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THE INDIRECT METHOD OF PREACHING

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THE INDIRECT METHOD OF PREACHING

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JOHN C. DAVIDSON

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To the glory of God

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ABSTRACT

The Indirect Method: A study of the potential effectiveness of the indirect method of preaching. The study examines the Biblical and practical components of the indirect method. A sample sermon is presented together with an evaluation of the sermon by selected members of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lancaster, Ohio. The evaluation will measure the method's effectiveness in the proclamation of Law and Gospel from a Lutheran context. The proclamation of the Law exposes the hearer's sinfulness and need of a Savior. The proclamation of the Gospel reveals Jesus Christ as Savior and offers forgiveness and salvation to all who believe in Him.

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Introduction

Proclaiming salvation by grace through faith in Christ is the challenge of the preaching ministry. This Doctor of Ministry project addresses this challenge for me, particularly in the area of creative preaching. My goal in enrolling in the Doctor of Ministry program is to become a more proficient preacher of the Gospel. The selection of this topic crystallized as I attended courses in this program. The counseling courses in the program introduced the concepts of physiology and how this plays a part in the listening process. Courses in Parish Leadership and Church Growth revealed what some experts noted will be the direction of the Church into the 21st century. Preaching courses reaffirmed the need to properly distinguish between the Law and Gospel. Two courses, though, stand out above the rest in formulating the ideas of this project.

An exegetical class, Exegetical Exigencies, proved of great value. This course emphasized that preachers need to examine the original languages of a text and gather from the text the truths presented in the message. Proper exegesis results in a sermon that will speak to the person in the pew in fresh ways. This course reaffirmed the belief the good exegesis forms the basis for a good sermon.

A homiletics course, Preaching the Gospel Creatively,

influenced the nature of this project. Required reading for this course included the book Overhearing the Gospel, by Fred Craddock. This book introduces the indirect method as a form of preaching. Briefly defined, the indirect method allows the preacher to communicate his message primarily through the use of story and illustration.

This project seeks to mesh an understanding of Lutheran Biblical interpretation with the concepts of the indirect method. The first chapter defines the indirect method of preaching and discusses its potential use in the Church. Chapter two studies the biblical basis for the indirect method in terms of the parables of Jesus. A study of the physiological aspects of the indirect method on the hearer forms the basis for the third chapter. Chapter four offers a model for the use of the indirect method and a sample sermon. The final chapter tests the responses of my congregation to an indirect sermon.

THE DEFINITION AND RATIONALE OF THE INDIRECT METHOD

General Observations

The Lutheran Church has always held in high esteem the Office of the Preaching Ministry. The Office of Preaching stems from the call of the Apostles, and as such is to be considered the highest office of the Church.¹ The Confessions state that God is at work in and through the preaching of His called ministers. Note that:

The ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises: "The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Rom. 1:16), again, "My word that goes forth from my mouth shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11)²

Elsewhere the Confessions state:

Through this means (namely, the preaching and the hearing of his Word) God is active, breaks our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the law man learns to know his sins and the wrath of God and experiences genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow in his heart, and through the preaching of and meditation upon the holy Gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ there is kindled in him a spark of faith which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel. And in this way the Holy Spirit, who works all of this, is introduced into the heart . . . because the Holy Spirit's activity often is hidden, and happens under the cover of great weakness, we should be certain, because of and on the basis of his promise, that the Word which is heard and preached is an office and work of the Holy Spirit, whereby he assuredly is potent and active in our hearts (II Cor. 2:14ff).³

Hence, the Confessors of the Church have stated their understanding of the importance of the office of preaching in the

life of the Christian. The issue addressed in this project is: "As the Church begins the 21st century, one form of preaching that the Church should consider is that of the indirect method." The purpose of this project, therefore, is to show the value of this form and how it may be used well.

The Definition of the Indirect Method

Fred Craddock in his book Overhearing the Gospel suggests that there are two methods of communicating the Gospel through the sermon. In this book, Craddock utilizes the preaching style of Sorren Kierkegaard in order to introduce and explain the indirect method of preaching. Craddock argues that this form was prevalent in Kierkegaard's messages.⁴

The standard method used throughout the Church is called the direct method. This method communicates a message to the listener through the transfer of information. The direct method is valuable and totally appropriate, according to Craddock, to the fields of history, science, and other related disciplines.⁵ However, this method, when utilized by preachers, in the opinion of Craddock, does a disservice to the listener, for it does not allow the listener to fully participate in the message being conveyed.⁶

The alternative form which Craddock offers to the Church through the example of Kierkegaard is the indirect method. This method is defined as "the mode for eliciting capability and action from within the listener."⁷ In order to elicit the response from

the listener, Craddock further describes this method as one of "overhearing." Craddock explains:

My proposal is that there is a method of approaching and communicating Scripture that preserves the distance from the text necessary to its own integrity as a historical document and the participation in the text necessary to its faith and life function as the Scripture of the Church today. That method is overhearing. Overhearing Scripture, as with music or drama or a good book, owes most of its power to these two factors: distance (I am an anonymous listener, reader, viewer, unrelated to the event) and participation (I am drawn in by identification with persons and conditions within the event).⁸

This process is analogous to a midwife helping to bring forth a child in childbirth.⁹ The need in preaching is to present the old truths about Jesus Christ in new and fresh ways. Noting Kierkegaard's situation, Craddock explains that the Gospel of Christ had been preached and presented to everyone in Denmark, so that everyone knew the message. The problem, though, was that the hearer did not apply this message to the life. This is called the "vain conceit," which gives the hearer the illusion of knowing the message without actually hearing and applying that message to his or her heart. The spell of the illusion diminishes when additional information is given to the listener. Withholding information therefore enhances the beauty of the message. Similar to the stripping of a floor of its many layers of paint to show the original beauty of the wood, the maieutic method allows God to work faith when and where He wills.¹⁰

This form of communication affects the hearer. Craddock writes:

For the listener, there is in the indirect method

complete respect. The listener is respected for what is already known. Sorren Kierkegaard found his principle for proclamation in I John 2:21: "I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you already know it." The listener is respected for being in possession not only of the mental capacity for understanding what is being said but also of the appetites and capacities for living fully. . . . This method also respects the privacy of the listener. Those who make direct changes and accusations in public gatherings, if heard at all, hurt and embarrass. But the indirect approach draws out the listener's own thoughts and feelings that may accuse and convict, but if so, it is with a privacy that permits confession of wrong to God And finally, the listener is permitted room to make the decision about his own existence.¹¹

Kierkegaard likened the indirect method to people who have had too much food to eat. They are in fact nourished by taking the food away. So too, the preacher then nourishes his congregation not by heaping information and more information upon the hearer, but by taking this information away.¹²

