outcome of an active hearing response to his words as adoption into a familial relationship with him. Snodgrass (2004:59) says,

Jesus' parables were intended to enable hearing and elicit a response. They assume a hermeneutics of hearing, one that calls for depth listening and includes a hermeneutics of obedience.

The 'Mountain of Transfiguration' is one of only two occasions recorded in the gospels when the voice of God is heard to speak directly about Jesus (Bock 1996:270).⁵⁰⁹ This event is preceded in the opening act of Mark's gospel (Mark 1-8) with a presentation of, "the gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον*) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."⁵¹⁰ Mark shows the power of Jesus⁵¹¹ and the identity of Jesus when he shows him endowed with authority over sin,⁵¹² authority to (re)define the Torah⁵¹³ and authority to embrace the unclean⁵¹⁴ (Edwards 2002:13–14). Having presented Jesus as the powerful Son, Mark's gospel then hinges around the events at Caesarea Philippi.⁵¹⁵ Edwards (2002:261) calls this "a continental divide between the first and second halves of the gospel". As the first half ends, Mark records humans beginning to grasp the identity of Jesus in an indistinct and blurred manner.⁵¹⁶ Peter declares Jesus to be, 'the Christ/Messiah'⁵¹⁷ which is correct but incomplete. This declaration leads Jesus to immediately begin the process of teaching his disciples about his suffering and death.⁵¹⁸ He teaches them about the suffering-soaked, death-shaped nature of his Messiahship with its corresponding call to discipleship.⁵¹⁹ Peter rejects this suffering agenda and rebukes Jesus.⁵²⁰ This movement from powerful Messiah to suffering Messiah (Carson 1984:364) becomes deeply problematic for the disciples.⁵²¹ Luke hinges his own gospel, departing from Mark's outline (Marshall 1978b:400) by showing Jesus resolutely turning his face towards his suffering death in Jerusalem.⁵²² This context is important to understanding the import of the events on the Mount of Transfiguration. Further context is supplied from Moses prophecy,⁵²³ that God will raise up a prophet like himself. McConville (2002:302) points out the emphatic nature of the construction of his promise. This prophet will come from within the nation, from amongst their brothers and will continue the revelation of the words of Yahweh. The Israelite temptation however

⁵⁰⁹ In the first event, at his baptism (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22), the Synoptic writers record God declaring Jesus identity as 'his beloved son' with whom he is pleased.

⁵¹⁰ Mark 1:1

⁵¹¹ Mark 1:26,31, 34, 42; 2:11; 3:5, 12; 4:39; 5:13, 29, 42; 6:41,48, 56, 7:29, 34; 8:7-8, 25

⁵¹² Mark 2:5

⁵¹³ Sabbath Mark 2:23-26, 3:1-6, food laws Mark 7:19

⁵¹⁴ Mark 1:40-45, 2:13-17, 7:24-30

⁵¹⁵ Mark 8:27-30

⁵¹⁶ Mark 8:24

⁵¹⁷ to which Luke adds 'of God' (Luke 9:20) and Matthew adds, 'the son of the living God' (Matt 16:16)

⁵¹⁸ Matt 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22

⁵¹⁹ Mark 10:35-45

⁵²⁰ Matt 16:22, Mark 8:32, omitted by Luke

⁵²¹ Mark 9:33,34, Luke 22:24

⁵²² Luke 9:51

⁵²³ Deut 18:15

will be to listen to the words of the surrounding nations⁵²⁴ and Moses calls them instead to listen to the voice of the ‘prophet like Moses’. Block (2012:444,445) rightly highlights that the immediate context in Deuteronomy refers to the successive line of prophets that Yahweh would mercifully allow to visit his people but recognises that later interpreters would understand this to be an eschatological messianic messenger who would either precede the messiah or be the messiah himself. Judaism thus had an expectation that this prophecy would in some way be literally fulfilled. When John the Baptist is questioned about his identity, he is asked whether he is ‘the Christ’, Elijah or ‘the Prophet’.⁵²⁵ Similarly, as Jesus’ ministry unfolds the crowds repeatedly ask whether he is ‘the prophet’.⁵²⁶ Jesus makes a veiled claim to be this when he says, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.”⁵²⁷ This backdrop provides some of the context behind the events on the Mountain of Transfiguration. Peter, James and John are taken up an unnamed high mountain⁵²⁸ and shown the ‘coming of the kingdom of God in power’⁵²⁹ in order to substantiate the truth of Jesus’ identity as the ‘Christ/Messiah, son of the living God’. In the face of Jesus’ “shocking and apparently contradictory revelation of his imminent suffering and death” (Hagner 1995:489) the three disciples are given a visible revelation of the veracity of Peter’s verbal declaration. The event is soaked with allusions to the Exodus-Sinai event where Yahweh meets with Moses and the subsequent Sinai event where Elijah seeks Yahweh. In that second meeting Yahweh affirms his ongoing commitment to his people despite their wickedness and rejection of him as God.⁵³⁰ As Jesus is transfigured before the disciples God declares in words identical to the baptism,⁵³¹ “This is my beloved Son;” with the now added and emphasised, “listen to him.”⁵³² The divine voice reveals and attests to the identity of Jesus as the beloved divine son of the Psalms⁵³³ (Wilcock 1979:110); as the chosen,⁵³⁴ suffering servant of Isaiah,⁵³⁵ who is about to complete his impending Exodus⁵³⁶ and as the prophet like Moses, who is to be heard and obeyed.⁵³⁷ The event becomes pivotal for the disciples⁵³⁸ who hear God’s own voice confirm that they are to listen to the words of Jesus (*αὐτοῦ ἀκουετέ*) (Bock 1996:270–71) and to obey his call to the obedience of suffering discipleship (Marshall 1978b:388).

⁵²⁴ Deut 18:14,20

⁵²⁵ John 1:19-21

⁵²⁶ John 6:14; 7:40

⁵²⁷ John 5:46

⁵²⁸ Matt 17:1, Mark 9:2-3, Luke 9:28

⁵²⁹ Mark 9:1

⁵³⁰ 1 Kings 19

⁵³¹ Matt 3:17

⁵³² Matt 17:5, Mk 9:7, Luke 9:28-36

⁵³³ Ps 2:6-7; 72:13

⁵³⁴ Luke 9:35

⁵³⁵ Isaiah 52:13-53:12

⁵³⁶ Luke 9:31

⁵³⁷ Deut 18:15,19

⁵³⁸ 2 Pet 1:16-18

4.3.8.2 John

The Johannine prologue is a carefully crafted ‘foyer’ (Carson, 1991:111) drawing the reader into the major themes of the gospel many of which are mirrored and expanded in both the gospel and the Johannine Epistles.⁵³⁹ As the prologue introduces the incarnated *λογος* it consciously echoes the creation narrative (Bruce, 1983:63; Mc Hugh, 2009:6) drawing the reader to a consideration not only of the ‘doings’ of God but also of the ontological ‘being’ of God (Bruner 2012:10).⁵⁴⁰ In both accounts the ‘Word’ is present at creation and is the agent of creation.⁵⁴¹ The ‘Word’ is introduced as the origin of both light and life – claims that Jesus will directly make about himself.⁵⁴² Much has been written on the author’s meaning and purpose in using the underlying term *logos* but Carson (1991:115) must surely be correct to assert that it is to the Genesis creation narratives that the writer is primarily looking in his usage of this term. Bruce (1983:63) says that, “a ‘word’ is a means of communication, the expression of what is in one’s mind. ‘Word’ is thus an expression of thought and essence. It carries an assumption of hearing and relationship accompanied by activity and deed. *Logos* speaks of what is (in the beginning was the ‘word’), how it happened (all things were made through him) and an expression of the essence of the reality behind it all (the ‘word’ was with God and the ‘word’ was God). *Logos* is thus who God is, *logos* is what God does and *logos* is how God does it. Bruce (1983:64) summarises the *logos* as ‘word in action’. It is this *logos* that John declares has now been incarnated.

John’s gospel does use ‘hearing’ to summarise the appropriate human response to God in Christ⁵⁴³ but this does not constitute the primary emphasis of the author. Instead the Johannine literature primarily uses the language of *λαμβάνω* (receiving/taking) and *πιστεύω* (believing). So frequent is this usage in John that Kostenberger (2015:1250) says,

Apart from “Jesus” (241 times) and “Father” (136 times), there is no theologically significant word that occurs more frequently in John’s gospel than the word “believe” (πιστεύω). The ninety-eight instances of this term in John’s gospel compare to eleven in Mark, fourteen in Matthew, and nine in Luke. Thus it seems justified for Merrill Tenney to call John “the Gospel of belief.

⁵³⁹ Life/death, light/darkness, love/hate, above/below, witness, truth/falsehood, flesh/Spirit, world, believe/faith/trust/unbelief, glory. See Bruce (1983:62), Carson (1991:111), Kostenberger (2015:724–44).

⁵⁴⁰ Bruner (2012:3) puts this majestically when he calls the prologue, “the overture to the symphony of the whole gospel, the preface to the greatest story ever told, the introduction to history’s central fact, the foreword to the Last Word, and the preamble to the realities most trusted...”

⁵⁴¹ Gen 1:3; John 1:1

⁵⁴² John 8:12; 9:5; 11:25; 14:6

⁵⁴³ John 5:24; 8:43,51; 10:16,27; 12:48; 14:24; 17:8

John's purpose in writing is further expressly outlined in John 19:35 and 20:31 where he declares that he writes in order that his readers may know the truth, believe it and thus have life.

The gospel opens with disbelief. John declares that the *logos* was not received by his own people.⁵⁴⁴ In conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus calls him to receive, to believe and to obey.⁵⁴⁵ Similarly, in John 4 the writer contrasts the belief of the Samaritan woman and her family, and the belief of the Capernaum official, with the unbelieving, prevailing demand for a sign.⁵⁴⁶ The teaching of Jesus contains the constant call to receive him and believe in him⁵⁴⁷ often in the context of opposition and rejection. In conversation with the 'Jews', Jesus offers life to those hearing his word and believing the Father.⁵⁴⁸ To the Capernaum crowd Jesus equates believing in him with the very work of God.⁵⁴⁹ He declares that coming to him and believing in him provides the very fundamental building blocks of life – bread and water⁵⁵⁰ and the antidote to death.⁵⁵¹ Having healed the man born blind, Jesus asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"⁵⁵² In conversation with Martha following the death of Lazarus, Jesus calls her to "believe in me" and as a result to be given life.⁵⁵³ Jesus equates believing in him with believing in the Father who sent him.⁵⁵⁴ The Upper Room Discourse further establishes the relationship between belief and obedience which is then worked out in love. Jesus calls the disciples to believe in him; to believe that he and the father are one and then to express that belief in works of love obedience.⁵⁵⁵ As John records Jesus' words in the high priestly prayer, it is surely significant that *logos* reappears.⁵⁵⁶ Jesus prays for the disciples who have responded to both the person of the *logos* and the words of the *logos*.⁵⁵⁷ John thus clarifies an important aspect of obedient listening. Obedient listening involves not simply hearing but also receiving the word and believing it which then leads to obedience. To 'hear' the *logos* is to receive the Son sent from God, to be personally persuaded by him, and to place one's confidence in him with trust and reliance (Vine 1939:108).

4.3.9 The Acts of the Apostles

The central characters of the book of Acts are Peter (Acts 1-12) and Paul (Acts 9; 13-28) which justifies the book's traditional title "The Acts of the Apostles". Other scholars have noticed the significant place that the Holy Spirit plays in the narrative and have posited a corrective suggesting

⁵⁴⁴ John 1:11

⁵⁴⁵ John 3:11-21

⁵⁴⁶ John 4:39-53

⁵⁴⁷ John 3:33-36; 5:24,39-46; 6:29, 35; 7:38; 8:24; 9:35-37; 11:25-27,42; 12:44; 14:1-12; 29; 16:27; 17:8,21

⁵⁴⁸ John 5:24

⁵⁴⁹ John 6:29

⁵⁵⁰ John 6:35, 7:38

⁵⁵¹ John 8:24

⁵⁵² John 9:35

⁵⁵³ John 11:25

⁵⁵⁴ John 12:44

⁵⁵⁵ John 14:1-15,23-24; 15:10,14).

⁵⁵⁶ John 17:6

⁵⁵⁷ John 5:19-30, 14:23

that the book should rather be called 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit'. Noticing the Spirit's, "promise, gift, outpouring, baptism, fullness, power, witness and guidance," Stott (1990:33) suggests that this is an important corrective. This suggestion is further strengthened by the structure of the narrative with its significant place given to the baptism/filling of the Holy Spirit first to the Jews in Jerusalem,⁵⁵⁸ then to Samaritan believers⁵⁵⁹ and finally given to Cornelius's Gentile household.⁵⁶⁰ This giving of the Holy Spirit mirrors the fulfilment of Jesus promise of witness first to Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.⁵⁶¹ Luke's initial verses present the book as a continuation of the 'Acts of Jesus'.⁵⁶² This continuation is done through the agency of the Holy Spirit and the efforts of the apostolic church. To this end, Stott (1990:34) proposes another cumbersome (by his own admission) title for the book "The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by his Spirit through his Apostles." However one entitles or divides the book, Acts seeks to elaborate how the mission of Jesus was furthered from its small beginning amongst the Jews to become established across the Roman empire. This takes place through Spirit-directed, frenetic action, constant evangelism and public proclamation. The consequences are that listeners hear, respond and are added to the church. This growth is often aggressively and violently opposed by persecuting human agencies, yet is always directed, protected and often miraculously rescued by the hand of God from complete failure (Pelikan, 2005:23).

Central to the narrative is the preached announcement of Jesus of Nazareth, killed and raised⁵⁶³ which Luke summarises as the word, the 'word of God'⁵⁶⁴ or the 'word of the Lord' (Petersen, 2009:33).⁵⁶⁵ Luke places summary markers⁵⁶⁶ to emphasise that the mission of God happens through this word being preached which results in the growth of the church⁵⁶⁷ and the growth of the word itself.⁵⁶⁸

Acts is bookended by an emphasis on hearing/obedience. After the Ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is given to the Jews at Pentecost and they are enabled to speak in other languages (*γλωσσα*). A bewildered crowd gathers together, each hearing in their own language, they hear together about the mighty works of God.⁵⁶⁹ As Peter explains, he calls the crowd to give careful attention to his words (*ἐνὸτιζομαι*)⁵⁷⁰ and to listen (*ακουῶ*) to his declaration of Jesus as

⁵⁵⁸ Acts 2:4

⁵⁵⁹ Acts 8:14-17

⁵⁶⁰ Acts 10:44-48

⁵⁶¹ Acts 1:8

⁵⁶² Acts 1:1

⁵⁶³ Acts 2:22-24

⁵⁶⁴ Acts 4:31, 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:5-7, 44-48; 16:32; 17:13; 18:11

⁵⁶⁵ Acts 8:25; 13:49; 15:35f; 19:10, 20

⁵⁶⁶ Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20 and 28:21. Some scholars add additional divisions at 9:31 and 16:5 see Longenecker (1979:233-34) and Barclay (1955:xvii)

⁵⁶⁷ Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 11:21, 24; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20

⁵⁶⁸ Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:30

⁵⁶⁹ Acts 2:6-11

⁵⁷⁰ Acts 2:14

Messiah.⁵⁷¹ This results in the crowd being cut to the heart and responding in repentance and faith.⁵⁷² Similarly, as Peter addresses the gathering crowd after the miraculous healing of the lame beggar, he details the events of Jesus' death and resurrection, then calls them to repentance and to listen to the prophet like Moses sent by God. He also warns of the judgement that ensues for not listening.⁵⁷³

As the Book of Acts unfolds Luke regularly contrasts those who listened/heard⁵⁷⁴ with those who did not.⁵⁷⁵ The book ends in Rome with Paul's tragic echoing of Isaiah's damning prophecy of the judgement of God on the Jews who fail to hear the prophetic word in contrast to the Gentiles who will listen.

Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them." (Acts 28:26,27).

4.3.10 The Epistles

The New Testament epistles sing the hymn of Jesus Christ.⁵⁷⁶ They proclaim an incarnated person, as God's final word, in fulfilment of prophecy, expressing God's desire for restored relationship. Consistent with the Old Testament declaration, God is revealed as a God who speaks and who demands a hearing, obeying trust.⁵⁷⁷ Humanity is called to respond in faith to the actions of God in Christ⁵⁷⁸ but the epistles are primarily written to churches who have already responded in faith. As a result, the major emphasis of the epistles is that Christians remain and endure in faith,⁵⁷⁹ continue in their transformation into the likeness of Christ and deal with the presenting problems.⁵⁸⁰ The epistles' primary concern is not the declaration of Christ for the establishment of faith but a reminder for the perseverance of Christians under the many problems encountered by the human condition.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷¹ Acts 2:22

⁵⁷² Acts 2:37

⁵⁷³ Acts 3:11-23

⁵⁷⁴ Acts 2:37; 4:4; 8:6; 10:22, 33, 44; 13:7, 44, 48; 16:14; 18:8; 19:5,10; 21:20

⁵⁷⁵ Acts 5:33; 7:54, 17:32; 22:22; 28:27,28

⁵⁷⁶ Rom 5:1-11, 8:1-4; 1 Cor 1:23, 15:1-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 1:3; Eph 2:4,13; Phil 2:5-10; Col 1:15-20, 2:2-3, 3:11; 1 Thes 5:9-10; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 1:8-14; Titus 3:4-7; Heb 1:1-13, 7-10; 1 Pet 1:3-5; 2 Pet 1:16-18; 1 John 1:1-2; 2 John 7

⁵⁷⁷ Rom 10:14-15

⁵⁷⁸ Rom 1:16-17, 3:21-25, 5:1-2; Col 2:5; Heb 10:19,11; 1 John 2:23, 5:1,13

⁵⁷⁹ Rom 11; 1 Cor 15:1-2; Gal 1,3; Phil 1:27-30; 3:1-11; Col 1:23, 2:6-10; 1 Thes 4:1; 2 Tim 4:4-5; Heb 2:1-4; 4:1,14-16; 10:23, 12:1; 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 2:24

⁵⁸⁰ Rom 12-16; 1 Cor 5-10; Gal 5:13-6:10; Eph 4-6; Phil 2,4; Col 3-4; 1 Thes 4-5; Heb 12-13; James 1-5; 1 Peter 1:13-5:11; 2 Peter 3:14; 1 John 1-5

⁵⁸¹ The epistles address fundamental issues that threaten the Christian church's ongoing perseverance in faith. These include disunity (Corinthian Correspondence), legalism (Galatians), false teaching (Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, Pastorals, 2 Peter,

The Pauline writings use the language of ‘the gospel’ as summary statement of the apostolic message (Moo, 1996:29).⁵⁸² This gospel calls for hearing, obeying faith. As Paul laments Israel’s rejection of Christ he affirms that faith comes from hearing the word of Christ spoken⁵⁸³ and weeps that they have, “eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear”.⁵⁸⁴ He identifies his task as the proclamation of the gospel so that the Gentiles might hear⁵⁸⁵ and affirms that they will hear and listen.⁵⁸⁶ Paul celebrates those that have heard, affirming that this hearing has brought faith and the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.⁵⁸⁷ He affirms the Colossian church who have heard and understood the gospel which resulted in them bearing fruit⁵⁸⁸ and calls them to continue,

Not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven (Colossians 1:23).

