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WORKSHOP IN NARRATIVE PREACHING
AN ADDED APPROACH FOR THE PULPITS OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL

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FEBRUARY 18, 2009

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

WORKSHOP IN NARRATIVE PREACHING
AN ADDED APPROACH FOR THE PULPITS OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CONCORDIA SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

BY
REVEREND ELY PRIETO

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to offer a new approach from the field of homiletics to the ministry of pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil – IELB. The goal was to help a small group of seven pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio do Sinos, in South Brazil, to integrate a more narrative style of preaching into their ministry. The chief component of this project was to offer a workshop on narrative preaching to this group of pastors and to see how effective the workshop could be in helping them integrate the theory and practice of narrative preaching. To verify the impact the workshop had on the pastors, questionnaires, study of written sermons, and written evaluations were conducted. Based on the gathered data, the researcher was able to verify that the workshop had a positive impact on the pastors' preaching; they were not only able to learn the new technique but also to integrate the narrative style of preaching into their ministry. On the basis of this study the researcher offers suggestions and ideas for the use of this workshop in narrative preaching in the ministry of IELB in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Major Applied Project (here after MAP) would not have been possible without the support, encouragement and guidance of many individuals. I would like to thank the following people.

First, I thank my dear wife Miriam for her encouragement and support, helping me to keep focused on this project and complete the Doctor of Ministry (here after D. Min.) program. I would also like to thank my two children, Filipe and Natália. My thanks to them for being patient with their father, especially when I was not able to spend time with them as I attended classes and dealt with other matters related to this project.

I also extend my word of thanks to the members of Concordia Lutheran Church in San Antonio and the staff, for their encouragement, prayers and support during my studies. Especially I thank them for allowing me to take the time off that I needed to accomplish this important project in my life. Here I can not forget to mention Mrs. Sharon Devora, who faithfully dedicated much of her time reviewing papers, checking grammar and punctuation, since I started the D. Min. program.

My thanks also goes to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (here after IELB) and its clergy, especially the pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos who were willing to take time away from their families and ministry to be involved in this project. My deepest gratitude goes to: Revs. Breno C. Thome, Leonardo Raasch, Renato L. Regauer, Oscar M. Zimmerman, Sergio L. Neivert, Martim Brehm and Adalmir Wachholz. I also thank the members of their congregations who participated in the survey for this project and helped in the sermon evaluation teams. My thanks also go to Rev. Marcos Schmidt and the members

of Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Novo Hamburgo, who opened the doors of their congregation and hosted the workshop in narrative preaching in their facilities.

I also would like to acknowledge the support and direction which has been given by my MAP advisor, Dr. Glenn Nielsen. His expertise in the area of homiletics as well as his helpful suggestions have made my work in this project both challenging and rewarding. Dr. Nielsen has been a blessing not only to me but also to Concordia Seminary.

Finally, my thanks go also to the members of the Oral Exam Committee. I thank Dr. David Peter and Dr. Robert Weise for their helpful insights and comments. Their words of support and encouragement, and also their willingness to work with me have been greatly appreciated.

CHAPTER ONE

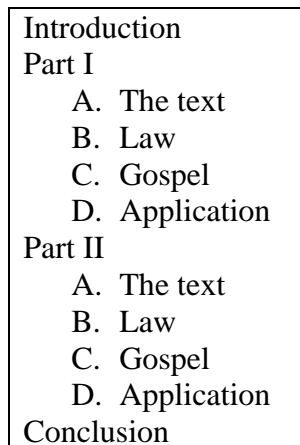
NARRATIVE... WHAT?

Fall 1991 was my first week on campus at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and I was walking toward the Kramer Chapel. I was trying to learn my surroundings, with my new professors, the fellow students, and the whole aspect of living in a cross-cultural experience. During one of the first chapels, I was happy to see Dr. William G. Houser stepping into the pulpit. He was a familiar face, since I had my morning class with him. But he was still a new professor for me, and I did not know much about him. His sermon that morning was so powerful that I can still see and hear Dr. Houser in that pulpit delivering that message. I not only remember the text, Matthew 18, but I also can remember his style of preaching. In a way that was very peculiar for me at that time, Dr. Houser masterfully wove together the story of the text with other stories and examples of our daily lives, making sure that the congregation could understand and even experience the forgiving of the brother that sins against you.

Chapel was over, and on our way out I could see that I was not the only one impressed and touched by that sermon. Later on, I heard someone say: *“That was a great narrative sermon.”* And then, someone else complimented: *“Dr. Houser is a master in the art of the interrupted narrative preaching.”* Here is this new Brazilian student on campus, trying to figure out what he just heard, *“Narrative... what?”* Up to that point, I had not heard about narrative preaching, much less interrupted narrative! My background in homiletics was deductive preaching. In my first course in homiletics I was introduced to Richard

Caemmerer and his book *Preaching for the Church*.¹ This book was our major homiletical text and it became my reference in terms of sermon preparation.

One of the first things our professor at Seminário Concórdia in Brazil, Dr. Rudi Zimmer, tried to impress upon the students was the preaching process that would lead to stating the sermon's goal, malady and means. We were supposed to follow all the steps in the process until we could summarize the central thought of the text. With this summary in hand, we were to write a short and clear sentence, which would become the sermon's theme. This sentence or sermon's theme was to be divided in two or more parts. Each part had its own sub-parts, which were basically: A. the explanation of the biblical text; B. preaching of law; C. preaching of gospel; D. application. Every part of the sermon followed this pattern. Visualizing the sermon structure, we would see this:



With this pattern pretty much embedded in my “mind,” I started to write and preach my first sermons. Our professor reminded us that this structure would keep our sermons balanced in terms of law and gospel; besides, it would be very logical and objective. I adopted this pattern of preaching as my own, because it was the way I learned how to write a

¹ Richard Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959).

sermon, and it was working for me. So neither narrative nor interrupted narrative were a part of my homiletical knowledge in the early days of fall 1991.

But it was not long before I was exposed to other homiletical approaches in my studies at Fort Wayne. In one of my next classes I came across the book *A New Hearing*², and this book became my personal epiphany in terms of preaching. Names like Charles Rice, Eugene Lowry, Fred Craddock, and David Buttrick became more familiar to me. Step by step I was introduced to the New Homiletic and its different styles and models of preaching.³

The Problem Identified

Back in Brazil, after I finished my studies in Fort Wayne, I was excited about the new homiletic methods I was just exposed to. I was eager to incorporate a more narrative style into my own preaching. But what about my fellow Brazilian pastors in the ministry? How were they doing in terms of preaching? What style were they using? These questions led me to read the recent homiletical materials published in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil and listen more carefully to the sermons preached by fellow pastors in the ministry. I found that deductive preaching was still the major style used by the pastors of IELB.

The history of Seminário Concórdia explains this scenario.⁴ For over 100 years, this Seminary has had a strong emphasis on deductive or propositional preaching in its

² Richard L. Eslinger, *A New Hearing – Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987).

³ In his book, *The Sermon*, Eugene Lowry talks about the plurality of voices of the New Homiletic and he identifies six types or models, all related and all different in this field. *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 20-28.

⁴ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil began in June of 1904. Since its beginning, the first missionaries had a concern that the church would have its own indigenous pastors. As a result, even before the formation of the Synod in Brazil, a Theological Institute was founded in 1903. This Institute provided training for local leaders and prepared them to serve as pastors. Eventually the Institute became the Seminário Concórdia (Concordia Seminary). This seminary is currently located in São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul State, South Brazil.

homiletical classes. This is not to suggest that there are not other approaches in the classroom setting. However, deductive homiletic is still the predominant method taught. The result of this homiletical instruction is that today, among the majority of pastors in the IELB, the predominant way of preaching is propositional; that is, with theme and parts. With that, I mean a sermon that is analytical in style, developed in a logical, sequential and linear manner, rather than using a more narrative and storied sermon.⁵ This is not to suggest that some professors and even pastors have not tried new ways of proclamation. Yet, the majority of Brazilian pastors in IELB are strongly rooted in the propositional style of preaching.

One fact that illustrates this propositional predominance is that the National Administration of the IELB, with the leadership of the Church, decided that for the 2003 Pastoral Conferences, the major subject studied would be Homiletics. The text book suggested for reading in preparation for those conferences was *Preaching for the Church*, a text written in 1959, but only recently translated to Portuguese.⁶

The *Igreja Luterana*, a theological journal published twice a year by the faculty of Seminário Concórdia, is another example. An attentive reader of this journal will quickly perceive that the majority of its homiletical helps and sermon outlines are deductive and propositional.⁷ Another homiletical resource available for pastors in Brazil is *Preciso Falar*.⁸

⁵ Of course, this researcher understands that a narrative or inductive sermon can have a unifying theme as well and that a plotted sermon also can be composed of “parts,” such as episodes or moves. He further agrees that a kind of “outline form” can also be used in an inductive and even a narrative sermon. For a more detailed contrast between a narrative/storied preaching and propositional/deductive preaching see the charts used on the workshop manual on p.98.

⁶ Richard Caemmerer, *Pregando em Nome da Igreja* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia Editora, 2002).

⁷ Randomly I selected a volume from each decade and in the majority the sermons, homiletical studies and outlines I found a deductive pattern. See Vol.1, January 1940, 7-11; Vol.10, November, December 1949, 64-

These sermonic studies are prepared by Brazilian pastors to be used by the pastors in the Brazilian Synod. *Preciso Falar* offers 61 homiletical studies in volume 17. These studies follow the same format: a brief commentary on the lessons of the day, a study of the text to be preached, homiletical comments about the text and an outline. A close look at these 61 studies found: 58 offer an outline with a theme, parts and subparts, and these studies are very logical and analytical in style. Only 3 studies offer some kind of story or narrative aspect, but even these are deductive and propositional in their structure.

The new trend in homiletics that gained much momentum in America in 1971, when *As One Without Authority* by Fred Craddock⁹ was published, never reached the Brazilian shores. The literature and resources that describe the New Homiletic and its different approaches in the pulpit are not yet available in Portuguese. Lately, professors in Seminário Concórdia in Brazil are working to expose students to this new trend in homiletics and to encourage them to use the narrative style of preaching as another option in the pulpit. But the pastors in the field will have had much less, if any, such training.

Certainly, no one will deny that propositional preaching is a time honored and useful homiletical approach. However, it is not the only approach and may not even be the best approach in the current culture we are living in. Richard Jensen points out in his book,

65; Vol. 21, January 1960, 13-20; Vol.34, 1973, 65-69; Vol. 40; 1980, 38-40; Vol.50, January 1991, 55-59; Vol. 63, November 2004, 198-201, 226-233.

⁸ *Preciso Falar* is a book published by Concórdia Editora (the Brazilian CPH) annually with homiletical helps and sermon outlines for the entire church year, plus Reformation Festival and Thanksgiving. The book surveyed was: Dieter Jagnow, Editor. *Preciso Falar – Auxílios Homiléticos – Volume 17* (Porto Alegre: Editora Concórdia, 2007).

⁹ Craddock's book was pivotal in changing the preaching style in North America with its move toward inductive preaching and the use of story and image. Because of his book, Fred Craddock is considered the "father" of the New Homiletic; however, some homileticians consider Henry Grady Davis's book *Design for Preaching*, the forerunner text of the New Homiletic. Cf. Lowry, *The Sermon*, 11,15.

Thinking in Story, that we are living in post-literate times. As a result, we need to rethink the way we communicate in the pulpit. According to Jensen, in a post-literate culture the primary means of communication is through stories and narrative discourse.¹⁰

Glenn Nielsen also affirms that we are living not only in a post-modern society, but also in a post-literate era. Post-literate does mean that writing and print do not communicate with people today; instead, oral-aural is the dominant way of communicating. In this culture, the analytical way of thinking and teaching (also preaching) does not work as well; instead, the narrative and story style fits better in this context.¹¹

Therefore, in this MAP, I plan to lead a workshop to a limited number of Brazilian pastors in order to help them integrate a narrative style of preaching into their ministry. The goal of this workshop is to help Brazilian pastors recognize that the propositional method of preaching is not the only way to approach people from the pulpit in a post-literate age. The MAP will present an additional way of preaching, namely a narrative form of proclamation, for pastors who have had little or no instruction in this style. The purpose of this project is to coordinate a workshop that will present an additional way of looking at sermon preparation and delivery and help this group of pastors to proclaim the Word faithfully and comfort God's people with His story of love in Christ in a new and fresh manner.

¹⁰ Richard Jensen, *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate Age* (Lima: The C.S.S. Publishing Co, Inc., 1993), 8-9.

¹¹ Glenn Nielsen, "Surveying Homiletical Horizons – Part 2", in *Expanding Homiletical Horizons: Part 1 Reaching into the Text* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications, Symposium Papers, N°8, 1998), 100-104; also: "No Longer Dinosaur: Relating Lutheran Homiletics and Communication Practice" in *Concordia Journal* (January 1999): 28.

Theological Assumptions

The need for a relevant and meaningful sermon is a significant concern for every pastor in our day. Certainly, many new homiletical methods and techniques are available for pastors to use. However, methods and techniques are not the most important elements in a sermon; the content of what we preach is of paramount importance.

Good preaching transcends mere technique; it is the proclamation of the Word of God within the context of the lives of a specific congregation gathered to hear that Word.¹²

The Lutheran preacher is challenged to consider not only the communication needs of his congregation when he steps in the pulpit, but also his theological heritage. Because preaching is an essential component in the pastoral ministry, the preacher needs to be very clear in his own mind about what he is doing. Very simply, he brings a message from God to the people before him.

The Formula of Concord asserts that preaching is deeply rooted in God's Word when it says:

God the Holy Spirit does not effect conversion without means, but he uses the preaching and the hearing of God's Word to accomplish it, as it is written (Rom. 1[:16], the gospel is a "power of God" to save. Likewise, faith comes from hearing God's Word... For apart from his grace our "willing and exerting," our planting, sowing, and watering, amount to nothing... As Christ says, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" [John 15:5].¹³

This statement helps us to understand that to preach is to proclaim God's Word!

Apart from the Word of God there can be no sermon. The sermon is based on the Word and

¹² Norbert Mueller and George Kraus, *Pastoral Theology* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), 81-82.

¹³ "Formula of Concord – Epitome", Article II: Free Will, 4-6, in *The Book of Concord*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 492.

draws its content from the Word. The sermon is nothing else than the offer and proclamation of the Word.

Apart from the Word (and the Sacraments), communion between God and people doesn't happen. Without the Word written in the Scriptures, read, preached, and heard, God remains an unknown God. "Every sermon, therefore, that is not a proclamation of the Word of God destroys the one bridge between God and humanity, so that neither can approach the other."¹⁴ The preacher that wants to be a faithful ambassador of Christ and a loyal servant needs to correctly handle this Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Therefore, the Apostle Paul encourages the young pastor Timothy to preach the Word, in season and out of season, because the Word is the means by which people are corrected, rebuked and encouraged (2 Timothy 4:2).

To preach the Word, however, is more than just transferring content from the Bible to hearers in the pew. The preacher also needs to understand that a Bible text has its own dynamics and literary form. More or less like a newspaper, which gathers a variety of genres – news, editorial, reports, stories, and chronicles – the Bible has a variety of literary forms. The Bible is not only doctrines about God, but it has a rich array of doctrine, history, proverbs, prophecies, psalms, letters, sermons, prayers, biographies, genealogies, poetry, parables, different kind of laws, gospels, and other forms. In addition, biblical texts not only vary in their form, but they also vary in their intention. Due to that, the preacher will seek to be faithful to the text's message of law to accuse, instruct, exhort, and warn. The preacher

¹⁴ Johann M Reu, *Homiletics* – Concordia Heritage Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), 44-45.

will attend as well to the text's gospel message and its power to comfort, strengthen, encourage and empower God's people.¹⁵

The preacher's task is not "simply throwing the text into an exegetical winepress, squeezing out the ideational matter, and then figuring out homiletical ways to make those ideas attractive to contemporary listeners."¹⁶ Neither is it to stuff all his Lutheran confessional background – theology and liturgy, into every sermon. Instead of making the text to fit in his "box," the preacher needs to step out of it and approach the text with an open mind and heart, willing to hear God's voice in that specific text.

Second, the proper distinction of law and gospel will always be a concern for pastors, because it is the core of Lutheran preaching. Now a sermon is more than simply an articulation of law and gospel. In fact it is a living event, which balances textual exposition, theological confession, evangelical proclamation, and hearer depiction.¹⁷ However, to proclaim God's Word, law and gospel and its meaning for life, is a foundational goal for the church and its clergy. Indeed, the preacher cannot forget that the center of his sermon will always be the gospel, i.e., the testimony of the grace of God, forgiving sin and conferring righteousness. As Lischer has well said: "we preach life and death – with the advantage to life."¹⁸

Concerning this aspect in the sermon, Nielsen says:

The gospel is to predominate. Even if the text is light on gospel, our sermons are not stingy with that proclamation. We seek to make the gospel

¹⁵ Glenn Nielsen, *Theology of Preaching – Twelve Key Elements* (hand out given in class – D.Min. Summer Classes, 2002), points 5 and 6.

¹⁶ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 12.

¹⁷ David R. Schmitt, "Law and Gospel in Sermon and Service," in *Liturgical Preaching*, ed. Paul J. Grime and Dean W. Nadasdy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 31-32.

¹⁸ Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching* (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1992), 47.

understandable, memorable, and participatory for people. The overall goal of every sermon is that we send our people home strengthened and encouraged by the proclamation of Christ crucified and risen.¹⁹

Preachers know that to proclaim God's Word and its meaning for life is a serious task and it demands great dedication, hard work and a humble heart.

Third, as God's people, because we seek to share our faith, our understanding of life and the good news of the gospel, clear and good communication is not luxury, but it is a necessity. As Lutherans we believe and confess that God is active in His visible Means of Grace – Word and Sacraments.²⁰ God Himself is doing the communicating, even when the preacher is speaking.²¹ However, this in no way excuses the preacher from seeking the best ways and forms to proclaim God's Word for our people.

A tension will always be here between good content and good communication, but preaching involves both. The preacher may struggle to provide both in his sermon, but both can and must be present. Again, Nielsen says:

The dichotomy of the old cliché 'I'd rather have a poor presentation with good content instead of a great presentation of a bunch of fluff' simply can't stand. In our sermons, God's people need both: good content and skillful communication. I'd rather have good stuff communicated well!²²

A faithful preacher will want to strive for excellence in proclaiming the gospel, not for his own glory, but for Christ's. His goal is to grow in abilities and techniques not for his own

¹⁹ Nielsen, *Theology of Preaching*, point 12.

²⁰ Cf. "The Augsburg Confession" – Article V.

²¹ When we talk about preaching we must realize that we are dealing in the realm of the supernatural. Even when the preacher is speaking, God Himself is in action. Luther was convinced that the preacher's message is the message of God Himself. In his sermon of September 11, 1540, on John 4:9-10, he says: "Yes, I hear the sermon; but who is speaking? The minister? No indeed! You do not hear the minister. True, the voice is his; but my God is speaking the Word which he preaches or speaks." Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1959, Vol.3), 1125.

²² Glenn Nielsen, "No Longer Dinosaurs: Relating Lutheran Homiletics and Communication Practice," in *Concordia Journal* 25 (1999), 15.

sake, but for the benefit of his people.²³ The preacher is aware that when he preaches, the ultimate responsibility for spiritual change is through the gospel by the Holy Spirit; He is the one who brings people to Christ by the proclamation of the gospel and keeps them in the true faith. However, the preacher has penultimate responsibility for the use of the means of grace, so the message will be heard, understood, remembered and experienced.²⁴

The narrative style of preaching and its way of involving people with its use of plotted structures and storied format will provide a better possibility to reach out to this postmodern generation that is listening to stories all day long and not to analytical and deductive speech.²⁵ The biblical witness of the use of narrative throughout the Scripture asserts that it is an effective way employed by the Holy Spirit to help people not only to hear God's narrative of salvation, but also to understand it, remember it and experience it in their daily lives.

The Project's Purpose and Plan

This MAP sought to offer a new approach from the field of homiletics in the Lutheran Ministry in Brazil. The goal was to help a small group of Brazilian pastors to integrate narrative preaching into their ministry.

The chief component of this MAP was a workshop, offered to seven Brazilian pastors on narrative preaching. This workshop took place in South Brazil – Distrito²⁶ Vale do Rio dos Sinos, one of the Circuits of the IELB. The goal was not so much to evaluate the pastors

²³ Ibid., 29.

²⁴ Nielsen, *Theology of Preaching*, point 10.

²⁵ Glenn Nielsen, "Surveying Homiletical Horizons," 100,103.

²⁶ In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, the Circuits are called Districts.

and their style of preaching, even though some kind of evaluation did occur during this process, but was rather to see how effective the workshop could be in helping the pastors integrate the theory and practice of narrative preaching.