The tools utilized in this form are story, narratives, humor, and irony, to name a few.¹³ These allow the hearer to overhear the message being conveyed. Once this is done, the hearer can thereby transfer the message to his life, reflecting, accepting, rejecting, or resolving it.¹⁴

Richard Jensen in his book Telling the Story relates the importance of using a variety of forms to indirectly communicate the Gospel of Christ to the hearer in the pew. Particularly, Jensen embraces proclamatory preaching and story preaching. In proclamatory preaching, the preacher seeks to proclaim the good news of Christ in such a way that the news becomes real in the life of the hearer.¹⁵ Jensen argues that many times preachers preach about doctrinal concepts of forgiveness and love rather than

directing the message to the hearer and proclaiming the message of Christ in a way which is faithful to the text and sensitive to the needs of the hearers.¹⁶ Jensen illustrates his point:

You should find ways to create a mold that fits the text you wish to bring to living proclamation. A sermon can be thought of as having a living center of proclamation. The paths to that center, the paths on which we lead people in order that they may hear the living word of the text, may come at that center from many directions. The sermon has a living center. The development of the center moves out in ever expanding circles always returning to the center. The sermon structure looks something like what we see when a pebble is thrown into a brook. The pebble creates a ripple effect. As we watch the center, that spot where the pebble entered the water is always there. Our eyes don't lose sight of the center but the radiating effects of that center expand ever outward. Proclamatory preaching can, likewise, radiate outward from a dynamic, living center.¹⁷

In what Jensen calls story preaching, the Biblical text and its content are recast into stories which have serious implications for those who hear the message today.¹⁸ Jensen takes great pains to explain that in his definition of story preaching, the story itself is the message.¹⁹ The aim of the message is to draw the listener into the sermon so that he becomes involved in the story himself and participates in the Good News. To illustrate this point, Jensen uses Nathan's parable of the rich man to David (II Samuel 12:1-7). In this story, David identifies himself in the message by participating in the conclusion of the story. This then is the primary purpose of story preaching, namely, to involve the hearer in the message to such an extent that the hearer applies the story to his or her own life, making the application a personal one and thereby supplying a conclusion to the story.²⁰ The indirect method of communication, Jensen argues, comes to the hearer as a

"slant" to the Good News. It catches the hearer by surprise, involving him in the message so that the hearer figures out the story was meant for him.²¹

Pastor Leith Anderson in his book A Church For the 21st Century offers yet another form of the indirect method of preaching. Anderson agrees with Craddock in the assessment that the addition of information in the sermon may serve as a barrier to effective communication.²² In Anderson's opinion, the best test for a sermon in this day and age addresses three primary questions. 1) Did the listener experience God in the sermon? 2) Was God's Word better learned and understood? and 3) Was the content of the sermon clearly connected to the life of the hearer?²³

The style of the message, according to Anderson, is not that of a preacher or lecturer. Instead, today's pastor should be viewed as a communicator or one who converses in the Good News.²⁴ Former President Ronald Reagan is offered as an example of how one should communicate a message such as the Gospel to the people of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Reagan was viewed by many as an excellent communicator. His popularity related to the fact that when he spoke to the nation, it was as if he was speaking to the individual listener.²⁵

The form of sermon that Anderson argues as being most effective is what he calls the inductive method of preaching as opposed to the deductive method. The deductive method starts with a premise and then explains that premise logically to the hearer. This method, states Anderson, preaches to those who are already

convinced of the message.²⁶ Conversely, the inductive method uses an approach to those who are on the fringe of the Church or are openly hostile to it. The inductive method offers explanations of the faith and then states a conclusion. Thus, this sermon may begin by stating the hearer's need, give stories how God has met that need in Christ, offers stories on how God has worked in the lives of people with the same need, and then offers the conclusion to the sermon. Anderson believes that the inductive method best suits the needs of people living today.²⁷

An important element to what Anderson calls the inductive method is the use of story. Anderson writes:

Stories are especially important to the twenty-first-century preaching style. We increasingly deal with a generation that thinks more in images than in points. Stories stick. They are memorable. They are easy to identify with. Ask any generation of churchgoer to repeat the points of a six-weeks-ago sermon and few can do it. But ask for a rerun of the stories and illustrations, and a high percentage remember in detail. There is a strong theological precedent in the preaching of Jesus. His communications were full of stories--related to everyday happenings and practices.²⁸

This preaching style must be simple in its presentation. The challenge for the preacher who uses this method will speak to a diverse audience thereby drawing them into the same experience. While the challenge is great and difficult to achieve, in Anderson's opinion it is a worthwhile goal.²⁹

The preacher needs to have a definite goal any time he preaches, but especially when using the indirect method. He preaches not for his own sake, but for the sake of those in the pew. His goal is to effectively communicate the Gospel of Christ in a meaningful way to those who hear him. His purpose in the

sermon, therefore, is to clearly communicate the message by developing a message which moves the hearer to think along the same lines as the preacher.³⁰ The indirect method and its forms allow for the preacher to meet the hearer in the life situations that they find themselves in today.³¹

Having defined the indirect method and some of the various forms it may take, we will now turn our attention to the reasoning behind the use of this method.

The Rationale For The Indirect Method

There exists in the Church today a group of people who seek to examine the trends within the Church so as to predict what might happen in the future. These "Church Futurists" cover many aspects of the Church, including the state of preaching in the Church and what shape preaching may take in the 21st century. One of the foremost authorities today in examining the state of the Church today is Lyle Schaller. In his book entitled It's a Different World: The Challenge for Today's Pastor, Schaller portrays the culture in which the Church finds itself today. Schaller's main premise is that it is more difficult to be a minister in the world today. He cites a host of factors which contribute to the challenge. For the sake of this study it is interesting to note that Schaller argues that the mobility of church members is a major challenge which needs to be addressed today. Church shoppers come to worship with a host of differing worship experiences as well as

differing expectations for the sermon. As a result, more pressure is placed upon the minister to present the message so that he will be seen as competent in the eyes of the worshipper.³² Schaller admits that this pressure is highly subjective, but is nevertheless real. The watchwords for ministry (and preaching) in the Church today are excellence and choice.³³ The preacher must deliver an excellent message in each worship service, for the listeners have many more options from which to choose.

More and more Christians are seeking sermons which speak to them in their situation. Schaller writes of the challenges:

This writer's observations of the religious scene suggest it has become increasingly difficult for any... minister to preach a sermon that will be meaningful to everyone. The increasing availability of televised worship services, the growing number of church members who visit two or three or four other churches every year while on vacation, the higher level of educational attainment of the adult population, the growing number of members who were not reared in the same denominational family as the church they now attend,... are among the reasons which can be offered for this change.³⁴

While there exist many challenges for the preacher today, Schaller argues that the sermon remains one of the most important factors in increasing church attendance. He notes that there are several forms the sermon can take, including the teaching sermon, expository sermon, and the story sermon. Schaller notes specifically that the story sermon is receiving renewed interest in the field of preaching today because of the extensive use of imagery and contemporary language for the worshipper.³⁵

George Barna is another person who seeks to identify those issues which contribute to effective ministry for the Church today and in the future. While Barna does not address the indirect

method of preaching per se in his writings, he does touch on some overall themes of ministry which are germane to this discussion.