This pattern of encouragement to continue in hearing marinated Paul’s instructions to Timothy. Timothy is to keep a close watch on himself and his teaching in order to save both himself and his hearers.⁵⁸⁹ He is to follow the pattern of truth heard from the apostle and then to pass this on to other faithful men.⁵⁹⁰

The epistle/sermon to the Hebrews flows from the person and activity of God (Morris, 1981:12). He is the God who has spoken historically ‘at many times and in various ways’, and supremely and finally in Christ.⁵⁹¹ The book is an exposition of the supremacy and superiority of Jesus Christ (Carson et al., 1992:391) with its corresponding exhortation to hearing perseverance. God’s spoken word is attested.⁵⁹² It demands to be responded to positively (Ellingworth, 1993:213), to be heard and held to and to not neglected.⁵⁹³ The writer repeatedly quotes Psalm 95, whose use in synagogue services on the Sabbath was common (Lane 1991:85).⁵⁹⁴ The writer exhorts the readers to hear the Holy Spirit, to ‘hear his voice’, to not harden their hearts nor drift away as did the Israelites in their desert rebellion.⁵⁹⁵ The exhortation of Hebrews is to a persevering discipleship, in submission to Christ, in contrast to the desert generation of Israelites who refused to acknowledge God’s presence nor heard his living, active, dividing, all-seeing word (Lane

Jude, 1 John), the Jew/Gentile divide (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians), suffering (2 Corinthians, 1 Peter) and the death of the apostles (Pastoral Epistles).

⁵⁸² Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 2:2; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:6-11; Eph 1:13; Phil 1:27; Col 1:3-8; 1 Thess 2:8; 2 Tim 1:8, 2:8; 4:17

⁵⁸³ Rom 10:14,18

⁵⁸⁴ Rom 11:8

⁵⁸⁵ 2 Tim 4:17

⁵⁸⁶ Rom 15:21

⁵⁸⁷ Eph 1:13

⁵⁸⁸ Col 1:6

⁵⁸⁹ 1 Tim 4:16

⁵⁹⁰ 2 Tim 1:13, 2:2

⁵⁹¹ Heb 1:1f

⁵⁹² Heb 2:3-4

⁵⁹³ Heb 2:1-3

⁵⁹⁴ Mirrored in Anglican liturgies today

⁵⁹⁵ Heb 3:7, 12-16; 4:7

1991:90).⁵⁹⁶ Hebrews concludes with a solemn exhortation summarising the call of the epistle, “do not refuse him who is speaking”, but instead to listen to Jesus who is the better word spoken by God.⁵⁹⁷

James calls his readers to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. He calls them to receive with meekness the implanted word from God and encourages them that this word is able to save their souls.⁵⁹⁸

The Johannine letters are prompted by a break-away group of false teachers who “went out from us”⁵⁹⁹ and had “gone out into the world”.⁶⁰⁰ Against this group, the author⁶⁰¹ writes to assure his readers that they “qualify for eternal life” (Marshall, 1978:5). He writes to give believers “certainty” (Stott 1960:50) in their relationship with the Lord calling them to remain in truth and to act in love (Eloff, 2016:22). In Johannine fashion his purpose is expressly stated,

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

This certainty is prefaced upon the eyewitness testimony of those who heard, saw and touched the ‘word of life’. The author is thus a hearer⁶⁰² who proclaims⁶⁰³ in order to be heard.⁶⁰⁴ What he proclaimed is summarised in 1 John 3:23,24,

And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

John assures his readers that those who hear the word⁶⁰⁵ that they heard, who believe in Jesus Christ, abide in him⁶⁰⁶ and who practice obedience to his commandments,⁶⁰⁷ especially the primacy of love,⁶⁰⁸ are the true followers of Christ and have eternal life.

⁵⁹⁶ Heb 4:11-13

⁵⁹⁷ Heb 12:18-28

⁵⁹⁸ Jam 1:19-21

⁵⁹⁹ 1 Joh 2:19

⁶⁰⁰ 2 Joh 7

⁶⁰¹ For a discussion on authorship see Yarbrough (2008:57). This research concurs with Yarbrough’s view that the style and vocabulary of the gospel and 1 John are so similar that a common author - the apostle John - is extremely likely.

⁶⁰² 1 Joh 1:5, 2:7, 3:11

⁶⁰³ 1 Joh 1:3,5; 4:5

⁶⁰⁴ 1 Joh 4:5-6

⁶⁰⁵ 1 Joh 1:1,2

⁶⁰⁶ 1 Joh 2:23, 4:2,15, 5:10,13

⁶⁰⁷ 1 Joh 3:22, 5:2-3

⁶⁰⁸ 1 Joh 3:11, 4:7-12, 5:1-3

4.3.11 The Revelation

The 'Revelation of Jesus Christ'⁶⁰⁹ acts as a finale to the metanarrative of salvation history by reaffirming the Bible's central message of Jesus Christ (Goldsworthy, 1984:23; Tenney & Dunnett, 1985:390). It reaffirms the major Biblical themes of the Lordship of Christ⁶¹⁰ and the culmination and completion of the covenant promises of God. This culmination is achieved by Jesus' death and resurrection which guarantees his victory over evil, suffering and death⁶¹¹ and culminates in the final return of Jesus to usher in the new creation.⁶¹² The book is designed as a call to patient, listening endurance in the face of suffering and persecution. The ascended, exalted, victorious Christ speaks⁶¹³ calling John to write what he has seen⁶¹⁴ so that the church may hear. Revelation calls its suffering readers to hold on to Christ by reading its message (aloud), hearing it and keeping it.⁶¹⁵ The writer, John, records himself as the one who has seen,⁶¹⁶ heard⁶¹⁷ and who faithfully records what he has seen and heard, so that the church may also respond, endure and keep the words of the book.⁶¹⁸ The church⁶¹⁹ is called to remember,⁶²⁰ to repent and to do,⁶²¹ not to fear but instead to be faithful,⁶²² to conquer,⁶²³ and to hold fast.⁶²⁴ All of these commands are prefaced upon the repeated injunction for the churches together to give ear and hear.⁶²⁵ This hearing makes faithfulness possible and brings with it the corresponding promise of re-established fellowship with the risen Christ.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Rev 3:20)

Beale (1999:234) points out that Revelation's repeated command, "the one who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," corresponds to the injunction given by the prophetic witness⁶²⁶ which is later echoed in the synoptic gospels.⁶²⁷

⁶⁰⁹ Rev 1:1

⁶¹⁰ Rev 1:12-19; 4:8,9; 5:9ff; 19:16; 20:11f

⁶¹¹ Rev 1:18; 2:8; 6:2; 11:15; 12:9ff; 14:1,14; 15:2ff; 18:2; 22:3

⁶¹² Rev 19-22).

⁶¹³ Rev 1:12

⁶¹⁴ Rev 1:1,19

⁶¹⁵ Rev 1:3

⁶¹⁶ Rev 1:2,12,17,19, 20; 4:15:1-11; 6:1-12; 7:1-9; 8:2,13; 9:1,17; 1-:1-5; 13:1-11; 14:1-14; 15:1-5; 16:13; 17:3-18; 18:1; 19:1-19; 20:1-12; 21:1,2; 21:22

⁶¹⁷ Rev 1:10; 4:1; 5:11; 6:1,3,5,6,7; 7:4; 8:13; 9:13,16; 10:4,8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:2,13; 16:1,5,7; 18:4; 19:1,6; 21:3, 22:8

⁶¹⁸ Rev 22:8

⁶¹⁹ I take it that the seven churches addressed in the opening letters are real churches with real issues but that they symbolically represent the entire church of God. Revelation then is addressed to all suffering Christians through the ages (Goldsworthy, 1984:75).

⁶²⁰ Rev 2:5; 3:3

⁶²¹ Rev 2:5,16; 3:3,19

⁶²² Rev 2:10

⁶²³ Rev 3:5,12,21

⁶²⁴ Rev 2:25,3:11

⁶²⁵ Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9

⁶²⁶ Isa 6:9-10, Ezek 3:27, 12:2; Jer 5:21

⁶²⁷ Matt 13:9-17, Mark 4:9,23; Luke 8:8

4.3.12 Conclusions from Normative Perspectives on the Preacher as Listener-to-the-Word

This section, developing normative perspectives, has conclusively established the validity of describing preaching as ‘asymmetrical, intersectional, quadrilateral listening.’ The sheer weight of the Biblical testimony to God’s call on humanity to listening-trusting-obedient-action must determine the definition of preaching and the direction of homiletical praxis. The Biblical testimony establishes that the people of God are primarily to be listeners to God whose activity is grounded in his love-expression of, “the drive towards the reunion of the separated” (Tillich, 1960:28). As such, homiletics cannot exist without listening-trusting-obedient-action and preachers are to exemplify this call they hear God in their community. The weight of the Scriptural testimony to this deep hearing of the inscripturated voice of God must set the direction for the homiletical conversation.

4.4 NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER-TO-THE-WORLD

4.4.1 Introduction

The second part of the research question seeks to investigate the preacher as listener-to-the world, when it asks, *do sermons preached within REACH-SA display...a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?*

This second section of the normative research will use considerations from the models of preaching provided by Moses the proto-preacher, models of preaching from the history of Israel, considerations from the preaching of Jesus and finally considerations from the New Testament praxis of preaching so as to allow good models to develop understanding of the preacher as listener-to-the-world (Osmer, 2008:152).⁶²⁸

4.4.2 Moses the Proto-Preacher.

The book of Exodus has two significant sections; It describes the actions of God in rescuing the Israelites from Egypt which is followed by the events and words at Mount Sinai as Yahweh calls the nation to himself.⁶²⁹ God is the central actor in Exodus fulfilling his covenant promises through the agency of Moses whom he commissions as his mouthpiece (Harris, 2008:140).⁶³⁰ As Exodus opens, Israel is numerous but enslaved.⁶³¹ God hears their groaning, sees their enslavement and remembers his promises.⁶³² God acts by preparing Moses and then calling and commissioning

⁶²⁸ The Bible’s elucidation of preaching is an immense task that can only be briefly attempted here. For more detailed attempts see Bonhoeffer (Fant 1975:123–26), Coggan (1945, 1987), Griffiths (2017), Meyer (2013), Mounce (1960).

⁶²⁹ Scholars differ as to where to divide the sections (Dillard & Longman, 1994:62). For example, see Enns (2000:33) who divides Ex 1-15; 16-24 compared to Ndjerareou (2006:86) who breaks Ex 1-18; 19-40.

⁶³⁰ Gen 12 & 15

⁶³¹ Ex 1

⁶³² Ex 2:24

him to rescue Israel.⁶³³ Moses hesitates, doubting his eloquence.⁶³⁴ Moses recognises that the call from God is a call to speak on behalf of him.⁶³⁵ God is not dissuaded by Moses' reticence, instead, by providing him the assistance of Aaron, he sends him to speak to the Israelites and to speak to Pharaoh.⁶³⁶ The calling of Moses marks a significant new development in God's dealing with humanity. Moses is commissioned as the proto-preacher, to speak a mediated, heard word from Yahweh to a fearful, enslaved people and to their political overlords. Previously in Genesis, God has spoken directly to the patriarchs but from this point forward his word will be mediated via preachers.⁶³⁷ Moses is firstly, to hear the authoritative voice of God, a point which is repeatedly made in the structure of Exodus, Leviticus (Kiuchi, 2007:25) and Numbers, where almost every section is prefaced with the phrase, "the LORD spoke to Moses,"⁶³⁸ and then secondly, having heard, Moses is to speak this heard word to the people.⁶³⁹ God's unmediated voice and presence induce fear in the people causing them to affirm Moses as the mediator who hears God and speaks in his place.⁶⁴⁰ Von Rad (1961:9) says,

What God had to say to Israel had to be mediated to the people by Moses, for Israel did not think itself capable of enduring the direct voice of God.

As proto-preacher Moses is called to preaching which Von Rad (1961:7) describes as paraclesis. He defines this as,

An exhortation in view of the indicative fact of salvation...Paraclesis is...a speech of exhortation directed to those who have already received the word of salvation. It has occasionally been said that paraclesis could be summed up in the phrase—become what you are.

Moses' preaching is to look backwards and forwards. He is to remind the Israelites of Yahweh's salvation⁶⁴¹ and then to set before them Yahweh's words for their daily obedience.⁶⁴² Initially all seems well, the nation declares their willingness to obey⁶⁴³ until the apostasy of the golden calf

⁶³³ Ex 3:4,10

⁶³⁴ Ex 4:10

⁶³⁵ Ex 3:13, 4:1,10,13

⁶³⁶ Ex 4:22-31

⁶³⁷ Ex 6:2-9

⁶³⁸ Ex :14:1,15; 16:11; 19:9; 20:1,22; 25:1; 30:11,17,22; 31:1; 32:7; 33:1,11, 17; 34:29; 40:1; Lev 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1,8,19,24; 7:22-29; 8:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1,33; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1; 22:17; 22:26; 23:1,9,23,26,33; 24:1,13; 25:1; 27:1; Num 1:1,48; 2:1; 3:5,11,14,44; 4:1,17,21; 5:1,5,11; 6:1,22; 8:1,5,23; 9:1,9; 10:1; 11:25; 13:1; 14:26; 15:1,17; 16:20,23,36,44; 17:1; 18:25; 19:1; 20:7; 25:10,16; 26:52; 28:1; 31:1; 33:50; 34:1,16; 35:1,9

⁶³⁹ Occasionally Moses is to speak to Aaron but most often to the people. Lev 1:2; 4:2; 6:25; 7:23,29; 9:3; 11:2; 12:2; 15:2; 16:2; 17:2; 18:2; 19:2; 21:17; 22:2,18; 23:2,10,24,34; 24:15,23; 25:2; 27:2; Num 5:6,12; 6:2,23; 8:2,10; 14:28; 15:2,18,38; 16:24; 17:2; 18:26; 27:8; 33:51; 35:10

⁶⁴⁰ Ex 20:19, Heb 12:18f Deut 5:27

⁶⁴¹ Ex 6:12; 14,15

⁶⁴² Ex 19:6,7

⁶⁴³ Ex 24:7

which results in Moses speaking God's word of judgement.⁶⁴⁴ As Exodus summarises the ministry of Moses, these two aspects of his proto-preaching task are emphasised – Moses received the words of God which he then spoke to the people.⁶⁴⁵

Deuteronomy gives the clearest description of Moses' preaching. The book presents itself as three sermons delivered by Moses on the Plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 1-4, 5-28, 29-32), with a concluding blessing (Miller, 1990:10–12),⁶⁴⁶ delivered a generation after the Exodus events.⁶⁴⁷ Block (2012:30) says that Deuteronomy presents itself as,

The record of a series of addresses delivered orally by Moses to his countrymen on the verge of crossing over into the Promised Land, and immediately committed to writing.

Moses has led the people. He has seen and heard their persistent, un-listening disobedience. He challenges them with their unfaithfulness and exhorts them to exclusive love of Yahweh in the light of Yahweh's great works of election, salvation and promise keeping.⁶⁴⁸

In the first sermon, recorded in Deuteronomy 1:1-4:40, Moses focuses on the Israelites' disobedience and the disappointments that followed Horeb. Moses reminds them of their history of disobedience and their failure to listen/obey, which prevented them from entering the land.⁶⁴⁹ Moses shows a significant understanding of their past. He has seen, heard and lived with them as a people. They were disobedient at Horeb in the golden calf event,⁶⁵⁰ they failed to enter the land at God's command⁶⁵¹ and they rebelled at Baal-Peor.⁶⁵² Despite their disobedience they have witnessed the ongoing actions of God in the defeats of kings Sihon and Og. The sermon concludes with exhortation as Moses calls the nation to "attention and adherence", to listen, to keep and to do (Miller, 1990:54).⁶⁵³ Moses' preaching is an encouragement to obey in the light of God's faithfulness but the sermon is pessimistic as Moses foresees their inability and their ongoing disobedience.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁴⁴ Ex 32:26f Moses acts as mediator for the nation (Ex 32,33) indicating that he is more than the prophet and proto-preacher but this is outside the scope of this study.

⁶⁴⁵ Ex 34:29-35

⁶⁴⁶ Millar (1998:45–47) proposes an alternative structure. He proposes ch 1-11 - Israel at the place of decision; ch 12-26 - the decision spelled out; ch 27-34 - the outcome of the decision. He is endeavouring to analyse the book giving appropriate emphasis to the laws contained in the central section of the book and to the latter chapter ch 27-34 rather than treating these as an addendum or appendix.

⁶⁴⁷ Deut 1:5, 4:44-49, 29:1

⁶⁴⁸ Deut 6:4

⁶⁴⁹ Deut 1:26,35

⁶⁵⁰ Exo 32

⁶⁵¹ Num 13,14

⁶⁵² Deut 2-4

⁶⁵³ Deut 4:1-40

⁶⁵⁴ Deut 4:25-30

In the second sermon, which forms the bulk of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:44-28:68), Moses describes his preaching ministry using the words 'teach'⁶⁵⁵ and more prominently 'command'.⁶⁵⁶ Moses' preaching is a further explanation of the actions of God in salvation and an explanation of the command from God as he teaches them to listen/obey him. Moses, the proto-preacher, reminds them again of the actions of God in the Exodus salvation and issues the command of Yahweh to obedience.⁶⁵⁷ They are called to the exclusive worship of Yahweh,⁶⁵⁸ they are called to remember the past actions of God,⁶⁵⁹ to witness the present and future activity of God,⁶⁶⁰ and they are called to respond in listening-obedience to the teachings presented to them in the sermon. It is a striking feature of Moses' understanding of his ministry that he is the teacher of God's commands, personally under the commandment of God and issuing the commandment of God, in order that the nation may learn it and obey it.⁶⁶¹

In the third and final speech,⁶⁶² Moses calls the nation again to covenant faithfulness. He does this by retelling the story of the nation's history,⁶⁶³ exhorting them to 'keep the words of the covenant' and warning them from turning away from Yahweh.⁶⁶⁴ He holds out hope in the face of disobedience⁶⁶⁵ and exhorts them to,

*Choose life...loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him
(Deuteronomy 30:19).*

In obedience to Yahweh's command, Moses composes and recites/sings a song as a witness and reminder to the people.⁶⁶⁶ Moses' preaching uses both information and music to teach truth about God, to aid memory of him,⁶⁶⁷ to warn of disobedience and to encourage covenant obedience to God's words.⁶⁶⁸ The song is once again underpinned by the tragic expectation of failure by the Israelites due to the hardness of their hearts.⁶⁶⁹ This pessimism is founded on the truth that although they have seen the acts of God in history, they do not have hearts willing to

⁶⁵⁵ Deut 4:1,5,10,14; 5:1,31; 6:1; 31:12,19,22

⁶⁵⁶ Deut 3:18, 21; 4:2,14,40; 6:1,6; 7:11; 8:1,11; 10:13; 11:8,13,22,27,28; 12:11,14,21,28,32; 13:18; 15:5,11,15; 19:7,9; 24:8,18,22; 27:1,4,10; 28:1,13,15

⁶⁵⁷ Deut 5:1-30

⁶⁵⁸ Deut 5:7; 6:1-15; 10:12; 11:1

⁶⁵⁹ Deut 6:16; 8:2-4; 9:13f; 10:1f; 16:1f

⁶⁶⁰ Deut 7:1-3; 8:5-11; 9:1ff; 12:29; 17:14f; 18:9; 18:15f; 19:1f; 20:1f; 21:10f; 26:1f

⁶⁶¹ Deut 5:31

⁶⁶² Deut 29:1-33:29, Some scholars divide this speech into two separate speeches with the final speech beginning at Deut 33:1. For an example see Miller (1990).