This project involved three major phases. First, a group of seven pastors from IELB, belonging to Distrito Vale dos Sinos, as well as five members from each of their congregations, responded to a questionnaire. The pastors answered questions about their understanding and knowledge of narrative preaching, in what style of preaching they were trained in the Seminary, how they would define their own style of preaching today and how much story, imagery and narrative were in their sermons. The seven groups of five lay people listened to two of their pastor's sermons, and then were invited to answer a questionnaire that asked for a brief summary of each sermon heard, what was most difficult to pay attention to or listen to in the sermon, what was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to, and what part of the sermon they could apply most to their lives. The questionnaires, both from pastors and the members of the congregations, were sent back to the researcher for further evaluation and study.

The second component of this project was the workshop offered to these seven pastors. The workshop went for four days, and the meetings were held in the mornings and afternoons at Saint Paul Lutheran Church, in the city of Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul State, South Brazil. The workshop offered the pastors feedback about their own questionnaires as well as those from their members. Next, a series of presentations introduced the pastors to new trends in homiletics, especially a more narrative approach in the pulpit. They were also shown how the characteristics of a post-literate society are a major reason for the increased role of narrative and stories in preaching. This process helped

the pastors get acquainted with the most prominent authors in the field of narrative preaching and their techniques. In the last day of the workshop, the pastors were asked to evaluate the workshop in terms of what they liked and learned the most and how the workshop could be improved for future presentations.

After the workshop came the final stage of this project. In this phase the pastors were asked to write two new sermons using the narrative style of preaching and to proclaim them to their congregations. Afterward, the pastors responded to another questionnaire which dealt with issues such as: what the major challenges they faced using the narrative style of preaching, what differences they perceived in their sermons, how their members responded to their narrative sermons and whether they thought that this style of preaching helped them to memorize and deliver the sermon. Also, the same group of lay people responded to another questionnaire. It was similar to the first one, except it had one more question inquiring whether they noted any differences in their pastor's sermons from the time they did the first survey.

The following structure will be used to report the MAP's findings. Chapter two contains the Biblical and theological foundation for narrative preaching. Chapter three explores the characteristics of the post-literate society and the need for narrative and story styles of preaching. In the fourth chapter, the details about the research conducted for this MAP are summarized, as well as the components of the workshop in narrative preaching offered to the Brazilian pastors. Chapter five includes an evaluation of the workshop based on the analysis of the data gathered in the research and its impact and effectiveness upon the pastors who participated in this project. Finally, the sixth chapter considers the contributions

and implications of this study in the field of homiletics and preaching in the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil.

An Exciting Opportunity

When I graduated in 1983 from Seminário Concórdia in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the number of pastors in the roster of IELB was 363; today this number is 854. The total membership (lay people and clergy) in those days was 182,979; today it is 228,586.²⁷

When we look at these numbers, two thoughts come to mind. First, we can see that the Lord of the Church has blessed tremendously the ministry and the mission of IELB over its hundred years of existence, and we are thankful for His undeserved mercy. Second, we can view these numbers as a great and exciting opportunity for growth in terms of theological education. This MAP hopes to make a small contribution in this avenue, offering a theological and practical reflection about narrative preaching for pastors in the field, as well as to students at Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo, Brazil.

As someone that is passionate about the art of preaching, my hope is that this MAP will help Brazilian pastors and students in the Seminary experience the new trends of homiletics, especially the narrative style of preaching. Then, after they have had their own moment of “*Narrative what?*”, they will be able to share the good news of the gospel with their congregations in a narrative format.

²⁷ The full chart about the IELB’s statistics can be found in *Mensageiro Luterano*, Janeiro e Fevereiro, 2007, 30-33 and also in DIR-INF-216/2006 – Dados Estatísticos.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR NARRATIVE PREACHING

For a Definition of Terms

According to Charles Campbell, the move toward narrative preaching goes back to 1958, when Henry Grady Davis published his book *Design for Preaching*.¹ Davis says that the gospel is narrative in itself, and it helps the hearers to think in stories, to see things and to feel things. Preaching is more than simply saying what a pastor has to say. Preaching is communication, not just talking, but sharing with the audience.² Then Davis concludes by saying that “a sermon idea may take the form of a narrative of events, persons, actions, and words ... we preachers forget that the gospel itself is for the most part a simple narrative of persons, places, happenings and conversations.”³ Since Davis, other names taking this approach appeared on the horizon of homiletics, and more frequently was heard the term “*narrative preaching*.”

But even after almost 50 years, some confusion remains as to what classifies a sermon as “*narrative*.”⁴ Lowry acknowledges that the term “*narrative preaching*” is vague; he calls it “a banner of many colors and stripes.”⁵ With so many authors and different ways of describing narrative preaching, we need to have a clear definition of what “*narrative*

¹ Quoted by Mark Barger Elliot, *Creative Styles of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 1.

² Henry G. Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 59.

³ Davis, 157.

⁴ Elliot, 1.

⁵ Eugene L. Lowry, “The Revolution of Sermonic Shape,” in *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred Craddock*, ed. Gail R. O’Day and Thomas G. Long (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 94.

preaching” means for this project. Does one mean story preaching, like Richard Jensen, or narratively shaped sermons like Lowry? What does one say about Craddock in his inductive preaching? Is it narrative? Does a first-person sermon count as narrative? What do you do with Buttrick’s moves and structure in the sermon?⁶

To help us to define “*narrative preaching*,” John S. McClure identifies four ways that the word *narrative* can be used in relation to preaching. The first focus is “*narrative hermeneutics*,” and its main focus is the biblical text and how its literary form will impact the form of the sermon. The second is called “*narrative semantics*,” and has to do with narrative sermonic shape, when the sermon follows the structure of a short story or movie. The third focus is “*narrative enculturation*,” suggesting exploration of the use of culture and human experience. Here preachers are told to use narrative elements such as image and metaphor in order to make the connection between grace and human experience. The final focus is what McClure identifies as “*narrative world view*.” This category stresses the potential for narrative to shape a church’s theological worldview, using sermons that refer to faith-stories that are generated in the context of a congregation. It would be the intersection between the world of the preacher, the congregation and the biblical text.⁷

McClure’s work gives us some clarification of the use of the term “*narrative preaching*,” but it is not conclusive. Others have tried to provide the same service. However, here we need to understand that people will slice this pie in different ways and not everyone who is writing on the subject of “*narrative preaching*” will have the same point of

⁶ Ibid., 94-95.

⁷ Quoted by Lowry, 96-97 and quoted by Elliot, 1-2.

view. Hence, we cannot presume that terms such as *story*, *inductive*, and *narrative* are used synonymously.⁸

For Lowry, it seems we would be best served by keeping the terms *story* and *narrative* separate and defining them differently for their use in homiletics. For him the term *story* is quite restricted in breadth. It refers to a tale drawn from any number of numerous literary forms, such as myth, parable, and saga. By the term *narrative* he means a particular shape that discourse might take.⁹ As he himself explains:

What identifies the usual narrative sermon most readily is its plot form, which always – one way or another – begins with a felt *discrepancy* or conflict, and then makes its way through *complication* (things always get worse), makes a decisively sharp turn or *reversal*, and then moves finally toward *resolution* or closure. Such a sermon may involve a story told (in which case it would be better called a story sermon). Then again – and more likely – it may not involve any kind of story at all.¹⁰

In conclusion, we could say that “a story sermon as defined by Lowry is always a narrative sermon, but not all narrative sermons are story sermons.”¹¹ As we can see above, there is no fixed understanding of what is and what is not narrative. Some people understand narrative as same thing as story, for others, narrative is a much broader and more elastic category.¹²

For this MAP project, the understanding of a narrative style of preaching is the use of a sermonic approach that incorporates a storytelling process or a plot, emphasizing a growing sense of expectancy and culminating with a resolution. Such a narrative shape provides the

⁸ Lowry, 97-98.

⁹ Wayne B. Robinson, Ed. *Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1990), 4.

¹⁰ Eugene Lowry, *The Sermon – Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdom Press, 1997), 23.

¹¹ Robinson, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

listeners with a sense of participation, identification and engagement. Such a sermon may or may not actually involve any particular story.

Theology of Narrative Preaching

The need for a relevant and meaningful sermon is a significant concern for any serious pastor. However, preachers should not get the impression that learning how to produce such a sermon means simply reading some new books about preaching, learning new homiletical methods and techniques, and trying to implement the “new tools” in their pulpits. Methods and techniques are not the only issue in a sermon; something else is there too.

Good preaching goes beyond mere technique and methodology. When the preacher is delivering a sermon, he needs to be very clear in his own mind what he is doing, for he brings a message from God. A solid pulpit is built on a solid theology. Every time a Lutheran preacher steps in the pulpit, he is challenged to consider not only the unique needs of his congregation but also his theological basis for a particular approach to preaching.

When a pastor considers the use of narrative preaching as an approach for his pulpit, he needs a theological foundation which will support this style of preaching. When he steps in the pulpit to preach a narrative sermon, he wants to be sure that such theology will be there, not only to guide him, but also to norm his preaching. With that in mind, we approach Scripture to see what God’s Word tells us about such an important matter.

God and the Origin of the Narrative of Salvation

When we look at the Scripture and see how God creates the world and interacts with His creation, we have to agree that speech is something very close to God; in fact, it belongs to His very nature. God can be best described as a *speaking God*. He spoke and by the power of His Word the world came to existence (Genesis 1:3-25). But God did not stop

there; then came Adam and Eve, and with them God had an “*oral-aural relationship*.” God not only created Adam and Eve, but He also communicated with them. He spoke to them (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:16-17; 3:8-13,16-19). After the fall, God did not stop His communication with them (even though they did! Genesis 3:8), but He came after Adam and Eve and asked: “*Where are you?*” (Genesis 3:9). In face of the chaotic situation, where sin and death had prevailed, God speaks in a narrative way, a word of hope, forgiveness and life; and He proclaims the first gospel in the Bible (Genesis 3:15).¹³ Then, He becomes the first “*preacher*.” The origin of preaching is in God. He not only generates the message, but He also proclaims it.

God wants to tell men about the life which He has for them as a gift. As men are born into the world they do not have this life. Preaching tells of God’s gift of life, which He gives to men through His Son Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose again that men might live.¹⁴

God keeps talking throughout the Scriptures. Sometimes He speaks immediately (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 3:1-10), at other times He uses His prophets (Isaiah 1:1-3; Jeremiah 1:1-4; Amos 1:1-15); His own Son (John 12:44-50; 14:10; Hebrews 1:1-2); and also, His apostles (John 20:21-23; Luke 10:16; Mark 16:14-16). God is still talking today; He is a God of proclamation. Through appointed pastors His narrative of love and forgiveness is still echoing in the world. As a called and ordained man, the preacher holds the office of the public ministry. It is a specific invitation and assignment given by God through the church

¹³ The way God talks with Adam and Eve and also with the serpent, is narrative in nature. We read a description of what will happen in the future. God uses a sequence of events, a story line format telling the unfolding of the events. There is also a plot, first a conflict and some complications between the serpent’s offspring and the woman’s, then a reversal and resolution, the striking of the woman’s son on his heel and crushing of the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:14-15).

¹⁴ Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis, MO: CPH, 1959), 2.

that he continues to proclaim God’s story of salvation – the gospel narrative.¹⁵ The continuous use of this narrative approach by God Himself, His prophets and His own Son, not only encourages preachers today to use the same format and the same content, but it also validates its use.

The Scripture and its Narrative Form

Any attentive reader of the Scripture will perceive that the Bible has a variety of literary forms; however, the narrative form is extensively used. Dennis Bratcher says that “about 40% of the biblical material is narrative, story, and is the most common single type of writing in the Bible.”¹⁶ God is not only the creator of the world but He is also the God that has chosen to reveal Himself in extraordinary ways in human history. Throughout the Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, narrative and story plays an important role in God’s revelation. This has led some to describe Scripture as “The Story of God.”¹⁷

However, Thomas Long cautions against the exaggeration that says the Bible is a narrative collection because there is so much non-narrative material in the Scripture. At the same time, Long says the claim that the Bible is a “story book” is not far off the mark. There is, indeed, a narrative understructure to the Bible, and even its non-narrative portions bear a crucial relationship to the “master” stories of Scripture.¹⁸

Narrative and plotted structures play an important role in God’s revelation and speak directly to people’s heart and mind, as Glenn Nielsen well states:

¹⁵ Norbert Mueller and George Kraus, *Pastoral Theology* (Saint Louis: CPH, 1990), 20.

¹⁶ Dennis Bratcher, *Guidelines for Interpreting Biblical Narrative*, in www.crivoice.org/narrguide.html (April 14, 2006), 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1989), 66.

The biblical witness, with its use of plotted structures, is extensively narrative. Scripture is wonderfully storied. It has aesthetic and literary beauty. ... As we begin to recapture those artistic elements, our sermons will better reach out to the people listening to them.¹⁹

The narrative of salvation, as we have seen above, has its origin in God. He is the one who tells Adam and Eve what His plans for the future are and how He will provide a way to rescue them from their sin (Genesis 3:8-19). A little later, we will find God calling Abram and telling him how He will bless him and through him, all peoples on earth (Genesis 12:1-3). This same promise is repeated over and over again in the Old Testament, to the Patriarchs, to Moses, to David, and by the prophets to God's people; then, in the New Testament, the promised Messiah is born and with Him the narrative of salvation reaches its climax. Christ does not only remind why He came – the fulfillment of the prophecies of the past (John 1:14-18), He also shares His present mission - to do His Father's will (John 6:38). Then finally He points to the future, when He will come again to take us to His Father's house eternally (John 14:1-3).

The narrative of salvation follows a story line, where God's people look to the past and see God's mighty power in action. They also live in the present assured of His presence among them. Finally, they look to the future, with hope and joy, knowing that their home is in heaven. Since narrative is a genre used by God Himself throughout the Scripture in a powerful way to reveal the gospel and save people, we, too, can use it as an added approach in our pulpits today to accomplish His purposes.

¹⁹ Glenn Nielsen, "Surveying Homiletical Horizons – Part 2," in *Expanding Homiletical Horizons: Part 1 – Reaching into the Text* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications, Symposium Papers, Number 8, 1998), 100.

Jesus and the Gospels

If we look to Jesus and His ministry and think in terms of story and narrative, we can say that Jesus was indeed the perfecter of the form. Matthew tells us that Jesus did not say anything to the crowd without using a parable (Matthew 13:34). Parables are nothing more than stories or comparisons. Jesus uses something familiar to His audience and through that he helps people to bridge between what they already know and what they don't know. It is an inductive way of preaching and teaching people about God's love. Short stories, down to earth, with an unexpected ending, is one way Jesus conveys His message.

Jesus also made use of narrative in his preaching and teaching. How many times he said: "*There was a man who had two sons...*" (Luke 15:11); or, "*A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho...*" (Luke 10:30). Narrative was a method used by Jesus to teach people about God's love and how to love and treat our neighbors.

In His ministry Jesus developed a kind of pastoral relationship with his disciples and people around Him. That relationship of trust was the context for His teaching and preaching. With a variety of techniques He addressed the whole person: people could hear (auditory) Jesus speaking the truths about God's Word ; by His examples and illustrations the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven were unveiled before their eyes (narrative and visual). Through Jesus' embodied message, His teaching and preaching became a lively experience for all people around Him. Through the incarnate Word (John 1:14), people now could not only *hear* God Himself speaking, but they also could *see* His glory and even *touch* Him.

Peter and Paul in Acts

Peter's sermon in Pentecost is narrative in shape and content as he addresses the crowd gathered in Jerusalem. Beginning with the Prophet Joel in the Old Testament, he

reaches the height of conflict by describing to his hearers what they have done to Jesus of Nazareth. Peter depicts clearly the resolution of the plot in the events of Christ's passion, His suffering, death on the cross and His glorious resurrection. Then Peter mentions King David and how he also died in the hope of the resurrection in Christ. The crowd was astonished before such vivid description of Christ's passion, and they wanted to know what they were supposed to do. Peter guides them to the promise of God, assuring that salvation was not only for them, but also for their children and people from far off. And by the action of the Spirit, many were baptized at the end of that narrative sermon (Acts 2:14-41).

Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-20) was very dramatic and caused a deep impact in the apostle's preaching and teaching. Later on, during his missionary ministry, Paul used his personal experience to narrate to people his personal encounter with his Lord and Savior. During his defense speech in Jerusalem, Paul starts with his childhood and his Jewish lineage. Then he talks about his education under Gamaliel's feet. But now the real plot is about to start! Paul brings a tone of conflict to his personal story when he describes his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. People could experience the tension by listening to him, because now they wanted to know what would happen with that blind man in the story. Will there be a reversal? And indeed, Paul brings in the character of Ananias, the one that literally brings light to Paul, physically and spiritually. The resolution of the story is Paul's baptism and his commissioning to the gentiles (Acts 22:1-21).

Paul uses the same narrative approach before king Agrippa, and, at the end of Paul's speech, Agrippa felt Paul trying to persuade him to be a Christian! And Paul boldly responds that he is praying to God that not only Agrippa would become a Christian, but all who were listening to his personal life story would become one too (Acts 26:1-29)!

Peter and Paul use the narrative approach in their sermons in different occasions and contexts. This provides precedent for preachers to use the same technique in their own pulpits today. It also demonstrates that it is a very effective way of proclaiming God's Word, as we can see by the reaction of the apostle's hearers.

Liturgy and Church Year

Another additional perspective in the theology of narrative is the foundation that our liturgy and the church year provide to this matter. Any attentive preacher will perceive that there is a very strong interrelationship between preaching and the church year, especially in the Lutheran Church. Preaching never happens in the vacuum, but in the context of a congregation and a liturgical setting. The Christian sermon, while a discourse or an oral presentation, should not be seen or even understood without the context of the worshiping congregation. The sermon "is not an isolated or independent act, but a portion of a larger whole, the service of the worshiping congregation, of which it forms an integral part."²⁰

Wingren says that, "the place and function of preaching are best seen in relation to two major entities – the Word that is in the Bible, and the people who have come together."²¹

Preaching is the church's language. By its very nature, preaching reflects the life of a community and emerges from it and it is carried out by its own pastor. And here we remember that this community is the people of God!²² As we confess, it is "*the communion of saints.*" It is a holy people, which once were not people of God, but now, because they

²⁰ Johann M Reu, *Homiletics* – Concordia Heritage Series (St. Louis, MO: CPH, 1977), 37.

²¹ Gustav Wingren, *The Living Word* (Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 13.

²² Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching – The Dynamics of the Gospel* (Durham, NC, The Labyrinth Press, 1992), 76.

were called out of darkness into His wonderful light and had received mercy, they belong to God (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Preaching belongs to the church because it is its distinctive talk. Besides worship (liturgy) and catechesis, the church also preaches. Preaching is not a virtuoso performance but the language of the church, which accompanies the laborious formation of a new people.²³ The Holy Spirit not only calls people by the power of the gospel, but also enlightens them, keeping them together in one true faith. Through the church's preaching, He keeps calling and gathering people all over the earth.²⁴

God's Word creates the church and maintains the church. The preacher must be careful to not "create the false impression that it is possible for individuals, as individuals, to participate in the Word apart from the community that embodies it."²⁵ Since its beginning, the story of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ was handed down by the church. The evangelists and apostles, when they wrote about Jesus' life, did not have in mind single readers, but their idea was to have a group of people, an assembly of believers, reading and studying God's Word. The New Testament preaching was from church to church. The missionary journeys of Paul and his epistles are a confirmation of that. Even today "preaching is the church giving voice to its experience of God's salvation."²⁶

²³ Ibid., 77, 79.

²⁴ Martin Luther, "The Creed - Third Article: On Being Made Holy." *The Small Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 355.

²⁵ Lischer, 79.

²⁶ Ibid., 79.

As it was said before, the church also talks through its liturgy. Through the years, generation after generation, the liturgy of church is still a powerful instrument to retell God's acts among His people in the world. James Wetztein, in his article *Liturgy as Story*, says:

The liturgy, taking its cues from Scripture, tells stories and tells them well. The liturgical script tells the great story of creation, redemption, and sanctification among the people of God who have come to say back to God what he has said to them. The freight that the liturgy must carry is the freight of the story of God.²⁷

The Church calendar helps to unfold the story of God's people in the Scriptures. When the sermon is preached the hearers can identify themselves within that story, and that story also becomes their own story. "The text, the liturgy, and the experiences of the hearers are mutually informative. All three have their stories. All three come together in the preaching event."²⁸ To this end, the preacher preaches what has been told him to preach. He presents the Canonical text, the real story that can illuminate our own stories.²⁹

According to Wetztein, the goal of any faithful preacher of the Word is to "help his hearers see that the [three] stories are, in essence, all the same. Not because he says so, but because they 'see so.' For they are all involved in the great saving story of God."³⁰

Based on what was said above, we see that narrative preaching fits well into the context of a liturgical setting; in fact, there is a deep interrelationship between these two. The story of God's salvation unfolded in the liturgy now provides the foundation and the context for the sermon, which applies the gospel narrative to the lives of the hearers today, making them the same body – the Holy Christian Church, and sharing the same story.

²⁷ James A. Wetztein, "Liturgy as Story," in *Liturgical Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: CPH, 2001), 218

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁹ William H. Willimon, *Peculiar Speech – Preaching to the Baptized* (Grande Rapids, MI: Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1992), 12,13.

³⁰ Wetztein, 225.