Barna suggests that in order for churches to be relevant in the world today there needs to exist an understanding of ministry as one of meeting the needs of people. Ministry is defined by Barna in terms of meeting the people's needs. The emphasis in ministry needs to be on the people to whom one is ministering.³⁶ This seems to suggest that in preaching the sermon one must take into account the needs of the hearer. In short, the sermon needs to be relevant for the audience. Similarly, the message must also exhibit quality in its ministry. Churches which are successful in reaching others for Christ exhibit excellence in areas of ministry so that the visitor feels compelled to return. Barna argues that the concept of quality extends to five aspects of the Church. These aspects can be applied and understood in terms of the preached Word. Thus a sermon today should exhibit integrity (that is it is to be an accurate reflection of God's Word), excellence (in reflecting the God whom we serve), consistency, (in the Word communicated and lived), credibility (in the message conveyed), and reliability (so that others may find hope in Christ).³⁷

Barna further explains that the relevance of the message will allow the hearer to understand in very real ways how and why the Christian faith relates to the life the Christian is called to live.³⁸ Conveying the relevance of the message to the hearer, the message then has the greatest potential to penetrate the hearer's consciousness.³⁹ Thus a major factor in contributing to the

success or renewal of churches today is the quality of preaching found at the Church.⁴⁰ Barna concludes:

The fact remains that, unless God can work through somebody who is devoted to the proclamation of His Word in practical and insightful ways, the people will suffer the side effects of being held hostage to world's views, rather than gaining exposure to God's views. Preaching the Bible is central to every church, but it is an absolute need in a church desperate for renewal.⁴¹

Another writer seeking to project into the 21st century is Leith Anderson. Two of Anderson's recent books deal with the possible changes that churches will need to make in order to meet the challenges of the day. In his book Dying For a Change, Anderson cites both Schaller and Barna in concluding that effective preaching in today's society includes preaching that is meeting the needs of the people. Another factor in effective preaching today is a sermon that not only has meaningful content but is also communicated in an interesting manner.⁴² Among the items that Americans cite which contribute to their choice of a church in which to worship is the quality of preaching.⁴³

Anderson believes that the Church must be willing to adapt to the changes that are occurring in society. The message of the Church does not change; rather the presentation of the message may need to be couched in different forms in order to effectively communicate the Gospel. Anderson dedicates a chapter to the changes needed in the preaching ministry in order to effectively communicate the Gospel in the 20th century. His basic premise is that the message of hope (the Gospel) needs to be predominant in the sermons of the future. Yet Anderson is most vocal in

advocating a change in form and presentation of the sermon. Anderson believes that the Church of the 21st century must adopt a new form in preaching, what he calls the inductive method. This inductive method, as has been previously stated, is similar to the indirect method of preaching.

Anderson's support for the inductive method is rooted in his belief that the message must be relevant and Biblical. He states that the sermons that will connect with the hearer will be those sermons which are based on the Bible and are relevant to the situations of the modern world.⁴⁴ Of utmost importance to the hearer is the credibility of the preacher and his message. The person in the pew seeks integrity from the pastor and his message. The 21st century hearer seeks Biblical information but not an overload of information. The most effective sermon, therefore, will be one which takes information away from the hearer. Anderson writes:

There are two traps to avoid in preparing the content for the twenty-first-century sermon: 1) inadequate understanding of the Biblical text and 2) overload of information on the Biblical text... Compare it to a surgeon explaining a procedure to a patient...a surgeon should not explain everything he knows -- that would take too long and almost require a medical school course. There is an underlying assumption that the surgeon fully understands the procedure and patient and that an appropriate amount of information is selected to teach the patient all he or she needs to know. The test comes when the patient asks a technical question beyond the explanation. If the answer is easily offered, confidence soars and learning increases. Likewise for the sermon--lots of preparation with adequate but not complete explanation.⁴⁵

Relevant stories replace information in the sermon. The memorable message draws the hearer personally into the sermon.

Thus the hearer applies the message to his own situation. Even as the parables of Jesus still speak to a modern generation, so too stories are important to the 21st century preaching form so that the hearer will find the message easy to identify with, memorable, and relevant.⁴⁶

Anderson's conclusion is that the indirect method will be the most effective method for sermon form and communication now and into the next century. The utilization of illustrations and stories is not new to the field of homiletics. Homileticians have consistently advocated their inclusion so that the message is relevant to the listener. H. Grady Davis states that the illustration serves to give reality to the thought of the sermon.⁴⁷ The danger lies in the fact that many people may have different reactions and conclusions to the illustration. Nevertheless, the illustration remains extremely important to the sermon's relevance.

John Stott cites the importance of illustrations by calling attention to the need for bridge building within the sermon.⁴⁸ The relevant sermon applies the Word of God to the context of the day. Illustrations are useful in that they throw light on the topic, enhancing the listener's ability to understand.⁴⁹

David Buttrick argues that the story is one of the most easily identifiable means for illustration.⁵⁰ Stories are a part of our existence. Children grow up listening to the stories of their families. As one grows into adulthood, the wide range of experiences all form to produce a personal history or one's own "story." Our story gives us identity, a sense of purpose, a

pattern to follow in our life. Preaching, according to Buttrick, is the means whereby the minister tells God's story in human language.⁵¹ Or, as Fredrick Buechner states: "The task of the preacher is to hold up life to us; by whatever gifts he or she has of imagination, eloquence, simple candor, to create images of life through which we can somehow see into the wordless truth of our lives."⁵²

The laity agree with this assessment. The call from the people in the pew to preachers today is to be relevant and interesting. One writer states that the first quality of impactful preaching in the Church today is the use of effective imagery.⁵³ Effective imagery is the ability to paint imaginative word pictures for the hearer. This creates the sense of being able to personally direct the message to the needs of the hearer.⁵⁴ These word pictures not only make the sermon interesting but also give life and meaning to the sermon.