⁶⁶³ Deut 29:2ff

⁶⁶⁴ Deut 29:9-13; 18-28

⁶⁶⁵ Deut 30:1-10

⁶⁶⁶ Deut 31:19,30; 32:44

⁶⁶⁷ Deut 32:4, 8-14, 19-27, 39-42

⁶⁶⁸ Deut 32:1-2, 15-42

⁶⁶⁹ Deut 30:1,2; 8-10; 31:19-22, 27; 32:15-21, 28-30

obey.⁶⁷⁰ The final speech summarises the promises of life and blessing associated with obedience, and the warning of death and destruction associated with turning away from God.⁶⁷¹

Features of the proto-preaching of Moses include:

- Preaching is from God and rooted in obedience to God's word and command.
- Preaching reminds of the historical story. The preacher highlights the historical actions of God as the basis for present obedience even as the preacher observes their hearers' inability and failure.
- Preaching is didactic. The preacher explains Yahweh's actions and ethical expectations to a particular people in a particular context.
- Preaching contains hortatory exhortation and encouragement to hearing-obedience in a lived context. It contains warnings for disobedience and the promise of blessing for obedience.
- Music and singing are interconnected with preaching to aid memory and appropriation.

4.4.3 Israelite History: Kings, Prophets, Levites and Priests

As Israel demanded 'a king like the nations' and rejected the rule of Yahweh, God raised prophets to convey his voice to the king.⁶⁷² By the eighth and seventh centuries, the prophetic ministry had broadened to include the divided nations of Israel and Judah and some of the surrounding nations (La Sor et al., 1982:302-303). This movement in prophetic message from king to nation is reflected in spoken prophecy increasingly being written down, in order to distribute the message to a wider audience and to negate the ever-increasing reality of false prophets (Gruden, 2000:702; La Sor et al., 1982:303). Each prophet's calling and initiation was unique. They were commissioned, often tested,⁶⁷³ given the word of Yahweh and commanded to speak.⁶⁷⁴ The prophets' primary function was to speak for Yahweh as his messengers. This is evident in the recurring phrases, "Thus says the LORD" and "The word of the LORD came to..." (Carlson 2017:16). Grudem (2000:701) says, "The prophet has no message of his (her) own but can only report the message God has given..."

The prophets were conscious that the message they authoritatively announced was God's word that they had heard and received (Greidanus, 1988:2, Quicke, 2003: 20). Despite the assurance of God's authority underlying their message, the prophets recognised that their task was not simply to provide information but to cultivate curiosity in their listeners, facilitate retention of their

⁶⁷⁰ Deut 29:4

⁶⁷¹ Deut 30:15-20

⁶⁷² 1 Sam 8:1-9

⁶⁷³ See for example Jer 1:11; Amos 7:8,8:2; Zech 4:2,5:2

⁶⁷⁴ See for example Isa 6; Jer 1, Eze 2; Hos 1:2; Joel 1; Amos 1:3; Oba 1; Jon 1:2

message, and persuade their listeners to hear and obey (Carlson, 2017:60;75). Their message is summarised by Azariah, when speaking to Asa and Judah he says,

Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you (2 Chronicles 15:2).

Zechariah similarly challenges Judah when he said,

Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you' (2 Chronicles 24:20).

The writer of 2 Kings summarises the prophets' message,

Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets (2 Kings 17:13).

The prophetic message is covenant-centred looking back to Yahweh's previous deeds and words (Dumbrell, 1988:107). The prophets challenge breaches of the covenant stipulations and urge their audiences to return to covenant faithfulness and the God of the covenant (Dumbrell, 1988:107). In continuity with Moses, the prophetic message re-emphasises the blessings of faithfulness and the consequences of judgement associated with not hearing, nor obeying. The prophetic message is thus a paraenetic call to wholehearted Yahweh devotion and a solemn warning in the face of repeated apostasy.

The prophetic task went beyond warning to include a declaration of comfort and the promise of a new covenant.⁶⁷⁵ This comfort included the reassurance of God's faithfulness despite their wickedness and the prospect of a new hope (Carlson 2017:32-35; Sailhamer, 2006:120). The prophets often spoke in poetic oracles so that many of the written prophetic books are overlapping collections of speech events. Isaiah and Jeremiah contain compendiums of interconnected oracles of judgement, with oracles of salvation, presumably preached over a variety of occasions. Some of the prophetic words are recorded at length while many others are simply recorded in summary or via a very brief statement;⁶⁷⁶ consider Jonah's (Jonah 3:4), "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Prophetic ministry was widespread and included schools of

⁶⁷⁵ Isa 40-66; Jer 31:31

⁶⁷⁶ 2 Chron 15:2; 19:2,3; 24:19

secondary prophets affiliated with the major prophets (Grudem, 2000:702-703).⁶⁷⁷ Yahweh often called the prophets to unique and unusual actions accompanying their preached word⁶⁷⁸ and the prophets' message was often exemplified in their personal lives and experience (Carlson 2017:127-139).⁶⁷⁹

During this epoch, the prophets are not the totality of God's word given to his people. They were complimented by Levites and priests who were to teach the law given at Sinai. Yahweh commissioned Aaron, commanding him to teach his statutes spoken to Moses.⁶⁸⁰ Moses reiterated this teaching function for the Levites in his final blessing.⁶⁸¹ The Chronicler records Jehoshaphat sending officials, Levites and priests to teach the people from the book of the law.⁶⁸² This practice falls into disuse but occurs again under Josiah.⁶⁸³ In addition to their sacrificial functions, the priests were to be instructors of the 'book of the law' and guardians of knowledge.⁶⁸⁴ They read the law aloud, studied it and taught it,⁶⁸⁵ explaining its meaning to help people to understand and obey.⁶⁸⁶

Features of public proclamation during Israelite history include:

- Prophets were conscious of their words being a word from God.
- The prophetic message is rooted in hearing its world. It is aware of national apostasy and is a call back to covenant faithfulness.
- The prophetic message is pessimistic of obedience and looks forward in hope to a new/different covenant future of the heart.
- Levites, priest (and prophets) acted as teachers of God's law.

4.4.4 Jesus

Attempts to gain normative perspectives on preaching from the ministry of Jesus seem appealing. Stitzinger (2005:30) says that Christ is the "model of preaching." Abendroth (2008:14) concurs when he says,

We must preach and we must do so as Jesus the prince of preachers did. We must also measure excellence in preaching by comparing all preachers to Jesus himself.

⁶⁷⁷ 1 Sam 10:5, 1 Kings:18:4, 2 Kings 2:3-7; 4:38

⁶⁷⁸ Consider Isaiah's nakedness (Isa 20:4), Ezekiel lying on his side for 390 days while cooking his food on cow dung (Ezekiel 4) and Hosea repeatedly taking a wife of unfaithfulness amongst many others.

⁶⁷⁹ See for example Hosea and Jeremiah.

⁶⁸⁰ Lev 10:11

⁶⁸¹ Deut 33:10

⁶⁸² 2 Chron 17:7-9

⁶⁸³ 2 Chron 35:3

⁶⁸⁴ Mal 2:7

⁶⁸⁵ Ezra 7:10

⁶⁸⁶ Neh 8:7-9; 9:3

Similarly Daane (1980:6) argues that,

Both what Jesus says and how he says it point to the awesome mystery of the nature of proclamation.

Jesus' preaching praxis is however profoundly complex. What is uncontested is that Jesus saw himself as a preacher, announcing the arrival of the kingdom of God.⁶⁸⁷ He courted controversy by prioritising his preaching ministry over healing.⁶⁸⁸ His message was described as 'the gospel'⁶⁸⁹ (Seccombe, 2002:191) which he proclaimed and taught in the synagogues.⁶⁹⁰ Mark summarises his preaching as an announcement of the 'Kingdom of God' with its corresponding call to 'repent and believe the gospel/good news'.⁶⁹¹ Frustratingly, he then records very little of what Jesus actually said in this announcement or how Jesus went about saying it (Edwards 2002:13; Seccombe 2002:156). Wells and Luter (2002:45) note that the phrase 'kingdom of God' occurs seventy-five times in the gospels but also note that Jesus never defines it instead expecting his listeners to understand what he was declaring. Luke records Jesus preaching in the Nazareth synagogue⁶⁹² at the beginning of his ministry, where 'as was his custom',⁶⁹³ he got up to read and preach. Luke records that Jesus read from the Hebrew Scriptures but then, frustratingly, he too summarises Jesus' entire sermon⁶⁹⁴ into the phrase, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:21) (Nolland, 1989:198).

In addition to the title 'preacher' the gospels repeatedly describe Jesus' ministry using the term teaching (*διδασκειν*).⁶⁹⁵ This is especially prevalent in Mark's account.⁶⁹⁶ Stein (1996:123) asserts that there are more than forty occasions in the gospels when Jesus is described as a teacher. Jesus' teaching was without peer, it was infused with authority and learning and astounded those who heard it (Wells, 2002:46-48).⁶⁹⁷ Much of his teaching was to ordinary people and to 'outsiders' which led to the constant irritation of the 'insiders' and religious authorities.⁶⁹⁸ Jesus' teaching contained incredible diversity in style. Stein (1996:124) records numerous literary forms found in

⁶⁸⁷ Wells and Luter (2002:44) say, "Modern scholarship, which agrees on almost *nothing* else, "is quite unanimous in the opinion that the kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus."

⁶⁸⁸ Mark 1:38

⁶⁸⁹ See Seccombe (2002: 191-194) for an elaboration of Jesus understanding of himself as fulfilment of the Isaiah gosseller (Isaiah 52:7-8; Isaiah 61:1).

⁶⁹⁰ Matt 4:23-28

⁶⁹¹ Mark 1:15

⁶⁹² Luke 4:18f

⁶⁹³ Luke 4:15,16

⁶⁹⁴ This sermon is sometimes called the 'Nazareth Manifesto'.

⁶⁹⁵ France (2007:302) identifies the distinction presented in Matthew between "proclaiming the good news" and "teaching in the synagogues" suggesting that this is not simply repetition. Instead, he suggests that proclaiming is informal preaching to gathered crowds while teaching is a more formal opportunity to speak in a synagogue. France goes on to suggest that there is unlikely to have been a significant difference in content

⁶⁹⁶ Mark 2:13; 4:1,2; 6:2, 6; 6:34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35; 14:47

⁶⁹⁷ Matt 7:28-29; 13:54; 22:33; Mark 1:22; 6:2; 11:18; Luke 4:32

⁶⁹⁸ Matt 9:13, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:32

Jesus' teaching ranging from poetry, hyperbole, puns, similes, metaphors, riddles, paradox, irony and questioning techniques.

The analysis of Jesus' preaching and teaching in this normative study will loosely follow Matthew's broad arrangement and then conclude with some unique Johannine material.

4.4.4.1 The Sermon on the Mount/Plain

Matthew and Luke record Jesus' most famous sermon - the 'Sermon on the Mount/Sermon on the Plain'.⁶⁹⁹ The differences in their record creates questions about whether this was a single sermon perhaps delivered on multiple occasions, or whether each author has constructed a crafted, redacted composition of multiple sermons to suit the writer's own narrative purposes. Much has been written on the purpose of the sermons as scholars have tried to establish what Jesus was trying to achieve.⁷⁰⁰ Matthew tells us that having seen the crowd, Jesus was teaching his disciples.⁷⁰¹ Any analysis of the sermons will notice their deep connections with the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus is presented as a new Moses, on a new Sinai (Ratzinger, 2007:65-66). The sermon is presented as a fulfilment of the 'Law and the Prophets'.⁷⁰² The sermon is not based on a single Hebrew text but is instead saturated with themes from the Torah and shaped by major themes from the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah 40-66 (Seccombe, 2002:253).⁷⁰³ The sermon shows the shape of life for those who embrace the 'kingdom of heaven' and offers a vision of an alternative world, so startling, as to appear foolish (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:119). The sermon shows considerable understanding of the world to which it is spoken when it announces new attitudes,⁷⁰⁴ uproots socially held truths,⁷⁰⁵ shapes political, religious and economic values,⁷⁰⁶ and determines the norms of kingdom behaviour as it disorients and shocks its hearers into a new kingdom-shaped righteousness (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:119).⁷⁰⁷

A second noticeable feature of the sermon is the authoritative nature of the declarations, which emanate from Jesus himself and the implied identification of the speaker that these declarations carry. A casual reader of the sermon might describe Jesus' address as self-absorbed, perhaps even narcissistic or egomaniacal. The sermon is punctuated with authoritative assertions, "You have heard that it was said...but I say to you," which seem in contradiction to the voice of Yahweh

⁶⁹⁹ Matt 5-7, Luke 6:12-49

⁷⁰⁰ See Seccombe (2002:249-63) or Carson (1978:151-57) for a further discussion.

⁷⁰¹ Matt 5:1,2

⁷⁰² Matt 5:17

⁷⁰³ Seccombe (2002:253) lists these themes as, "the Messiah as teacher, the declaration of the gospel from the mountain, the gathering of Israel, the salvation of the poor, the kingdom of God, satisfying the hungry, giving gladness and laughter to those who weep and mourn, the reproach of people, being cast out for the sake of the Servant's name, reward, consolation, the importance of hearing, the blind and those who see, turning the other cheek, the mercy of God, the coming of the light, obedience to the Servant."

⁷⁰⁴ Matt 5:3-9

⁷⁰⁵ Matt 5:18, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:2, 5,16; 7:4

⁷⁰⁶ Matt 5:21-48

⁷⁰⁷ Matt 5-7

recorded in the Torah.⁷⁰⁸ Little wonder then that the crowd was ‘astonished at his teaching’.⁷⁰⁹ The sermon concludes with a call for the listeners to hear, listen and build their lives in obedience to these very words of Jesus.⁷¹⁰ Jesus is thus introduced, not simply as a prophet like Moses, nor as a kingdom preacher but as the divine, messianic king, declaring the arrival of the ‘kingdom of heaven’ to his context with a corresponding demand for listening, trusting obedience to him and his words.

4.4.4.2 The Missionary Discourse

Jesus’ preaching-teaching ministry is never intended to be conducted by himself alone (Green 1988:128). He is the good shepherd who has compassion on his sheep⁷¹¹ and so he mobilises his disciples, sending them on mission. Matthew 10 presents Jesus instructing (*παραινέλλω*) his disciples for this immediate task of mission. Matthew collects together material scattered amongst the other gospels, which may indicate that the material was given on various occasions (France 1985:174). Jesus delegates his authority and power to his disciples⁷¹² and calls them to proclaim (*κηρύσσω*) the arrival of the ‘kingdom of heaven’.⁷¹³ They are to embark on the mission frugally and urgently, taking no additional supplies.⁷¹⁴ They are to expect difficulty, suffering and persecution.⁷¹⁵ They are to endure persecution,⁷¹⁶ operating without fear,⁷¹⁷ having an eschatological expectation⁷¹⁸ and knowing that their message will be divisive to their hearers as well as personally costly.⁷¹⁹ Jesus sees himself as the focus and goal of their mission. He is to be received, acknowledged, loved and followed.⁷²⁰ The disciples’ proclamation is to be initially received from Jesus,⁷²¹ it is to bear witness (*μαρτυριον*) to Jesus⁷²² and is to be about Jesus.⁷²³

4.4.4.3 Storytelling: Normative Perspectives from the Preaching of Jesus

Jesus used stories extensively in his preaching. His storytelling primarily takes the form of parables which are defined as short, succinct, allegorical stories designed to teach and convey truth. The Synoptic gospels contain extensive references to Jesus’ parables. Edwards (2002:127) says that parables were Jesus’ preferred form of public teaching. Ratzinger (2007:183) concurs

⁷⁰⁸ Matt 5:18, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:2, 5,16; 7:4

⁷⁰⁹ Matt 7:28

⁷¹⁰ Matt 7:24-27

⁷¹¹ Matt 9:36

⁷¹² Matt 10:1,8

⁷¹³ Matt 10:7

⁷¹⁴ Matt 10:8-10

⁷¹⁵ Matt 10:17-39

⁷¹⁶ Matt 10:22-23

⁷¹⁷ Matt 10:26,28,31

⁷¹⁸ Matt 10:15,23,26,32,41-42

⁷¹⁹ Matt 10:34-39

⁷²⁰ Matt 10:32-40

⁷²¹ Matt 10:7,27

⁷²² Matt 10:18,22

⁷²³ Matt 10:32-42

saying that, “parables constitute the heart of Jesus’ preaching.” Mark, the gospel writer, summarises Jesus’ preaching as ‘parables’ when he says,

*With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.
He did not speak to them without a parable (Mark 4:33,34).*

Frustratingly, Mark records only four of Jesus’ parables⁷²⁴ but this is supplemented by both Matthew⁷²⁵ and Luke⁷²⁶ who contain extensive blocks of parables spoken by Jesus. Parables are not exclusive to Jesus, they do occur at other places in the Hebrew Scriptures⁷²⁷ but the uniqueness of Jesus’ parables is seen in both their quantity and their centrality to his preaching ministry (Edwards, 2002:127). Seccombe (2002:321) draws attention to the uniqueness of Jesus’ parabolic preaching when he says,

In their quality and in their sheer number, Jesus’ parables are unique. There never has been a parable maker like him. If you did nothing else with him, you would have to give him a place in the ‘literary’ history of the world.

The church has long struggled with ‘the’ interpretation of Jesus’ parables and whether a single interpretation of a parable is possible or advisable (Ratzinger, 2007:184). It is commonly held that parables are explanatory and are presented in order to make understanding easier. Modern readers often regard parables as illustrative stories, and thus their purpose becomes a didactic methodology used in order to improve communication. Edwards (2002:127) cites this common understanding of parables as, “Something that is placed alongside something else for the purpose of clarification.” This understanding of parables comes from observing the content of Jesus’ parables, which were taken from his personal life context. He displayed significant listening awareness of his own surroundings and culture, closely observing human interaction and activity. His hearers would have known sowers, fields, fishing, weddings, markets, masters, dishonesty and rebellious sons. Jesus’ parables, while presenting themselves as immediately understandable, were however never intended as illustrations of truth. This is especially evident in the way in which he is described as presenting his parables. On occasions, Jesus would simply tell the parable, and then stop speaking without further explanation of its meaning.⁷²⁸ This must have left his hearers confounded and confused. This method itself was an essential part of Jesus’ preaching strategy as recorded in the Synoptic accounts of the foundational parable-of-the-sower.⁷²⁹ Matthew, Mark and Luke present Jesus as teaching a large crowd. They then record him

⁷²⁴ Mark 4,12

⁷²⁵ Matt 13-25

⁷²⁶ Luke 10-20

⁷²⁷ Jud 9:7-15, 14:14; 2 Sam 12:1-14, 14:1; 1 King 20:35-40; 2 King 14:9; Isa 5:1-6; Eze 14:2-9; 17:1-10, 24:3-5

⁷²⁸ Mark 4:9,33,34

⁷²⁹ Matt 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-10

delivering the parable and ending without any explanation of its meaning. However, during his presentation, Jesus called people to listen and have, “ears to hear.”⁷³⁰ Matthew and Mark then present an essential intercalation into the narrative in order to explain Jesus’ intention in his parabolic preaching method. The parables are designed to be intentionally unclear, ambiguous and unfinished (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:113) and are thus used by him to divide his listeners into ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.⁷³¹ Jesus’ parables are designed to be open-ended and unsettling. They reframe the world by inviting their hearers into the mystery of the ‘kingdom of God’. This mystery is given to ‘insiders’ but kept from ‘outsiders’ (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:114).⁷³² Being an ‘insider’ is fundamentally interconnected with the person of Jesus. It is relational and personal, and is reflected in the listener hearing, seeking and responding to Jesus’ teaching by coming to him for further explanation. The people who listen to Jesus and ask him for an explanation of the parable are then freely given its meaning as they encounter *him*.⁷³³ The parables are thus intended to draw listeners into a relational identification with Jesus as the one to be heard and obeyed. Fundamental to this identification was,

The personal realization that their heart needed to be open to Jesus word, that they must hang on to it at all costs (Seccombe 2002:332–33).