The Whole Person of Faith

Another aspect of the theology of narrative preaching has to do with the hearers and how God has wonderfully created them. Preaching is not only intellectual and abstract, but also needs to relate to people's lives and emotions. The goal of a Lutheran sermon is to apply God's Word to the whole person of faith, body and soul, intellect and emotions, using all the resources, gifts and skills given by the Creator in the service of the gospel.

In the Lutheran Service, the community of believers confesses together their faith in the Triune God. It does not matter if they use the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene or the Athanasian, the creed is a statement of what the church believes, teaches and confesses. We say with confidence that the Lutheran Church is a credal church. However, in terms of practicing this confession in the daily life of the church, it seems that there is major emphasis on the second and the third articles of the creed, in the vertical relationship, the relationship with God. This emphasis is understandable, especially in a church that teaches that justification is a gift from God and it is through faith in Christ and Christ alone!

But there is also another dimension of our faith confession: the horizontal one. As Christians, we live and move between two worlds; one is our relationship with God, the other is our relationship with our neighbor. It is important and essential to make a distinction between the two, but we can not separate them, because they intersect with each other, and they cannot exist separated from each other!³¹ The understanding of this interrelationship is essential, especially when we look to the preaching task and to the role of communication in this arena.

³¹ Charles Arand, *Moving Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Church and Ministry in the 21st Century* (a unpublished paper, 3 December, 2001), 3-4.

History tells us that the church has struggled to relate preaching and rhetoric, proclamation of the gospel and communication of that proclamation, but this does not mean that we cannot use the gifts that God gave us (the first article of the Creed) to better convey the kerygma to our hearers. It is necessary to remember that efficacy in the spiritual realm is not a result of communication skills, but the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. Communication skills are not to be joined to the power of the Word to effect spiritual benefits. As preachers, we do not go looking for God's favor apart from the Word and Sacrament. Instead, we trust His Word that He will be active through those means to effect His purposes in the lives of people in our congregations.³² However, this does not mean these skills do not have their proper place and use in the service of the gospel!

As Christians, when we confess the Creed, we confess the whole Creed! Our faith is Trinitarian; we believe in one God that is Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. When we preach, we cannot forget that we are dealing with people who are made of flesh and blood. God has given them reason and intellect, that is true, but He also has given them feelings, emotions, spirit and their senses.³³ The culture in which we are living today reminds us that preaching can not be merely analytical, filled with ideas and propositions, and linear in its development. Instead of preaching only for the intellect, our goal is to preach to the whole person of faith, to all faculties of the human being.

The people sitting in the pews are not only people of faith, but they are also people of creation. They live in the world, a world surrounded by culture and means of communication; but they also are affected by this environment, including the way they listen

³² Glenn Nielsen, "No Longer Dinosaurs: Relating Lutheran Homiletics and Communication Practice," in: *Concordia Journal* (January, 1999) 15-16, 22-23.

³³ Martin Luther, "The Creed - First Article: On Creation." *The Small Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 354.

and process information. As preachers, the whole person of faith cannot be overlooked.

Again, Glenn Nielsen is very helpful in this aspect when he says:

In the listening experience, people expect a holistic communication process. They want emotions, will, intellect, and physicalness all wrapped together in the message. If you leave one of those out, particularly if you leave out the emotional component and it's just an intellectual exercise, then you'll lose most of the people. It's hard for us to listen if you have not somehow latched onto all the parts of the person.³⁴

God has given us many blessings when He created us so wonderfully (Psalm 139:14).

God's gifts abounds in His creation and they are there to be used to serve God and our neighbor! Of course, there will always be a risk when we use any kind of technique, science, method, and the like in the church, but this does not mean that we can not use those "things" in the service of the gospel. When we think about Moses, remember how God equipped him with training for his later role as leader of His people. Luke tells us that "*Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action*" (Acts 7:22). Now, when Moses was leading the Israelites in the desert did he only and absolutely count on God's direction and never, ever use his knowledge and expertise learned with the Egyptians to guide God's people? Of course not! Otherwise, all the time expended in study and training would have been wasted. In the same way, a faithful preacher wants to give his best and will strive for excellence in proclaiming the gospel, not for his own glory, but for Christ's. His goal is to grow in abilities and techniques not for his own sake, but for the benefit of his people, whom he serves.³⁵

What can be said about the apostle Paul? Anyone acquainted with Paul's biography is aware that he was very well educated and trained, not only in the Jewish tradition (Acts

³⁴ Nielsen, "Surveying Homiletical Horizons," 102.

³⁵ Nielsen, "No Longer Dinosaurs," 29.

22:3), but also in the wisdom of the world (Acts 17:28). When he came to Corinth and said: “*when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with superior eloquence or wisdom... and my speaking and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom*” (1 Corinthians 2:1,4), Paul was contrasting his approach with the sophists of his time. Upon arrival in a city, a sophist would sometimes declaim on a topic suggested by the audience in order to show off his eloquence and win their approval. Paul’s topic had long been predetermined by his commission to preach only Christ crucified. Because Paul chose this approach in Corinth does not mean that Paul was lacking in rhetorical and debating ability. D. A. Carson warns against misinterpretation of Paul’s rejection of rhetoric. He says:

It would be entirely improper to infer that Paul was an incompetent speaker, a bad communicator... What Paul avoided was artificial communication that won plaudits for the speaker but distracted from the message. Lazy preachers have no right to appeal to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 to justify indolence in the study and careless delivery in the pulpit. These verses do not prohibit diligent preparation, passion, clear articulation, and persuasive presentation. Rather, they warn against any method that leads people to say, ‘What a marvelous preacher!’ rather than, ‘What a marvelous Savior!’³⁶

If we are creedal preachers, certainly we will lead our audience not only to say “what a marvelous Savior,” but also “what a marvelous Creator.” And the whole people of faith will say “amen.” Narrative preaching is indeed a great gift of communication that reaches the whole person of faith. It not only appeals to the intellect but also to the emotions; it allows the preacher to reach his hearers in a holistic way, applying the truth of the gospel that speaks to the whole human being, who is wonderfully created by God.

³⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: An Exposition of Passages from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 34-35.

Conclusion

God can be indeed described as a *speaking God*; since the beginning He established an “*oral-aural relationship*” with Adam and Eve. God not only generated the message, but He also proclaimed it and provided others to do the same. Throughout the Scripture, we see that narrative and story play an important role in God’s revelation. We acknowledge that the Biblical text has its own dynamics and different literary forms; however, we cannot deny that narrative is a genre used by God in His Word in a powerful way to reveal the gospel and save people. The gospels tell us that Jesus used different approaches to communicate with people: parables, comparisons, short stories and narratives. His use of these styles made His message a lively experience for them. The apostles followed in the foot steps of their Master, and Acts gives us examples of the use of narrative preaching by Peter and Paul. The Lutheran heritage and liturgy also contribute to the use of a narrative approach in our pulpits, since it unfolds God’s story of salvation before the eyes and ears of His people, gathered together to worship. Finally, we are reminded that when we preach, our preaching should encompass faith as a whole, and not merely be an intellectual activity. The hearers are not only people of faith but they are also God’s creation, wrapped in human bodies and narrative is a powerful approach to reach the whole person of faith.

A pastor’s goal is to improve and grow in his abilities as a preacher of God’s Word. Lutheran theology assures us that the Holy Spirit is always in charge in the whole spiritual life process. He is the one who brings people to Christ by the proclamation of the gospel and keeps them in the true faith. Preachers have the privilege and the honor to be instruments in this process, striving to have the gospel message to be not only heard and understood, but also to be remembered and experienced.

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATIVE AS A POWERFUL COMMUNICATION TOOL

Cultural Context

As Christians, we know that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20); however, we are still living in this world. The people that get together every Sunday to listen to our sermons live out in the world. They are not of the world, but they live in it (John 17:14-17). Since they live in this world, it is certain that they are influenced by it. The preacher's challenge is to preach God's Word in a way that it will be meaningful to this people and will fit their understanding and their needs. To accomplish that, it is necessary to not only have a good sense of who these people are, but also to know the world where they live in, the challenges they face daily, what they see and hear.

Glenn Nielsen says that these people are post-literate. "Post-literate" does not mean that they can not read, but simply that print and writing are no longer their most dominant way of communicating.¹ It means logic and reason are not as significant for them; instead, feelings and emotions count much more. There is also more interest in what is practical and usable than what is theoretical or abstract. Brian McLaren talks about this cultural challenge that preachers face in their task of delivering God's Word to their people. He says:

What happens when we become a screen-based world rather than a paper-based world? What happens when the primary modes of communication are electronic

¹ Glenn Nielsen. "Surveying Homiletical Horizons – Part 2," in *Expanding Homiletical Horizons: Part 1 Reaching into the Text* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary Publications, Symposium Papers, N° 8, 1998), 100-104. According to Richard Jensen, we are living through a time of cataclysmic change in terms of human communication. The world went through three different communication eras: oral communication era, writing and printing era, and now, the era of electronic communication. Richard Jensen, *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate Age* (Lima: The C.S.S. Publishing Co, Inc., 1993), 45 & 8.

rather than through books? Huge change. Change in the way people think. Change in the way they process information. Change in the way we've got to preach to them.²

The challenge of preaching in an electronic culture is quite different from preaching in a culture of print. Before, a key element in communication was the eye reading words on a page; but now, it is the eye and the ear in a multi-sensory context. In a culture grounded in print and literacy, thinking had to do primarily with sequences of ideas. It was linear in development and analytical in nature. On the other hand, the post-literate pattern of thinking is experiential, wrapped in narrative and emotions. Jensen says that this shift from a literate to a post-literate culture calls forth changes in the way we conceptualize the preaching task in our time. For him, the best way to communicate with this "secondarily oral" culture is through story and narrative.³

With this background in mind, we need now address the question: "Why do narrative and story work in this post-literate culture?" In other words, what qualities of narrative make it so important and useful for preaching in today's context?

Why Story and Narrative?

In this oral-aural world, Jensen reminds us that it is the ear that is massaged; the primary form of communication in this culture is the human voice.⁴ In a culture where speaking-hearing plays an important role in communication, story is a key element. Among oral cultures, story is primary. People who are part of an oral culture more easily understand a story sermon when they have trouble understanding a sermon developed in analytical

² "Preaching to Postmoderns: An Interview with Brian McLaren," *Preaching*, Vol. 16, N^o6 (May-June 2001), 4.

³ Jensen, 18; 43; 29; 53; 46 and 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

form.⁵ In their book, Millard Erickson and James Heflin explain how people respond differently to a story sermon than to a sermon developed in analytical form:

They may listen, and listen attentively, to a three-point sermon. When asked to tell what the sermon was about, they may remember points in a different order than they were spoken, or they may recall only one of the points. Rarely do they see the connection of the points or understand their meaning as a whole. When the same people hear a story, on the other hand, they not only remember the story, but often can recite all or part of it after hearing it only once. They understand because they comprehend plot, character, and other components of story.⁶

A sermon preached in story form or narrative will make the message memorable to people. Story has communicative power that will help people to remember what was preached to them because humans structure their lives through story. The fragments of their experience are held together most often with a narrative. Robert Hughes and Robert Kysar explain how these different layers of narrative to which we are daily exposed help us to frame our life.

Our own narratives frequently develop layer upon layer, each layer widening the perspective: personal story, national stories, ethnic stories, and finally universal or cosmic stories that provide the outer structure that encompasses all the others. Story is the most common way of framing life and experience.⁷

Because story employs inductive movement, it invites the listener to participate in its reality. Story helps to anchor the abstract in lived reality and elicit participation. Not too long ago, homiletical books would encourage the use of illustrations and stories mostly for the sake of understanding. The goal was to make the abstract visual or concrete, and thus more understandable. Nevertheless, *“the power and potential of narrative extends far*

⁵ Millard J. Erickson & James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 202.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

⁷ Robert Hughes & Robert Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 66.

beyond lending a helping hand to the comprehending side of the brain. Stories also invite participation. They elicit emotion.”⁸

As Jensen states clearly, “*participating in the reality of the gospel in story form is something quite different than understanding the gospel in idea form.*”⁹ In this case, preaching becomes less about the dissemination of ideas and more about relating to listeners with stories and life experiences.¹⁰ A good story identifies the listener in the story vicariously, the listener is involved with the characters in the story, even to the extent that their pain becomes his/her pain and their victory becomes his/her victory.¹¹ Talking about the power of story working in a message and helping the listener to participate in it vicariously, Nielsen says:

Narrative works because people are caught up in the plot, action, characters, and scenes as the story moves along. It evokes thoughts, emotions, relationships, even physical sensations. A story is often a world created for someone to enter through their imagination and so live with the characters as a plot unfolds. Of course, we know as the story is told that this is not our life, that it is not our work and family and home. But we vicariously become a part of the action, the conflict, the resolution, experiencing what is going on in the narrative. It’s the way movies work, as well as television, novels, theater, radio drama, and certain narratives within the sermons. Good stories told well simply invite participation of the whole person. Thus we do not merely understand a story; we participate in it as well.¹²

Preaching in a narrative way may enable the listeners to find themselves in God’s story. This identification creates commonality; and then, something mysterious happens; the

⁸ Glenn Nielsen, “Preaching Doctrine in a Postmodern Age,” in *Concordia Journal* 27 (January 2001), 24.

⁹ Jensen, 62.

¹⁰ Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 2001), 78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹² Nielsen, 24.

story that seems to be so distant from my reality becomes my own story.¹³ That truth of God's love and mercy in Christ is now more intimately united with my experience by the power of the Holy Spirit through the story.¹⁴

Another important reason for the use of narrative and stories in preaching is to bridge the gap between literate and post-literate ways of processing information. People today form their lives from and around experiences that are increasingly oral rather than in print or writing; however, this orality is quite different from that which preceded the printing press. The new orality today is shaped by electronic communication, where television, computers and video play an important role. For this post-literate culture, saturated with all sorts of media information and imagery, story is still a powerful tool to communicate.¹⁵ Jensen argues in the same way, when he says:

Stories are in sync with the way the electronic media work. Frankly, it is difficult to communicate ideas through the mass media. Mass media almost always works through story. People are accustomed to experiencing reality through story. Sermons that work in story fashion imitate the way television most usually works.¹⁶

People not only listen to stories all day long, but in fact, they live in them. According to a recent survey, television is a dominant medium in our culture. It is estimated that most people spend 80 percent of their non-working and non-sleeping time watching television.¹⁷

¹³ Erickson & Heflin, 218.

¹⁴ Leland Ryken says that stories have power to move people, because in hearing a story listeners instinctively place themselves into the setting and action, and experience what the character feels – thus learning on a firsthand basis. Quoted by Mark Galli & Craig B. Larson, *Preaching that Connects* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 82.

¹⁵ Hughes & Kysar, 66-67.

¹⁶ Jensen, 63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 48. “The average adult who spends fifty hours a year in a pew will also spend two thousand hours at home watching television. By the end of high school the average American school child will invest more hours in television (fifteen thousand hours) than in class (twelve thousand hours). Some estimate that the average child will spend more time watching television before entering school than he will listen to his father during his entire lifetime. These same children will have watched 350,000 commercials by the time they are graduated

If we consider that even the shortest commercials on television usually tell some sort of story, it is clear that narrative connections have become primary in the people's experience, and in this case, the use of narrative and story in the pulpit become imperative in these days.¹⁸

Why is narrative so powerful in our cynical and skeptical culture?¹⁹ Because stories work indirectly, they have a chance to break through the cultural filters that work in the heads of those listen to preaching. Thomas Long points out that story and narrative preaching have been favorites in three periods of American history: preceding the First Great Awakening, immediately following the Civil War, and the present time. Long concludes his thought by saying:

Story telling and narration become favorite forms of preaching during times in which religious experience is imperiled and dampened. Stories enable the preacher to bypass the rampant cynicism and relativism of the day.²⁰

The telling of biblical stories and of stories which help people to experience biblical stories has a chance to get around these cultural filters that the post-literate culture may have.

Working indirectly, people don't see what is coming in the story. When they do, it is too late

from high school. Add to these the influences of movies, video arcades, highway advertisements, grocery packing, and over-head projectors, videotape, and analog computers. The conclusion is inescapable: "Ours is par excellence the Age of Illustration, an age when people are habituated to picture thinking." The average person in the pew does not depend on words alone for information." Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 169.

¹⁸ Nielsen, "Surveying Homiletical Horizons," 103.

¹⁹ René Descartes probably didn't realize how much his radical skepticism, which started in 1600s, would influence and shape our current culture. Today, skepticism and doubt have become a way of life. Most of the time, people will say: "How *do* you know? Isn't it all opinion anyway? I mean, who are you to say that you are right and I am wrong? Or that anybody is wrong?" A 1991 survey asserts that two out of three Americans agree with the statement: "there is no absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct." David Henderson, *Culture Shift* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 124-125; 194-195.

²⁰ Quoted by Ed Rowell, "Where Preaching is Headed," *Leadership* 18 (Winter 1997), 96.

and they are hooked by the story.²¹ In his article, “Why Story?”, Blake Harwell points out that story allows people to overhear the gospel in a fresh way.

Story is one of those unique ways through which we allow others to “overhear” the gospel. Not frontal assault, it sneaks up on the listener. It catches the imagination and the heart unawares and drives home a point like no other medium can.²²

For a post-literate generation, strongly influenced by television, which treats them night after night to a veritable feast of visual images and visually told tales, ideas and concepts are best conveyed with an image or story. People will remember images and stories because they have impact on the imagination and get lodged in consciousness. Any experienced preacher can testify that what the hearers frequently will remember from a sermon is not usually the theme or even the text, but the sermon’s illustrations.²³

Story sermons and narrative preaching are effective, particularly in the electronic culture, because stories catch our attention. In his book *Preaching to a TV Generation*, Michael Rogness speaks of this reality, when he says:

Every preacher has experienced it: As we explain something, we note the mother in the back pew digging through her purse for crayons and a snack to quiet the squirrely child, the teenager counting bricks on the wall or passing notes to friends, the head nodding up and down, and so on. Then begin a story and the whole congregation becomes hushed and attentive. Finish the story and the activity resumes.²⁴

When a sermon fails to use story, the conceptual assertions and the main points the preacher are trying to make are quickly discarded from memory. But when propositions and

²¹ Jensen, 62.

²² Blake Harwell, “Why Story?” *Preaching*, Volume 13, N^o5 (March-April, 1998), 43.

²³ Hughes & Kysar, 56. Talking about the difference between a traditional sermon and a story sermon, Blake Harwell comments: “We preachers know that a “traditional” sermon has places that move, flow, carry themselves as well as places that stop. Watching the eyes of the people during a traditional sermon tell any preacher where those stopping and moving places are. Most of the time, “points” are where a message stops; story is where it moves! That’s why upon exiting the place of worship though people rarely remember the points, they almost always remember the stories.” “Why Story?”, 43.

²⁴ Michael Rogness, *Preaching to a TV Generation* (Lima: The CSS Publishing Company, 1994), 45.

points are combined with story and mental pictures evoked by the preacher, the message of the sermon is better heard and remembered. Hughes & Kysar wisely advise preachers with these words:

If we want people to remember our sermons (and who does not?), and if they remember stories and images, then we need to fashion those carefully so that they carry the focus and function of the sermon.

But the most important reason imagery has become so vital for preaching is that pictorial language engages the imagination and evokes response. Propositions appeal to the mind. Imagery appeals to the whole person – mind, emotions, and will. Moreover, verbal stories and pictures provoke imagination and hence participation in the sermon.²⁵

No doubt a good story can grab the listener's imagination and help people identify with an idea in a way that triggers significance and meaning.²⁶ Stories indeed have power to move people.²⁷ Jensen reminds us that the biblical faith was handed on for many centuries with very little resource to literate discourse. It was done by telling stories! Telling stories was a fundamental way in which the Christian faith has been passed on from generation to generation, and if it works very well in a post-literate culture, why not in the pulpit?²⁸ Glenn Nielsen underlines this approach by saying:

The biblical witness, with its use of plotted structures, is extensively narrative. Scripture is wonderfully storied. It has aesthetic and literary beauty. So is our society. As we begin to recapture those artistic elements, our sermons will better reach out to the people listening to them.²⁹

²⁵ Hughes & Kysar, 56.

²⁶ Ryan Ahlgrim in his article "A Preaching Journey" asserts that images not ideas transform our souls. Ideas speak to our cognitive minds. New ideas may persuade us to think differently, but ideas rarely, on their own, transform us. Images are the key to deep transformation. *Preaching*, Volume 14, N^o5 (March-April 1999), 37-38.

²⁷ Johnston, 155-156.

²⁸ Jensen, 64-65.

²⁹ Nielsen, "Surveying Homiletical Horizons," 100.

This is a time to shift paradigms in terms of preaching. If preachers want to reach people living in this post-literate age, story and narrative preaching will play an important role in it.

Talking about the best way to speak to Generation X,³⁰ Sarah Hinlicky reminds us that they are story people. They know narratives, not ideas. Raised by their TV and VCR surrogate parents, the Generation X people have learned to treat their tedium with stories, many stories, because stories are the only things that make sense for them. And when these external stories fail, they end up making a story of their own lives.³¹ Hinlicky writes:

You wonder why we're [Generation X] so self-destructive, but we're looking for the one story with staying power, the destruction and redemption of our lives. That's to your advantage [talking about the church]: you have the best redemption story on the market.