One Christian calls for the sermon to touch people in a meaningful way through the use of story. In painting the picture of God's Good News, she relates that the Spirit allows her to see the picture, apply the message to her heart so that her entire being becomes a part of the communication process.⁵⁵ Another writer suggests sermons that illustrate how the Gospel is able to transform lives for service to God.⁵⁶

The use of story will allow the Spirit to use the message among those who have continually heard the Gospel as well as those who have yet to hear. One missionary states that the use of story

is extremely important in communicating the message of salvation to those who have not heard the message of Christ. The early Christian Church and its preachers simply tell the stories of the faith. They communicate the story of how God loved the world to the extent that He sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Savior of the world.⁵⁷ In this way the Spirit creates the connection where the message of Christ intersects with the listener so that faith is created and begins to grow.⁵⁸

The sermons of the Apostle Peter show an ability to use story.⁵⁹ A study of those early Christian sermons has found similar traits. There was not only a passion and conviction among the preachers of the early Church, but a willingness to "present the Gospel in interesting ways, using current events or experiences common to all as illustrations. They usually do not preach doctrines in the abstract, but apply their messages to everyday lives."⁶⁰ The early Church used the indirect method as a viable form of sermon communication. Many request and suggest the indirect method as a viable form of sermon communication today.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that preaching is the fundamental task of the Church, whereby the Spirit of God works through the Word to create and sustain faith in those who hear the message of Christ. Two ways to communicate the message are through the direct and indirect methods. The direct method of communication has been a

standard form of communication in the sermon. Here the preacher transmits information to the hearer. Another form of communication is the indirect method. In this instance, the preacher removes information and the hearer "overhears" the Gospel in the form of story or narrative, thereby applying the message directly to his own situation. This form allows creativity in the presentation of the Gospel.

The rationale in using the indirect method is that this is the form which is most appealing to the modern hearer. Those who study the trends and future of the Church offer this model of communication as an effective method of sermon communication. Homileticians have always suggested certain forms of the indirect method to be used in the sermon. The result is relevancy for the hearer and the ability to apply the message to his or her own situation. Listeners suggest that sermons use certain forms of the indirect method for better communication of God's Word to modern man.

The next chapter will demonstrate that Jesus widely used the indirect form of communication in His preaching, thereby giving precedent for the continued use of this method in the Church today.

Endnotes

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16. Ibid., p. 87.
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A SCRIPTURAL MODEL FOR PREACHING

General Observations

The previous chapter states that there are two sermonic forms, namely the direct and indirect forms. It is the opinion of this writer that the form which is predominant in the Lutheran Church today is the direct method of preaching. Leith Anderson in his book A Church for the 21st Century calls this method the deductive style of preaching. This style of preaching is characterized by a basic premise which is then proven in the sermon.¹ The indirect sermon draws the hearer into the message so that the listener applies the message to his or her own situation. As Anderson suggests, one form is not to be considered right while another is considered wrong. Similarly one can not be considered better than another. Rather one form may be better suited for a specific audience.² It is this writer's belief that the sermonic form which the Church should consider that will better communicate the Gospel to the people of the 21st century is the indirect method. The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate that this indirect method is a model used by Jesus to communicate the Gospel to the people of His day.

Parable as Indirect Method

An often used sermonic form that Jesus utilized in His preaching was the parable. Some writers estimate that Jesus utilized parables in almost one third of His sermons.³ A study of the word "parable" shows that it has its origin from the Greek word parabole. A parable is descriptive of God's saving activity in Christ.⁴ Scharlemann writes: "...it would seem that the term is used in the New Testament as part of the terminology applied to the instructional and revelatory activity of Jesus. He had come as priest and king, to be sure, but also as God's prophet, proclaiming the mystery of the Kingdom."⁵ The parable is defined as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. As such, there is a recognizable difference between that which is of humanity and that which is of God. Through the use of the narrative form, Jesus sought to bring people into a saving relationship with Him. Parables are by their very nature kerygmatic. They seek to confront the hearer with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The uniqueness of the parable is that it demands a knowledge and acceptance of God's total redemptive activity in Christ. The hearer seeks responses to the questions of life which are only answered by having a relationship with Jesus Christ. ⁶

It is interesting to note that while Jesus used the parable about one-third of the time in His preaching, the Gospels were written so that the Jesus story communicates the message of salvation. Almost 90% of the Gospels use the narrative form.⁷ The

implication therefore is that the narrative form, or indirect method, should predominate in our preaching style. Elizabeth Achtemeier states that preachers are to share the loving identification of God in Christ with humanity.⁸ The very nature of the Gospel is, therefore, the identification of God in Christ with humanity, which is communicated in the Scriptures through the indirect method.

Throughout the pages of Scriptures one finds the use of the indirect method. The Old Testament stories show how God saved His people. Beginning with creation one can see God working in the lives of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David, and a host of others. These stories are written so that one might learn of the salvation of God in Christ. As one Lutheran pastor writes:

The Bible itself is our best teacher. Here, particularly in the Old Testament, we find the greatest people-stories in all of literature.... People are presently honest, revealing greatness and baseness. They are fully human without every last detail of their existence sketched out.... We meet such people in the biblical narrative in a manner sufficient for the first and main requisite of telling a people story in preaching---the story concerns me.⁹

Jesus utilized a variety of forms in order to preach about the Kingdom of God. These forms made use of illustrations, analogy, and stories.¹⁰ Parables harmonize the spiritual and the material things of life.¹¹ In using parables, Jesus indirectly spoke of the Kingdom of God. Jesus utilized stories from real life, teasing the hearer into thinking for himself with the intent of moving the hearer to action.¹² Thus the parable is to be considered a "work of art" whereby the truth of God can be applied to situations not yet contemplated by the hearer.¹³

One reason Jesus used parables is that it was a standard for preaching and teaching among the Jews. He took common things known to Jews and filled these things with the Good News of God.¹⁴ The Hebrew mind thought in terms of practicality; therefore, Jesus expounded upon the truths of the Kingdom in stories that the common person could understand.¹⁵ Stories attract the attention of people, for as one theologian has stated:

The parabolic method appeals to far more than the Jew. It has a well-nigh universal appeal for the ordinary man with the ordinary mind. Most of us tend to think in pictures: and most of us have difficulty in grasping abstract ideas. Philosophers and thinkers can argue until doomsday about the definition of beauty or of goodness without reaching finality. But if we can point at a person and say, "that is a beautiful person; that is a good man," then at once beauty and goodness become intelligible because they have become embodied in a person. Ideas are for the most part most easily recognizable when they are clothed in persons. In a very real sense every word must become flesh. If Jesus had argued purely abstractly, using only ideas, few might have understood Him. But He always knew what was in man; He knew how our simple minds tend always to think in pictures; and He gave us these cameo-like pictures we call parables that the great ideas He wished to teach might become comprehensible to simple minds....Jesus used earthly things to lead men's minds to heavenly things. As someone has said, "He believed that there in no mere analogy but an inward affinity between the natural and spiritual order"... For Jesus the whole world was the garment of the living God.¹⁶

Kenneth Bailey in his book Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15 demonstrates that Jesus utilized the parable as a means of communication because the Jewish person of His day thought readily in picturesque terms. In explaining the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, Bailey sheds light on this discussion of how the parable is a means of indirect discourse. Bailey begins with his understanding of modern discourse by writing:

At least since the fifth century B.C., and the great days of classical Greece, the Western mind has done its serious

thinking in concepts. In most forms of discourse, we from the West begin with an idea and then occasionally illustrate that idea with a simile, metaphor, or parable. The conceptual language is primary and the metaphor or parable is secondary. The first is critical, the second optional. If the listener/reader is intelligent enough, the speaker/writer may dispense with illustrations. For indeed, the story is presented only to clarify the meaning of the concept. If people are able to catch meaning without using up time with illustrations, so much the better. The illustration is useful for simplification, the Western mind thinks. It aids memory. It assists in aiding emotional coloration and in catching and holding attention. But through all of this, the pictorial remains a secondary form of speech. The concept continues as a primary form of theological language. A theological discourse is created by attaching one concept to another by means of logic.¹⁷

The model which Bailey studies in this book is the parable.