Snodgrass (2004:59) says,

Jesus’ parables were intended to enable hearing and elicit a response. They assume a hermeneutics of hearing, one that calls for depth listening and includes a hermeneutics of obedience.

‘Insiders’ thus hear (and continue to hear) Jesus, believe in him and bear fruit in their contexts while ‘outsiders’ fail to hear and because they do not listen, they do not come to Jesus and are thus excluded from the kingdom (Edwards, 2002:131).

4.4.4.4 The Sermon of Woes

The Sermon of Woes, recorded in Matthew 23:1-36 and Luke 11:42-52, is another sermon of significance; in it, Jesus publicly denounces the scribes, teachers-of-the-law and the Pharisees to the crowds and his disciples. Importantly, in Matthew,⁷³⁴ this follows the confrontation with the Pharisees on the identity of the Messiah⁷³⁵ which stands at the heart of the gospel (Carson,

⁷³⁰ Matt 13:10-17, Mark 4:9f

⁷³¹ Mark 4:11-12

⁷³² Matt 13:11, Mark 4:11, Luke 8:9-10

⁷³³ The ‘parable of the sower’ contains the command to *akouein* (Mark 4:15,17,18-19). This command to hear is in the aorist tense in contrast to Mark 4:20 where the aorist gives way to the present tense. Those that bear fruit show an ongoing continual hearing (Edwards 2002:137–38) of the words of Jesus.

⁷³⁴ See Carson (1984:469) for a discussion of some of the difficulties associated with its structure in the context of Matthew

⁷³⁵ Matt 22:41-46

1984:470). Prophetically, having heard his world,⁷³⁶ Jesus issued a divine warning on their hypocritical adherence to public religion⁷³⁷ rather than a devoted love for God⁷³⁸ and their advancement of self⁷³⁹ rather than a love for others⁷⁴⁰ which flowed from their wilful rejection of the prophetic warnings⁷⁴¹ and led to a failure to recognise Jesus the Messiah.⁷⁴² The differences in contexts presented between Matthew's and Luke's records of the Sermon of Woes suggests that Jesus' denouncing of the scribes and Pharisees might have happened on repeated occasions. Whether we follow Carson's (1984:477) chiastic structure for the seven woes or Turner's (2008:863) three pairs with a climactic conclusion, what is emphasised, is Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees because they have not rightly understood the Old Testament Scriptures (Carson, 1984:477).⁷⁴³ This has led to their failure to rightly identify Jesus as the Messiah and a failure to live in response to his arrival.⁷⁴⁴

4.4.4.5 Discourse and Conversation

On numerous occasions the gospel writers record Jesus teaching by discourse and conversation in response to questions that are posed to him.⁷⁴⁵ These exchanges are sometimes in private with his disciples but more usually they are public. The tone of these discourses and conversations is occasionally friendly but more usually they are veiled conflicts precipitated by the religious authorities that become 'sharper and more theological' (Carson 1984:347) as the question, counter-question and reply from Jesus unfolds (Buttrick 1987:480). The initial impetus for this teaching comes from a presenting issue⁷⁴⁶ or a question that is posed to Jesus, what Buttrick (1987:405) calls 'preaching in the Praxis Mode'. During these controversies Jesus displays a broad understanding of his own context when he addresses a wide range of ethical and theological issues ranging from his own identity and authority,⁷⁴⁷ his death and resurrection⁷⁴⁸ the status of John the Baptist,⁷⁴⁹ discipleship,⁷⁵⁰ the fate of his listeners⁷⁵¹ and the cities in which he worked,⁷⁵² appropriate Sabbath behaviour,⁷⁵³ the desire for a sign from the Messiah,⁷⁵⁴ radical

⁷³⁶ Cf Isaiah 5:8-23 and Habakkuk 2:6-20; see also Revelation 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 12:12; 18:10-19

⁷³⁷ Matt 23:5, Luke 11:38

⁷³⁸ Matt 22:37

⁷³⁹ Matt 23:6

⁷⁴⁰ Matt 22:39

⁷⁴¹ Matt 23:34, Luke 11:47-51

⁷⁴² Matt 22:46, Luke 11:29

⁷⁴³ Matt 23:19,23,25-26

⁷⁴⁴ Matt 23:13

⁷⁴⁵ Or on occasion by him. See Mark 10:35-37

⁷⁴⁶ See for example the mission of the disciples in Matthew 10

⁷⁴⁷ Matt 21:23, Mark 11:28, Luke 20:2

⁷⁴⁸ Matt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; Mark 8:31-33, 9:32-34,10:32-34

⁷⁴⁹ Matt 11:7-15

⁷⁵⁰ Mark 8:34-38

⁷⁵¹ Matt 11:16-19

⁷⁵² Matt 11:20-24

⁷⁵³ Matt 12:1-8

⁷⁵⁴ Matt 12:38-42, Mark 8:11-13

holiness,⁷⁵⁵ traditions and commandment,⁷⁵⁶ cleanliness,⁷⁵⁷ human conflict,⁷⁵⁸ divorce, singleness and marriage,⁷⁵⁹ entering eternity and wealth,⁷⁶⁰ paying tax⁷⁶¹ and heavenly marriage after the resurrection.⁷⁶² These interchanges, are again recorded only in brief summary but they typically contain two significant and familiar features. Firstly, the answers are soaked in Old Testament Scripture. Two brief examples will suffice. When the Pharisees and teachers-of-the-law pose the question, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.”⁷⁶³ Jesus replies by quoting from Exodus 20:12 and 21:17, ‘Honour your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ He then continues his answer with a quote from Isaiah 29:13,

This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Another example of Jesus' answer being grounded in Old Testament foundations is when he is questioned on divorce and remarriage.⁷⁶⁴ Jesus answers by quoting God's revealed plan for marriage as recorded in the creation accounts in Genesis 1:27.

Secondly, in Jesus' discourses it is significant to notice that the focus of his answers is repeatedly his own person. As a rich young man questions him on the way to 'inherit eternal life' Jesus points him away from his wealth and towards himself when he calls him to “Sell all that you have and give to the poor...and *come follow me*.”⁷⁶⁵ Lane (1974:368) rightly says that, “Jesus' demand is radical in character. He claims the man utterly and completely.”

All three synoptic writers record the longest of the responsive discourses.⁷⁶⁶ In it, Jesus teaches his disciples about the 'end of the age' in response to their observations of the temple's grandeur. Jesus speaks in typically prophetic style of the temple's destruction. The disciples interpret this as synonymous with the Messianic return and the culmination of human history (Carson 1984:495).⁷⁶⁷ Whether the interpreter holds a dispensational view, the view that the destruction of Jerusalem serves as a foreshadowing of the second advent, the view that the disciples foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem and the Eschaton as simultaneous events, or any other of the many

⁷⁵⁵ Mark 9:42-50

⁷⁵⁶ Matt 15:1-9, Mark 7:1-13

⁷⁵⁷ Matt 15:10-20, Mark 7:14-23

⁷⁵⁸ Matt 18:15-20

⁷⁵⁹ Matt 19:1-11, Mark 10:1-12

⁷⁶⁰ Mat 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31

⁷⁶¹ Matt 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17

⁷⁶² Matt 22:23-33, Mark 12:18-27

⁷⁶³ Matt 15; Mark 7

⁷⁶⁴ Matt 19:3-9, Mark 10:1-12

⁷⁶⁵ Mark 10:17-22

⁷⁶⁶ Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21

⁷⁶⁷ Matt 24:3

proposed views, what is immediately apparent is that Jesus' answer is once again saturated in Old Testament thought and intentionally self-conscious. Old Testament thought is everywhere present in the language concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.⁷⁶⁸ The language of 'birth pains' is a common Old Testament descriptor of suffering prior to Israel's deliverance;⁷⁶⁹ the abomination of desolation is present in Daniel's visions;⁷⁷⁰ the proverb regarding the vultures and the corpse;⁷⁷¹ heavenly shaking; mourning of the nation⁷⁷² and the language of the 'Son of Man'⁷⁷³ all come from the Old Testament. In addition, Jesus' answer is substantively focused on himself when he says, 'many will come in my name',⁷⁷⁴ 'you will be hated by all for my name's sake',⁷⁷⁵ 'then they will see the son of man coming in the cloud'⁷⁷⁶ and 'My words will not pass away'.⁷⁷⁷

4.4.4.6 Johannine Image Discourses

A final significant component of Jesus' preaching and teaching comes primarily from John's gospel record. John does not record the parables but instead records a number of "extended discourses built around images" (Ratzinger 2007:219). In a variety of contexts, Jesus presented declarations about his identity with corresponding miraculous signs in order that his listeners might believe.⁷⁷⁸ He declared himself to be 'the bread of life',⁷⁷⁹ 'the light of the world',⁷⁸⁰ 'the door/gate for the sheep',⁷⁸¹ 'the good shepherd',⁷⁸² 'the resurrection and the life',⁷⁸³ 'the way, the truth and the life',⁷⁸⁴ and to be the 'true vine'.⁷⁸⁵ Some have argued for a Gnostic influence behind these images (Ratzinger, 2007:219) but this seems unlikely given the rich Old Testament imagery embedded within them. The images of bread,⁷⁸⁶ light,⁷⁸⁷ good and bad shepherds,⁷⁸⁸ life,⁷⁸⁹ the way⁷⁹⁰ and the true vine⁷⁹¹ are all themes present in the Old Testament and it is these images that Jesus appropriates to identify himself to listeners who would understand their intent. John thus presents

⁷⁶⁸ See for example Jer 26:6,18; Mic 3:12

⁷⁶⁹ Isaiah 13:8, 26:17, Jer 4:31, 6:24, 22:23; Micah 4:9-10

⁷⁷⁰ Dan 8:13,9:27,11:31,12:11

⁷⁷¹ Job 39:30

⁷⁷² Zech 12:10-12

⁷⁷³ Dan 7:13-14

⁷⁷⁴ Matt 24:5; Mark 6:13; Luke 21:8

⁷⁷⁵ Matt 24:27 Mark 13v26 Luke 21:12-17

⁷⁷⁶ Matt 24:31; Mark 13v26, Luke 21:27

⁷⁷⁷ Matt 24:35; Mark 13v31 Luke 21:33

⁷⁷⁸ John 20:31

⁷⁷⁹ John 6:35,48,51

⁷⁸⁰ John 8:12

⁷⁸¹ John 10:7-9

⁷⁸² John 10:11-14

⁷⁸³ John 11:25

⁷⁸⁴ John 14:5-6

⁷⁸⁵ John 15:1,5

⁷⁸⁶ Isa 55:1-2

⁷⁸⁷ Gen 1; Exod 13; Ps 24:1, 44:3; Isa 42:6, 49:6, 60:19-22

⁷⁸⁸ Ps 23:1, 80; Is 40:11; Ezek 34:12, 23; 37:24; Zech 13:7

⁷⁸⁹ Gen 1,2

⁷⁹⁰ Ps 119

⁷⁹¹ Is 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:17,19; Hos 10:1. In the Old Testament Israel is the vine but the image is always used of Israel as apostate and degenerative (Bruner 2012:895). Jesus is presented as the new, faithful and true vine.

Jesus' preaching as containing image-rich, vibrant metaphors drawn from Old Testament Scripture which correspond to everyday life and are then used as declarations of his identity. Bruner (2012:812) has described the central component of Jesus' image discourses as 'Christoexclusivity' which demands a human response.

Features of the preaching/teaching of Jesus include:

- Jesus' preaching/teaching was centred on a declaration of his identity, mission and kingdom.
- Jesus' preaching was derived from and soaked in Old Testament Scripture.
- Jesus' preaching used diverse styles and different techniques so as to connect with his hearers.
- Jesus' preaching was rich in imagery. Brown and Powery (2016:164) describe Jesus' preaching as "evocative, metaphorical and vivid". It was drawn from both the Old Testament, as well as his listeners' experience, and was designed to appeal to the mind, emotion and will of his hearers.

4.4.5 The Acts of the Apostles

Acts provides a significant array of early Christian preaching. Petersen (2009:28) estimates that approximately one-third of the book is devoted to these speeches. There are minor addresses by both Christians⁷⁹² and unbelievers,⁷⁹³ major addresses by Stephen⁷⁹⁴ and James,⁷⁹⁵ and seventeen addresses given by the book's two major figures - Peter and Paul. Peter delivers eight addresses⁷⁹⁶ and Paul nine.⁷⁹⁷ Luke makes no claim to a verbatim recording of these addresses asserting that there were 'many other words',⁷⁹⁸ instead he records a "reliable digest of each address" (Stott 1990:69). The major speeches display significant sensitivity to their listeners' worlds, even as they display similar content. They are primarily a declaration of Jesus - his life, death and resurrection;⁷⁹⁹ as fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (Petersen 2009:29–32), promise and history;⁸⁰⁰ culminating in a call to their hearers for a response of listening leading to repentance and faith.⁸⁰¹ As Luke records the addresses of both Peter and Paul, he describes their first evangelistic sermons in extended detail as if to hold these initial addresses up as records of what will subsequently be recorded only in summary form.⁸⁰² The arrival of the Holy Spirit

⁷⁹² Acts 1:15-22, 6:2-4, 11:4-17, 20:18-35

⁷⁹³ Acts 5:35-39, 19:25-27, 19:35-40, 24:2-8, 25:14-27

⁷⁹⁴ Acts 7:1-53

⁷⁹⁵ Acts 15:13-21

⁷⁹⁶ Acts 2:14-36, 3:11-26, 4:8-20, 5:29-32, 10:34-43, 11:5-17, 15:6-11

⁷⁹⁷ Acts 13:16-41, 14:15-17, 17:2-3, 17:16-34, 20:18-35, 22:1-21, 23:1-6, 24:10-21, 26:2-23

⁷⁹⁸ Acts 2:40

⁷⁹⁹ Acts 2:22-36, 3:13-26, 4:8-12, 5:29-32, 7:52-56, 10:34-43, 13:24-39, 17:3, 30-31, 18:5, 22:1-21, 23:6, 26:2-23, 28:23

⁸⁰⁰ Acts 1:16, 2:14-41, 3:12-26, 7:1-53, 8:32-35, 13:16-41, 17:2, 17:11, 24:14-15, 26:22-23, 28:23

⁸⁰¹ Acts 2:38-39, 3:17-26, 4:12, 10:42-43, 13:38-41, 14:15-17, 17:29-31, 20:21, 28:23

⁸⁰² Acts 2:14-41; 13:16-48

precipitates Peter's first sermon at Pentecost. Peter explains what has happened, asserting it as the prophetic fulfilment of the Joel prophecy⁸⁰³ and then proceeds to link the arrival of the Holy Spirit with the resurrection and ascension of the Messiah⁸⁰⁴ in fulfilment of Old Testament promise.⁸⁰⁵ Luke's record of Paul's preaching shows him using different approaches and a high degree of contextual flexibility (Wells & Luter, 2002:121). Beginning at Pisidian-Antioch, Paul's sermon looks similar to Peter's when preaching to a largely Jewish audience.⁸⁰⁶ The sermon has three features - a review of Old Testament salvation history,⁸⁰⁷ a proclamation of the significance of Jesus and a call to repentance (Schnabel, 2008:158).⁸⁰⁸ Paul roots his declaration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in Old Testament Scripture.⁸⁰⁹ However, when addressing predominantly Gentile audiences with different worldviews, such as those at Lystra⁸¹⁰ or Athens,⁸¹¹ Paul begins with the situation, he affirms their worship of deity and moves to a proclamation of the one true God⁸¹² concluding by calling his audience to turn to this God in repentance.⁸¹³ These sermons are filled with Biblical allusions and themes ranging from the creation of the one man,⁸¹⁴ to a critique of the Greek gods and the proclamation of the one true God (Schnabel, 2008:177–78).⁸¹⁵ A final method used by Paul was the presentation of his own personal story⁸¹⁶ which he uses as a springboard leading to a declaration of the resurrection of Jesus.⁸¹⁷

Features of the preaching from the Acts of the Apostles include:

- Preaching is centred on Jesus' life, death and particularly his resurrection.
- Preaching is contextually flexible. Paul displays a significant understanding of the worldviews of the audience to whom he spoke which influenced his sermon construction.
- Preaching to Jewish audiences is derived from and soaked in Old Testament Scripture.

4.4.6 The New Testament Epistles

The New Testament contains no definition or 'special treatise on the essence of preaching' (Runia 1983:25) but 'word ministry' saturates the New Testament record (Adam, 1996:59). Many studies have detailed over thirty verbs⁸¹⁸ that the New Testament contains to describe the early church's

⁸⁰³ Acts 2:14-21, Joel 2:28-32

⁸⁰⁴ Acts 2:22-35

⁸⁰⁵ Ps 16:8-11

⁸⁰⁶ Acts 13:13-52

⁸⁰⁷ Acts 13:16b-25, also 28:23-27

⁸⁰⁸ Acts 13:26-37

⁸⁰⁹ Ps 2:7, 16:10, Isa 55:3

⁸¹⁰ Acts 14:15-17

⁸¹¹ Acts 17:16-34

⁸¹² Acts 14:15-17, 17:24-29

⁸¹³ 1 Acts 4:15-17, 17:30-31

⁸¹⁴ Gen 1:26,27

⁸¹⁵ Isa 42:5, 66:1-2

⁸¹⁶ Acts 22:3-21, 24:10-21, 26:2-23

⁸¹⁷ Acts 23:6, 24:15 26:23

⁸¹⁸ See Friedrich, 1965:703; Greidanus, 1988:6; Mounce, 1993:735; Runia, 1988:527

different word ministries.⁸¹⁹ Adam summarises these into categories which he calls words of information, declaration, exhortation, persuasion and conversation (Adam 1996:75). New Testament 'word ministry' includes occasions when:

- i. Believers speak of Christ boldly in public contexts (Colossians 4:3).
- ii. Believers explain the message of Christ privately to each other (Acts 18:26) and in families (2 Timothy 3:14).
- iii. Believers teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).
- iv. Believers make a defence, giving a reason to anyone who asks about the hope that is in them (Colossians 4:6, 1 Peter 3:15).
- v. Believers speak as if speaking the very words/oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11).
- vi. Believers are encouraged to embark on the public reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13).