A story needs a storyteller, and it is the Church alone that tells the story of salvation. Here in the Church is where the cities of Man and God meet, and that is why all the real spiritual battles, the most exciting adventure stories, begin here. We know that death will continue to break our hearts and our bodies, but it's not the end of the story. Because of all the stories competing for our attention, the story of the City of God is the only one worth living, and dying, for.³²

The words of Sarah Hinlicky tell both of us – church and preachers – that if we want to reach this post-literate culture, we need to consider the way we preach and communicate with these people. This challenge is enormous, but it can be addressed. A key way to do that is through story and narrative. Story has communicative power that will help people not only to remember what was preached to them, but also to facilitate a vicarious identification between hearers and the characters in the story.

³⁰ People born between 1964-1979.

³¹ Sarah Hinlicky, "Talking to Generation X," *First Things* (February 1999), 11.

³² *Ibid.*, 11.

Conclusion

People today listen to stories all day long. They live in it! This is their world, and preachers need to understand that transmitting ideas and concepts to this generation can also be done through narrative and story. Our current culture not only relates to story and narrative, but it also clamors for it; because it is imbedded in their cultural DNA.

Telling stories is nothing new for the Christian church; in fact, this was the way the biblical faith was handed on for many centuries. From generation to generation, that same “old story” of God’s love and mercy in Christ was the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to change people’s heart and mind and bring them to a faith relationship with God. The world today needs a storyteller, and the Christian Church is called to pass on the story of salvation to this post-literate culture through its pastors and preachers.³³

³³ Discussing this “secondary orality” we are living in today, Rodney Clapp says: “This setting [secondary orality] allows Christians to remember that we are a profound oral people. Ours is the God who did not *write* to create the world, but *spoke* it into being. Our God did not “inscribe” the Son but “uttered” him. The Son himself left nothing in writing. He spoke and acted; creating a community of discourse we now call the church. Only there, in life intimately shared, in the close proximity of hearing and touch, is the body of Christ or “Christianity” really known. Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 135.

CHAPTER FOUR
WORKSHOP IN NARRATIVE PREACHING
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

The Design of the Project

Since its beginning, Seminário Concórdia (Concordia Seminary)¹ is a School that has had a strong emphasis upon the theological formation of its students. Practical theology is integrated into the other three areas of theology – Historical, Biblical and Systematic. The inter-relationship of the four areas of theology is to be present in all areas of the pastoral ministry. This is especially true for teaching and preaching.

In its over 100 years, Seminário Concórdia has had a strong emphasis on deductive or propositional preaching in its homiletical classes. This is not to suggest that there are not other approaches in the classroom setting. However, deductive homiletics is still the most predominant method taught. The results of this homiletical approach, as we have seen in chapter one, is that today, among the majority of pastors in IELB, the most predominant way of preaching is propositional and analytical. This is not to suggest that some professors and even pastors have not tried new ways of proclamation. Yet, the majority of Brazilian pastors in IELB are strongly rooted in the propositional style of preaching.

Certainly, propositional preaching is time honored and a useful homiletical approach. However, it is not the only approach, and may not be the best approach, especially if we

¹ The first LC-MS missionaries working in Brazil had a concern that the local church would have its own indigenous pastors. As a result, even before the formation of the Synod in Brazil (1904), a Theological Institute was founded (1903). This Institute provided training for local leaders and prepared them to serve as pastors. Eventually the Institute became the Seminário Concórdia (Concordia Seminary). This seminary is currently located in São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul State.

consider the theological foundation for narrative preaching presented in chapter two, as well as the needs of the current post-literate culture seen in chapter three.

The goals with this project through the workshop are basically three: (1) Promote a way for a group of Brazilian pastors to evaluate their current method of preaching; (2) Help these pastors to recognize that the propositional method of preaching is not the only way to approach people from the pulpit in a post-literate age; (3) Present an additional way of preaching, namely a narrative form of proclamation, for pastors who have had little or no instruction in this style.

To accomplish these goals, a workshop was offered to seven Brazilian pastors on narrative preaching. This workshop took place in one of the circuits of IELB, in South Brazil – Distrito² Vale do Rio dos Sinos. This project was designed to provide a qualitative evaluation of the effectiveness of a workshop in narrative preaching in helping a specific group of Brazilian Lutheran pastors to learn and implement aspects of narrative proclamation in their own preaching. If these three goals described above can be achieved through the research and analysis of the data, then a more confident assertion about the effectiveness of this workshop in narrative preaching can be made.

Research Tools and Methodology

Data for verifying the impact of this project was gathered through written questionnaires, evaluations and study of written sermons. Also a teaching component was used in this project through the form of a workshop.

² In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, the Circuits are called Districts.

The first component of this research was accomplished through a written questionnaire sent out to the seven pastors who confirmed their participation in the workshop. This written questionnaire asked the pastors to answer questions about their understanding and knowledge of narrative preaching, the style of preaching they were trained in the seminary, how they would define their current style of preaching, and lastly, how they use stories and narrative in their sermons.³ These questionnaires were returned to this researcher for further evaluation and study.

The group of pastors participating in the project was invited to select five lay people from their congregations who listened to their pastor's sermons (two sermons). In addition, this group of lay people was invited to answer a questionnaire that asked for a brief summary of each sermon heard, what was the most difficult and the easiest parts of the sermon to listen to, as well as what part of the sermon they could apply most to their lives.⁴ These questionnaires were also returned to the researcher for further evaluation and study.

The second piece in this project was a workshop offered for four days to this group of seven pastors participating in the research. During the workshop, the pastors received feedback about their training in homiletics as well as their current style of preaching. The information gathered from their members through the questionnaires was shared with participating pastors. A series of presentations and lectures about narrative preaching was offered to the pastors attending the workshop. They also received samples of narrative sermons from different authors and training on how to prepare and write a narrative sermon.⁵

³ See Appendix A – Pastors Survey - Questionnaire 1.

⁴ See Appendix B – Sermon Evaluation Team – Questionnaire 1.

⁵ See Appendix C – Workshop Manual.

At the end of the four days, the pastors were invited to evaluate the workshop by a written questionnaire and asked to share their thoughts about the length of the workshop, handouts, sermon samples, classroom and facilities. Also they were asked which parts of the workshop were most helpful to them and which ones could be improved. Finally, they were asked to share the most important thing they learned in the workshop.⁶

The third phase of this research came after the pastors attended the workshop. They were invited to write two new sermons using the narrative style of preaching and proclaim them to their congregations, including the same group who evaluated their sermons earlier. Afterwards, the pastors responded to another questionnaire, which dealt with issues such as: what were the major challenges they faced using the narrative style of preaching; what differences did they perceive in their sermons; how did their members respond to their narrative sermons; if they think that this style of preaching helped them to memorize and deliver the sermon; and, in what ways they will make use of a narrative style in their preaching.⁷ The same group of lay people involved in the first part of their research was also invited to respond to another questionnaire, similar to the first one, except it had one more question targeting any differences in their pastor's sermons from the time they did the first questionnaire.⁸

⁶ See Appendix D – Workshop Evaluation.

⁷ See Appendix E – Pastors Survey - Questionnaire 2.

⁸ See Appendix F – Sermon Evaluation Team – Questionnaire 2.

Implementation of the Project

The steps for this project were implemented gradually. On January 5, 2006, Rev. Marcos Schmidt, the senior pastor of the Igreja Luterana São Paulo (St. Paul Lutheran Church) in the city of Novo Hamburgo, in South Brazil, was contacted by e-mail and asked about the possibilities of his church being the host congregation for the workshop in narrative preaching in the month of June. Upon his confirmation, the dates of June 12 to 15 were secured for the workshop.⁹

On February 16, 2006 some of the pastors in the Distrito Vale Rio dos Sinos were contacted by e-mail requesting if they would be willing to participate in this project about narrative preaching in Brazil.¹⁰

Two criteria were used to select these pastors. First, where there was more than one pastor serving the same congregation, the researcher decided to invite just one of the pastors. It helped to avoid two pastors from the same congregation being involved in this project, because in this way the congregation could still have at least another pastor available during the days of the workshop. The second criterion was the year of the pastors' graduations. The pastors selected to take part in this project were pastors that graduated in different years, which allowed the researcher to have a mix of pastors, trained by different homiletic professors during their studies in the seminary and also with a variety of preaching experiences in the ministry.

⁹ See Appendix G – Contact with Rev. Marcos Schmidt.

¹⁰ See Appendix H – First contact with Pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos. Here a note of explanation needs to be made. According to the Anuário Luterano (Lutheran Annual) of the IELB, the Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos has 22 pastors serving 12 different congregations and missions in this area. In Anuário Luterano – Igreja Luterana do Brasil, (Porto Alegre: Concórdia Editora, 2008), 118.

Initially, ten pastors were selected and invited to participate in this project. Out of the ten, nine confirmed they would like to take part in this survey. Upon their responses and willingness to participate; the seven pastors were selected as follows:

Pastor's Names	Year of Graduation	Congregation & Location
1. Rev. Breno C. Thome	1964	Cristo, Rincão dos Ilheus
2. Rev. Leonardo Raasch	1974	São Lucas, Ouro Branco
3. Rev. Renato L. Regauer	1978	São Mateus, Sapiranga
4. Rev. Oscar M. Zimmerman	1981	São Miguel, Dois Irmãos
5. Rev. Sergio L. Neivert	1985	Emanuel, Nova Hartz
6. Rev. Martim Brehm	1985	São Marcos, Canudos
7. Rev. Adalmir Wachholz	1992	Rei Jesus, Rondônia

On April 4, 2006 the pastors involved in the research received further information about the process in the project and also were invited to select an evaluating team from their congregation who would be evaluating their sermons. They were encouraged to invite people from different ages and gender, as much as possible, which would give them a broad perspective of how their members were hearing their sermons.

Along with this information, the pastors received the last details about the workshop, dates, time, as well as the questionnaires to be used by them and their evaluating team. The pastors determined the specific Sundays in April where they would preach their sermons to be evaluated by their evaluating team.¹¹

In May 2006 the questionnaires that were sent to the pastors and the evaluation teams, as well as the sermons that were preached, were mailed to the researcher's address in San Antonio, Texas (USA) for further evaluation and study.

From June 12 to 15, 2006, the workshop in narrative preaching was offered to the pastors at Igreja Luterana São Paulo, in the city of Novo Hamburgo, South Brazil. The

¹¹ See Appendix I – Second contact with Pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos.

group met in one of the congregation's classrooms from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with a lunch break from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Each participant received a workshop manual with the schedule and the information pertinent to the workshop.¹²

After the workshop, the pastors were invited to evaluate their training section on narrative preaching using a specific questionnaire.¹³ They also received the second set of questionnaires to be answered by them and also by their evaluation team.¹⁴ Further information was also given about the next steps they had to take in relation to the project.

The pastors had the month of July to write and deliver two new sermons to their congregations, using a narrative approach learned in the workshop. After they completed their preaching assignments, the surveys were implemented by them as well as by their evaluation group. August 15, 2006, was selected as a tentative date for the pastors to mail the second set of questionnaires and the sermons preached to the address of the researcher in San Antonio, Texas (USA) for further evaluation and study.

Conclusion

These methods that were employed in this project take into consideration the ministry context of the pastors involved in this survey as explained in chapter one, also the theological foundation established in chapter two, as well as the cultural needs of the post-literate culture described in chapter three.

¹² See Appendix C – Workshop Manual.

¹³ See Appendix D – Workshop Evaluation.

¹⁴ See Appendix E – Pastors Survey - Questionnaire 2 and Appendix F – Sermon Evaluation Team – Questionnaire 2.

It was expected that the use of these methods – offered through this workshop – would enhance the homiletical knowledge of these Brazilian pastors and enable them to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ using narrative preaching. It is also expected that the collection of data gathered in this project will strengthen the outcome of the study by providing a mechanism through which the participant responses can be compared and contrasted, enabling the researcher to improve and make the necessary modifications in this workshop for future presentations. The next chapter will evaluate what impact the project had on the pastors who participated in this survey.

CHAPTER FIVE
WORKSHOP IN NARRATIVE PREACHING
THE PROJECT EVALUATED

The purpose of this project was to offer a new approach from the field of homiletics to the ministry of IELB. The goal was to help a small group of seven Lutheran pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos, in South Brazil, to integrate a more narrative style of preaching into their ministry. The chief component of this MAP was a workshop on narrative preaching offered to this group of pastors. The objective was not as much to evaluate the pastors and their style of preaching, even though some evaluation did occur during this process, but rather to see how effective the workshop could be in helping the pastors integrate the theory and practice of narrative preaching.

Data for verifying the impact of this project was gathered in different ways, such as written questionnaires, study of written sermons and written evaluations. The study involved three major distinct phases. The first phase involved written questionnaires with the pastors; sermon evaluation feedback by congregational members of the pastors participating in the study as well as sermon evaluation by the researcher. The second phase was the workshop presentation and an evaluation of its impact on the pastors attending the training. The last phase, following the workshop, was another written questionnaire with the pastors to evaluate the impact of the workshop on their style of preaching; and the sermon evaluation feedback by the same group of members and a sermon evaluation by this researcher.

Written Questionnaire with the Pastors

All seven pastors received the same questionnaire. The questions and responses regarding their training in homiletics as well as their style of preaching are presented below.¹

Question # 1: “In what style of preaching were you trained during your studies in the Seminary?”

To this question, all seven pastors responded that their major training in homiletics was basically the same: a deductive sermon, with theme, parts and sub-parts. One of the pastors mentioned that he still remembers what his professor once said in classroom:

“Professor Otto Goerl was almost inflexible [in his way of teaching], trying to condition us [students] to structure our sermons with a single thought, with theme (which could not have terms used in the other parts of the sermon), parts and sub-parts.”²

One interesting aspect with this question is that nine different homiletic professors were named by the pastors. Just one out of the nine was said to be more flexible in terms of sermon structure and letting the students develop more of their own style of preaching.

This overwhelming response by the pastors confirms the first premise of this project, that in the IELB the majority of the pastors are trained in the deductive method of preaching. They are strongly rooted in the propositional style of preaching.

Question # 2: “Describe your preaching style, especially how you organize or structure the sermon.”

There is a saying among pastors that after being in the ministry for some years, each pastor ends up developing his own method and style of preaching. The responses to this question confirm this saying. After evaluating the seven answers, I could see that the

¹ The questionnaire notes are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

² Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

majority of the pastors developed a way of preaching that was comfortable to them.

However, out of the seven pastors, at least four of them still use theme, parts and sub-parts as their sermon structure and their sermons are deductive in style. Two of them clearly stated in their answers:

“I start reading the text in the vernacular, then in the original; I also check the context and parallel passages. [Then] I make the sermon structure: theme and parts...”

“I try, based on the text, to verify and/or elaborate a theme, next, a directive question. Then, I write the parts, usually two or three, and after that I start detailing the parts... I don't write the text of my sermon.”³

Again, here we can see the confirmation of the hypothesis of this project, that a great number of pastors in IELB still use the deductive style of preaching.⁴

Question # 3: “What is your understanding/knowledge of narrative preaching?”

Out of the seven pastors participating in this survey, just one mentioned that he read some internet articles about narrative preaching. This same pastor said that stories had always been a part of his life growing up. He said that he remembers his father gathering together his children in the living room in the evenings and telling them stories. He concluded his comments by saying that his father's stories were the greatest event of the day. For him, there is no better way of explaining a biblical text than using stories. If the text does not provide one, the preacher needs to create or find one or more stories as a support for his message.

The other six pastors' answers to this question describe their lack of knowledge about narrative preaching. They said:

³ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

⁴ One aspect related to this question was to learn the way the pastors described how they prepared their sermons. The pastors mentioned the use of the church lectionary, the study of the original languages through an exegetical work of the text; a concern for a good law & gospel balance in the sermon; application of the truth of the text to the hearers' lives and a gospel based conclusion at the end of the sermon.

“I don’t remember reading anything about it [narrative preaching].”
“I never read or heard anything about this style [narrative preaching]... I’m curious to know this style.”
“I don’t know what is narrative preaching.”
“I never heard about it [narrative preaching].”
“I think I have heard some sermons in this style, but I think it is complicated to make applications [using this style of preaching].”
“Nothing or almost nothing [about narrative preaching], except the term.”⁵

The answers above again confirm the assumption made by this researcher that the pastors in IELB do not have a formal training or even much understanding regarding narrative preaching. This scenario corroborates the fact that there is a need among Lutheran pastors in Brazil for this type of teaching and training.

Question # 4: “How much story, imagery, description, narrative, do you use in your sermons?”⁶

The pastors responded to this question with a variety of answers. They said that they attempt to use as much as possible stories, biblical stories, facts of life, parables, and news from the media. In addition they used images and some mentioned using object lessons in their sermons. Just one pastor said that he does not use illustrations and stories in his sermons. He said:

“I have a hard time in using illustrations and stories in my preaching. I use, sometimes, images, episodes and events of life to help in the sermon. But I don’t use them frequently.”⁷

⁵ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

⁶ This questionnaire was prepared for the pastors in the scope of the new homiletics. The goal was to see how far the pastors had gone beyond the propositional and analytical style of preaching. Although the words “imagery” and “description” can be used in a broader sense to include propositional preaching, the survey assumed a contextual understanding of these words, grounded in a “story” and “narrative” framework.

⁷ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

The pastor that mentioned having read something on narrative preaching said that his sermons always have one or two illustrations or some type of story. He also said he tries to preach like he was painting on a canvas, describing a picture to his hearers in the pew.

The way that the majority of the pastors answered this question also shows that the pastors see the use of illustrations in the sermon more as a resource to teach a point in the sermon than a story of participation. The reason for this conclusion is that the pastors did not mention using a story or narrative to involve the listener in the plot or make them be part of the story. While this may be due to the type of homiletical training they had in the seminary, their answers show that these pastors don't have a clear understanding (or knowledge) of what is the difference between metaphors of illustration and metaphors of participation, which is a key component in narrative preaching.⁸

Based on the responses given by the pastors participating in this project, the researcher could see that this project on narrative preaching for pastors in IELB was a helpful addition to their training. These seven pastors at least could benefit from a workshop on narrative preaching.

Sermon Evaluations

As stated previously, the goal with this part of the project is not to evaluate the pastors' sermons in terms of content, use of the text, or even law and gospel application. The reason for this sermonic assessment is to see what kind of sermon format and style of preaching these pastors have and how much Bible stories, story, and narrative are present in their preaching.

⁸ Richard Jensen explains the difference between the two. He says that in storytelling preaching, the story is not an illustration of a point in the sermon, so that once one grasped the point the story is dispensable; instead, the story is a metaphor of participation. The goal of the storyteller is to invite participation in the world of the story. In *Thinking in Story* (Lima: The C.S.S. Publishing Co, Inc., 1993), 27-28.

Each pastor participating in the survey submitted two sermons.⁹ The researcher had a chance to read and evaluate fourteen sermons, which gave him a good perspective as to how these pastors write and prepare their sermons. After an attentive reading of the sermons, the first thing that caught the researcher's attention was the way the pastors developed their sermons. All the pastors, without exception, had a deductive, propositional approach in their sermons. In fact, two out of the seven pastors did not have any sermon script, but only an outline, with a clear theme, introduction, parts, subparts, and a conclusion in their sermons.¹⁰ As it was pointed out before, even with nine different professors of homiletics teaching these men in the seminary, the sermons submitted confirm again how much of the propositional style of preaching is present in the pulpits of IELB today.

Another aspect that was of interest for this project is how much story and narrative was present in the sermons submitted by the pastors. In reading the sermons, the researcher was able to find some illustrations, analogies, examples of life in general, but nothing strong in terms of story or narrative, except for the one pastor who said stories were always part of his life. Most of the time, the researcher found brief illustrations trying to convey the teaching point in the sermon. Some of the sermons did not have any illustrations at all. When the text that served as the basis for the sermon was narrative in nature, a gospel

⁹ The sermons are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

¹⁰ One of the pastors that just submitted outlines of his sermons wrote in one of them, "*It has been a long time since I have written a full sermon script.*" As I continued conversing with pastors attending the workshop, some informed me that it was a problem for them to participate in this project, because they usually don't write their sermons, but take only an outline with them to the pulpit. Obviously, the demands on a pastor's time are legion, and it can prove difficult to put in the time needed to write out a full sermon manuscript. However, be it narrative or propositional preaching, taking the time to study, outline, and draft a manuscript proves invaluable in gathering, refining, and even delivering important thoughts, stories, and doctrinal teaching in a cohesive, compelling, and cogent way. When the pastor does not take the needed time to hone his sermons, even in the midst of a harrying schedule, his preaching inevitably suffers. Good preaching takes time.

narrative for example, the story in the text was broken down into teaching points and the narrative of the text was mostly lost.

Because these sermons were preached during Holy Week and Easter, the lectionary provided many stories for the preachers, not only in the gospel lessons, but also from the other assigned lessons for the Sunday. However, the pastors did not take advantage of these biblical narratives in their sermons. The stories and narratives were right there before their eyes – in the text – but their sermons did not move beyond the deductive format, with a linear development of ideas and analytical in style.