According to Bailey, the parable was a necessary form of communication in the Middle East, for this form was conducive to the thought and communication patterns of the person living in this culture. Bailey continues:

We can but offer gratitude and pay tribute to the diligent men and women who have struggled with the dominant philosophical systems of the day and who have across the centuries used the structures of those systems as pathways of the mind along which the Gospel might travel. But there is another way to "do theology." Middle Eastern creators of meaning do not offer a concept and then illustrate (or choose not to illustrate) with a metaphor or parable. For them the equation is reversed. Rather than concept + illustration the Middle Eastern offers parable + conceptual interpretation. The Middle Eastern mind creates meaning by the use of simile, metaphor, proverb, parable, and dramatic action. The person involved is not illustrating a concept but is rather creating meaning by reference to something concrete. The primary language is that of the metaphor/parable and the secondary language is the conceptual interpretation of the metaphor that in Biblical literature is often given with it.¹⁸

Hence the parable or metaphor creates the meaning for the listener whereby the story says more than what is said. Bailey likens this process to a person who purchases an orange for orange

juice. When the orange has already been squeezed for juice and is packaged for the consumer, the consumer will find this process to be pleasing in that the juice is readily available. Yet, Bailey argues, the whole orange before squeezing is of a greater reality than the orange juice itself. Similarly, metaphors and parables can be squeezed for meaning, yet the story speaks to people on a deeper level. The metaphor speaks to the listener in ways which the interpretation does not.¹⁹ For this reason Jesus chose to speak in parables, so that the whole person would be confronted with the Word of God and its meaning in life.

Jesus spoke directly to people in terms they could readily comprehend. He was the Master of speaking indirectly to people so that they might believe. The one who hears the parables of Jesus is drawn into the story, overhearing the message without taking offense. The parable is the simplest yet most sublime form of indirect preaching. The hearer indirectly receives the message and applies that message to his own situation.²⁰ In using parables, Jesus vividly paints pictures of the Kingdom of God so that His message penetrates the human heart and mind so as to make it memorable.²¹ In doing so, Jesus is able to prove the truths of the Kingdom of God, all indirectly.²² Having demonstrated that the parables are a Scriptural model for the indirect method of preaching, it is important to examine the purpose of the parables.

The Purpose of the Parables

The parables indirectly communicate the Gospel. One of the briefest parables in Scripture tells the story of a man who, once discovering the value of the Kingdom of God, sells all that he has in order to obtain the treasure (Matt. 13:44). Similarly, the parables themselves are treasures hidden in the Gospels whose purpose is to communicate the message of salvation in Christ Jesus.²³ Jesus originally spoke in parables so that the people of His day would readily understand His message. So too the student of Scripture hears the parable in a way in which Jesus personally communicates to the hearer's present situation.²⁴

G. H. Lang in his book The Parabolic Teaching of Scripture picks up on this thought by comparing the parable to a work of art. One who is trained in art has acquired an eye for the details of a particular work of art. One who is a casual observer in the field of art would notice the same details of an expert only after taking time to study it. The person who has no knowledge in this field will not find any beauty in the details or meaning of the picture. Thus Lang concludes that in the same way parabolic language reveals more than a simple direct statement, for it sets forth the truth in a more vivid and striking manner which will be memorable to the listener. The person who is dulled in his understanding of the lesson in the parable will not see its beauty or message.²⁵

It is for this reason that Jesus spoke in parables to the people of His day. The leaders and people who continually had

heard the message of Christ during His ministry had hardened their hearts to the Gospel. Early in His ministry Jesus was more direct in His preaching. Yet His preaching takes a turn toward parabolic language in Matthew 12 and 13 in fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. The ears of the people did not hear nor their hearts understand the meaning of the Gospel. Therefore Jesus spoke indirectly to the people so that the message of salvation in Christ would be revealed clearly to those who were eager to understand the message.²⁶ The message in the parables forced those who heard it to think about all of its implications.²⁷ By its very nature the parable drew from the common experiences of human life to communicate the Gospel of Christ in a manner which would not only attract the hearer to the Good News but also tease the hearer into a more active thought process.²⁸

A primary characteristic of a parable is its simple and direct nature.²⁹ Jesus uses the parable to either condemn or convince pertaining to the truthfulness of the Gospel. He adopted this indirect form of communication so that men would be convicted of their sinfulness and be compelled to believe the Gospel.³⁰ Jesus sought, through the utilization of the parable, to communicate to the hearer in his own world view. Parables were not stories that Jesus told for the sheer enjoyment of the story. The story had a pointed message, and depending upon the situation in which the hearer heard the message, that story called for an immediate response.³¹ To those who were comfortable in their lifestyle, the parable confronted and condemned. The call was to repent. To some

who heard, the parable was a weapon of war. While there was a simple and direct truth communicated in the parable, it was done in a manner which would proclaim both Law and Gospel to the listener.

An examination of the Parable of the Vineyard will give evidence of how Jesus used the parables as a means of indirect discourse. For the purpose of this paper, the Scripture is cited below:

Then, using this illustration, Jesus spoke to them. He said, "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, made a vat for the winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to vineyard workers and went on a trip. At the right time he sent a servant to the workers to collect from them a share of the grapes from the vineyard. The workers took the servant, beat him, and sent him back with nothing. So the man sent another servant to them. They hit the servant on the head and treated him shamefully. The man sent another, and they killed that servant. Then he sent many other servants. Some of these they beat, the others they killed. He had one more person to send. That person was his son, whom he loved. Finally, he sent his son to them. He thought, "They will respect my son." But those workers said to one another, "This is the heir. Let's kill him, and the vineyard will be ours. So they took him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the workers and give the vineyard to others. Have you never read the Scripture passage: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it is amazing for us to see?" They wanted to arrest him but were afraid of the crowd. They knew that he had directed this illustration at them. So they left him alone and went away. (Mark 12:1-12 from God's Word).

It is interesting to note some features of this parable that are common to other parables in Scripture. In the story of the vineyard Jesus used common everyday items in order to communicate His message. Vineyards were common in Jesus' day. When Jesus spoke in terms of the vineyard, the people who heard knew what Jesus was talking about. They did not ask questions as to the details of how a vineyard would operate nor did they ask concerning

the tasks of the workers. Jesus was illustrating a common everyday occurrence in the lives of the people. No explanation was needed, so none was given.