Paul describes some of these 'word ministries' in his gift-lists using the language of prophecy, teaching, exhortation, evangelism, shepherding, wisdom, knowledge and tongues/languages.⁸²⁰ Adam (1996:59) rightly insists that public preaching cannot carry the burden of all 'word ministry'

⁸¹⁹ The main descriptors of preaching in the New Testament include:

- i. *Κερύσσο*. This verb is prominent occurring sixty times (Tyndale House, 2020). It carries the meaning of a public proclamation, particularly of an event or news (BDAG) and its consequences, by a herald, town-crier, announcer or proclaimer, of a message given to them on behalf of a monarch or master (Greidanus, 1988:4; Griffiths, 2017:27). *Κερύσσο* is used to describe what John the Baptist did (Matt 3:1, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:3), what Jesus did (Matt 4:17,23; Mark 1:38, Luke 4:44, 8:1, et al.) and what the apostles did (Mark 3:14, 6:12; Luke 9:2; Acts 8:5; 10:42, Rom 10:14,15; 1 Cor 1:23; Col 1:23, 4:2; 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Tim 4:2 et al.) (Runia, 1978:7). Griffiths (2017:31) notices that the agent of proclamation is usually a person of recognised authority.
- ii. *Διδασκο*. This verb occurs ninety-seven times (Tyndale House, 2020) and carries the meaning of teaching and explanation, especially of religious and ethical themes, to produce understanding (LSJ). C.H. Dodd (1936) influentially emphasised a distinction between *κερῦγμα* which he defined as the 'public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world' (Dodd 1936:7) and *διδασκο* which he defined as the largely ethical and doctrinal teaching to the church (Dodd 1936:7). This distinction is noticeable but Dodd's conclusions are difficult to maintain as the New Testament often uses the verbs interchangeably (Matt 4:23, 9:35, 11:1; Luke 20:1; Acts 4:1,2; 5:42, 15:35; 28:30,31). As an example of this complexity Luke describes the preaching event following the healing of the lame beggar in Acts 3 using at least four different verbs - answer (*ἀποκρινο*) (3:12), speaking (*λάλεο*) (4:1,17,20), teaching (*διδασκο*) (4:1) and proclaiming (4:1) (*καταγγέλλο*). By using verbs together, the New Testament writers emphasise that there is a message to be announced but that it also needs to be explained, clarified, elaborated, and applied to facilitate understanding (Runia 1978:15).
- iii. *Λάλεο* is a broad word meaning 'to speak'. It is used to describe Jesus and the disciples' preaching in public situations (Matt 9:18; Mark 2:7; Lk 11:37; John 3:11; Acts 4:1,17,20; 11:20; 21:39; Tit 2:1).
- iv. *Εὐαγγελίζομαι/εὐαγγελίζεσθαι* Occurs sixty-five times (Tyndale House, 2020) and is clustered in the writings of Luke, Paul and Peter. It carries the sense of good/significant news being spoken (BDAG), often focussing on the content of that news (Griffiths, 2017:20) which in the New Testament is always the arrival of the kingdom of God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. (Luke 1:19, 2:10, 4:3, 8:1, 9:6, Acts 5:42, 8:4, 12; Rom 1:5, 15:20; 1 Cor 1:17; Gal 1:23, 4:13; Eph 3:8; 1 Peter 1:12,25 et al.).
- v. *Καταγγέλλο* occurs seventeen times most often in Acts (Tyndale House, 2020) (Acts 4:2, 13:5,38; 15:36, 16:17; 17:3,13,23; 26:23; Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 2:1,9:14, 11:26, Phil 1:17,18, Col 1:28). It carries the meaning of proclamation and announcement (BDAG) often in a public place.
- vi. *Ἀπαγγέλλο* occurs forty-six times (Griffiths, 2017:18) most often in the Gospels and Acts. It means to announce, report or proclaim (BDAG) usually of routine information. On occasions it is used to speak of the announcement of personal experience related to the gospel events (Acts 26:20, 1 John 1:2,3).
- vii. *Μαρτυρεῖν/μαρτυρεῖν* is a verb used extensively in the Johannine writings. It has its origins in the courtroom and carries the sense of 'bearing witness to' or 'testifying to' what has been personally seen or heard about an event or a person (BDAG). It carries the sense of communicating, "truth from one who has a first-hand knowledge." (Mayhue, 2005:6). The apostles were primarily called to bear witness to the events of Jesus life, death and resurrection from their own personal experience (Luke 24:48, Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41; 22:15; 26:16). No person can today bear witness to those events in that same manner, nor does the New Testament speak of preaching today using the categories of witness, instead preaching today is regarded as a guardianship of witness already given (2 Tim 1:14), a continuing in this witness (2 Tim 3:14) and the passing on of this witness to others (2 Tim 2:2).

⁸²⁰ Rom 12, Eph 4, 1 Cor 12,14

and that preaching is only one form of ‘word ministry’ essential in the church (Adam 2004:59; Keller 2015:1-4). Although the New Testament contains no special treatise on preaching, the presence of public speech to assembled groups, permeates apostolic activity. This research is chiefly concerned with this public preaching and not with the other extended categories of ‘word ministry’. The following themes concerning preaching are noticeable in the New Testament Epistles.

4.4.6.1 The content of New Testament preaching is Christ (crucified and risen)

The New Testament writings consistently describe the content of their preaching as Jesus Christ (Mounce, 1993:735) which Paul calls his ‘gospel’.⁸²¹ Writing to the Romans, Paul affirms that God makes salvation available through the preaching (*κερυσσο*) of ‘good news’ that is centred on the person of Christ.⁸²² This news is delivered via sent messengers who stand in continuity with the Old Testament testimony and who call people to hear, believe, confess and obey Christ (Griffiths, 2017:67-73).⁸²³ To the Corinthian church, Paul summarises the content of his preaching (*κερυσσο*) as ‘Jesus Christ and him crucified’⁸²⁴ which he has been sent to preach (*εὐαγγελίζομαι*).⁸²⁵ In 2 Corinthians he summarises his proclamation (*κερυσσο*) as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in whom are fulfilled all the promises of God.⁸²⁶ Later in 2 Corinthians 4:5, Paul says,

For what we proclaim (κερυσσο) is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants.

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul describes his preaching (*εὐαγγελίζομαι*) to the Gentiles as “the unsearchable riches of Christ”.⁸²⁷ Writing from his prison cell to the Philippians, Paul rejoices when Christ is proclaimed (*κατανγγελλο*).⁸²⁸ Similarly, writing to the Colossian church, Paul sings the great Christological hymn⁸²⁹ and then declares that it is,

Him we proclaim (κατανγγελλο), warning everyone (νουτηετο) and teaching everyone (διδασκο). (Colossians 1:23,28)

The author of 1 Timothy summarises the content of his preaching (*κερυξ*) as,

⁸²¹ Wilson (2008:56) suggests that ‘preaching Christ’ and ‘preaching the gospel’ seem interchangeable in Pauline thought.

⁸²² Rom 10:9-10,14-17

⁸²³ Rom 10:9-21

⁸²⁴ 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2

⁸²⁵ 1 Cor 1:17

⁸²⁶ 2 Cor 1:19

⁸²⁷ Eph 3:8

⁸²⁸ Phil 1:18

⁸²⁹ Col 1:15-20

There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle...(1 Timothy 2:5-7)

The centrality of Christ to the continuing task of preaching is also emphasised in 2 Timothy when the writer summarises his gospel as,

Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel. (2 Timothy 2:8)

Similarly, the apostle Peter describes the preaching (*ευαγγελιστην*) announced and received by his readers, as centred on Christ prophesied, suffering and glorified.⁸³⁰

Theologians observe that the New Testament addresses a vast array of subjects (Chapell, 1994:272). These subjects all emerge out of the primary New Testament proclamation 'Jesus, Christ, Lord (*Ιησουν Χηριστον κυριον*). Knowles (2008:155) observes that Jesus, Christ and Lord are universal in the Pauline writings.⁸³¹ Additionally, the New Testament writers preach the juxtaposition of incarnation, supremacy, resurrection, and exaltation together with crucifixion, death, service and humiliation. Christ crucified is preached as the fulfilment of Old Testament expectation, the apex of God's redemptive work (Chapell 2018:9, Keller 2016:48) and the indicative of God, which then gives rise to ethical imperatives. The New Testament recognises that all subjects coalesce under the Lordship of God's crucified Son Jesus.⁸³²

4.4.6.2 New Testament preaching opposes error

The writers of the New Testament are acutely aware of the situations of their recipients. False teaching and error are constant themes in the New Testament writings. The Romans are warned of teachers who cause division as they teach doctrines other than the ones taught to them.⁸³³ The Corinthians are warned of super-apostles proclaiming (*κερυσσο*) a different gospel to the apostolic gospel.⁸³⁴ In Galatia some are turning to 'a different gospel' to the one received from Jesus Christ and proclaimed by the genuine apostle.⁸³⁵ Echoing Jesus' warning of false prophets in sheep's clothing,⁸³⁶ Paul warns the Ephesian elders of preachers speaking (*λαλεο*) twisted things.⁸³⁷ Timothy is exhorted to remain at Ephesus in order to charge (*παρηνελλο*) some not to

⁸³⁰ 1 Pet 1:10-11

⁸³¹ Ten times in 1 Corinthians, six of them in the first chapter; also 2 Corinthians 1:2,3; 8:9; 13:13.

⁸³² Luke 24:27,44-45; John 5:39,46

⁸³³ Rom 16:17

⁸³⁴ 2 Cor 11:4

⁸³⁵ Gal 1&2

⁸³⁶ Matt 7:15

⁸³⁷ Acts 20:30, Eph 4:14

teach different doctrines nor to pursue myths.⁸³⁸ Scholars have long debated the nature of heresy⁸³⁹ being proclaimed in Colossae against which the church is warned⁸⁴⁰ and this church is called to 'walk' in the proclaimed Christ Jesus.⁸⁴¹ The recipients of Hebrews are similarly exhorted to 'not be led away',⁸⁴² while the recipients of 1 John are called to test the spirits and to trust the word of the apostles sent from God.⁸⁴³ Peter and Jude are especially strong in their condemnation of error proclaimed by false teachers and they call their readers to remember and trust the apostolic word that was spoken to them.⁸⁴⁴

The intensely personal Pastoral Epistles are written to Timothy and Titus as they assume the mantle of post-apostolic church leadership.⁸⁴⁵ The author lays out for them a deep concern about false teaching⁸⁴⁶ and calls Timothy to, not be ashamed, but instead to share in suffering for the gospel⁸⁴⁷ as he guards the apostolic deposit that has been given to him.⁸⁴⁸ This deposit is the message of Christ Jesus, risen, saviour, mediator and ransom.⁸⁴⁹ The author calls Timothy to be a faithful workman with the word⁸⁵⁰ who correctly handles the word of truth.⁸⁵¹

4.4.6.3 New Testament preaching voices the living God in the liminal space between power/wisdom and folly/scandal

In 1 Corinthians, Paul confronts disunity in the church which is manifested in factions congregating around preferred leaders.⁸⁵² He defends his ministry as one of preaching (*εὐαγγελίζομαι*), commissioned by Christ,⁸⁵³ of a received message⁸⁵⁴ which he stewarded⁸⁵⁵ and proclaimed (*κερύσσο*) in collaboration with others (Fee, 1987:75).⁸⁵⁶ Paul parades the gospel he preached as a subversive (Ott, 2019:61) reversal of worldly values (Thiselton, 2006:45) embodying the liminal space between power/wisdom and folly/scandal (Campbell & Cilliers, 2012:17-38). His preaching reflects the counterintuitive, and upside-down, kingdom opposites and reversals, manifested and

⁸³⁸ 1 Tim 1:3,4

⁸³⁹ See O'Brien (1982:xxx).

⁸⁴⁰ Col 2:8; 16-19

⁸⁴¹ Col 1:28; 2:6

⁸⁴² Heb 13:9

⁸⁴³ 1 John 4:1-6

⁸⁴⁴ 2 Pet 1:16; 2:1-22; 3:16,17; Jud 3-16, 20-23

⁸⁴⁵ 1 Tim 1:3, Tit 1:5

⁸⁴⁶ 1 Tim 1:3, 4:1-3, 6:3-5; 2 Tim 3:1-9, 4:3-4; Tit 1:10f, 3:10

⁸⁴⁷ 2 Tim 1:8

⁸⁴⁸ 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14

⁸⁴⁹ 1 Tim 1:15, 2:5; 2 Tim 2:8; Tit 2:13

⁸⁵⁰ 2 Tim 2:25

⁸⁵¹ 2 Tim 2:14

⁸⁵² 1 Cor 1:10-12

⁸⁵³ 1 Cor 1:17

⁸⁵⁴ 1 Cor 15:3-5

⁸⁵⁵ 1 Cor 9:17

⁸⁵⁶ 1 Cor 1:21-23

revealed in a crucified Christ which is both an affront and abject foolishness to a world enthralled by power and wisdom.⁸⁵⁷ Campbell and Cilliers (2012:20) summarise this folly when they say,

Theologically, it was unimaginable that the Messiah-the Christ-would be crucified. Philosophically, it was unthinkable that the divine would hang in the flesh on a cross. Politically, it was inconceivable that the Messiah would liberate Israel through crucifixion by the very empire from which liberation was expected. And culturally, it was impossible that one shamed on the cross could be honoured as the Christ.

The apostle has a dual expectancy, describing his preaching as folly (*μωρία*) and a stumbling block (*σκανδαλον*), but also as the power (*δυναμις*), wisdom (*σοφία*) and word of God.⁸⁵⁸ He anticipates that his hearers will be dismissive of the gospel message and even offended by it, but he also displays supreme confidence in the gospel proclamation to be God's very power and voice.⁸⁵⁹ The New Testament presents God as the primary actor, personally present in the foolish act of preaching (Griffiths, 2017:129). The power of preaching resides in the supernatural and mysterious presence of God as the primary speaker whose voice is heard through a fallible human vessel.⁸⁶⁰ Homiletics thus always wrestles with legitimacy and efficacy; contemplating rhetoric and method, seeking to cultivate proficiency, excellence and power while operating in the liminal space of proclaiming a gospel that is folly and scandal.

4.4.6.4 New Testament preaching hears its context

In an important description of his ministry in 1 Corinthians 9:18-19, Paul describes the very essence of his preaching as embodying servanthood for the sake of the 'other' (Thiselton, 2006:144). He curtails the freedoms that have been granted to him in the gospel and instead voluntarily descends, embracing slavery for the benefit of his hearers (Fleming, 2005:195).⁸⁶¹ Paul says,

I have become all things to all people, that I might save some by all means. I do it all for the gospel's sake, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:22-23)

Paul describes his preaching as a presentation of the gospel,⁸⁶² which seeks to serve the outsider hearing them and their context, and even becoming like them (Schnabel, 2008:137) in order to

⁸⁵⁷ Matt 5:3-10; 1 Cor 1:17,18

⁸⁵⁸ Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:17-25; 1 Thess 1,2

⁸⁵⁹ Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18; 1 Thess 1:5

⁸⁶⁰ Rom 10:14-17; 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:13; the repeated refrain in Heb 1-3 "hear his voice"; Heb 4:7; 12:25

⁸⁶¹ 1 Cor 9:19b

⁸⁶² 1 Cor 9:18

win them by a sharing of the gospel's blessings.⁸⁶³ The very nature of the gospel presented, which declares a suffering messiah, demands that preaching embodies this gospel humbling, and an outward, careful-listening and contextualising, for the sake of the 'other'. Thiselton (2006:145), notices this practice in the ministry of Jesus, who he says, "Uses every kind of method of communication." Paul, likewise, embodies the same practice of self-embracing personal cost (Thiselton, 2006:145), deep listening to the outsider and varied communication methods in his preaching so that the gospel might be heard. He furthermore exhorts this same practice in the lives and ministries of the church.⁸⁶⁴

4.4.6.5 New Testament preaching stands in continuity with the Old Testament, Jesus and the apostolic proclamation

The second letter to Timothy climaxes (Griffiths, 2017:53) with a solemn charge given in the presence of God and of the returning, reigning Christ.⁸⁶⁵ The writer uses nine imperatives to define post-apostolic ministry, summarised under his concluding phrase 'fulfil your ministry' (Knight, 1992:451).⁸⁶⁶ Chief amongst these imperatives is a call to 'preach the word' (*κερυσσον τό λόγον*). This imperative 'to preach' is elaborated and expanded upon, using the additional imperatives 'confront, rebuke and exhort.'⁸⁶⁷ In these imperatives the writer echoes the instructions given in the other pastorals. In 1 Timothy, post-apostolic church leaders are to 'command, teach, exhort' and 'devote themselves to the public reading of Scripture'.⁸⁶⁸ Similarly, Titus is to teach,⁸⁶⁹ declare, exhort, rebuke⁸⁷⁰ and to remind his hearers of the gospel.⁸⁷¹ Post-apostolic preaching is the proclamation, confrontation and exhortation of those that will listen even as many turn their ears away.⁸⁷²

The content of this post-apostolic preaching is defined in the Pastoral Epistles as 'the gospel' in continuity with the Old Testament Scriptures. As we have seen, this gospel is 'Christ Jesus our Lord', the crucified and risen mediator and ransom,⁸⁷³ who will return,⁸⁷⁴ in the world to save sinners.⁸⁷⁵ Mounce suggests that 'the gospel' is a dominant theme in the Pastoral Epistles and he argues that Paul interchanges references to Old Testament Scripture with references to 'the gospel' (Mounce, 2000:lxvii,561). Timothy is encouraged to stand firm in 'the gospel' that he has

⁸⁶³ 1 Cor 9:20-23

⁸⁶⁴ Phil 1:27-2:11

⁸⁶⁵ 2 Tim 4:1

⁸⁶⁶ 2 Tim 4:5

⁸⁶⁷ 2 Tim 4:2

⁸⁶⁸ 1 Tim 4:11-12

⁸⁶⁹ Tit 2:1

⁸⁷⁰ Tit 2:15

⁸⁷¹ Tit 3:1-7

⁸⁷² 2 Tim 4:3-4

⁸⁷³ 1 Tim 2:5; 2 Tim 2:8

⁸⁷⁴ 1 Tim 6:14; Titus 2:11-14

⁸⁷⁵ 1 Tim 1:12-15, 3:16, 4:10; 2 Tim 1:8-14

received from Paul⁸⁷⁶ who received it himself from Jesus.⁸⁷⁷ Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures (Mounce 2000:lxvii).⁸⁷⁸ Timothy is to emulate Paul's life which was lived speaking 'the gospel'.⁸⁷⁹ He is to continue in what he has learned of 'the gospel' from the Old Testament Scriptures. He is to take confidence in the Old Testament Scriptures as the breathed-out word of God and to use them as the source and basis of his preaching.⁸⁸⁰ Contemporary preaching must derive its shape from the apostolic charge to preach the gospel deposit of truth, in continuity with the Old Testament witness, fulfilled in Jesus and given to his apostles. Griffiths (2017:125 -126) summarises this description of preaching when he says,

Post Apostolic preaching ministry not only stands in a line of continuity with the ministry of Jesus, his apostles and their agents, but ...also stands in a line of continuity with prophetic ministry in the Old Testament.

4.4.6.6 Hebrews

Scholars widely accept that the book of Hebrews is a sermon and thus deserves special consideration as an example of good practice in early preaching. Hagner (2002:54) calls Hebrews a sermon-treatise while other writers suggest that the purpose of the book was not intended to be "abstract or theoretical" but rather to be an interconnected exposition of Hebrew Scripture combining application and exhortation, all woven together into a synagogue homily designed to maintain the hearers attention (Cockerill, 2012:100). Van Hoya (quoted in Griffiths (2017:105)) says,

*The 'Letter' to the Hebrews is simply not a letter...it belongs to the genre of preaching...it is the only example we have in the New Testament of the text of a sermon which has been preserved in its entirety.*⁸⁸¹

The author of Hebrews describes the very purpose of the book as a "word of exhortation",⁸⁸² a term used in the early church and synagogue to describe a sermon (Griffiths, 2017:104). Griffiths (2017:106–117) notices that Hebrews contains a series of expositions of Old Testament texts detailing how they reveal and explain Christ and his mission, each concluding with an exhortation to respond. At the heart of Hebrews' message is an exhortation to hear (and continue hearing) the present voice of God⁸⁸³ by listening to the historical voice of God about his Son recorded in

⁸⁷⁶ 2 Tim 2:1,8; 3:10

⁸⁷⁷ Gal 1:11-2:10; 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:11

⁸⁷⁸ Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39-47. See Mounce (2000:lxvii) for an elaboration of this discussion.