Two of the sermons submitted by the same pastor were special sermons, one for confirmation and the other one celebrating the anniversary of the youth group in the congregation. Again, this preacher did not take advantage of the occasion to share with the congregation one or two stories about the confirmands during their journey of faith or about the young people who are part of the youth group. The stories were right there; with the opportunity to invite the congregation to participate vicariously in these moments of God's grace in their midst, but the preacher did not make use of this opportunity in his preaching.

Here, an observation needs to be made. As was mentioned earlier, one of the pastors participating in this project had a chance to read some articles in narrative preaching on the internet. Since stories and narratives were part of his life experience in growing up, his two sermons stood out from among the others. His sermons had illustrations and at least one or two stories. He also used analogies and some type of description based on advertisements or stories on television which were familiar to the hearers. However, even with a sermon filled with analogies and little stories, this pastor was trying to bring light to a certain truth or a

point in his sermon. Nevertheless, the researcher has to admit that it was much easier to read these sermons than the other ones, which did not use such rhetorical devices.

At this point, the sermons submitted by the pastors confirmed what was found in their answered questionnaires: propositional preaching is the main method used by the Brazilian pastors in IELB.

Sermon Evaluation by Congregational Members

The pastors participating in this project were invited to select a team of five lay people from their congregations to help evaluate their sermons. What follows are the results of this evaluation implemented by these teams, based on the answers found in their questionnaires.¹¹

Question # 1: “Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.”

The researcher found that the majority of the people in the evaluation team were able to write good summaries of their pastor’s sermon. With a few exceptions, the members did not have major problems putting together the main topics of the sermons preached to them.

This researcher wondered how the majority of people could summarize so well the sermons, especially considering that the majority of the sermons were predominately deductive, containing few illustrations or stories. Perhaps one reason for this is the church calendar and its liturgical cycle. All the sermons evaluated by the group were preached during Holy Week, Easter and the Sundays following Easter. Biblical stories, such as Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus and Thomas, the Good Shepherd, and the Apostles in the early chapters of Acts, provide the narrative frame that most likely helped the

¹¹ The evaluation notes are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

hearers to remember the sermons, even though the majority of their pastors did not preach a narrative sermon.

Still, the researcher was pleased to see the people were able to identify the content of the sermons. It shows that narrative is not to replace the older approach in preaching but add to the pastors' homiletical skills.

Question # 2: "What did you find most difficult to pay attention to or to listen to in the sermon?"

While this question raised many interesting issues, the researcher will not address all of them here. If he did, he would lose the focus of this project.

Out of seventy people answering the questionnaire, only four decided not to respond to this question. Twenty seven participants said that they did not have any problems understanding the sermons. Some of their reasons are as follows:

"It is because we know the story very well; Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. It is like a movie played before our eyes."

"I know well the gospel story."

"The message was clear and easy to understand."¹²

As stated, the reason that some give for clearly understanding the sermons is basically they know the story, the gospel narrative. Since they knew the gospel story so well, it was easier for them to pay attention on the sermon.

However, more than half of the participants (thirty-nine people) said that they had some difficulty understanding or paying attention to the sermon. We will consider here only the reasons that are pertinent to this project and helpful to our study.¹³

¹² Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

¹³ Some of the other reasons people mentioned being a hindrance for them to pay attention to the sermons were: noise in the sanctuary or from the street; physical problems such as a headache; a confusing introduction; new ideas brought by the pastor in the sermon that didn't connect with the rest of it and long sermons.

Some of the respondents said that theological terms or expressions used by the pastors in their sermons were somewhat confusing to them. Theological jargon is seldom a helpful way of communicating with people. Instead of bringing clarification to the message, jargon became a hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel.

Examples and illustrations that don't connect with the sermon and don't bring any light to the sermon were also mentioned. Sometimes a "good illustration" necessarily is not welcomed by the hearers in the pew, especially when they don't see any connection between the sermon and the point the illustration is trying to make.

Many of respondents said the use of other biblical passages in the sermon or reading the text of the sermon without further explanation caused them to stop paying attention to the sermon. One characteristic of a deductive sermon is to preach for understanding. Sermons, sometimes, will "throw in" some Bible verses without additional explanation. Concerned about trying to bring a biblical proof to his sermon and teach a biblical truth, the preacher may lose his hearers with that move. Biblical truths and theological points are important in a sermon, but they can become more attractive to the hearers if they come dressed in a narrative format.¹⁴ Yet, a story told in a sermon is not guaranteed that it will make an impact

¹⁴ Bryan Chapell tells an interesting story about a famous preacher that liked to use stories in his sermons. One day, after speaking for a gathering of pastors and giving reasons for why to use stories, one minister in the group said: "*You always preach with stories. Why not simply state what Scripture teaches? Shouldn't we just present truth as truth?*" The preacher smiled and said, "*To answer [your question] let me tell you a story.*" And he began: "*... One day Bare Truth came walking into town. What he had to say was very important, but he looked very intimidating with bulging muscles and hard knuckles. Some people remembered when he had hurt them before. As a result, most people went into their houses to wait for Bare Truth to finish his business. Only the strongest of the townspeople did not mind Bare Truth visits. The next day Parable came to town. He looked just like most of the town's people and dressed in ordinary clothes, but he told of all the places he had been and the sights he had seen. All the people loved to visit with Parable. They came out to greet him and invited him into their homes... Bare Truth was upset that Parable got a reception so unlike his own. He went to the other town visitor and said, 'Tell me, Parable, why do people greet you with such warmth when I am Truth they should hear?' Instead of answering, Parable took off his hat and jacket and put them on Bare Truth. Truth was transformed. He was no less strong. He was no less Truth. But the people saw him in an entirely different light. When he put on Parable's clothes, Truth showed he really was concerned that people hear him. When the people recognized that Truth cared enough about them to find out what he needed to do to have them listen*"

on the listeners or will help them pay attention to what is being preached, as one of the respondents said well:

“[I also have difficulty in paying attention to a sermon or listening to it] when the story is told and there is no application to our lives today.”¹⁵

Question # 3: “What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?”

Out of all the participants, just one person decided not to respond to this question. The majority of the answers fell in the same area of interest of this study.¹⁶ People in the survey mentioned that it was easier for them to listen to the sermon when the pastor used some type of comparison or example from their daily lives. When the pastor made a comparison with sports, an advertisement on TV or items from the news, the respondents said they were able to make the connection with their lives. This approach helped them to remember specific parts of the sermon. One person said: “*When the sermon brings facts from our daily lives, it is like Jesus when He spoke in parables*”¹⁷

In response to question # 3, stories were the second most often answer. The respondents mentioned that stories told by the pastors were significant in helping them remember the message preached to them. Since the researcher had access to the sermons’ script, he was able to confirm this truth. When the respondents mentioned the stories, they were able to summarize those specific sections of the sermon very well.

to him, they listened all the more intently. The very people that had invited Parable for coffee and donuts now invited Truth too. To this day, when Truth has business in town, he puts on Parable’s clothes so that the people will hear him and deal with him.” In *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 175-176.

¹⁵ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

¹⁶ Some of the other reasons people mentioned as the easiest part of the sermon to listen to were: good introduction, the pastors speaks well, and the pastor uses a clear language in his sermon.

¹⁷ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

The next most often answer was the use of biblical stories or the biblical narratives. A large number of people participating in this project mentioned that the stories from the Bible made it easier to listen to the sermons. One of the respondents said: “*When the pastor told the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection, because it is a well known story... it is easy to remember*”¹⁸

As was mentioned before, in spite of the fact that the preaching style of the majority of the pastors in this survey was deductive and propositional, when they compared an example of life or a story to a biblical story involved in the message, those sermons were easier to listen to.

Question # 4: “What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?”

The researcher was pleased to see how the hearers could make good applications from the sermons to their lives. Some of the applications were more obvious or natural in Lutheran circles, such as, Christ’s death on the cross – forsaken for our sake; Christ rose again, so we also will rise one day too; Christ is the only name – salvation is found in no one else. However, what became evident is that the respondents were better able to make applications when some type of comparison, analogy, story or character in the narrative was used or mentioned in the sermon.

For example, some people mentioned our relationship with Jesus as the true vine and us as the branches. In addition, they mentioned being nurtured by Him in the Lord’s Supper (John 15:1-9). Thomas’ story was another application that the hearers were able to make, when, in some way, they could see themselves in the character of Thomas (John 20:19-29). The same connections occurred with Jesus the Good Shepherd. The people that listen to His

¹⁸ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

voice are the ones that belong to His flock (John 10:1-18). In these cases, we can see both analogy and story working together, facilitating that application for the hearers.

Brazil is well known as a nation that enjoys soccer. People understand very well what it means to be a part of a soccer team. One of the pastors made an analogy with Baptism. When we are baptized in Christ, we are part of Jesus' team – we put on His team jersey – and as players on His team, we run the field (the world) with the good news of the Risen Lord (Galatians 3:26-28). This analogy was so effective that all five members on this evaluating team explicitly referred to it, saying how helpful it was for them in terms of life application, accessibility and relevance.

Based on the answers provided by the respondents, it became evident that analogies, comparisons or any type of story and narrative are very effective in terms of helping hearers make applications to their lives.

Workshop Evaluation

As part of this project evaluation process, we now will direct our attention to evaluations made by the pastors at the end of the workshop.¹⁹ The reason for that is to see how well the workshop was received by the pastors, what kind of adjustments need to be made and how much they were able to apprehend in such a short period of time.

Question # 1: “How did this workshop go in terms of length, handouts, sermon samples, classroom facilities, etc.?”

Overall, the pastors responded favorably to this question. In terms of length, they said that the four days of workshop was too intense. It would have been better to have it spread out for a week, with one section per day, preferably in the morning. This would allow

¹⁹ The workshop evaluation notes are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

more time for discussion and reflection of the new content that was being taught to the pastors.

The manual used in the workshop, as well as the power point presentations, were considered very helpful for the teaching-learning process. One of the pastors mentioned that some of the sample sermons were translations from English to Portuguese. Hence, the participating pastor found that in these translations, the narrative examples were more difficult to follow and, therefore, to understand.

The classroom used for the workshop was considered adequate; however, some comments were made in terms of having more comfortable chairs.

Question #2: “Which parts of the workshop were most helpful to you?”

It is difficult to summarize all the pastors’ responses relating to the workshop and how helpful it was to them. Here are few selected comments:

“The layout of the workshop manual was very didactic.... The sermons examples were also helpful, however would have been better if we could have watched all the preachers delivering their sermons live.”

“It is hard to mention just one, but the description of the all different techniques in narrative preaching, plus the graphics used, and the examples given by the instructor were valid.”

“The part where we talked about the use of story in the sermon, and the many stories shared in class; as well as the different examples of narrative sermons. I return home with many more ideas for my own sermons.”

“I really enjoyed the different techniques and ways of narrative preaching. The sermon samples in the manual were very helpful in putting together the theory and the practice of narrative preaching.”²⁰

The following comment may well describe how the pastors valued the workshop in terms of helping them to evaluate their own sermons as well as how it could impact their preaching. The following pastor says that he had used stories before in his sermons, especially examples from our daily lives. He states:

²⁰ Workshop Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

“[This workshop] helped me to realize how many times I have used stories unconsciously in my sermons, but now I understand that I can do that in a better and more efficient way and with more planning.”²¹

This comment was made by a fellow pastor who said he hadn’t written his sermons for a long time, but only used an outline in the pulpit. These outlines were deductive, structured with main points and ideas, very analytical in nature.

Question # 3: “Which parts of the workshop could be improved? In what ways?”

The pastors attending the workshop were kind in their comments and did not offer too many ideas or suggestions to improve the workshop. The only criticism that was mentioned was that sometimes the discussions in class got away from the main theme and prevented the group from focusing on narrative preaching. Besides that, the main suggestions to improve the workshop were as follows:

“If some of the books and articles were available in Portuguese, it would help in the understanding of narrative preaching as well as its different styles. [We also] could have more videos with the different preachers delivering their narrative sermons.”

“If we had more time, maybe we could have more practical exercises in the workshop.”

“Offer the workshop in a longer period of time, maybe a week, when we would have chance to use and evaluate the new technique – narrative preaching – in classroom.”²²

These comments attest to one of the main reasons for this project in Brazil. As we can see above, the pastors were not only open to learn about narrative preaching, but also willing to expend more time discussing the topics presented in the workshop. One aspect that will prevent these pastors from continuing education in this field is the lack of bibliographical material available in Portuguese.

²¹ Workshop Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

²² Workshop Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

Question # 4: “The most important thing I learned in this workshop was...”

The pastors’ comments on this question were all positive and encouraging for this researcher. All the pastors seemed to be pleased with the results of the workshop. The words shared by the group reaffirm the need for this type of training and conversation in the midst of the IELB and its clergy. Some of the comments were:

“[I learned] I can have more variety in my sermons, without losing the most important thing, which is to preach the gospel. Besides, I think I will be able to captivate my audience [using this technique.]”

“[This is] one more way of bringing Christ’s love for people [narrative preaching]. It was also another way of gaining more knowledge and learn to be more dynamic [in the pulpit].”

“Narrative preaching is indeed a good way of involving the whole congregation... the hearers in the sermon.”²³

The researcher could continue to quote comments like these; however, they would become repetitive. One pastor said something different from the others. This pastor admits that he struggled with the idea of using stories in his sermons, but now, following the workshop, he felt encouraged to do so. He says:

“I had some prejudice toward some fellow pastors that used stories or little stories in their sermons, even sometimes “abusing” the use of it. [This workshop helped me] to remove the “scales” of my eyes and gave me ideas in how to use illustrations from the human experience and from our daily lives.”²⁴

The researcher hopes that not only this pastor has found a new and fresh way of preaching God’s Word to his people, but also that all the pastors that attended this workshop will have a new motivation and enthusiasm for proclaiming the gospel in a more narrative shape and fashion.

With this positive response from the pastors who participated in the workshop, we move on with our evaluation of this project, trying to find out how these pastors maneuvered

²³ Workshop Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

²⁴ Workshop Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

throughout this new journey on narrative preaching. We will also see how their hearers responded to it and if they were able to join their pastors in this journey.

Written Questionnaire with the Pastors

After the workshop, the pastors were invited to preach two new sermons to their congregations, trying to implement a more narrative style in their preaching. They were also asked to answer a new questionnaire,²⁵ sharing their thoughts regarding their experience and how their congregations responded to their new sermons.

Question # 1: “What were the major challenges you faced using the narrative style of preaching?”

The pastors had different reactions in using this new style of sermon format, but I could see that some of the challenges were common among them. The first struggle was to find a good source of narrative material for their sermons. Two of the pastors said:

“The most difficult part was to find a source of narrative material to be used in the sermon and that had a good connection with the text.”
“Finding stories or situations in life that relate to the text and apply to hearers.”
Preaching about the biblical doctrines in a clear manner, without being systematic.”²⁶

Another challenge for the pastors was the new method in itself. Because it was new for them, it required more time for preparation and writing. Also, because it’s a new approach for them, they were not sure if they were doing the right thing in the pulpit. Some of the pastors said:

“Sometimes I’m not so sure if my preaching is narrative or not. I need to continue to read the sermon samples in the manual and also get more knowledge about narrative preaching.”

²⁵ The questionnaire notes are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

²⁶ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

“For me, the biggest challenge is to prepare a narrative sermon. It requires more creativity from the preacher. We pastors in IELB are not used to this method as well as our members in the congregation.”

“I believe that my sermons were narrative, but I’m not quite sure... I’m not secure enough with the method yet. My biggest challenge was to find the right words, examples and stories for the sermon. Maybe it seems to be easier to preach in this way, but right now, in this phase of learning a new method, it is more complicated than my previous way of preaching.”²⁷

This last quote points out another big challenge that the Brazilian pastors faced, transitioning to a new style because of their familiarity to the older method. The quotes below are representative of how much the proposition style of preaching is strongly rooted in the homiletical culture of these pastors.

“For me, the most difficult part is to leave my old style of preaching and trying not to mix the two methods, narrative with theme and parts.”

“The challenge of the change [from one style of preaching to the other]. I think that, in some ways, I used the narrative method, but even when I did it, I always tried to adjust my sermon to that style of theme and parts.”

“Every time you try to do something new, and you are learning something different, you feel insecure... One thing that I felt strongly, it was the challenge of changing my style [of preaching], writing the sermon in another format. I have to confess that it was very difficult for me to write the sermon in a new way, I had to think longer, read more, research more and rewrite again... but I’m sure that at the end, the people [in the congregation] benefited from that, and the gospel gained much more. We all grew [with this experience].”²⁸

This last quote ends in a positive note. This researcher perceived that the pastors faced the challenge of using a new style of preaching with the same attitude, welcoming the opportunity to learn and the willingness to try something new in their pulpits.

Question # 2: “What differences did you perceive in your sermons?”

Two major aspects were brought up with this question. The first one was related to the biblical text spoken more easily to the current needs of the hearers and also relating to the day-to-day experiences of life.

²⁷ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

²⁸ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

“The biblical text gets more close to the reality of the hearers. The “figurative” language of the Old Testament gained life and communicated in contemporary terms. The epistle texts also became more concrete and related to the daily lives of the hearers.”

“I always tried to speak in a simple way as much as possible to my congregation; however, a narrative sermon allows you to put theory and practice together.”²⁹

While the deductive style of preaching tries to capture the truth of the text and present it in a static propositional format, (through typically an outline), the narrative style allows movement and experience. Through an inductive journey, the biblical text and the life of the hearer intersect, allowing the hearer to experience the gospel in a wholistic and fresh way.³⁰

The second comment had to do with the pastors’ memorization and delivery of the sermon, as well as how the hearers related to this form of preaching.

“Seems to me that they flow more naturally... I feel more secure when I deliver them [narrative preaching]. I believe they fit better the needs of our members.”

“With the script in hand, it was much easier to study and deliver the sermon. I memorized the sermon quickly and I felt more comfortable when I delivered it.”

“I perceived that this way of preaching [narrative preaching] catches the hearers’ attention and it is much less abstract. The hearers get involved.”

“As the evaluating team well put it, the sermons became easier to listen to, simple and clear.”³¹

In the propositional style of preaching, the preacher’s task is to organize ideas, while in the narrative style it is to shape experience. Instead of memorizing abstract points, which are analytical in nature, the narrative approach allows the preacher to have a dialogue with his congregation, where stories are stitched together and pastor and hearers participate vicariously in the sermon.³²

²⁹ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

³⁰ Jensen, *Thinking in Story*, 7,23-29.

³¹ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

³² A more detailed contrast between propositional and narrative preaching can be found in Richard Jensen’s book *Thinking in Story*, 43, and Eugene Lowry’s *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 27.

Obviously, these comments made by the pastors testify to the fact that they see narrative preaching with positive eyes. The pastors also perceived that not only they, but also their hearers, will benefit from it. The researcher hopes that this experience will motivate these pastors to continue to pursue the use of narrative preaching in their ministry more frequently.

Question # 3: “How did your people respond to your narrative sermons?”

The responses given by the pastors were extremely encouraging. All seven pastors basically said that the members responded positively to their narrative sermons. Some of the answers were:

“People’s responses were very positive and encouraging, as their answers in the questionnaires attest to that fact.”

“The responses I received from the congregational members were words of compliment and praise. This does tell me that people understood and liked what they heard.”

“My congregation was always very attentive to my sermons, but I could see it increasing when I preached these two narrative sermons. I did not hear anything negative about the experience, only compliments and good comments not only from people participating in the survey, but also from people in general in the congregation.”

“They were more attentive to the sermon... sometimes they laughed, in other moments they showed concern. It seems to me that they “participated” in the message.”

“The evaluating team as well as the other members responded very well. People want to understand what is being said to them, they want to be part of it.”³³

A comment by a member of a church council describes how much people in Brazil not only enjoy listening to this style of sermons, but also how they appreciate this approach from the pulpits of the pastors in the IELB. In the quote below, the pastor describes the reaction of one of his council members following a sermon when he used a more narrative style learned in the workshop.

³³ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

“In our church council meeting, the vice-secretary said: *‘Pastor, your sermons are getting better and better.’* When I responded that it was the result of the workshop I had attended, his answer was: *‘I recommend that the other pastors in our congregation attend this workshop too.’*”³⁴

Question # 4: “Do you think that the narrative style of preaching helped you in the memorization and delivery of the sermon?”

Some of the pastors already addressed this question when they answered Question # 2. However, from their responses in this specific question about how much narrative helped them in their memorization and delivery of the sermon, we can see how much they appreciated this experience.

“Immensely, at least in these two sermons [I had to preach].”
“Yes, it helped me so much... it gave me more confidence in the delivery.”
“It is much easier to memorize a narrative sermon. I think it helps both the preacher and the hearers... A narrative usually has a natural sequence of facts.”
“Yes, it helped tremendously. It is much easier to memorize and stay with the sermon’s theme. The flow was more natural and made sense.”³⁵

This researcher understands that this should not be the main reason why a pastor would choose to preach a narrative sermon instead of a propositional one. However, it helps to confirm one of the cultural aspects raised by this project - that people today live a storied life; therefore, it does not matter if you are a preacher or a person seating in the pew, you are better able to listen to stories.