The central thought of the parable is found in verses seven through nine, wherein the owner discovers his son had been killed; therefore he determines to hand the vineyard to others. This central thought is explained fully in verses ten and eleven as Jesus cites the Old Testament passage to demonstrate the fulfillment of this prophecy. This parable is a story illustrating the nature of the relationship of the Old Testament Church to their God. God in this parable is the vineyard owner. He desired fruitfulness in living for Him from His people. God created His Church and gave to the Church His good gifts so that the Church would know God as the true God and worship Him alone. He entrusted the Church to the leaders in the Church. When the leadership did not act in accordance with His will, He sent among them His servants (the prophets) to call the Church to repentance. The Church and its leaders continually rejected God's servants and His message. So God as a final act of love sent His only Son, whom He loved, to forgive the Church. His Son was crucified and disowned by the Church. The good and gracious will of God reached out to others so that many more would be saved and come to know the truth of God in Jesus Christ.

The response of the people in verse twelve is telling. Those in the crowd knew that this story was directed at them. Among those in the crowd were the Pharisees, other Church leaders, the

disciples of Jesus, and other bystanders. But how did the crowd know that the story was directed at them? Jesus did not use direct language in making His point. He used indirect language and the people in the crowd overheard the message. The Spirit applied the message to their individual situations. The responses were varied among those who heard the story.

There were those in the crowd who felt the sting of the Law in this message. The Pharisees and other Church leaders responded in anger to the words of Jesus. This story condemned them and their teaching. They sought to kill Him. Others, including the disciples, heard this message and were comforted. The Gospel was proclaimed to show what God was doing for humanity in the person and life of Jesus. In one simple story both Law and Gospel were proclaimed in an indirect manner to speak to the people according to their needs. The parable spoke to people where they were at, and by the power of the Spirit they were affected in different ways. This parable is just one example of how Jesus used the indirect method of preaching in His parables in order to effectively communicate His message.

Implications for Preaching

It remains to discuss the implications these findings have for those who preach the Gospel today. It is my belief that God in His wisdom used the indirect method in order to communicate His love to all through the sending of His Son. John writes in His Gospel: "In

the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God and the Word was God. He was already with God in the beginning.... The Word became human and lived among us. We saw His glory. It was the glory that the Father shares with His only Son, a glory full of kindness and truth" (John 1:1-2, 14). Here God chooses to communicate with a humanity lost in sin by sending His Son clothed in human flesh. Sinful people can not stand before a holy God. Therefore God's communication with the world is found in Jesus, for whoever hears Jesus hears the Father. His language by which He communicates with a fallen world is the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. As Francis Rossow has stated in his book Preaching the Gospel Creatively:

The rationale for the responsible use of creative language in preaching lies in the character of the Gospel-event itself.... Even as I am presently using words to describe, reveal, explain, and make clear, so Christ from the very beginning served the purpose of describing, revealing, explaining, and making clear the Father.... To accomplish this, what did Christ, the Word, do? He became incarnate. He became flesh. He became a man. He was born at Bethlehem and spent approximately 33 years on our earth. One might say that Christ, the Word, became a concrete Word. (Prior to Bethlehem Christ had been only a spirit, an abstract Word so to speak). As any reader or listener knows, concrete words are much more effective than abstract words, more fun to listen to and easier to understand.³²

God chose to make the message of salvation known and easily understood by sending His Son to be the Savior. The life and ministry of Jesus is God's story of salvation in human terms. One can even say that Jesus is God's living parable to humanity, showing how God was making friends with the world in His chosen Savior.³³ God in Christ gives evidence of utilizing the indirect method by not only sending Christ to be the Savior but also through

the message and ministry of Jesus.

Jesus utilized the Law and the Gospel effectively in His use of the indirect method of preaching and teaching for the purpose of saving sinners. In the example of the parable of the Vineyard one can see Jesus effectively using both the Law and Gospel in His preaching. As C. F. W. Walther has stated in his book The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, the teachings of God in the Scriptures are divided into only two doctrines known as Law and Gospel. Both Law and Gospel have specific purposes and are to be utilized with different audiences. The Law has been given by God to show a person his sinfulness and need for a Savior. No one can be saved by the keeping of the Law. The Law tells a person what he must do to be saved but has no power to save. It gives only demands and commands conditionally. The conditional demands that the Law places upon a person are to fulfill the Law perfectly and be saved. If a person cannot keep the Law, it then threatens that person with punishment. The effects of the preaching of the Law are threefold. One effect is that the person becomes more unwilling to keep the Law. Another effect is that the sinfulness of the person is uncovered, throwing the person into despair over his sinfulness. Lastly the preaching of the Law produces contrition on the part of people. The Law is to be preached to impenitent sinners, to people who are comfortable in their lifestyle and at ease with their sins. The purpose of the Law is to condemn sinners by showing their sins and need for a Savior.

It is the Gospel of Christ that saves a person and not the

keeping of the Law. The Gospel differs dramatically from the Law in that the Gospel contains no threats. God offers salvation to all in the Gospel. A person is saved by God's Good News that He sent Christ to be the Savior of the world. There are no conditions with the Gospel, for it promises the free gift of God's love in Christ to all. The Gospel contains no threats, only consolation for sinners lost in their condition and the promise of salvation through faith in Christ. Even the worst sinner hears in the Gospel the offer of forgiveness, life, and salvation through the merits of Christ. The effects of the Gospel are threefold as well. The first effect is that the Gospel gives the faith in Christ that it demands. The second effect is that the Gospel takes the fear and threats of the Law and replaces these with the peace and joy of Christ. Lastly the Gospel asks nothing from a person; rather, the Gospel changes a person into that what he cannot be in and of himself. The Gospel changes a person into a believer and child of Christ. To the person who is sorrowful over his sinfulness, who is terrified of God's wrath, the Gospel offers the friendship and peace of God in Christ.³⁴

Christ made this distinction between Law and Gospel in the parables He preached. Note the reactions of the hearers to Christ's message. The religious leaders of Jesus' day (Mark 12:1-12) reacted negatively towards Jesus and His message. They reacted to the parable because they felt Jesus was preaching the Law to them. His message condemned their teachings and beliefs. Yet there is an entirely different reaction to this parable on the part

of Jesus' disciples. His followers readily accepted His teaching and heard the Good News that God was in Christ reconciling the world. Even though the religious leaders rejected Christ, God made His grace in Christ the cornerstone for salvation. The preaching of this and other parables engendered faith on the part of Jesus' followers.