⁸⁷⁹ A constant call in the Pauline epistles (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 4:9; 2 Thess 3:7,9).

⁸⁸⁰ 2 Tim 3:14-16

⁸⁸¹ Ellingworth (1993:62) holds a dissenting view although he does concede that his is a minority opinion, and that the majority of scholars describe the body of Hebrews as a sermon

⁸⁸² Heb 13:22

⁸⁸³ Heb 1:6,7,8; 3:7

the text of Scripture.⁸⁸⁴ This is reinforced in Hebrews 3:7,8 and 4:7 where the writer appeals to Psalm 95, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Psalm 95:7-8)

A summary of preaching arising from the book of Hebrews would be, the proclamation of Christ through the exposition of Old Testament Scripture leading to an exhortation to respond by continuing in and with Christ (Griffiths 2017:117).

Features of preaching from the New Testament Epistles are:

- God is the primary agent in preaching.
- Preaching emanates from the word received from God.
- Preaching is a public declaration, proclamation or explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and raised (Griffiths 2017:17,33).
- Preaching announces Jesus Christ, crucified and raised as the fulfilment of Old Testament Scripture.
- Preaching stands against error.
- Preaching embodies the very nature of the gospel. It operates in the liminal space between power/wisdom and folly/scandal.
- Preaching operates within a specific, heard, human context which influences how the sermon is shaped, spoken and applied.

4.4.7 Conclusions from Normative Perspectives on the Preacher as Listener-to-the-World

This second and final section, developing normative perspectives on the preacher as listener-to-the-world, has confirmed that preaching emanates from the speaking Trinitarian God. He spoke in history and continues to speak through the progressively revealed agency of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are fundamentally a declaration of Jesus Christ as Lord. They are a declaration of him crucified and risen as the fulfilment of Old Testament promises, so that the central content of preaching is summarised in the Pauline maxim ‘Jesus Christ and him crucified’.⁸⁸⁵ Preaching reminds of God’s activity in history, for his people and the consequent implications of that activity.

Preaching is always spoken, mediated and (even) incarnated through the agency of human preachers who are called to be faithful and worthy. Preachers are to emulate the suffering servanthood of Jesus and to stand against the error declared by false teachers and ‘wolves in

⁸⁸⁴ Heb 1:5,6,7,8,10,13; 3:7,15 et al.

⁸⁸⁵ 1 Cor 2:1-2

sheep's clothing'.⁸⁸⁶ Preaching is always contextually flexible and is addressed to a heard, specific and unique people, who inhabit a particular context. This contextual flexibility is reflected in the language used and the applications made. Preaching is diverse in style and uses different techniques to communicate. It is didactic, hortatory and encouraging. It calls to obedience and back to obedience. It also contains warnings and promises. Preachers use music, poetry, image, metaphor and story to facilitate communication in preaching.

⁸⁸⁶ Matt 7:15

CHAPTER 5: PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES ON REACH-SA PREACHING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Practical theology must culminate in providing guidance for transformation by formulating a strategy of action in order to facilitate change (Osmer, 2008:176). It seeks to provide servant-leadership, emanating from a hermeneutical interaction between the perspectives gained in the descriptive-empirical, interpretive and normative tasks, leading to proposals and strategies to bring the world into greater harmony and submission to the word of God (Smith, 2008:205). Ballard and Pritchard (1996:92) warn against prematurely truncating the process of practical theology by incorrectly considering that reflection is action. They urge completion of the process by moving from reflection to action (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:162). Perspectives gained from the earlier tasks must be developed into an action plan which then offers potential solutions for the initially identified problem (Smith, 2008:206-7).

The pragmatic perspectives developed in this chapter seek to lead change in three areas: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Cognitive change occurs when new thinking transpires (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:166; Osmer, 2008:176-199). Affective change culminates in the adoption of new attitudes (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:166). Behavioural change happens when new competencies are learned, understood and applied (often requiring subsequent and additional refinement (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:166-172)). Osmer (2008:210-218) recognises that change is always a process rather than an event. He suggests that change begins with vision-casting which is then followed by experimentation and innovation. The changes implemented create new, unforeseen and additional complexity, which then requires the need for further change.

The pragmatic component of this research seeks to make proposals for the improvement of REACH-SA preaching in order to better facilitate church development in South Africa's complexity. The initial research objectives sought to contribute to bridging the gap that exists between the REACH-SA denominational commitments to reaching all of South Africa's complicated diversity and the uneven praxis of church planting and development within the denomination in recent decades. A significant component of these pragmatic perspectives is the development of a practical tool to aid REACH-SA preachers in personal evaluation and assessment of their own preaching praxis in order to implement improvement in their praxis. Every preacher has some form of personal evaluation – this is usually individual, informal, intuitive, often unarticulated and inescapably emotional. The pragmatic component of this research seeks to develop a tool that will enable preachers to grow in this personal assessment, resulting in the

adoption of new attitudes and behaviours, in line with the conclusions developed during this research.

5.2 PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER-TO-THE-WORD

The study and practice of homiletics is rightly concerned with the quest to improve preaching for the glory of God. In the descriptive perspectives gained in this research, five areas of consensus emerged. In this section, focussing on the preacher as listener-to-the-word, four of these will be considered with the final one developed in the section on the preacher as listener-to-the-world. Preaching is rooted in obedient-listening to the Trinitarian, speaking God, who is the primary agent that stands behind preaching. God speaks through the agency of the Scriptures, which declare the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that the central content of good preaching must be a faithful commitment to the heard word of Jesus Christ, crucified and raised. This word-of-Christ contains within it a present call from God to 'hear his voice' today. Preaching is spoken, mediated and incarnated through the agency of a human preacher who is member of community.

In the empirical perspectives of this research, the preaching of REACH-SA preachers was investigated to establish whether they attempted to listen-to-the-word. It was noted that expository preaching is ubiquitous in REACH-SA preaching. Preachers uniformly embraced the exposition of Scripture as normative. All talks reflected a confidence in Scripture, were biblically centred and endeavoured to be discernibly shaped by the text of Scripture. Preachers took time and effort to contextualise, explain and apply the passages chosen. The scope of the Scriptures covered was broad including both Old Testament and New Testament expositions. Preachers displayed a constant expectation that their audiences would study the Scriptures with them, and they used extensive Biblical theological content and cross referencing.

In the interpretive perspectives, considerations of the hermeneutic applied by REACH-SA preachers were examined using perspectives from hermeneutics and African Studies in order to ascertain how preachers' pre-understanding might influence their listening-to-the-word. It was noted that African and Western anthropological theories diverge in their understanding of human interconnectedness. African ontology is holistic, relational, personal and interconnected. In contrast, Western ontology regards the universe as impersonal, accidental and existing outside of the direction and care of a deity. REACH-SA preachers often came to the text viewing it in individualistic and private terms, frequently failing to hear its corporate emphasis. Applications drawn were seldom corporate or communal but were more usually personal and individual. This stands in contrast to the vast majority of the New Testament's applications which are made in the plural. In addition, preachers were subliminally influenced by Western materialism and struggled to hear and apply both the Old and New Testament's significant attention to the materially poor.

The normative component of this research concluded that preaching is established on God and his character. He is a God who speaks in order to be heard. His speaking anticipates listening-obedience from his creation. These conclusions have given shape to this research's description of preaching as asymmetric listening, giving priority to the voice of God over the competing voices of present listeners, preacher and historical community.⁸⁸⁷ In the face of the catastrophic collapse of Christianity and church attendance in the West, the paradigm shifts in Western culture from Modernism to Post-Modernism and with the tectonic changes brought about by the explosion of technology and globalisation, homiletics has found itself uncertain as to where to place its emphasis. At times, under Enlightenment optimism or a Neo-Orthodox response to liberalism, homiletics has emphasised Biblical proposition and textual understanding. This emphasis has been challenged in more recent study by the New Homiletics' highlighting of the listener, relevance, application, experience, engagement and what the sermon 'does' as *event* (Gibson, 2005:476–81). Homiletics has recently prioritised the necessity of preachers better understanding language and culture through ethnographic analysis and contextualisation.⁸⁸⁸ Still another emphasis in homiletical study has been on the knowledge, skill and character of the preacher (Quicke 2003:86–108). In rightly observing the poverty of much preaching, homiletics has proposed solutions for increased effectiveness in the improvement of preachers as rhetoricians. The asymmetrical nature of preaching established in the normative perspectives gives shape and direction to the assessment of recent homiletical theories. The Biblical text must be the centre of authority. It can never be incidental or supplementary because it is a "definitive expression of God's mind and will" (Cassidy, 1996:1). Human insight and experience, important as they are, always remain subordinate to hearing of the voice of God (Gibson, 2005:478-479).

Bartholomew (2015:18) has rightly noticed a significant problem in the division between the academic disciplines of Biblical Studies and Theology. He has argued that Western academic study concentrates on the analysis of Scripture while Scripture itself asks rather to be heard as God's personal address (Bartholomew, 2015:18). Western thought, which is unavoidably Enlightenment-shaped, over-privileges sight, method and individualism, while under-emphasising the ontological importance of the relationships that are created in that listening-obedience (Bartholomew, 2015:19-25). Bartholomew notices how complex it is to actually apply the Biblical call to listen. He argues that there is no method to learn listening. It requires tools to achieve but the goal of attentiveness includes a basic trust or hope resulting in wonder and worship (Bartholomew, 2015:20). Quicke (2003:38) similarly calls for a holistic engagement with Scripture that, "captures head and heart, intellect and imagination, emotions and will." He argues that preachers are often trained in the discipline of exegesis resulting in them only engaging

⁸⁸⁷ See Figure 8

⁸⁸⁸ See Tisdale, L.T. 1997. *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. Fortress: Minneapolis.

intellectually with Scripture and that their subsequent preaching becomes cerebral rather than personal and relational (Quicke 2003:39). Hays argues that the real work of interpretation is to actually 'hear the text' (Hays, 2002:272). Barth (1991:97) has described the complexity of actually listening to Scripture. He contends that preachers who listen to Scripture are preachers who trust it and respect it. They are preachers who read Scripture with attention and submission, aiming for correction and personal appropriation so as to be moved by God's word (Barth, 1964:89-92,98). Listening is an affirmation and expression of 'creaturely humility' (Bartholomew, 2015:22). Listening is an expression of asymmetry (Immink, 2019:5) when it recognises the transcendence of God and the smallness of humanity. Listening is an expression of a responsive heart-commitment (Ramey, 2010:25-34) displaying what Hays (2002:266-274) calls a 'Hermeneutic of Trust'. Listening is an expression of responsive love (Tillich, 1960:84). Listening is an act of reciprocity. It is an expression of gratitude for God's relational commitment to humanity in his cruciform, saving actions. Preaching can never properly occur without the hearing heart desired by God. Schlafer (1995:13) concurs,

Attentive, disciplined listening is essential for an understanding of the conversations taking place in Scripture. Such listening is also essential for establishing a clear and coherent conversation with Scripture.

Tyagi (2013:1) has argued that listening is comprised of hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding. It happens through a complex interchange of reading and meditation on the text of Scripture. It is interconnected with prayer and petition, and with contemplation leading to submissive appropriation. The preacher reads and meditates with an attitude of trust, seeking firstly, to personally hear and appropriate the message for themselves. The preacher seeks to embrace the text and receive it for themselves. There must follow subsequent contemplation on its widespread implications for both individual *and* community, and this contemplation aims at a resultant response of submissive worship to God rather than resistant defiance (Bartholomew, 2015:41). As the preacher listens, they find themselves drawn into relationship with the person of Jesus Christ *and* into relationship with his creation. Listening is always relational. It involves a loving, trusting, obedient, reflective, personal embracing of the person of God and his words both for the preacher and by the preacher as a member of community. It is an effort to see Christ; to hear Christ and then to apply Christ in community. Augustine (2007:235) summarised when he said, 'It's a futile preacher outwardly of God's word, who isn't also a listener.' This gives rise to the first question to be used by preachers: -

Listening to the Word

1 Did I hear the voice of God to me?

An essential component of this listening is exegetical analysis leading to comprehension. Homiletical scholarship has generated many methods to facilitate the journey from text to sermon.⁸⁸⁹ These methods display many common considerations and include tools for:

- Periscope selection.
- Genre analysis.
- Contextual considerations. (Biblical, historical, cultural, and literary).
- Linguistic investigation (grammar, structural and argument analysis).

Listening incorporates a movement from text through comprehension towards meaning. The tools facilitate comprehension, clarity and understanding which then enable the preacher to formulate a personal, exegetical understanding derived from the text. Unfortunately, many of the methods used to facilitate the journey from text to sermon make significant Western assumptions. They assume high levels of literacy, access to the original languages, the availability of a variety of translations, as well as access to commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, lexicons, grammars, word-study books, encyclopaedias, and socio-historical sources (Long, 2005:69-98; Robinson, 2001:61-65; Van Rensburg et al., 2015:8). These are realities only available to a very few, privileged language groupings. For many African preachers, these tools simply do not exist and if the tools do exist, they cannot access them due to educational or financial considerations. Furthermore, many African preachers are self-supporting and cannot give the time to this level of study. The challenge for homiletics and African preaching is developing hermeneutical techniques with the Bible text alone. The second question results: -

Listening to the Word

1 Did I hear the voice of God to me?

2 What am I hearing from the Scriptures (for me, for them, for us)?

Essential to the process of hermeneutics is a questioning restlessness. It includes a suspicion of the preacher's present presuppositions and personal corruption (Hays, 2002:271). Preachers are to guard against confidently claiming an infallible understanding of Scripture and to recognise that they exercise a personal 'hermeneutical grid' through which they filter the text (Cassidy, 1996:1-2). Sanders (2002:222-223) has highlighted how, in the last two hundred years, the presuppositions of Biblical Criticism have significantly influenced the hermeneutic applied and the

⁸⁸⁹ See for example Van Rensburg, F.J. et al (2015).

corresponding conclusions derived. A similar criticism can be levelled at sections of the church whose presuppositions allowed the justification and even advocacy for apartheid, slavery and colonial oppression. In these justifications, theologians were unable to identify how their personal presuppositions radically influenced the conclusions they derived. In addition, hindsight has the disadvantage of creating notions of present superiority. Hindsight does not aid the present identification of presuppositions in order to prevent similar blindness. Sanders argues that it is human to consider that one's own personal hermeneutic is self-affirming and thus that the individual has a special claim on history so that truth culminates with them (Sanders, 2002:222-223). Hermeneutics must integrate a hermeneutical humility born from a suspicion of the human condition that so easily fails to listen and so easily brings its own agenda to the text. It must recognise the potential of subliminal prejudice and unarticulated bias, always seeking to notice and prevent it, while still affirming the importance of the voice of God actually being heard.

Integral to Western presuppositions are notions of ontology that elevate human individuality over human community. Biblical hermeneutics must recognise that the goal of God in creation is communal not individual. It is God's re-establishment of shattered community⁸⁹⁰ and the creation of an international multitude in relational worship of Jesus the Son.⁸⁹¹ Listening will always result in the demotion of self, the elevation of God, the embracing of other-person-centred service and the priority of *αγαπε* to both God and people. Hermeneutics must embody a suspicion of individual priority and material prosperity so esteemed in Western worldviews, and give way to a hermeneutic that embraces relational, communal and corporate restoration.

Listening to the Word

1 Did I hear the voice of God to me?

2 What am I hearing from the Scriptures (for me, for them, for us)?

3 What presuppositions am I bringing to my hearing? Are they valid and reinforced by the text or do they display subliminal prejudice?

5.3 PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREACHER AS LISTENER-TO-THE-WORLD

The fifth and final component of preaching identified in the descriptive perspectives necessitates that the preacher be a listener to the 'lifeworld' (Pieterse, 2020:351) of their hearers. The empirical research investigated whether REACH-SA preachers display a sensitivity to the complex and changing realities of South Africa. It sought to identify whether they show a manifest comprehension of the pain of racism, the ongoing realities of coloniality, an awareness of poverty

⁸⁹⁰ Eph 3:6

⁸⁹¹ Isa 66:20, Rev 7:9

and a mindfulness of corruption. It also sought to investigate whether preachers show an attentiveness to the realities of orality and limited education. Finally, it sought to examine whether REACH-SA preachers show comprehension of people as both cerebral and emotional beings.

The normative perspectives developed on the preacher as listener-to-the-world sought to develop insights from 'good models' of praxis presented in Scripture. The sermons delivered by Moses were derived from God's words spoken to him. They reminded of God's historical actions which gave rise to the imperative for listening-obedient action. Moses' sermons were didactic and hortatory, containing teaching, encouragement and warning. He concluded his major sermon with the use of music as an aid to memory. The prophets were also conscious of their words being from God. They called people back to covenant faithfulness in the midst of national apostasy. Jesus' preaching/teaching was centred on a declaration of his identity, kingdom and mission. It was rooted in Old Testament Scripture. Jesus used diverse styles and techniques. His preaching was rich in imagery so as to connect with his hearers and appeal to the mind, emotion and will of his hearers, all the while, calling his hearers to himself. New Testament preaching is summarised as a proclamation of Jesus Christ, crucified and raised in fulfilment of Old Testament Scripture. It stands against error and operates within a specific, heard, human context.

The interpretive perspectives of this research on the preacher as listener-to-the-world, developed considerations from neighbour sciences. These include considerations on introductions, sermon shape, the place of music and storytelling in order to achieve persuasion, linguistic flexibility and the development of applications as expressions of the preacher hearing their world. The pragmatic perspectives seek now to integrate the considerations from aspects of this research for cognitive, affective and behavioural change by further development of a tool for preacher evaluation.

5.3.1 Sermon Introductions

Sermon introductions hold disproportional significance and must consequently be given significant consideration (Robinson, 2001:165-174). Western reflections on sermon introductions prioritise the rhetorical importance of:

- audience engagement
- the arousal of interest
- the capturing or maintaining of attention
- the creation of anticipation and orientation towards the theme of the talk

These considerations are prioritised so as to connect the central concerns of the message with the world of the listeners. Important as these considerations are, they are rooted in a Western

task orientation, but African perspectives elevate the centrality of relationships. Sermon introductions then, rather than being an expression of task, should be seen as the establishment of trust. Two relationships are promised during a sermon introduction. Firstly, the hearers are invited to re-established relationship with the living God through hearing the living-voice-of-God. They are called to respond with obedient-listening to the person and work of Jesus Christ. This primary relationship is, secondly, interconnected with their relationship with the human preacher. In the introduction the preacher establishes a trust-compact between themselves and the audience. The introduction must function to establish *both* relationships which are founded on the speaker's credibility - what Aristotle called *ethos*. McCroskey and Teven (1999:90-103) conducted extensive research into speaker credibility in rhetorical communication theory. They argue, in keeping with Aristotle's description of *ethos*, that credibility results from subject-competence, speaker-trustworthiness and goodwill towards the audience. McCroskey (1992:110-111) has argued that people are more disposed to listen to a person who they believe has their best interests at heart. Hearers are more inclined to listen to teachers who show them goodwill and engage with them with positive intent. This goodwill encompasses understanding of the listener's context, empathy towards their pain and a responsiveness towards them (McCroskey & Teven, 1999:92). These realities will lead preachers to prioritise the relationship and trust components established in the introduction. Introductions must serve to establish a relationship so that the preacher becomes a person to hear and trust, as a sure companion on the journey of life. Sermon introductions must prioritise relational considerations rather than task or textual concerns. REACH-SA preachers often began with an extended reference to context. This sort of introduction, in addition to being immeasurably dull, implies an unconcern for relationship with their hearers. Stories and questions were often used to begin sermons. These introductions grabbed attention but seldom gave way to relevance rooted in the message of the text for the hearers. Preachers seldom explained why it would be beneficial for their listeners to hear the message and simply proceeded as if their task was the provision of information. Introductions are to be beacons of hope and light establishing a significant relationship that will lead to a hearing of the living-voice-of-God.