Question # 5: “In what ways will you make use of a narrative style of preaching?”

The answers in general indicated that the pastors plan to use, whenever possible, the narrative style of preaching. Some said:

“I plan to use this method on a regular basis, but not exclusively.”
“Not every weekend, but more as another way of preaching to my congregation.”

³⁴ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

³⁵ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

“My goal is to use this style of preaching at least twice a month, I don’t know if I will be able to do so.”³⁶

Some pastors understand that not all the biblical texts favored this type of preaching.

Besides, narrative preaching requires a lot of preparation time and creativity.

“The occasion and the texts will determine it. I don’t think I will be able to use a narrative sermon every Sunday, but I hope at least to preach once a month using this method.”

“I intend to use the narrative style of preaching as much as possible, especially when the biblical texts favor this method. I believe it is possible to write a narrative sermon based in the text, but in some cases, it requires more imagination and preparation; and besides it is not always that we have a good idea and time [to do that].”³⁷

Another aspect mentioned by the pastors is to provide a richer variety of sermon styles to their congregations, using the ideas and different ways of preaching learned in the workshop.

“Every time the biblical text allows me, I will do that, but I hope to do that in a way that will not be too repetitive, but like we learned in the workshop. There are different ways of writing a narrative sermon... I want to read more about this subject.”

“My plan is to preach around twice a month using this method. Variety is very important, especially when someone is in the same congregation more than ten years and has to preach every Sunday.”³⁸

The responses provided by the pastors are rewarding to this researcher. The pastors’ attitudes toward the use of a new homiletical approach in their pulpit is favorable, not only in terms of their own congregations, but also their use and advocacy will be a positive influence to their fellow brothers working together in the ministry, whether it be in their own congregations, in their circuits, or by extension, in the Brazilian Synod.

³⁶ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

³⁷ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

³⁸ Questionnaire notes – translated from Portuguese.

Sermon Evaluations

The evaluation of the pastors' sermons wasn't to assess the sermons in terms of exegetical work, content, or doctrinal teaching. The reason for these sermon evaluations was to find out how the workshop in narrative preaching impacted these pastors' preaching. It was also to see how much of the new technique introduced to them was put into practice in their pulpits after attending the class. The pastors participating in the project submitted two new sermons,³⁹ which gave this researcher an opportunity to read and evaluate their sermonic work in terms of the narrative preaching format. All the pastors put a lot of work into this project and the results are rewarding.

After assessing the sermons submitted, the researcher could see that there were basically three groups or categories of sermons. First, one pastor tried to implement a more narrative style of preaching in his sermons but did not accomplish the proposed goal. I cannot conclude whether this was because there was a lack of understanding of what was shared in the workshop or because he is so rooted in the old homiletical school. Hence, he was unable to make this transition.

This fellow pastor had two narrative texts (Mark 6:30-34 and John 6:24-35) which are rich in details and filled with stories and narrative material; however, these two sermons were basically propositional in format. It is important to note that this pastor was one of the two that did not have a full sermon manuscript in the first part of this research but submitted only his outlines. This time, he had had a full manuscript (little short of two pages long) for his sermons. There was a clear theme, but no parts or sub-parts. An attentive reader could tell that both sermons were deductive. He did not have any type of illustration or story in either sermon. The stories of the text were presented in more a propositional fashion and format. It

³⁹ The sermons are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

is hard to determine what the reason was for this approach without further investigation and personal contact with the pastor.

The second group is the largest one. These are the pastors who did well in trying to implement a more narrative style of preaching in their sermons. Because of their inexperience with this new style of preaching, they showed a certain lack of confidence relating to this approach.

In this group of five pastors, the texts used for their sermons varied from among epistles, texts from the Old Testament or psalms, and the gospels. Two pastors in this group openly said that they used a more deductive preaching in their sermons and one of them only had outlines for his sermons in the first questionnaire answered by the pastors before the workshop.

Regarding the goal of this project, the researcher observed two things: (1) the pastors were able to grasp a good knowledge of what it means to use a more narrative style of preaching; (2) the Brazilian pastors are open to this new trend in homiletics and are willing to improve their preaching skills.

The sermons in this group presented a variety of different stories, some personal stories, some stories from life or the narrative presented in the biblical texts. Also, the pastors used more comparisons and examples of life to illustrate their sermons. In terms of the different narrative styles used by the pastors, this researcher discovered that some of them preferred to use a more inductive format in their sermons and others used the storied discourse structures. In this group, the researcher found sermons that suspended the story, while others had an excursion followed by a story. Finally, others used a story application format. One pastor used an interesting approach in one of his sermons. He had an excursion

at the beginning (long introduction), a story (using the narrative of the gospel) and finally an excursion at the end (long application of the text).⁴⁰

Perhaps one reason the pastors choose these variations of narrative preaching has to do with their homiletical training received in the seminary, which was deductive and propositional. This type of narrative structure allows the preacher an opportunity to make an excursion in his sermon, teaching a specific aspect of the text or making an application to the life of the hearers. This narrative structure gave a chance to the pastors to experiment with a new style of preaching, but at the same time, allowed them to teach or explain a specific aspect of the text they were preaching about, which they normally did when they used the propositional method of preaching.

Finally one pastor's sermons stand out among the others. This was the pastor who had done previous readings on the internet about narrative preaching as well as experiencing stories growing up. In his sermons before the workshop, the researcher could see how much this pastor enjoyed the use of illustrations, analogies and stories. After being exposed to more variety of styles on narrative preaching as well as being able to read sermon samples with this structure, this pastor's sermons moved up to another level.

For his first sermon, he decided to stitch stories together. Using a personal story, short stories and anecdotes from life, he was able to bring these stories together with the narrative of the gospel (Mark 4:35-41). At the end, he made a long application with five specific points related to the whole sermon. We could say that his sermon structure was applying these experiential stories to the *story* (gospel narrative).

⁴⁰ Eugene Lowry talks about these different forms of narrative preaching: running the story; delaying the story; suspending the story and alternating the story in his book *How to Preach a Parable – Designs for Narrative Sermons* (Nashville, Abingdom Press, 1989), 38-41.

In his second sermon, this pastor changed the format. Using the narrative of the gospel, which happened to be the visit of the Magi to baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12), he invited his congregation to be part of a worship journey, comparing the Magi's journey to worship Jesus with the hearers' journey of worship. The technique used this time was suspending the story. He interrupted the sermon narrative three times, applying some truth of the gospel narrative to his hearers. At the end of the sermon, the pastor made a gospel application of Jesus' journey to the cross to save us. The sermon culminated with the empty tomb, emphasizing that Christians worship a Risen King and Lord.

These sermon evaluations were useful to this researcher. They helped him assess the impact of the workshop on these pastors, and also, how much it helped them in sermon preparation and narrative variety in the pulpit. From what was observed in these sermons, the results were gratifying, especially considering that the majority of these pastors had a more deductive homiletical background. Out of the seven pastors, five demonstrated a significant change in their style of preaching and another one moved up to another level of narrative preaching after learning new ways and styles of using this method. The pastor whose sermons did not demonstrate much change after the workshop deserves a further investigation to determine the reason(s) why his sermons did not show any of the narrative styles presented in the workshop. However, this is not the objective of this present project.

Sermon Evaluation by Congregational Members

The same team of five lay people from each congregation who participated in the first part of this project by evaluating their pastors' sermons were invited again to help evaluate their pastor's new sermons. This time they had an extra question in their questionnaires (Question # 5), asking specifically if they noticed any difference in their pastor's sermon

from the time they answered the first questionnaire to now. The observations that follow are based on their comments and answers found in their questionnaires.⁴¹

Question # 1: “Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.”

Comparing the first and the second questionnaires on this same question, the researcher was able to confirm what was said earlier, that stories from life, the Old Testament stories or stories from the gospel are very effective in helping people to remember what was said in the sermons. Also, when the pastors used any kind of analogy or comparisons, the hearers were able to make excellent summaries of the sermons that they heard.

For the researcher, this kind of reaction offered by the evaluating teams validates the main argument of this project: that people will be able to relate more to experiential and biblical stories every time they are used in a sermon.

Question # 2: “What did you find most difficult to pay attention or to listen to in the sermon?”

This time, only three people decided not to answer this question. Forty-two people said that they did not have any problem paying attention to the sermon and only twenty-five people mentioned some type of problem. Comparing the two surveys, we see that these numbers changed significantly. Before twenty-seven people did not have problems listening to the sermons and thirty-nine said they had some problem. Just looking to these numbers, we can say that the pastors’ sermons were much easier to pay attention to after the workshop than before. One reason for this improvement is due to the new storied style of preaching.

Some respondents mentioned:

“Did not have any problem in paying attention to the sermon, because the pastor told us a story, which we all knew about, but he did in a different way.”

⁴¹ The evaluation notes are available upon request from the researcher. Translated from Portuguese.

“I did not have any problem [understanding the sermon] because he [the pastor] made connections [through stories] with our daily lives.”

“I did not have any problems listening to the sermon because the pastor used many illustrations.”⁴²

When the pastors used stories, retold the biblical narrative in an innovative way, or used analogies and examples from life, people had less difficulty in listening to the sermons. As someone said, “*I don’t have major problems when stories are told and they relate to our lives or to our day to day experiences.*”⁴³

However, we had twenty-five respondents that said they still had some problems in listening to the sermons. Some of the reasons given are not pertinent to our study.⁴⁴ They will not be considered in our evaluation here, but at least two deserve our attention because they are directly related to our study.

One of the problems had to do with concepts–ideas or truths that the pastors were trying to convey in their sermons. When propositions or abstract concepts were said in the sermons without using a good illustration, a comparison or a story, the respondents said that it was more difficult to pay attention to the sermon.

Another point mentioned by the respondents was the biblical stories they already knew from the heart. One person said: “*As soon as the pastor started to tell the story of Paul’s conversion, I was out.*”⁴⁵ This researcher does not think that it was the story itself that was the problem, but the way it was told. When many other biblical stories were used in sermons after the workshop, nobody said they had trouble listening. Stories need a good

⁴² Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

⁴³ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

⁴⁴ People said that they could not listen to the sermons because: they were disturbed in the service or agitated by personal reasons, theological terms or difficult words were used, introduction did not involve the hearers, transitions in the sermon were not clear, or the sermon’s topic was too heavy.

⁴⁵ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

story-teller, especially biblical ones. Narrative preachers need to do well in retelling biblical stories in their sermons if they want to keep their hearers' attention.

Related to this matter is an interesting comment made by one of the respondents about his pastor's sermon. *"I could not "catch" the sequence of facts that were narrated [in his sermon]."*⁴⁶ This comment is particularly important because it was made by one of the members of the evaluating team whose pastor did not show many changes in his preaching style after attending the workshop. As mentioned previously, his sermons were still propositional and deductive in style even though he tried to use some of the narrative from the text as part of his sermon. Nevertheless, as his parishioner said, he could not "catch" the sequence of facts that were narrated in his pastor's sermon.

Question # 3: "What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?"

This second survey confirmed the results of the first survey. Some of the remarks made by the respondents were:

"[When the pastor mentions] facts from our daily life... it is much easier to pay attention, catching my attention from the beginning to the end."

"The sermon was easy to listen to, because it was practical... with good examples from life."

"The whole sermon was easy [to listen to], because it dealt with things from life."

"[The sermon talked about] things that we know from our daily lives."⁴⁷

The simple examples of life and the basic things people experience every day make a great impact in the sermon when used with clarity and creativity by the preacher. These things bring the sermon down to earth where people live and experience life.

⁴⁶ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

⁴⁷ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

Another finding in this second questionnaire was that more than twenty-five times the word story, stories or biblical story was mentioned by the respondents. When people mentioned these two categories they said:

“Everything was easy [in the sermon], but especially the stories and the illustrations the pastor told [us].”

“I think it was the stories... even my eight year old son listened quietly and laughed when the pastor told the story...”

“The whole sermon was very interesting because it was an interesting story. It does not make the sermon monotonous or boring to listen to, instead it grabs our attention in such a way that we want to hear it more and more.”

“It was very easy because it was a well know story [the Magi], but with some new explanations.”

“When the story [was told]... Jesus and the multitude... I imagined the scenes.”⁴⁸

This overwhelming number of respondents mentioning the same thing confirms two important aspects for this project: (1) the pastors used more stories and biblical stories in their new sermons than in the previous ones; (2) the workshop accomplished one of its main objectives - helping the pastors to write sermons in a more narrative style.

Question # 4: “What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?”

There were no major changes between the first and the second questionnaires. Again people were able to make good applications based on the sermons that they heard from their pastors. It became evident for this researcher that every time the pastors used comparisons, stories and Bible stories, these applications were more specific and clear.

Question # 5: “Did you note any difference in your pastor’s sermon from the time you did the first survey and now?”

This question was very important for this project because, depending on what the respondents would say, the researcher was able to verify if the evaluation group was able to perceive any major changes in their pastor’s style of preaching. After assessing all the

⁴⁸ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

answers offered by the different evaluation groups, the researcher learned a remarkable fact. Out of seventy respondents that participated in the survey, only twelve said that they did not notice any difference in their pastor's sermon. However, the number of people that said they perceived a difference in the sermons was overwhelming – fifty-eight respondents.

The small group of people who said that they did not notice any difference in their pastors' sermons did not give specific reasons for their answers, except to mention that the pastor always has a good sermon or that he is a good preacher. They stated that they enjoy listening to God's Word and that they always get something helpful from the sermon. All the pastors participating in the survey, except for one, received these comments from their evaluation group.

Since the objective of this project was to find out how much the workshop in narrative preaching would impact these pastors' style of preaching, I will look at some of the answers given by the majority of the respondents who stated a difference in their pastor's sermons.

Some of the respondents mentioned that the sermons were more to the point and easier to understand. The reason came from the examples of life as they related to the biblical narrative.

“Yes, it is more purposeful, using comparisons and examples from our daily lives.”

“I think the pastor is much more precise and clear in his sermon, using examples close to our reality.”

“In the previous sermons I always had some problems in understanding it; sometimes were difficult words or parts I could not understand, but today [the pastor used] a simple language, related to life.”

“I don't know for sure how to explain it... but his last sermons spoke to my daily life.”

“I don't know... I think it was the examples he used from life... I was captivated by the sermon.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

Other people mentioned specifically stories and narrative and how much it helped them to understand the message and being captivated by it.

“The narratives... the stories... it helps tremendously in the understanding of the sermon.”

“[The sermon] is more narrative in style, which helps to catch the listener’s attention.”

“Yes, the difference is that today the pastor told a story, a story that is part of our lives, the story of our congregation.”

“Yes, there is a difference in the way the pastor preached... I enjoyed the way he told the story.”

“Seems the pastor is having a dialogue with us [in the sermon], today I felt like I was traveling along with the Magi.”⁵⁰

The comments made by these respondents again confirms the hypothesis raised by this project, that narrative and storied preaching is an effective way of communicating with this post-literate generation. Because people’s pattern of thinking today is experiential, wrapped in stories and emotions, narrative is a key element in preaching today.

Conclusion

After reading all the pastors’ questionnaires and sermons before and after the workshop, the workshop evaluation done by the pastors as well as the researcher’s assessment of sermon evaluations done by the evaluating teams before and after the workshop, I can say that all of the parts of this research project significantly aided in accomplishing the project’s goals. The workshop had a very positive impact on the pastors’ preaching, helping them to integrate a narrative style of preaching into their ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil. The project also offered some suggestions and ideas for the use of this workshop in narrative preaching in the future. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁵⁰ Evaluation notes – translated from Portuguese.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Contributions to the Ministry of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil

This research project focused on the effectiveness of a workshop in narrative preaching offered to a specific group of Brazilian Lutheran pastors to assist them in learning and implementing aspects of narrative proclamation in their preaching. In order to implement this project, the researcher set three goals which would not only keep the project in perspective, but also help to evaluate its impact upon the pastors participating in this study.

The first goal was to promote a way for these Brazilian pastors to evaluate their current method of preaching. As it was stated before in this work, the theological training promoted by Seminário Concórdia has been a blessing to the students and pastors serving in the ministry of the IELB. In its over 100 years, Seminário Concórdia has prepared and trained men to serve God's people faithfully through the proclamation of the Word and administration of the Holy Sacraments. However, as it was shown in this study, because of the strong emphasis on deductive preaching received in the homiletic classes in Seminário Concórdia, the majority of pastors in IELB today are strongly rooted in the propositional style of preaching.

Looking at the reaction of the pastors who participated in this research and after reading their sermons and their own evaluations, this project was successful in accomplishing its first goal. The excitement of the pastors and their willingness to learn a new approach to preaching tell this researcher that not only these pastors in IELB will benefit from this workshop in narrative preaching but others too will benefit when this material is improved and offered again in Brazil.

The second goal of this project was to help this group of pastors recognize that the propositional method of preaching is not the only way to approach people from the pulpit in a post-literate age. Here again, this project had excellent results. The pastors could see how their parishioners responded to a more narrative and storied style of preaching. These members welcomed not only this new style of preaching, but also encouraged their pastors to continue to pursue this method of preaching. The reaction of the lay people tells this researcher that the members of IELB are open and willing to a new era of preaching in the pulpits of their church.

Finally, this project was designed to present an additional way of preaching, namely a narrative form of proclamation for pastors who have had little or no instruction in this style. Out of the seven pastors participating in this project, just one said that he had some previous knowledge of narrative preaching. After reading the sermons following the workshop, this researcher was pleased to see how much these pastors were able to grasp this new style of preaching and make use of it in their pulpits. Only one pastor showed difficulty in using this method. Five pastors demonstrated that they have made a change in their style of preaching. One pastor, who had some knowledge of narrative preaching, was able to move up to another level of preaching skills using this method.

The results of this project are encouraging for this researcher because they show that in a short period of time a group of pastors could learn and implement aspects of narrative proclamation in their own preaching. Now, he wonders, how much more can be accomplished through a consistent and continuous teaching of this methodology to the students in the seminary in São Leopoldo as well as to the pastors already serving in the ministry of IELB?

Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth

When I made my first contact with the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Dr. David Peter, in early 2000, I did not know what to expect from the program. I still remember reading a brochure that described the program and its different tracks of study. Homiletics caught my attention. Since I started my classes in the summer of 2001, the entire Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary has indeed been a blessing.

The opportunity to be in class, surrounded by a group of fellow brothers in the ministry with different backgrounds and experiences has not only enhanced my perspective of pastoral ministry but also encouraged me to continue to serve God's people faithfully. This program, with its great faculty and courses, has challenged me in terms of theology and practice of ministry. It made me rethink my way of "doing ministry," especially in terms of preaching. Exposure to new trends in homiletics and encouragement from a talented group of professors to employ diverse and innovative approaches in the pulpit laid the foundation for this MAP. It helped this researcher to design and pursue this study of narrative preaching with a group of Lutheran pastors in South Brazil.

This MAP has made a significant contribution to my personal and professional growth at least in three different aspects. First, it has helped me to value and appreciate not only the theological training I have received at Seminário Concórdia in Porto Alegre, South Brazil,¹ but also to look to the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil and see how much God has blessed His people in that part of the world through the proclamation of the gospel.

¹ My class of 26 students, who graduated in December of 1983, was the last class to graduate from the campus in Porto Alegre; early in 1984 the seminary moved to its current location in São Leopoldo, also in South Brazil.

Second, this project took me back to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. This revisit helped me to find a solid theological grounding for the task of narrative preaching. In addition, it reminded me that a solid pulpit is built on a solid theology.

Third, this MAP helped me to remember that theology is always a *habitus practicus*, which led me to the people to whom we are trying to communicate and to consider their unique needs in this post-literate culture. It helped me to find a better way to proclaim the truth of the gospel in a manner that will be not only understood, but also remembered and experienced by these people for whom our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again.

Recommendations for the Future

I understand that this project raised several possibilities for the future. Some were suggested by the pastors or the lay people in the sermon evaluating teams. Other suggestions and ideas came along during the implementation of the workshop.

The first future possibility has to do with the length and format of the workshop. Some pastors suggested that because of the novelty of the topic, the class should be offered during one period of the day, preferably in the morning. In addition, it should be offered for more days (a week long workshop). This would give the pastors more time to digest the information and also it would give them and the instructor not only an opportunity to discuss some of the issues related to narrative preaching but also opportunity to evaluate in class some of their sermons using the new style of preaching. Some pastors mentioned in their evaluations that they were not sure if they were doing the right thing when trying to use the new method of preaching learned in the workshop. Lengthening the workshop would give them a chance to reaffirm or redirect them in their work.

Another issue was related to the majority of the sermon samples used in the workshop. They were originally written in English to an American audience. When they were translated to Portuguese, two problems surfaced: (1) the original cultural flavor in some ways was lost and the Brazilian one was not present; (2) the narrative style and technique suffered from the translation, because the Portuguese language flows differently from the English language.

Related to that, certain terms used by the authors, such as Lowry's Loop, with its Oops, Ugh, Aha, Whee, and Yeah, required some creativity from the researcher in translating them to Portuguese. The use of videos with the preachers using their preaching techniques would serve better their purpose if they had subtitles. The pastors had the sermon manuscripts in Portuguese but it was hard for them to pay attention to the preacher while trying to read what was being said.