Still another implication from the parables for preaching today is the reason why Jesus couched His message in this form. In the book Finding the Lost, Kenneth Bailey suggests that Jesus used parables because the Oriental culture of His day thought in terms of images and pictures. Bailey implies that Christ Himself is God's metaphor or parable to sinful man.³⁵ Christ uses the parable as a type of political cartoon so that the full weight of his message would be clear to any perceptive listener who lived in the same culture as Jesus.³⁶ Typically the Western theologian understood the parable as having only one meaning. But Bailey argues that the parables of Jesus usually incorporated more than one meaning. The parable is likened to a cluster of grapes which hold many theological truths or a diamond which sheds light in a variety of directions. There are at least four themes found in the parables of Jesus. These are the entertaining aspect of the story, the ethics of the story, the theology, and the Christology of the parable.³⁷ Bailey argues that the parable said many things to many different people, for this was the primary method of communication in the Middle East. Therefore, in utilizing this form of communication the preacher will speak to many different people with

different needs. Among the many reasons for using the indirect method of preaching is that one story will speak to many people by shining the Light of the Gospel in a variety of directions. Thus the use of the method addresses the differing needs of the hearer.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that the parable was a sermonic form widely used in the preaching of Jesus. The parable readily communicated Christ's message by utilizing terms that people could relate to and understand. Christ used stories, analogies, and illustrations from the lives of His hearers to indirectly communicate the Gospel. The reason why Jesus used this method is that it was a method that would communicate the Gospel in ways in which the hearer would readily understand. I believe and will seek to demonstrate in the next chapter that the indirect method of preaching is a viable form of communication, for through it God speaks to people in a manner in which they can readily receive and process information in a manner similar to the way the Middle Eastern heard the Gospel in Biblical times.

Endnotes

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THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE INDIRECT METHOD

General Observations

Studies in the field of education and memory relate that a person will remember 10% of what is heard, 30% of what is seen, 60% of what is heard and seen together, and 80% of what is heard, seen, and then applied by the learner.¹ If this is true, then the person who listens to the sermon on any given Sunday will remember only 10% of what is heard. Thus for every twenty minutes a sermon is preached the listener on average remembers only two minutes of the message. The purpose of the indirect method is to enhance the ability of the listener to hear the Good News of Christ as presented in the sermon. It is my opinion that the indirect method will allow for the listener to not only hear the message but visually see the message through the process previously described as overhearing the Gospel. If the listener is able to hear and visually see the message, the implication is that the Gospel will be better remembered.

Every person has certain physical factors which indicate that the indirect method of preaching is conducive to preaching of the Gospel of Christ. To that end this chapter will concern itself with the physical aspects of human beings and how the physical makeup of the listener will be favorable towards the utilization of

the indirect method. Furthermore, the culture of our age is presently utilizing the information garnered from such knowledge and applying this knowledge in the electronic media. The second part of this chapter will concern itself with findings regarding the media's application of these factors. The final part of this chapter will deal with the implications these factors present to the practitioner of the indirect method.

The Human Brain

The Scriptures declare that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). The crown of God's creation, humanity, was made in His image. When God had completed His creation He called it good. Everything God wanted to create in a human He had done and therefore declared it perfect. In the creation of man God placed in humanity the physical ability to hear His Word. To that end God made not only the ears with the ability to hear but also the brain with the ability to process information. Recent studies of the brain suggest that it is made to process information in a variety of ways.

The basic model of communication can be described as the means by which a speaker encodes (or transmits) information (or a message) to a listener which is decoded (or received) so that the listener will understand the message conveyed.² This process is an electrochemical reaction that takes place in the brain during the communication process.³ Learning is said to take place when

the individual responds to a stimulus so that the listener's behavior is modified.⁴

The brain has been created by God so that learning may occur. Scientists studying the brain have discovered that the brain can be divided into two hemispheres, the left hemisphere and the right hemisphere.⁵ Each hemisphere is unique. Both have different functions, and researchers have discovered that both respond to different types of languages.

There is disagreement among scholars as to which hemisphere of the brain is the dominant hemisphere.⁶ It has been assumed that different hemispheres of the brain are dominant for different types of people. Most notably it has been theorized that the left hemisphere of the brain is the dominant hemisphere for a right handed person. Conversely, the right hemisphere of the brain is believed to be the dominant hemisphere for a left-handed person. This assumption has been challenged. Presently it is understood that there is no difference in brain hemisphere activity in relationship to a person's dominant writing hand. At birth until the first two years of life the two hemispheres of the brain develop equally, then differentiate as the person acquires an ability to use language.⁷

The language and purpose of the left hemisphere of the brain is one of rationalization. As Watzlawick summarizes in his book The Language of Change:

The left hemisphere is the dominant one, and its main function appears to be the translations of perceptions into logical, semantic, and phonetic representations of reality,

and the communication with the outside world on the basis of this logical-analytical coding of the surrounding world. It is, therefore, competent for all that has to do with language (that is, grammar, syntax, and semantics), with thinking, and thus also with reading, writing, computing, and generally, digital communication. Consequently, in the literature it is often referred to as the verbal or major hemisphere.⁸

The other hemisphere of the brain, the right hemisphere, has a different language and purpose. This hemisphere of the brain synthesizes the experiences of human life. Watzlawick summarizes workings of this hemisphere of the brain as being:

....very different. It is highly specialized in the holistic grasping of complex relationships, patterns, configurations, and structures.... What is of particular importance, however, is the strong likelihood that the right hemisphere is competent for the construction of logical clauses and therefore for the formation of concepts.... Its language is archaic and underdeveloped--so much so that the right hemisphere is often referred to in the literature as the "silent one." It lacks the prepositions and virtually all the other elements of (left hemispheric) grammar, syntax, and semantics....The right hemisphere is also considerably better equipped than the left in cognitive abilities necessary for the perception of complex spatial configurations; and it possesses a more or less consolidated world image.⁹

Watzlawick, it should be noted, is a psychotherapist. His purpose is to address the issue of how a therapist can communicate effectively to a client so that behavioral change will take place on the part of the client. Watzlawick argues that the language the therapist should utilize is one in which he communicates with the right hemisphere of the brain.¹⁰ He continues by demonstrating that it is the right hemisphere of the brain in which a person's world view is conceived and expressed in life.¹¹

The right hemisphere of the brain, Watzlawick argues, has definitive language patterns. He states that the language of dreams, fairy tales, myths, hypnosis, delusions, word plays, and

jokes is the language which is directed to and processed by the right hemisphere. He goes on to state that figurative language is the primary language of this hemisphere. This type of language, in his words, does not offer an explanation. Rather, it creates and evokes so that:

Without knowing how, the reader suddenly finds himself in the depth of a summer's day noon hour, feeling, seeing, smelling, and hearing it.... The power of concrete imagery (figurative language) has been utilized by medicine men and psychic healers for thousands of years. ¹²

It is interesting to note that Watzlawick agrees with the assertion of Kenneth Bailey (as previously cited in chapter Two) in that the Eastern cultures have traditionally utilized this type of right hemisphere communication with its use of figurative language, similes, and metaphors.¹³ Watzlawick, without using the terminology cited here as the indirect method, argues that there exist certain language forms which enable "people to say something without quite saying it."¹⁴

Right Hemispheric Communication

The right hemispheric communication seems to be the norm of our culture. Americans are continually being bombarded with messages from different types of media. Virtually every home has a television, commuters on the freeway listen to the messages on the radio, and computer use continues to rise.¹⁵ Magazine and newspaper pages are filled with advertisements beckoning one's attention. Our culture is a media-dominated and media-driven

culture.¹⁶ This fact is not lost on those in the field of mass media communication. Advertisers spend literally millions of dollars promoting their products yearly.¹⁷ Cartoons send subtle messages to children regarding the sanctioning of violence as a means of problem solving.¹⁸ This section will therefore concern itself with the messages which the media sends to the public and how these messages are couched in right hemispheric language.