Listening to the World

1 Did the introduction introduce God, the preacher and the message, and encourage the audience to listen?

5.3.2 Sermon Construction

Neal (2018:3-18) argues for a global homiletical conversation suggesting that this conversation is *the* work of 21st century homiletics (Neal, 2018:11). She argues that without it homiletics will continue to privilege and prioritise Western, American and Eurocentric practices and forms. She

profoundly highlights that this conversation requires the willingness to challenge assumed categories and the courage to be wrong (Neal, 2018:11).

The interpretive perspectives gained from the neighbour science of discourse analysis have reminded that the arrangement of ideas in the construction of human speech is not universally consistent but is influenced by cultural considerations (Kaplan, 1980:399-418). Western homiletical forms value direct, sequential and linear thought, deeply influenced by Western literary history, while African sermon expressions are unavoidably rooted in theistic presuppositions, formed in the lived reality of orality, they are deeply relational and they celebrate the fundamental importance of community. God is experienced *together* in communal celebration. African preaching is conscious of its oral legacy, that African society relies on spoken rather than written communication and thus preaching is participatory, infused with dialogue, characterised by call and response so that there is constant interaction, celebration, repetition and engagement (Ajibade, 2021:68-124; Tomlin, 2019:109). African forms of sermon are aimed at addressing the whole person with the whole gospel (Ajibade, n.d.:7). Authenticity and relational sincerity are indicated by the preacher in their efforts expended in sermon delivery, and this is responded to by congregational engagement and participation. African rhetoric values spontaneity, an absence of notes and unrehearsed oral forms which build and prioritise relationships.

The empirical perspectives gained on REACH-SA preaching indicate an overwhelming sameness in sermon construction and a commitment to literary rather than oral forms. REACH-SA preachers preached from all Biblical books indicating a commitment to the entire Bible. The sheer diversity of genres present in the Scriptures would indicate the possibility of variety in sermon forms. This was not present. Instead of allowing the genre to dictate the sermon's construction, preachers trusted a Western literary formula where the preacher gave an exposition of the Biblical text followed by a few applications. These applications were universally a call to faith and a call to individual morality. Preachers must be encouraged to embrace the variety of Biblical genres and be taught to allow these to shape sermon construction. They are to be encouraged to trust the story; to preach in such a way that narrative texts retain their narrative character rather than to transfer this into a didactic formula.⁸⁹²

African society is still strongly oral (Ajibade, 2021:82-93). People's lives are rooted in oral frameworks (Ajibade, 2021:71). Ajibade (2021:67) urges preachers to make an impact on the African continent by shaping their sermons to embrace the oral culture of the people, by actually hearing them, in order to facilitate transformation. Complex ideas should be packaged in

⁸⁹² As an example of this Ajibade (2021:111) suggests that when preaching epistles, preachers who embrace orality, might encourage these texts to be preached in reference to the storyline of Acts.

memorable ways so as to facilitate oral learning and retention (Ajibade, 2021:78). Much of the Bible was itself written to oral contexts; public reading was normative, memory was normal and expected, and communication of truth happened using narrative and storytelling formats. REACH-SA should increasingly embrace these considerations in sermon construction.

Listening to the World

1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message, and encourage the audience to listen?

2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?

3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?

5.3.3 Music

Luther (1965:321-322) profoundly celebrated the importance of music when he wrote, “Next to the word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.” He rejoiced in music’s power to facilitate emotional connection when he argued that music could provide comfort in sadness, alarm to the self-assured, encouragement to the despairing, humility to the proud, calmness to the disturbed and appeasement to those consumed by hatred (Luther, 1965:321-322). In the interpretive perspectives gleaned from African studies it was noted that music and dance are ubiquitous in the human experience (Rotimi, 2019:537). Nettl (2015:31-46) contends that humans universally connect music with the supernatural and thus regularly use it in religious activity. Music and dance are particularly important in African expressions of Christianity where they are the heartbeat of culture and community (Ajibade, 2021:139, Biwul, 2019:225). African expressions of Christianity are communal, expressive and embodied; they are infused with emotion, energy and spontaneity (Chigumadzi & West, 2022). People appreciate public emotion and articulate this in music, song, celebration, dance and rhythm (Smith, 1971:13). Music and dance are mediums of self-expression in the reality of human lived experience (Ojetayo, 2016:112; Onwuekwe, 2009:183). Any consideration of the effectiveness of preaching must contemplate the role of music in displaying the essence of culture and then appropriate the power of music to develop theological identity, human connection and relational community. It must consider how to strengthen preaching by using music to facilitate human communication, enhance learning, give expression to beliefs and develop theological understanding (Biwul, 2019:225; Lebaka, 2001:43; Onwuekwe, 2009:171-177).

It is not the place of this study to develop a theology of music in the Biblical meta-narrative. It will be sufficient to notice that music is constantly present in the life of the people of God. In the normative perspectives developed, it was noticed that Moses wrote a song to summarise his sermon. He urges the Israelite nation to remember God and his actions, and to respond to him in

listening-obedience. The song reminds and warns the nation of what transpired in the past when they forsook God.⁸⁹³ Music was also routinely used in Israelite life to celebrate victory in battle. Moses celebrated the Red Sea rescue,⁸⁹⁴ Jephthah was celebrated in his return from battle⁸⁹⁵ and David's victories were celebrated in song.⁸⁹⁶ The Psalms are a song book used on a variety of occasions. They include laments in tragedy, didactic reminders of Israelite history, songs for coronations, calls to worship and celebrations in the greatness of God. Furthermore, the New Testament church was reminded to use music as an expression of its life in Christ. The apostle Paul calls Christians to be filled with the Spirit and to express this by addressing each other using music.⁸⁹⁷ In a parallel passage in Colossians,⁸⁹⁸ the church is called to express their gratitude by the Word-of-Christ dwelling in them and for this gratitude to be expressed in music that is addressed to one another (Rotimi 2019:539-540).

In this study's empirical perspectives, it was established that music does not play a significant part in the preaching of REACH-SA. This is not to suggest that music is not central in other components of liturgy used by church communities but the almost total absence of music in preaching requires a revisiting of music's role in preaching. Songs are routinely used in Africa for the dissemination of news and current affairs, as well as the influencing of political opinion, especially among non- and semi-literate people (Finnegan, 2012:266). Songs are now constantly acknowledged by African political parties to be vehicles for oral communication and political education (Finnegan, 2012:276). African preachers routinely use music and dance as significant components of their communication techniques (Ajibade, 2021:134-139). They use music and dance to reiterate their arguments. Much African music is characterised by call-and-response and preachers use this to facilitate human connection and community with their hearers. In this, African preachers indicate a hearing and an understanding of their particular contexts. Music is used to enable and reinforce learning and is especially useful for oral and semi-literate learners. In its simple and repetitive nature, it is accessible to all educational levels. Music engages listeners by reinforcing content and aiding memory, by attaching melody and rhythm to the material (Van De Laar, 2000:180). REACH-SA preachers need to be challenged to hear the African context and Biblical contexts, resulting in them overcoming their reticence to use singing, music and dance to build better communication.

⁸⁹³ Deut 32:1-43

⁸⁹⁴ Exo 15:1-18

⁸⁹⁵ Jud 11:34

⁸⁹⁶ 1 Sam 18:6-7

⁸⁹⁷ Eph 5:19

⁸⁹⁸ Col 3:16

Listening to the World

1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message and encourage the audience to listen?

2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?

3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?

4 How can I incorporate music into my preaching?

5.3.4 Persuasion and Delight

Augustine (2002:278) defined rhetoric as, “the art of persuading people to accept something.” He argued that preaching extends beyond teaching, so as to include persuasion and even delight (Augustine, 2002:284). Augustine insisted that integral to the success of preaching, is that listeners, understand, retain information and then act. In order for persuasion to happen the attention of the hearer needs to be held so as to keep them listening and to eventually move them to action (Augustine, 2002:284). Similarly, Robert of Basevorn (2002:295) argued that the preacher is to win over their audience by attracting the mind of their listeners so as to enable the listeners to hear, retain and act. In this, these authors echo the apostle Paul writing to Timothy, when he urged him to ‘Preach the word...to reprove, rebuke and exhort.’⁸⁹⁹ Preaching fails when it views its task as simply the provision of information. Craddock (2005:493) says, “Preaching is not just transferring information. It’s creating the experience of that information.” Western pre-suppositions value task over relationship and thus prioritise the provision of information as primary. They value activity above relationship, forgetting that teaching is rooted in interpersonal connection. Preachers value doctrine, abstract truth and didactic content (Spurgeon:1952:349-361). Spurgeon (1954:353) said, “Our house should be built up with the substantial masonry of doctrine, upon the deep foundations of inspiration.” Preachers consider the provision of information to be the fundamental and primary task. Preaching fails when it does not listen sufficiently to the world and then fails to appreciate principles of human change. Berger’s study of social influence concludes by suggesting that humans have ‘roadblocks’ that prevent them from embracing change (Berger, 2020:11). He suggests that marketers fail when they attempt to persuade people. They

Coax, convince and encourage. Push, push, push. And if that doesn’t work, rinse and repeat. Step on the gas and push harder (Berger, 2020:9).

He suggests an easier and more effective way to facilitate change begins in identifying what is preventing the desired change and then eliminating the obstacles to action (Berger, 2020:11).

⁸⁹⁹ 2 Tim 4:2

When preachers have heard their world, they will understand something of what obstacles to change exist, and will then endeavour to teach truth so as to lead their hearers to listening-obedient-action in response to the living voice of God. In order to facilitate understanding, clarity of content is to be aimed for in preaching, but feelings, affections and motivations are also to be considered.

5.3.4.1 Storytelling

The interpretive perspectives, gained from the neighbour science of Business Communication Studies indicated that storytelling is a significant consideration for effective communication. Haven (2007:89-122) persuasively argues that research has concluded that stories improve comprehension, learning outcomes and the ability of hearers to understand and appropriate meaning. Stories facilitate motivation for learning, they encourage personal involvement as well as the development of community. In addition to enhancing learning outcomes, stories significantly improve and enhance contentment, retention and human memory. He concludes his research with the following summation,

Research overwhelmingly, convincingly, and without opposition provides the evidence I sought. Are stories a more efficient and effective vehicle for communicating factual, conceptual, emotional, and tacit information and a more effective teaching vehicle? Not only yes, but absolutely, yes! (Haven, 2007:122).

Robinson (2001:154) concurs when he says that illustrating enhances memory, stirs emotion, generates need, retains attention and importantly establishes relational rapport between speaker and hearer.

The empirical perspectives gained on REACH-SA preaching indicate that preachers make very little use of storytelling. They are seldom tempted to preach anecdotal sermons that are over-illustrated, nor are they tempted to, “let the sermon be all illustrations” (Spurgeon, 1954:353). Immink warns against over utilising stories and illustrations when he says,

Anecdotal sermons sometimes go from one human interest item to another and only cause confusion. Too much decoration distracts (Immink, 2019:5).

The overuse of stories however, is not a problem in REACH-SA preaching, instead preachers make little attempt to harness the power of story. They fail to trust the power of story to carry the message (Craddock, 2005:492). The interpretive perspectives on storytelling, gained from the neighbour science of Business Communication Studies, strongly suggest that this absence of storytelling must be re-considered. The perspectives gained from African Studies conclude that

worldviews beliefs and morality are often expressed in African culture in myth, story, song and drama, which necessitates a consideration of the importance of story in preaching (Ajibade, 2021:67). In addition to the conclusions on storytelling derived from neighbour sciences, the normative perspectives developed on the preaching and teaching ministry of Jesus, highlighted him profoundly using stories and parables in his communication strategy. These stories were not incidental, nor adornments to Jesus' teaching; they were the *primary method* of his teaching so that Mark concludes,

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.

He did not speak to them without a parable (Mark 4:33,34).

Rather than being an aid to understanding, Jesus' parables were designed to divide; they were designed to be open-ended, unsettling and unfinished. They were simple and singularly unadorned. They were intended to create a catalytic question in the minds of his hearers founded on the parable's incompleteness. Jesus' parables were designed to persuade his listeners into relationship with himself built on listening-obedience.

These considerations require that preachers be trained and encouraged to tell stories. Stories are universal and transcend culture. Spurgeon (1954:349-361) says that stories delight, they gladden hearts, they open eyes and ears and they introduce light into the sermon, making it pleasurable and interesting as they accelerate human attention. Preachers must be urged to put effort into the development of stories. Homiletical training should encourage and develop storytelling. Listeners that are delighted, engaged and enthralled by stories continue to listen even as they are encouraged to change. Craddock (2005:494) asserts that stories are derived mostly from observation and experience. He laments that preachers have often lost their capacity to listen to their people and context, and so they do not notice, nor retain, what they see around them so as to be able to use those stories to communicate the living voice of God.

Listening to the World

1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message and encourage the audience to listen?

2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?

3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?

4 How can I incorporate music into my preaching?

5 What stories did I tell?

5.3.4.2 Persuasion

Berger's (2020:11-12) study on persuasion holds significant pragmatic considerations for preachers. He highlights five factors, identified in his research, that influence human change which he calls: -

- Reactance
- Endowment
- Distance
- Uncertainty
- Corroborating evidence.

Berger (2020:15-60) argues that people have an innate anti-persuasion system and that they exhibit confirmation bias which ensures that they hear what validates their own understanding (Berger 2020:99). He suggests that in order to facilitate desired change, these obstacles to change need to be considered when communicating.

Firstly, he identifies that people highly prize freedom and autonomy (Berger, 2020:15-26). They like to feel that they have control and any restriction of their autonomy generates a psychological phenomenon which he calls reactance (Berger, 2020:23). Reactance is where people react against persuasion and then do the opposite of what is requested. In order to avoid this, he suggests that communicators allow for agency, that they allow people to persuade themselves by providing a menu of constructive options which ensures that people feel in control in their decision-making (Berger, 2020:27-32). He furthermore notices that the use of questions, derived from communicators listening to their audience, enhances persuasive outcomes (Berger, 2020:33-38). He suggests that when people feel heard, understood and cared for, they are more likely to trust the person who is communicating with them and be persuaded to change. Communicators should start with understanding and empathy before attempting persuasion (Berger, 2020:226).

Berger (2020:61-88), secondly, notices that change always involves cost. He argues that communicators need to address issues of attachment and loss by highlighting the costs of inaction as a part of their persuasion (Berger, 2020:73). He urges communicators to frame change in the language of 'the regaining of things already lost' (Berger, 2020:226). Preachers can use the lived realities of pain to encourage hearers towards the living voice of God.

Thirdly, Berger (2020:89-132) notices that the provision of additional data does not always change people's minds because of their confirmation bias (Berger, 2020:99). He urges communicators to persuade people by small incremental steps in a progression so that hearers stay out of the region

of rejection (Berger, 2020:227). Preachers are often impatient, calling people to life-altering change far too quickly and should rather aim to ask people to consider smaller steps in their obedient-listening.

Fourthly, Berger (2020:133-175) notices that uncertainty prevents change. His research concludes that people are risk averse and prefer the certainty of an existing situation, even if they know it to be deficient. He urges communicators to aim at reducing uncertainty by lowering barriers to discovery (Berger 2020:227).

Finally, Berger (2020:177-213) argues for the provision of corroborating evidence to facilitate change. He calls communicators to discern the distinction between weak attitudes, that are easy to change, and strong attitudes (like faith and values) which are firmly held. For the changing of strong attitudes more information, more texture and more certainty are required (Berger, 2020:181). Communicators often attempt persuasion by more exposure but they should rather encourage corroborating evidence from additional and meaningful sources to provide communal reinforcement so as to justify their call for change (Berger, 2020:188-189, 206, 228).

The empirical research on REACH-SA preaching indicates that preachers hardly ever consider reflections on their methods of attempted persuasion. Considerations of the cost and barriers to change will significantly enhance REACH-SA preaching as it endeavours to speak directly to people's perceived obstacles to change.

Listening to the World

1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message and encourage the audience to listen?

2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?

3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?

4 How can I incorporate music into my preaching?

5 What stories did I tell?

6 How am I attempting to persuade my listeners?

5.3.5 Linguistic flexibility and delivery technique

Missiologists speak of the 'heart language' of people in multi-lingual communities (SIL, 2017). A 'heart language' is often the first language that a person speaks. It shapes, expresses and represents people's cultural, historical, ethno-linguistic, geographic and religious identities. It is the best means of communication between people at their deepest levels of significance and comprehension (Linguae Christi, 2021). A 'heart language' is the language that people dream in

(Jesus film project, 2023) and the language that they use in their deepest expressions of suffering, despair and anxiety (Linguae Christi, 2021).

In multi-cultural communities, people operate in multiple languages for the purposes of trade, education and entertainment. These languages are not neutral, instead many reflect the ongoing legacies of colonial control and oppression. In the interpretive perspectives, the astounding multiculturalism of the Christian community was highlighted. Milne reminded of the early church's counter-cultural, unity-in-diversity (Milne, 2006:9-12). In South Africa, apartheid attempted to flatten this multi-cultural identity by the legislative separating of peoples. Preachers can thoughtlessly and mistakenly adopt a mono-lingual and mono-cultural praxis in their preaching - a practice noticed during the empirical research on suburban preaching in REACH-SA.

South Africa's beautiful diversity is celebrated in its motto '!ke e:/xarra //ke'⁹⁰⁰ but the dominance of English in education, international relations and entertainment can encourage preachers to assume that all that is required from them for the purposes of communication is the use of accessible English. Missiologists affirm that addressing people in their heart language is an expression of love and respect (Brown, 2009:85). Addressing people in their heart language is an expression of incarnational humbling as the speaker submits themselves to the needs of their people and seeks to carry the cost of multi-lingual communication rather than expecting the hearer to carry it (Brown, 2009:85). It is an attempt to transmit the message in a way so as to be heard, received and understood. It is an expression of identification where the preacher says, "I have heard you and I have seen you." Addressing people in their heart language seeks to communicate that God likewise, hears and speaks the language of *this* people. At the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,⁹⁰¹ God reversed the effects of Babel and enabled the apostles to speak to their hearers in their heart-languages. Quantitative research has indicated significant improvement in communication outcomes when speakers use heart languages for communication (Brown, 2009:85).

Perspectives gained from rhetoric noticed that public speech prioritises different values in different communities. In order to aid communication, communities have differing views on voice usage, eye contact, gestures/body language, mood and style. They value differing degrees of formality versus spontaneity, differing degrees of vocal and facial expressiveness and differing expectations in personal dress (Biwul, 2019:214-226). Significant amongst these must be that of linguistic flexibility (Mitchell, 1990:87) where preachers move in and out of different languages in an endeavour to communicate in the heart language of their hearers. By using linguistic flexibility

⁹⁰⁰ literal meaning "diverse people unite."

⁹⁰¹ Acts 2:7,8

preachers mirror African discourse which attempts communication by prioritising relationship. REACH-SA preachers in suburban contexts were predominantly mono-lingual and should endeavour to appropriate linguistic flexibility, as do preachers in township and multi-lingual communities, so as to embrace South Africa's multi-culturalism.