For the future, when this workshop will be offered again to students in the Seminário Concórdia or to pastors in the field, the researcher needs to make some adjustments in this area. I need to make sure that the people attending the class will be able to make full benefit of what is being shared with them.

Bibliographical sources and texts on narrative preaching available in the vernacular of the participants is another issue that needs to be addressed. Since 1971, when Fred Craddock's book, *As One Without Authority*, was published, a new trend in homiletics started in America. Craddock's book was pivotal in changing the preaching style in North America with its move toward inductive preaching and the use of story and image. After him, many other authors enhanced this fertile field of narrative preaching; however, none of these books are available in Portuguese. In addition, many basic articles that talk about narrative and

storied style of preaching, written from a Lutheran perspective, are still available only in English. This prevents the pastors from reading and learning more about this new trend in the field of homiletics.

This researcher hopes that in the near future, with the help of some pastors, professors and students in the seminary who are able to read English, some of these basic texts will be made available in Portuguese. He also hopes that with the workshop continuing to be offered to different groups of students and pastors, it will stimulate people not only to read more literature about narrative preaching (even sometimes reading in a foreign language) but also encourage others that have had the training and some knowledge in the field to write their own texts and articles about this subject. Perhaps some of these texts and articles could be published in theological magazines and journals in Brazil.

With the positive response provided by the pastors who attended the workshop and the overwhelming comments made by the sermon evaluation teams, this researcher hopes that the IELB will continue to offer this workshop not only to students in the seminary in São Leopoldo, but also as a continuing education tool for pastors in the field. This will enable them to enhance their knowledge about and techniques in narrative preaching.

Summary

This research project has made not only a substantial impact in the preaching style of a small group of Lutheran pastors in South Brazil but also brought contributions to the ministry of the IELB. It is difficult to imagine these pastors going back to their previous form of preaching after being exposed to a new and fresh way of proclaiming God's Word. The expectations now are different. The pastors are up to the challenge of preparing sermons in a more storied style. Their parishioners are eager to hear the gospel in way that will be not

only understood but also remembered and experienced. This MAP has presented and examined a workshop in narrative preaching that has been successful in the ministry of a small group of Lutheran pastors, and it will certainly continue to be a blessing for the ministry of IELB for many years to come!

Soli Deo Gloria

APPENDIX A

PASTORS SURVEY - QUESTIONNAIRE – 1

(Before the Workshop)

1. In what style of preaching were you trained during your studies in the Seminary?

2. Describe your preaching style, especially how you organize or structure the sermon.

3. What is your understanding/knowledge of narrative preaching?

4. How much story, imagery, description, narrative, do you use in your sermons?

APPENDIX B

SERMON EVALUATION TEAM - QUESTIONNAIRE – 1

(Before the Workshop)

1. Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.

2. What did you find most difficult to pay attention to or to listen to in the sermon?

3. What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?

4. What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?

APPENDIX C

WORKSHOP MANUAL

Workshop in Narrative Preaching

**An Added Approach
For the Pulpits of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil**



Congregação São Paulo de Novo Hamburgo

June 12 – 15, 2006

Rev. _____

Workshop in Narrative Preaching
An Added Approach for the Pulpits of the IELB
 Congregação São Paulo de Novo Hamburgo
 June 12 – 15, 2006

	Monday June 12	Tuesday June 13	Wednesday June 14	Thursday June 15
M O R N I N G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Prayer • Participants Introduced • Workshop Explained • Pastors' Quests Feedback - Discussion & comments • Evaluation Group Quests Feedback - Discussion & comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative Preaching continues... • Why Story & Narrative Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eugene Lowry Preaching from Ooops to Yeah <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowry Loop - Video - Sermon Samples - Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative Preaching - Advantages & Cautions • Selected Bibliography in Narrative Preaching
A F T E R N O O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Turning Point in Homiletics • Narrative Preaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Craddock The Inductive Method of Preaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inductive Preaching - Video - Sermon Samples - Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Jensen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metaphors of Illustration x Participation - Sermon Samples - Discussion • Bryan Chappel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Illustration x Proposition - Sermon Samples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What comes next? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two Sermons in Narrative Format - Questionnaires for Pastors & Evaluation Group • Workshop Evaluation • Closing prayer

**PASTORS' QUESTIONNAIRES FEEDBACK
DISCUSSION & COMMENTS**

NOTES

1. In what style of preaching you were trained during your studies in the Seminary?

2. Describe your preaching style, especially how you organize or structure the sermon.

3. What is your understanding/knowledge of narrative preaching?

4. How much story, imagery, description, narrative, do you use in your sermons?

**SERMON EVALUATION TEAM QUESTIONNAIRES FEEDBACK
DISCUSSION & COMMENTS**

NOTES

1. Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.

2. What did you find most difficult to pay attention or to listen to in the sermon?

3. What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?

4. What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?

THE TURNING POINT IN HOMILETICS

Brief History



1. Fred Craddock

- 1971 – *As One Without Authority*
- New era in North American homiletics is born
- Inductive method of preaching

2. Eugene Lowry

- 1980 - *The Homiletical Plot – The Sermon as Narrative Form*
- Narrative time and sermonic plot
- Sermon is seen as a homiletical plot in which a sequence of events move in time

3. David Buttrick

- 1987 - *Homiletic – Moves and Structures*
- Phenomenological method of preaching
- Sermon is a plot composed of a series of elements called moves

4. Richard Jensen

- 1980 - *Telling the Story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching*
- 1993 - *Thinking in Story*
- Emphasizes the use of story in the pulpit – Does not matter if the story is a biblical account or a contemporary parable, what is essential is to tell a story

5. Thomas Long

- 1989 - *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*
- His concern is not much with the shape of the sermon, but in fact with the Biblical text.
- Hermeneutics & Homiletics

Characteristics of the Traditional and New Homiletic

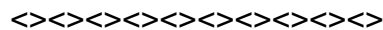
- In his book, *Thinking in Story*, Richard Jensen describes the characteristics of preaching shaped in an oral culture and preaching shaped by a literate culture.¹



Preaching in an Oral Culture	Preaching in a Literate Culture
1. Stitching stories together	1. Linear development of ideas
2. Use of repetition	2. Structure ideas in space
3. Situational vs. abstraction	3. Propositions as the main points
4. A tone of conflict	4. Analytical in nature
5. Right brain communication	5. Left brain communication
6. Metaphors of participation	6. Metaphors of illustration
7. Thinking in story	7. Thinking in ideas

- The chart that follows is based on Lowry's book - *Doing Time in the Pulpit*, and gives us a visual perspective of these two approaches in the pulpit.²

	Propositional / Spatial Outline	Narrative / Time Structures
Task	Organize ideas	Shape experience
Form	Structuring points	Process
Focus	Theme	Events
Principle	Substance – Are we saying it?	Resolution – Are we getting there?
Product	Outline – ordering ideas	Plot – ordering experience
Means	Logic and clarity	Suspense
Goal	Understanding	Happening - change



¹ Richard Jensen. *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate Age*. (Lima, OH: The C.S.S. Publishing Co, Inc., 1993), 43.

² Eugene Lowry. *Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship Between Narrative and Preaching*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 27.

NARRATIVE PREACHING

Definition of Terms

- 1958 - Henry Grady Davis wrote his book *Design for Preaching*
- Lowry – the term “*narrative preaching*” is vague, which he calls “a banner of many color and stripes.”

- John S. McClure
 - Narrative hermeneutics
 - Narrative semantics
 - Narrative enculturation
 - Narrative world view



- We cannot simply presume that terms such *story*, *inductive*, and *narrative* are synonyms
- Lowry - a story sermon is always a narrative sermon, but not all narrative sermons are story sermons

Theology of Narrative Preaching

- The need for a relevant and meaningful sermon is a significant concern for any faithful pastor in our days
- Good preaching transcends mere technique; it is the proclamation of the Word of God within the context of the lives of a specific congregation gathered to hear that Word
- The Lutheran preacher is challenged to consider not only the unique needs of his congregation when he steps in the pulpit, but also his theological heritage.
- When a pastor steps in the pulpit, willing to preach a narrative sermon, he wants to be sure that such theology will be there, not only to guide him, but also to norm the content of his preaching

1. God and the Origin of the Narrative of Salvation



2. The Scripture and its Narrative Form



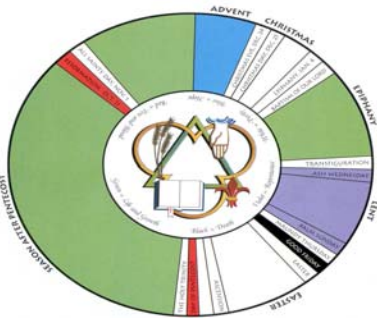
3. Jesus and the Gospels



4. Peter and Paul in Acts

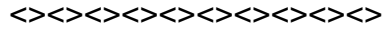


5. Liturgy and Church Year



6. The Whole Person of Faith





CULTURAL CONTEXT

What is going on?

- The challenge of preaching God’s Word and communicating with people today is huge, but it has to be done in season and out of season (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2)
- Paul advises us that we should be in a continual process of “*understanding the present time.*” (Romans 13:11)
- As Christians, we know that our citizenship is in heaven (cf. Philippians 3:20); however, we are still living in this world. They are not from the world, but they live in it (cf. John 17:14-17). If they live in this world, it is certain that they are influenced by it
- It is necessary for preachers today not only have a good sense of who the hearers are, but it is also necessary to know the world where they live, the challenges they face daily, and what they see and hear
- The twenty-first century brought us to a new era, which scholars are calling postmodern
- The term – postmodern – can have many different meanings, because of that, it is difficult to have an accurate idea of the term and, consequently, of the people that live in this new world called postmodern

Some Characteristics of Postmodern People³



- **Feelings and emotions**

- **Interpersonal and community relationships**



³ This section and the following one is based on: Glenn Nielsen. Surveying Homiletical Horizons – Part 2 In: *Expanding Homiletical Horizons: Part 1 – Reaching into the Text.* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications, Symposium Papers, Number 8, 1998), 100-103; and a handout given in one my D.Min. classes: DM- 925 Current Trends in Homiletics, taught by Dr. Nielsen, in summer of 2003.

• **Post-literate Society**



• **World of Electronic Communication**

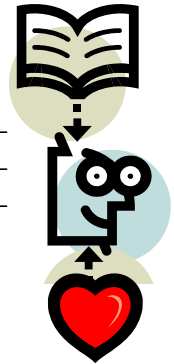
1. **Visual**



2. **Infotainment**



3. **Holistic**



4. **Passive and nonlinear listening**



5. **Narrative**



6. **Conversational**



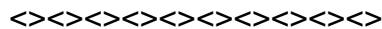
Why Story & Narrative?

- It works!
- People listen
- People like it
- People look for variety story provides
- People live storied lives
- Anchors the abstract in lived reality
- Unites Truth with experience
- Makes message memorable
- Brings visual and concrete to proposition
- People participate in them (vicariously)
- The artistic and imaginative juices are jumpstarted
- Energizes the whole of the human personality







Sources of Stories⁴

- The Bible
- Autobiography
- Stories of People and Communities of Faith
- Stories from the World of the Arts
- Creative Fiction

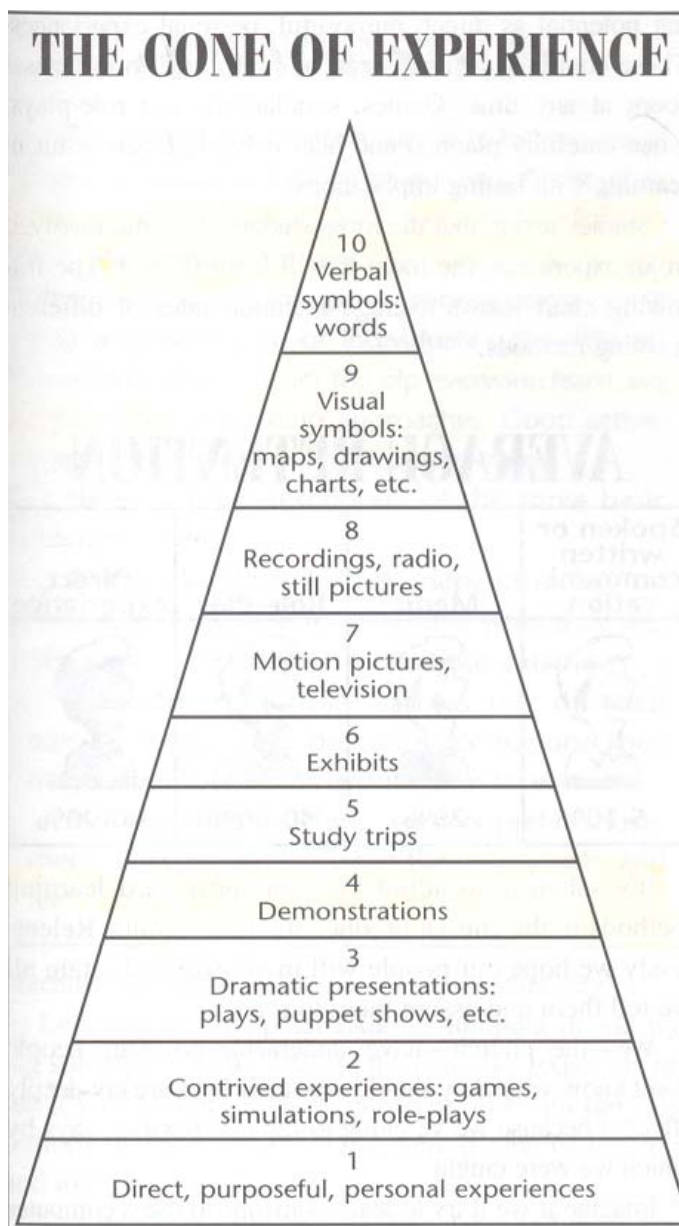


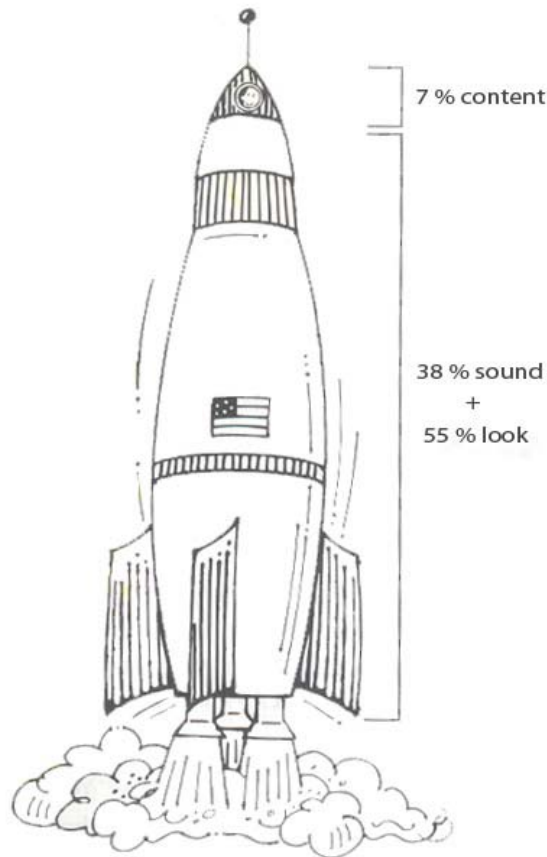
⁴ Jensen, Ibid., 89-106.

AVERAGE RETENTION

Spoken or written communication	Media	Role-Play	Direct experience
			
5-10%	25%	40-60%	80-90%

THE CONE OF EXPERIENCE





The Problem with Preaching⁵

According to the publication *Communication Briefings*, people...

- Forget 40% of a speaker's message within 20 minutes
- Forget 60% after a half day
- After a week they lose 90%

A University of California study found that the words speakers so carefully choose actually carry a minimal part of the message. How the speaker sounds (inflections, tonality, voice variety, emphasis, and energy) communicates 38% of the message. And what the listeners see carries 55% percent of the message. This includes the speaker's appearance, gestures, movement, and visual aids. Only 7% of the message that listeners receive comes from the words themselves.

⁵ All the charts above and the statistics are found in: Thom & Joani Shultz. *Why Nobody Learns much of Anything at Church – and How to Fix It* (Colorado: Group, 1996), 137, 138, 243, 244.

FRED CRADDOCK THE INDUCTIVE METHOD OF PREACHING

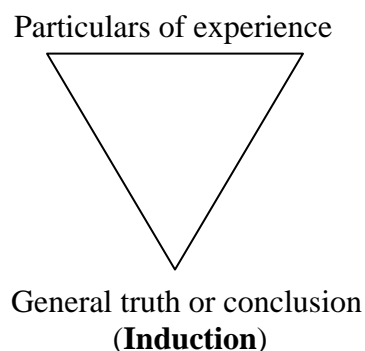
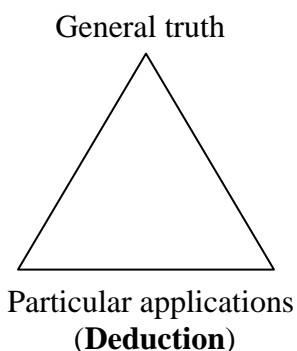
Brief Biography



- Dr. Fred B. Craddock, the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament, emeritus, at the Candler School of Theology.
- He is an ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), serving in various positions in this church, as well as guest professor at several universities and seminaries.
- Craddock has written numerous books, articles and commentaries. Newsweek named him one of the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world.

Deductive x Inductive

1. 1971 – At the time, most of the preaching was deductive, focusing on a proposition, which was then developed into major points



2. A sermon may have countless shapes and forms, but they tend to move generally in one of two basic directions – either along deductive or inductive patterns of thought
3. Craddock says: *“People live inductively!”*
4. The goal: recapture the exegetical *“eureka”* in the sermon
5. The trip: participation in an experience that is open ended

Authority

1. Not preacher making conclusive pronouncements
2. Located in congregation-text interaction
3. Listener oriented – participation emphasis

Conversational – Episodal Sermon

1. Preacher – congregational relationship
2. Bringing together episodes

Main Qualities in an Inductive Sermon

1. Movement
2. Unity
3. Imagination

Helpful Insights

1. Explores the inductive method – how people live daily
2. Concern that the Gospel/Word will be heard, understood and remembered
3. Seeks to be faithful to Scripture and connect with contemporary situation
4. Movement, anticipation, concreteness, imagination, oral character
5. Wholistic – emotions as well as mind

Cautions and Problems

1. Inductive method does not provide a sermon with a specific form
2. Will people have the same “*eureka*” as the preacher?
3. No clear conclusion of the sermon – open ended. People still “*simul iustus et peccator*”



EUGENE LOWRY PREACHING FROM OOPS TO YEAH

Brief Biography



- Dr. Eugene L. Lowry served for over 30 years as Professor of Preaching at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, and also as preacher, teacher, author, and musician – traveling the U.S. and beyond.
- A jazz pianist and antique car enthusiast, he is a member of the American Federation of Musicians and a member of the Board of Trustees, Kansas City Public Library.

- He is an ordained United Methodist minister.

A Narrative Plot Form

1. A homiletic that does not favor the linear development of ideas and the spatial paradigm of preaching. Sermon for him is much more than three points and a poem
2. Sermon is not: constructing, assembling, building, and putting together a sermon are not part of his homiletical vocabulary
3. The sermon is an event that takes place in time.
4. The challenge for the preacher is to listen to Scripture and to shape experience rather than to organize a collection of ideas.
5. Sermon is seeing as a homiletical plot in which a sequence of events works together. Suspense is the chief element of this homiletical plot.

Homiletical Plot and its Stages

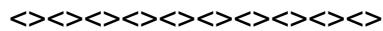
1. Oops - Upsetting the equilibrium
2. Ugh - Analyzing the discrepancy
3. Aha - Disclosing the clue to resolution
4. Whee - Experiencing the Gospel
5. Yeah - Anticipating the consequences

Helpful Insights

1. Narrative structure has a great listener appeal
2. Effective and dynamic in practice
3. Easily used for Law/Gospel preaching
4. Temporal movement of sermon emphasized
5. Whole person oriented
6. Actual methodology given

Cautions and Problems

1. Predictable formula
2. Not all texts conform to one structure
3. Substitutes form for power of the Word
4. Not every teachable moment begins with ambiguity
5. Creation of false ambiguity (which offers false solutions)
6. Emphasis on diagnosis
7. Can be oriented to experience at the expense of truth



RICHARD JENSEN THE USE OF STORY

Brief Biography



- Dr. Richard Jensen has had a long and distinguished career in ministry as a preacher and teacher. He is Axel Jacob and Gerde Maria Carlson Professor of Homiletics Emeritus at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.
- He was formerly the speaker on Lutheran Vespers, a weekly national radio ministry of the Lutheran Church. He is an ordained pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).
- He's the author of several books on the art of preaching and his sermons frequently appear in print.