Listening to the World

- 1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message and encourage the audience to listen?
- 2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?
- 3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?
- 4 How can I incorporate music into my preaching?
- 5 What stories did I tell?
- 6 How am I attempting to persuade my listeners?
- 7 How did I embrace linguistic diversity in the sermon?

5.3.6 Applications

People live with a sense of disquiet. They sense that something is not as it should be; that something requires transformation (Oberdorf, 2009:21,131). The disquiet is personal - they experience anxiety, worry, frustration, failure and pain; but the disquiet is also relational – human relationships are characterised by misunderstandings, conflict and dysfunction even as they simultaneously generate sublime moments of happiness; and then the disquiet is also spiritual – people feel the effects of separation from God especially in the ever-present reality of death. As a result, they come to the sermon for help in what Frazee (205:306) describes as the 'four rashes' of life – health, money, relationships and work. Sermon listeners are most interested in how to live on Monday rather than on a Sunday (Overdorf, 2009:130). They seek a diagnosis for their disquiet, as well as counsel, advice and solutions to live successfully and perhaps even victoriously.

The task of application is contested territory in homiletics.⁹⁰² This research has assumed that preachers are to serve their listeners by helping them to appropriate the truths expounded as they provide solutions for the human disquiet. The task of application then, requires significant attention by preachers, but seldom gets the attention it deserves. It is often left as the last thing on the speaker's agenda when both preacher and audience are flagging. Preachers enter the pulpit underprepared for it because the task of application is hard. It requires effort, attention, listening and thought. The preacher must have heard the *word* so as to be faithful to the text but

⁹⁰² See Overdorf, 2009:35-53

must also have heard their *world* so as to allow the truths contained in the text to influence and affect the contemporary situation. Chapell (1994:217) calls application the breaking point of most sermons. He says that preachers instinctively know that being specific is what makes application so difficult because it invites rejection and thus they avoid it (Chapell, 1994:216). Preachers are seldom helped in the task of application by scholars because of the gulf between scholarly study and the context of the speaker's audience. The Biblical situation to which the text was written, and the unique, present-day audience, are divided by gulfs of time, language and culture which the preacher must bridge. Some applications are obvious and direct, "Love your enemies. Do not steal"; while others require significant theological consideration, "Women will be saved through childbearing. Slaves submit to your masters." The arrival of Jesus has fundamentally transformed the application of Old Testament Law. Robinson (2005a:308-311), helpfully suggests a 'ladder of abstraction' where preachers consider the difference between 'necessary, probable, possible, improbable and impossible' applications. He furthermore contends that a passage must be controlled by its original meaning to its original hearers (Robinson, 2005a:308). Larson (2005:300-301), reminds of the Biblical connection between promise and command. Every call to listening-obedience is predicated on the divine call to faith and trust. Disobedience is rooted in disbelief (Pelton, 2005:311) which gives rise to the fundamental questions of application being, 'What are they called to repent of? What are they called to believe/trust/obey?'⁹⁰³

The normative perspectives of this research have reminded that God's primary call to humanity is a call to listen (to repent of un-listening) and to obey the voice of God (to trust that the voice of God is truthful). It is a call to re-established relationship with God through Jesus his Son. Stowell (2005:314) says,

Jesus is the story line of the Bible, the Creator of the universe, the pinnacle revelation of God. The Holy Spirit within me does the ministry of glorifying Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ shows me what God the Father is like. Jesus really is the focal point.

Preaching must be Christocentric (Stowell, 2005:314). Keller (2015:70-90) calls for Christ to be the instinctive message of preachers. It was observed in the empirical perspectives that REACH-SA preachers were strong in explaining Christ and uniformly called people to respond with a personal faith commitment. Important as this is, it is however insufficient. The call to hear the voice of God results in re-established relationships with God *and* people. Humans are to love God *and* love each other. Interpretive perspectives gained from African Studies remind of the centrality of human relationships. The call to trust Christ must come in the context of community and can

⁹⁰³ Acts 2:37-38

never be separated from community both present and historical. Listening to the voice of God must result in trusting Christ and loving people.⁹⁰⁴ If texts are applied through the individualistic lenses of Western culture, rather than through the communal lenses of Biblical and African culture (Overdorf, 2009:128); if applications are focussed on the singular 'I/me' rather than the collective, 'we/us'; then there exists the possibility of *orthodoxy without love*. The South African context of legalised racial oppression is an example of the sort of outcome that can ensue, where people embrace Christ personally but their human relationships are unaffected. Similarly, South Africa's present problems of rampant materialism, corruption and greed, are examples of what transpires when preachers fail to apply a response to God with a practical response in community. Preachers ought to be trained and challenged to recognise applications in the three spaces of God, the individual and the community. Properly applied, the Bible is the place through which humans first hear Jesus, then see themselves as they truly are, which results in a window through which they can see and hear others (Overdorf, 2009:32).

A second weakness, noticed in the empirical perspectives of the applications delivered by REACH-SA preachers, is the almost universal failure to address the 'Yes but how' of application (Quicke, 2003:154). Preachers consistently challenged their listeners to action, raising divergent considerations for them to consider but only a few gave their listeners practical elaboration as to how they might achieve the considerations raised. When preachers raise the 'what' of the text they leave their hearers with challenge but also with guilt; when they elaborate 'how' they provide a roadmap for change. REACH-SA preachers must address the 'what' so as to facilitate an understanding of relevance and then provide practical methods for achieving those positive outcomes.

Listening to the World

- 1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message and encourage the audience to listen?
- 2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?
- 3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?
- 4 How can I incorporate music into my preaching?
- 5 What stories did I tell?
- 6 How am I attempting to persuade my listeners?
- 7 How did I embrace linguistic diversity in the sermon?
- 8 How did I help them to love God and people?
- 9 Did I show them 'what' and 'how'?

⁹⁰⁴ Matt 19:16-19; Mar 10:17-19; Luk 10:25-37; Joh 13:34; Jam 2:14-16; 1 Joh 4:20-21

CHAPTER 6: SUMMATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research has sought to contribute to bridging the gap between REACH-SA's denominational commitments to reaching all of South Africa and the uneven praxis of church planting and development within the denomination in recent decades. This study has investigated whether preaching praxis might be a significant contributing component to this problem. The research used Osmer's model of Pastoral Theology to examine 81 sermons preached during the COVID years of 2020-2022 with the aim of understanding the state of preaching within REACH-SA. The research question applied was: *Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?*

6.2 THE DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK OF PRIESTLY LISTENING

In order to discern the present situation regarding REACH-SA's preaching praxis a literature review was conducted where five broad areas of consensus were identified that guide a definition of good preaching. These were:

- i. The speaking Trinitarian God is the primary agent that stands behind preaching.
- ii. God speaks through the agency of the Scriptures.
- iii. The Scriptures declare the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that the central content of good preaching must be 'Christ and him crucified'. The historical word of Christ contains a present call from God to 'hear his voice' today.
- iv. Preaching is spoken through the agency of a human preacher who is member of *both* present and historical communities.
- v. Preaching is addressed to a specific people who inhabit a context, different from that inhabited by the Scriptures' original audience.

These areas of consensus resulted in a definition of preaching: Preaching is *'the heard word spoken to a heard people*.

In the empirical component of this research, 81 sermons were evaluated using the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis detailed in Appendix C. This is a method of qualitative analysis comprising a network of questions that are put to the sermon. The questions are divided into a *superficial* analysis and a *depth* analysis.

The superficial analysis asked:

- i. What is the agenda of the sermon mapped out in the introduction?

- ii. Is there a discernible emphasis, central thrust(s) or big idea(s) to the sermon?
- iv. What conclusions/applications does the sermon develop?
- v. What is the form/shape of the sermon?
- vi. What conditional sentences are present in the sermon?
- vii. What does the sermon negate and confront? What does the sermon affirm and praise?

The depth analysis investigated:

- i. Which God is named and revealed in the sermon?
- ii. How does Scripture function in the sermon? How has the text been heard?
- iii. What kind of listeners does the sermon imply?
- iv. How does the preacher function in the sermon?

6.3 INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVES OF SAGELY WISDOM

In the interpretive task, perspectives from neighbour sciences were considered. Firstly, building on the definition of preaching presented in the descriptive-empirical task and using perspectives from African studies and sociology, it was argued that preaching can be described as asymmetrical intersectional, fourfold quadrilateral listening. To the three voices of God through the Scriptures, the sermon's hearers and the preacher's own voice it was argued that a fourth area of listening must be recognised which is the voice of historical community. African worldview perspectives reminded that preachers must not be viewed as individuals divorced from both their current and historical communities.

Secondly, using perspectives from hermeneutics and African studies the research evaluated REACH-SA's obedient-listening to God via the text of Scripture. It aimed to consider preachers as listener-to-the-word. In this component it was recognised that despite REACH-SA preachers displaying a profound commitment to Reformed hermeneutical perspectives that their preaching is infused with Western pre-understandings and conclusions, resulting in an under-emphasis of Biblical applications.

Finally, using perspectives from Business Communication and African studies to investigate the preacher as listener-to-the-world, it was noted that REACH-SA preachers under-appreciate African realities when they prioritise the cerebral over the emotional and make little use of music and storytelling. Using perspectives from Discourse Analysis, Rhetoric and Pastoral Theology the conclusions of the previous sections were reinforced that REACH-SA preachers are often over-influenced by Western considerations resulting in an under-emphasis of issues affecting the South Africa context.

6.4 NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES OF PROPHETIC DISCERNMENT

In seeking normative perspectives, this chapter established that the demand for obedient-listening profoundly resonates throughout the Scriptures and that this conclusion must shape homiletical praxis. In the first section seeking normative considerations, the sheer weight of the Biblical testimony to God's call on humanity to exercise listening-trusting-obedience, resulted in a confirmation of the definition of preaching as asymmetrical, quadrilateral listening.

The second section of the normative perspectives, sought to investigate good practices elucidated in the Scriptures as considerations for improved praxis. This section of the normative research used considerations from the models of preaching provided by Moses the proto-preacher, models of preaching from the history of Israel, considerations from the preaching of Jesus and finally, considerations from the New Testament praxis of preaching so as to gain normative perspectives on the preacher as listener-to-the-world.

6.5 PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The pragmatic perspectives developed a tool to facilitate cognitive, affective and behavioural change by preachers and to aid sermon improvement for REACH-SA preachers.

Listening to the Word

- 1 Did I hear the voice of God to me?
- 2 What am I hearing from the Scriptures (for me, for them, for us)?
- 3 What presuppositions am I bringing to my hearing? Are they valid and reinforced by the text or do they display subliminal prejudice?

Listening to the World

- 1 Did the introduction introduce God, me and the message and encourage the audience to listen?
- 2 Have I constructed the sermon to be faithful to the genre of Scripture?
- 3 Have I constructed the sermon in consideration of written and oral learners in my community?
- 4 How can I incorporate music into my preaching?
- 5 What stories did I tell?
- 6 How am I attempting to persuade my listeners?
- 7 How did I embrace linguistic diversity in the sermon?
- 8 How did I help them to love God and people?
- 9 Did I show them 'what' and 'how'?

6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DEFICIENCIES IN THE CURRENT STUDY

Three suggestions for further study have presented themselves during this research:

In the normative perspectives developed, Moses was identified as the first human preacher. Further study on Moses as proto-preacher in the book of Deuteronomy, with particular reference to sermon construction and the use of music as an aid to memory, would be worthwhile areas for academic consideration.

Secondly, in the interpretive perspectives developed from the neighbour science of Business Communication Studies, perspectives on persuasion were considered. Business Communication has done much research into persuasion but these insights could only be superficially addressed in this study. This constitutes a fruitful area of study in homiletics, where the perspectives from neighbour sciences can facilitate skills that are culturally appropriate and that constitute legitimate persuasion, without manipulation, so as to significantly aid the development of preaching.

Thirdly, Retief (Seccombe, 2023) is of the opinion that the hero of African Christianity is the unheralded and unpaid lay preacher. He considers that Christianity in Africa has largely exploded because of the labours of these evangelists whose methods have not been adequately researched and their stories seldom told (Seccombe, 2023). The memory of these preachers is difficult to access because it is largely oral and undocumented. Their achievements are under appreciated and their legacy is often considered to be small and insignificant. Osmer (2008:152) contends that normative considerations legitimately come from past or present good practice. The methods of preaching used by these lay preachers would be a fruitful area for additional study so as to aid preachers in imagining how they might do things differently so as to continue the growth of African Christianity.

6.7 FINAL ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question posited in this research was: *Do sermons preached within REACH-SA display obedient-listening to God, emanating from a heard word and a proficient ethnographic analysis of South African complexity resonating from a heard people?*

In answering the first part of the research question, the normative research conclusively established that preaching is established on a heard word from God and that preachers are to be listeners to that word. REACH-SA preachers display a profound commitment to hearing the Scriptures. Using Reformed hermeneutical perspectives, they attempt to hear the word and then communicate it to their listeners. Where this hearing can be improved is in recognising the presuppositions that they bring to the task of hearing, and how these presuppositions have been

shaped by Western influences and thus result in applications aimed at the individual rather than the community.

In answering the second part of the research question, it was noted in the descriptive and normative perspectives that preaching is spoken, mediated and (even) incarnated through the agency of human preachers who must hear their listeners. Preaching is to be contextually flexible and addressed to a heard, specific and unique people, who inhabit a particular context. Preaching is didactic, hortatory and encouraging. It calls to obedience and it calls back to obedience. It contains warnings and promises. The contextual flexibility required by the preacher is reflected in the language used and the way applications are made. It is shown in diversity of style and communication techniques. Preachers can use emotion, music and storytelling to facilitate communication. It was noted in the empirical perspectives that REACH-SA preachers under-appreciate African realities when they prioritise the cerebral over the emotional and make little use of music and storytelling. In the interpretive research, using perspectives from discourse analysis, rhetoric and pastoral theology, the conclusions of the previous sections were reinforced, that REACH-SA preachers are often over-influenced by Western considerations resulting in an under-emphasis of issues affecting the South Africa context. It was proposed that perspectives on sermon introductions, sermon construction, music, storytelling, persuasion, linguistic flexibility and sermon applications be considered for improved preaching by REACH-SA preachers in South African contexts.

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APPENDIX A – INFORMED CONSENT



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INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR PREACHERS IN REACH - SA

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: The preacher as listener: A practical theological study of obedient-listening in the preaching praxis of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa.

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00789-21-A7

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ADDRESS: 86 Belvedere Road, Claremont

CONTACT NUMBER: 084 556 2213

You are being invited to take part in a research study that forms part of a PhD study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will

not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-00789-21-A7) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

We plan to study sermons preached by preachers in REACH-SA in order to better understand how to train preachers for Africa.

This study will be conducted on sermons preached during the second wave of Covid infections by REACH-SA preachers. The research will be done by experienced researchers trained in preaching. 25 participants will be included in this study.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to be part of this research because you are a preacher in REACH-SA.

You will unfortunately not be able to take part in this research if you did not preach during the period specified.

What will be expected of you?

If your sermons are on a public forum nothing will be expected of you. If they are not you will be expected to supply a copy of your sermons by means of an audio copy, web link, sermon script or sermon notes.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

There will be no direct gains for you in the study.

The major gain of the study is to develop a better understanding of preaching in REACH-SA in order to better train preachers for South Africa's beautiful complexity.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

There are no risks to you in this study.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

Your privacy will be respected as no personal information will be collected on participants. Confidentiality will be ensured in the report findings as all participants will be given anonymous identifiers. Findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and electronic data will be password protected. Data will be stored for one year after the completion of the study.

What will happen with the findings or samples?

The findings of this study will only be used for this study.

How will you know about the results of this research?

The results of this research will be available on request upon completion of the study.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

This study is funded by the researcher. There will be no costs involved for you if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

You can contact Geoff Gertzen at geoff.gertzen@gmail.com if you have any further questions or have any problems.

You can also contact the North-West University Education, Management and Economic Sciences, Law, Theology, Engineering and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Marlize Bisschoff at 018 299 4707 or marlize.bisschoff@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.

You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: The preacher as listener: A practical theological study of obedient-listening in the preaching praxis of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa

I declare that:

I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

The research was clearly explained to me.

I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.

I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.

I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

APPENDIX B – ETHICS APPROVAL



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Fax: 018 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics

Tel: 018 299-4849

Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

22 November 2021

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Theology Research Ethics Committee (TREC)** on 22/11/2021, the Theology Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: The preacher as listener: A practical theological study of obedient-listening in the preaching praxis of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof FP Kruger

Student: Gertzen, G = #13182226

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	7	8	9	-	2	1	-	A	7
Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A

= Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date: 2021/12/01

Risk Category: Minimal risk

Expiry date: 2022/11/30

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the TREC:*
 - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
 - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*

APPENDIX C – SERMON ANALYSIS SHEET

Author:

Sermon Number:

Passage:

Superficial Analysis

What is the agenda of the sermon mapped out in the introduction?

Does the introduction invite the listener to hear the living voice of God?

Does the introduction funnel hearers from their situations toward the central theme of the sermon?

Is there a discernible emphasis (argument), central thrust(s) or big idea(s) to the sermon? What is it?

What conclusions/applications does the sermon develop?

How does the preacher seek to move hearers to a reframed reality, evidenced in motivated, enacted, responding obedient behaviour?

Is there command, celebration, encouragement, motivation, persuasion, repentance and confession, doxology, rebuke, training or teaching?

What are the listeners being called to remember 'in order to re-chew and celebrate'?

What is the form/shape of the sermon?

Deductive or Inductive?

Does it do justice to the genre of the Biblical text?

Is it didactic, cerebral, modelled on Greek logic emphasizing ordered, propositional truths? What of narrative, image, emotion and imagination?

What conditional sentences are present in the sermon?

If...when/would? How are the conditional sentences used to persuade the hearers?

What does the preacher wish might happen as a result of the sermon? What is their purpose?

What does the sermon negate and confront? What does the sermon affirm and praise?

Depth Analysis (seeking the sermon's motives)

God

Which God is named and revealed? What are the characteristics and behaviours of the God that is revealed?

How is Jesus Christ revealed in the sermon? Is the talk Christocentric or Anthropocentric?

What role does the Holy Spirit play in the sermon?

Scripture

Does the Bible set the agenda for the sermon? Does the homiletical aim of the sermon accurately reflect the exegetical aim of the passage?

What has the preacher done with the Scriptural text? How has the text been heard? How has the sermon interpreted the text?

Hearers

What kind of listeners does the sermon imply?

What clues are given in application, illustration and analogy as to the historical and societal context of the listeners being addressed? South Africa? Eurocentric? Racism and coloniality? Educational assumptions? Gender assumptions? Individual or corporate? Emotion/cerebral?

Preacher

How does the preacher function in the sermon? Herald, teacher, pastor, storyteller, witness, steward, confessor, servant, prophet or father?

What influence does the preacher's self-identification exercise on the sermon as delivered?

APPENDIX D – ETHICS CERTIFICATES



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Geoffrey Gertzen

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2019/06/11
CID : g09p4M7x



Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Continuing Education Program (3 Credits)
Programme de Formation continue (3 Crédits)



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Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSIMSAMW) (www.samw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

[REV : 20170310]



Zertifikat Certificat

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Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

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a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Research Ethics Evaluation

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2019/06/12
CID : b64FFD8a



Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Continuing Education Program (3 Credits)
Programme de Formation continue (3 Crédits)



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continue

Continuing Education Programmes
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Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSIMSAMW) (www.samw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

[REV : 20170310]



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

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Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Geoffrey Gertzen

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Informed Consent

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2019/07/04
CED : OLYStefanek


Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordonateur TRREE Coordinator



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Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/SAMW) (www.sams.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

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