Advocating Storytelling for Preaching

In his book *Telling the Story* (1980), Jensen says that the rise of the printing press gave shape to a new form of preaching, which he calls "*Gutenberg homiletics*." According to Jensen, this kind of homiletics has some specific characteristics:

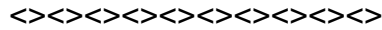
1. The goal of preaching is to teach the lessons of the text
2. In order to teach the lessons or meaning of the text the points to be made are usually abstracted from the text
3. The sermon is aimed primarily at the hearer's mind
4. The sermon is developed in a logical, sequential and linear manner
5. The sermon is prepared under the criteria for written material
6. The faith engendered in the hearer is "faith" that the ideas are true

Rethinking the Way We Preach

Jensen is concerned with the way preachers illustrate their sermons. He says that there are two ways of doing it: one is using **metaphor of illustration**; the other is with **metaphor of participation**.

Metaphor of Illustration: stories are used to illustrate the points of the sermon. They are dispensable once the listener has the point. The story told is just an illustration of a point, so that once one grasped the point the story is dispensable.

Metaphor of Participation: stories are used to invite the hearers to participate in the world of the story. Stories are told in such a way that the listener is grasped by the reality of the story through the story itself.



STORIED DISCOURSE STRUCTURES⁶

Overview

These methods arise from the use of one or more stories to communicate a central teaching or experience for the hearers. In this case, the story itself (or the sequence of stories) forms the experience of the sermon. The following designs focus upon telling a single biblical story within the sermon. Other material, not explicitly associated with the telling of the story, is considered an excursion from the central story of the sermon.

In storied discourse, the preacher needs to devote careful attention to studying the art of biblical narrative, to learning the contemporary poetics of storytelling, and to retelling the biblical story in way that uses the narrative poetics of the contemporary hearers and yet remains faithful to the intended meaning of the text in its historical context.

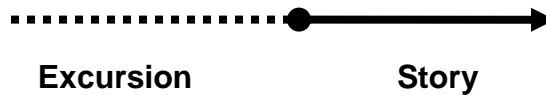
Running the Story

This type of sermon is composed solely of the retelling of the biblical story, leading to an application as its conclusion.



Delaying the Story

The sermon does not begin with the biblical story but delays its telling. First, the preacher sets a context for hearing the biblical story. The preacher gives the listeners some background information or some story from daily life that will prepare them to hear the biblical story and the sermon's application.



Suspending the Story

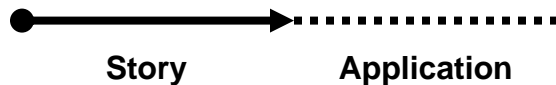
This type of preaching begins with the telling of the biblical story, but the preacher suspends the telling of this story for some explanation of a word in the text, some contextual reference that helps to understand the story, or some other information before returning to the biblical story and the application of the sermon.

⁶ This section is based in: Eugene Lowry's book *How to Preach a parable: Design for Narrative Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) 38 - 41; in a handout given in one of my D.Min. classes: DM- 929 Sermon Structures, taught by Dr. David Schmitt, in winter of 2003 & Richard Jensen's book *Envisioning the Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 129 - 133.



Applying the Story

The sermon begins with the biblical story. The preacher retells the biblical story, using his creativity and the poetics of storytelling and yet remains faithful to the intended meaning of the text in its historical context. At the end of the sermon, the preacher makes an application of the biblical story to the life of the hearers.



Stitching Stories

The sermon starts with an introduction, primarily to capture the congregation's attention and to provide a rationale for why the preacher is going to tell the stories in his sermons. The story or group of stories is then told. Here, the preacher can use the single biblical story of the text, or the stories assigned in the lectionary system. Also, he can use stories from autobiography, biography, stories of individuals and communities of faith, stories from the arts, current events, etc. Human condition, is the next step, when the sermon deals with the human condition in more depth, in other words, with sin and its consequences. The proclamation of the gospel is the climax of this type of sermon, when the announcement of God's promised is addressed to the human condition.

Introduction => Story(ries) => Human condition => Proclamation of the gospel

BRYAN CHAPELL USING ILLUSTRATIONS WISELY

Brief Biography



- Dr. Bryan Chapell, has served as President of Covenant Seminary since 1994. He began teaching practical theology at Covenant in 1984 after ten years in pastoral ministry.
- Chapell is much sought after as a speaker in churches and conferences around the USA. His book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, has established him as one of the nation's most recognized teachers of homiletics.
- He is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

Discontentment with Preaching

Chapell says that a widespread dissatisfaction with preaching cuts across our churches. Some of the complaints are:

1. Sermons often contain too many complex ideas
2. Sermons have too much analysis and too little answers
3. Sermons are too formal and too impersonal
4. Sermons use too much theological jargon
5. Sermons are too propositional, not enough illustrations
6. Too many sermons simply reach a dead end and give no guidance to commitment and action

Why Illustrate?

1. The crisis in Preaching
2. The currents of culture
3. The path to perception
4. The guidance of Scripture
5. The way of the Master

Some Definitions

1. Illustrations are life-situation stories within sermons whose details (whether explicitly told or imaginatively elicited) allow listeners to identify with an experience that elaborates, develops, and explains Scriptural principles.
2. The lived-body details flesh out the illustration in such a way that the listener can vicariously enter the narrative world of the illustration.
3. Illustrations lead listeners into events. This means that illustrations, however briefly expressed, reflect life-stories. Whether the account is new to the listener or conjured from memory, the preacher verbally re-creates a slice of life that defines a sermon's ideas.

How to Illustrate

1. Take a slice out of life
2. Tell a story
3. Introduce artistically
4. Use vivid details
5. Create crisis
6. Conclude meaningfully

Illustration Cautions

1. Use illustrations prudently
2. Use illustrations pastorally
 - Get the facts straight
 - Beware of untrue or incredible illustrations
 - Maintain balance
 - Be real
 - Do not carelessly expose, disclose, or embarrass
 - Poke fun at no one but self
 - Share the spotlight
 - Demonstrate taste and respect sensibilities
 - Finish what you begin



NARRATIVE PREACHING

Advantages⁷

1. Listening and thinking of electronic age
2. Learning and retention fostered
3. Reaches the whole person
4. Overcomes resistance in skeptical and cynical age
5. Church Year
6. Jesus as Divine Narrative
7. Jesus and Scripture use them
8. Identity forming
9. Enduring literary form
10. Relationships are mediated by story
11. Matches content and intent of text
12. Embodied authenticity
13. Converges the concrete/visual with abstract/conceptual
14. First article gift to use
15. Propositions are made real, lived, experienced
16. Community is formed
17. It will be heard and it involves
18. Indirect mode of communication



⁷ This section is based in a handout given in one of my D.Min. classes: DM- 925 Current Trends in Homiletics, taught by Dr. Nielsen, in summer of 2003; also in: John C. Holbert. Narrative Preaching – Possibilities and Perils (*Preaching*, Volume VII, Number 6, May-June, 1992), 22-28.

NARRATIVE PREACHING

Cautions⁸

1. Too powerful/determinative of sermon
2. Overrides text's intent and content
3. Unreliable sources (e-stories)
4. Ambiguous
5. Listeners don't make the connections you intend (people will miss the point)
6. Time inefficient
7. Emotional manipulation
8. Inappropriate use (too personal)
9. Misapplied
10. Stopping point for listening
11. Blurring of fact and fiction
12. Privileges individualized experience
13. Not all are good story tellers
14. Loss of teaching
15. Not all listening are story oriented (leaning styles differ)
16. Confusion of first and third articles
17. Use too much – loss of variety
18. Story becomes an end in itself
19. It can become a mere performance
20. Can overemphasize the human “story” at the cost of the “story” of Jesus Christ



⁸ This section is based in a handout given in one of my D.Min. classes: DM- 925 Current Trends in Homiletics, taught by Dr. Nielsen, in summer of 2003; also in: John C. Holbert. Narrative Preaching – Possibilities and Perils (*Preaching*, Volume VII, Number 6, May-June, 1992), 22-28 and Mark Barger Elliot. *Creative Styles of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 2.



SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY IN NARRATIVE PREACHING

During the workshop, the facilitator will direct the pastor's attention to some of the most important books in this bibliography and also to some of the articles. Some comments will be made about the bibliography.

Culture - Post-Modernism

Books:

- Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People – The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*. Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter Varsity Press, 1996.
- Gibson, Scott M., Editor. *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*. Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2004.
- Henderson, David W. *Culture Shift – Communicating God's Truth to our Changing World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- Johnston, Graham. *Preaching to a Postmodern World – A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners*. Grande Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.
- Rogness, Michael. *Preaching to a TV Generation: The Sermon in the Electronic Age*. Lima, CSS Publishing Company, 1994.
- Sample, Tex. *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Veith, Gene Jr. *Postmodern Times – A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994.

Articles:

- Allen, Ronald J. and Richard W. Jensen, "Changing Assumptions for Preaching in the New Millennium". *Preaching*, January-February, 1998, 24-28.
- Duduit, Michael. "Preaching to Postmoderns: An Interview with Brian McLaren." *Preaching*. May-June, 2001, 5-17.
- Hinlicky, Sarah. "Talking to Generation X." *First Things*, February, 1999, 10-11.
- Nielsen, Glenn A. "Preaching in a Changed Public" *Concordia Journal* (January 2003):50-62.

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Books:

- Allen, Ronald, Barbara Blaisdell and Scott Johnston. *Theology for Preaching: Authority, Truth and Knowledge of God in a Postmodern Ethos*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.
- Erickson, Millard, and James Heflin. *Old Wine in New Wineskins*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997.
- Huges, Robert and Robert Kysar. *Preaching Doctrine for the Twenty-First Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.
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- Okamoto, Joel. "Lutherans Speaking the Gospel into Postmodern Ears." *Concordia Journal* (April 2001):100-107.

Narrative Preaching**Books:**

- Craddock, Fred. *As One Without Authority*. Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2001.
- _____. *Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.
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WHAT COMES NEXT

NEXT ASSIGNMENT

- Write and deliver **two narrative sermons**. These sermons need to be evaluated by the same Evaluation Teams that did the evaluations of the previous sermons (before the Workshop).
- Pastor's questionnaire. Answer a questionnaire about your experience with narrative preaching: and how the members responded to your narrative sermons.
- Due date: for the two new sermons, the questionnaires for Evaluation Teams and Pastor's questionnaires is **August 15, 2006**.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

- The pastors will be requested to fill out a workshop evaluation sheet and write their thoughts and comments about the Workshop in Narrative preaching.

QUESTIONNAIRE – 2
For Evaluating Team
After the Workshop
Sermon No 1

1. Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.

2. What did you find most difficult to pay attention to or listen to in the sermon?

3. What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?

4. What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?

5. Did you note any difference in your pastor's sermon from the time you did the first survey and now?

QUESTIONNAIRE – 2
For Evaluating Team
After the Workshop
Sermon No 2

1. Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.

2. What did you find most difficult to pay attention to or listen to in the sermon?

3. What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?

4. What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?

5. Did you note any difference in your pastor's sermon from the time you did the first survey and now?

QUESTIONNAIRE – 2
For Pastors
After the Workshop

1. What were the major challenges you faced using the narrative style of preaching?

2. What differences did you perceive in your sermons?

3. How did your people respond to your narrative sermons?

4. Do you think that the narrative style of preaching helped you in the memorization and delivery of the sermon?

5. In what ways will you make use of a narrative style of preaching?

SERMON SAMPLES FOR THE WORSHIP

These sermons⁹ will be shared with the pastors in the workshop. Some of the sermons we will read and discuss during our meetings and other will serve as samples to help the pastors to have a better idea of different styles of narrative sermons.

1. Bryan Chappell – 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
Between the Fences: Knowing God's Will
2. Eugene Lowry – Mark 14:1-10
Swept Upstream
3. Eugene Lowry
The Great Preachers Collection
4. Fred Craddock – John 14:1-14
The Absence of Christ
5. Fred Craddock – Hebrews 12:1-2
The Great Preachers Collection
6. Richard Jensen – Luke 18:18-30
Burt Reynolds and the Question of Identity
7. Glenn Nielsen – Matthew 24:3-28
New Combinations from an Old Proverb
8. Glenn Nielsen – Matthew 11:28-30
From Easier to Easter
9. Ely Prieto - Romans 3:19-28
Reformation Sunday - Redeemed by Grace
10. Ely Prieto – Mark 3:31-35
What a blessing to be part of Jesus Family
11. Ely Prieto – Mark 6:1-16
The Circle of the Gospel Message is always Available
12. Ely Prieto – Jeremiah 23:23-29
The Lord Provides God Shepherds to Sheperd His Flock

⁹ The scripts of these sermons were part of the original workshop manual given to the pastors. They are available for further reading upon request from the researcher of this project.

APPENDIX D
WORKSHOP EVALUATION

1. How did this workshop goes in terms of: length, handouts, sermon samples, classroom facilities, etc.?

2. Which parts of the workshop were most helpful to you?

3. Which parts of the workshop could be improved? In what ways?

4. The most important thing I learned in this workshop was...

APPENDIX E

PASTORS SURVEY - QUESTIONNAIRE – 2

(After the Workshop)

1. What were the major challenges you faced using the narrative style of preaching?

2. What differences did you perceive in your sermons?

3. How did your people respond to your narrative sermons?

4. Do you think that the narrative style of preaching helped you in the memorization and delivery of the sermon?

5. In what ways will you make use of a narrative style of preaching?

APPENDIX F

SERMON EVALUATION TEAM - QUESTIONNAIRE – 2

(After the Workshop)

1. Summarize the sermon in couple sentences.

2. What did you find most difficult to pay attention or to listen to in the sermon?

3. What was the easiest part of the sermon to listen to?

4. What part of the sermon could you apply most to your life?

5. Did you note any difference in your pastor's sermon from the time you did the first survey and now?

APPENDIX G

CONTACT WITH REV. MARCOS SCHMIDT

Rev. Marcos Schmidt
Congregação Luterana São Paulo
Rua Joaquim Nabuco, 973
CEP 93310-002
Novo Hamburgo, RS
Brazil

San Antonio, January 6th, 2006.

Dear Pastor Schmidt,

I hope and pray that your family and ministry are doing well under God's blessings and care. The reason for this letter is to contact you about the possibility of you and your congregation being a host congregation to a Workshop in Narrative Preaching I'm planning to offer to our fellow brothers in the ministry in the Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos.

As you know from previous conversations we had on the phone, I'm currently enrolled in the D. Min. Program at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO – USA. As part of this program, I have to write a Major Applied Project as part of the requirements to receive my degree. Upon the approval of my advisor, Dr. Glenn Nielsen, it was decided that I will offer a Workshop to a selected group of pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos about Narrative Preaching.

Below, you will find specific information and more details about the Workshop.

Topic: Workshop in Narrative Preaching

Dates: June 12 to 15, 2006

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – lunch break from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Number of pastors: 7 pastors will be involved in the project

We would like to use one of your classrooms as well as other parts of your facilities necessary to conduct a successful workshop.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I wish God's blessings.

In His Service,

Rev. Ely Prieto
Concordia Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas – USA
elyp@concordia-satx.com

APPENDIX H

FIRST CONTACT WITH PASTORS OF DISTRICT VALE DO RIO DOS SINOS

San Antonio, February 16th, 2006.

To: The Pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos

Dear fellow brothers in the ministry,

I hope and pray that your family and ministry are doing well under God's blessings and care.

As probably most of you are aware, I'm serving a Lutheran congregation here in San Antonio, Texas, since January of 2001. One the reasons I moved to San Antonio, was to continue my studies in the area of homiletics and preaching. I'm currently enrolled in the D. Min. Program at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO – USA. As part of this program, I have to write a Major Applied Project as part of the requirements to receive my degree. Upon the approval of my advisor, Dr. Glenn Nielsen, it was decided that I will offer a Workshop to a selected group of pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos about Narrative Preaching.

I'm using this letter to make my first contact with you and find out if you would be interested in participating in this project. Pastor Marcos Schmidt and Congregação São Paulo in Novo Hamburgo, are willing to host the workshop in their church.

Probably by now you are wondering what your commitment with this project will be. Without giving too many much details and information, at this time I can tell you that this project will have three different phases:

Phase 1: Before attending the workshop, the pastor will answer a questionnaire about his training in homiletics and what he knows about narrative preaching. Also copies of two sermons preached in his congregation will be mailed (or e-mailed) to me for further evaluation. A group of five lay people from each pastor's congregation will evaluate the two sermons preached, using an appropriate form.

Phase 2: The pastor will attend the workshop in Narrative Preaching, from June 12 to 15, 2006. At the end of the workshop, every pastor attending will be asked to answer a questionnaire, evaluating the workshop.

Phase 3: The pastor will write two new sermons using one of the narrative styles learned in the workshop. These sermons also will be mailed (e-mailed) to me for further evaluation. The evaluation team in your congregation will also evaluate your new sermons using again an appropriate form. The pastor again will be asked to answer another questionnaire, describing his experience with the narrative style of preaching.

The pastor will have no cost to attend this workshop. He also will receive a manual with all the material required to participate in the workshop. Because the way this research will be

developed, I can not have more than seven pastors participating in this survey. After I receive your confirmation that you want to participate in this project, seven pastors will be selected and more details and information will be mailed to you.

Let me say something about this selection. The goal is not to favor some and disregard others; the reason for this selection has to do with practicality. Because some of you serve together in the same congregation, just one of you will be selected to be part of this project. The reason being is simply to avoid having two pastors from the same congregation involved in the research and away from their congregation during the workshop. The second factor that will be taken into consideration is the year of your graduation. As much as possible, I will try to have pastors who graduated in different years from the Seminary as this will bring a variety of preaching experience to the workshop, and also it will give a broad view of the homiletical training you received in the Seminary. I hope you will understand these criteria and not be offended in any ways by it. As soon as this project is completed the goal is to offer this workshop again to the pastors serving in the Lutheran Church in Brazil, and in this case, I hope you will have a chance to attend this training then.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Hoping to hear from you soon, I wish God's blessings.

In His Service,

Rev. Ely Prieto
Concordia Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas – USA
elyp@concordia-satx.com

APPENDIX I

SECOND CONTACT WITH PASTORS OF DISTRICT VALE DO RIO DOS SINOS

San Antonio, April 4th, 2006.

To: The Pastors of Distrito Vale do Rio dos Sinos

Dear brothers,

I hope and pray that your family and ministry are doing well under God's blessings and care.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate in this project, especially for taking time from your busy schedule to attend the workshop on narrative preaching in June. As I have explained in the previous letter, because the way this research will be developed, I cannot have more than seven pastors participate in this survey. In this case, out of the nine pastors that indicated their willingness to be part of this project, seven were chosen.

Let me share with you the names of the brothers that will be involved in this project: Rev. Breno Thome, Rev. Leonardo Raasch, Rev. Renato Regauer, Rev. Oscar Zimmerman, Rev. Sergio Neivert, Rev. Martim Brehm, and Rev. Adalmir Wachholz.

Having said that, I would like to now give you more details about how this project will be developed.

Workshop in Narrative Preaching

Dates: June 12 – 15, of 2006

Where: St. Paul Lutheran Church in Novo Hamburgo

Time: We will start promptly at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, June 12. The lunch break will go from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. The class will resume at 1:30 p.m. and will end at 4:30 p.m.

Food & Parking: For food and parking information, you can contact Pastor Marcos Schmidt at the St. Paul Lutheran Church office: (51) 3066-6434; email: marsch@terra.com.br

Attached to this letter, you will find two different documents. One is a personal evaluation about your preaching training and experience with narrative preaching. The other is an evaluation form to be used by the evaluating team selected from your congregation.

Pastors Survey – Questionnaire 1

Due date: April 19, 2006

The questionnaire has only four questions and I believe it does not require extra explanation. If you have any questions about it, don't hesitate to contact me. I would appreciate it if you could respect our due date to return the questionnaire to me, which would help expedite the planning process for the workshop in June.

Sermon Evaluation Team - Questionnaire 1

Due date: May 1st, 2006

Each pastor is responsible to select a group of five people from his congregation and form a Sermon Evaluation Team. I encourage you, as much as possible, to invite people from different ages and genders, which will provide a broad perspective of how your members are hearing your sermons. This evaluating team will evaluate four of your sermons: two sermons before the workshop and two new sermons after the workshop. For each sermon, there will be an evaluation form which is attached to this letter. The form for the first part of the evaluation has only four questions and the form for the second evaluation (after the workshop) has five questions. The questions are very simple and easy to understand. I don't think the member on your team will have any problems with it. At the end of the workshop, I will give you more details about the second part of your sermon evaluation.

It is also important to remember that the members you selected to be part of your evaluating teams should be the same for both sets of evaluations (before and after the workshop). I would like to encourage you to use the month of April to preach your two sermons and have them evaluated by your evaluating team. Don't worry about writing special sermons for this evaluation process. I would like each of you to write and preach regular sermons, as you usually do for regular services in your church. Again, I would ask you to respect the deadlines for these sermons and its evaluations. If I could have both your sermons and the evaluations done by you evaluating teams by the first week of May, that would be fantastic. This would help me in having everything ready to go when we meet in June.

Once again, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me. I'm looking forward to meet all of you in June to share our preaching experiences and to learn more about narrative preaching.

In His Service,

Rev. Ely Prieto
Concordia Lutheran Church
San Antonio, Texas – USA
elyp@concordia-satx.com

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