The medium of television particularly utilizes right hemispheric language to influence the viewer. As one media watcher has stated:

Until recently, there was little research on how the human brain absorbs information from TV. Many scholars long have been convinced that viewers react less from television than from reading, but evidence was scarce. Now, a research project by Jacob Jacoby, a Purdue University psychologist, has found that more than 90 percent of 2,700 people tested misunderstood even such simple fare as commercials or the detective series, "Barnaby Jones." Only minutes after watching, the typical viewer missed 23 to 36 percent of the questions about what he or she had seen. One explanation is that TV's compelling pictures stimulate primarily the right half of the brain, which specializes in emotional responses, rather than the left hemisphere, where thinking and analysis are performed. By connecting viewers to instruments measuring brain waves, researcher Herbert Krugman found periods of right brain activity outnumbering left brain activity by a ratio of 2 to 1.¹⁹

The impact of utilizing specific language which communicates to the right hemisphere of the brain is enormous. One media expert suggests that viewers today make choices because of the influence of this type of language.²⁰ Another expert suggests that the usage of indirect language is a common occurrence.²¹ The viewer turns on the television to watch a favorite show. The plot involves a chase scene with a fugitive and detective. In the chase

scene each actor drives a new car that shines brilliantly in the sunlight. The scene seems innocent in and of itself. Yet when the viewer will shop for a new car, he will be influenced by the images remembered in the chase scene. Thus the viewer is influenced by a very subtle, indirect message.²² This type of communication occurs with great frequency. Entertainers will promote particular brands of clothes, politicians will promote books and spin reelection attempts, all by utilizing indirect communication.²³

Indirect language in television is such a common occurrence that the viewer is even affected when he is not watching TV. A quick examination of television programs today shows that a particular picture is shown only for a few seconds, so as to hold on to the attention span of the viewer. Television has changed the attention spans of those who view its programs. Note the impact that one expert cites:

Another difficulty is the rapid linear movement of TV images, which gives viewers little chance to pause and reflect on what they have seen. Scientists say this torrent of images also has a numbing effect, as measured electronically by the high proportion of alpha brain waves, normally associated with daydreaming or falling asleep. The result is shortened attention spans---a phenomenon increasingly lamented by teachers trying to hold the interest of students accustomed to TV. To measure attention spans, psychologist Thomas Mulholland of the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, Mass., attached 40 young viewers to an instrument that shut off the TV set whenever the children's brains produced mainly alpha waves. Although the children were told to concentrate, only a few could keep the set on for more than 30 seconds.²⁴

Television has influenced the way our culture communicates to the extent that it has become invisible to many.²⁵ There is no other medium that so bombards the consumer with images and indirect

messages.²⁶ Television has become the centralized system for storytelling within our society.²⁷ One area which effectively utilizes television and the images that are conveyed is advertising. Advertisers are experts in indirect communication. The advertiser's message will influence and inform the audience.²⁸ Radio and television advertising have the same purpose and use similar techniques. Radio broadcasting has been called the theater of the mind.²⁹ Successful radio programs use indirect language which excites the imagination of the listener.³⁰ Radio advertisers use the images of indirect language to communicate reasons why their product is of value to the listener.

Since television advertisers have time constraints in order to sell their product, it is therefore crucial for the advertiser to sell the product in sixty seconds or less. Effective advertisers must use pictures to either offer their products as solutions to problems, influence lifestyles and ideas, or give structures of meaning to life.³¹ Immediately the imagination is engaged so that the listener responds.³² Specific techniques are used in advertising and these techniques help the viewer understand some basic principles in storytelling. The basic formula that advertisers use to evoke a response from the listener consists of five elements. These elements are orientation, complication, crisis, resolution, and coda. The orientation element introduces the scene, time, and participants in the story. The complication element unfolds one or more cycles of events to draw the audience into the story. The crisis is the pivotal point on which the story

turns towards a resolution. The resolution solves the crisis, leading to the final part (coda), which relates the story back to the present context.³³ The language contained in the story is common and simple to understand. A commercial filled with difficult words, long sentences, and unfamiliar phrases will tend to lose the audience.³⁴ Personal pronouns and dramatization add to the effectiveness of the message and will hold the attention of the listener.³⁵

Successful advertisers use this formula in their time limited spots. A recent example of this type of storytelling in advertising is the popular "Taster's Choice" commercial. In this commercial the love lives of two people are followed. A crisis arises in each episode to evoke the interest of the audience and to add even more zest to the ongoing evolving love story. Viewers watch the stories not because of the product but to see how the crisis is resolved and what effect it will have on the budding romance. The primary motive of the advertiser is to sell more coffee. The process utilized to accomplish the motive is the indirect method of storytelling.

This method is proven and successful. The purpose of television and advertising is to make money. The phenomenal growth in advertising is noted in the following:

Television advertising grew from a 300 million dollar business in 1952 to \$1.8 billion in 1964, to six billion dollars in 1976 and a projected 10 billion in 1981. In one three month period in 1970, almost 100 advertisers spent more than one million dollars each on TV spot commercials. Networks and advertisers also found that children's programming can be a gold mine.... Mattel's advertising propelled it from a \$500,000 business to one of 12 million dollars.³⁶

The money made in advertising continues to rise. In the 1970's advertising investments grew 170%.³⁷ As the areas of telecommunications have grown in our society, so have the revenues in advertising. Total investments in advertising by 1990 reached \$150 billion. The growth in the advertising business shows that advertising has a great effect on how we live our lives today.

Advertising and the images portrayed effectively influence many decisions we make today. Studies show the effects of TV violence among children. This is due in part to the images shown on TV.³⁸ An additional factor which influences behavior is the time the average American spends watching TV. It is estimated that the average adult will watch approximately four hours of TV daily. The average child will watch over twenty-five hours a week. By the time a child graduates from high school, he will spend more time in front of a TV than in a classroom. No other activity, with the exception of sleeping, is so dominant in the lives of children as TV.³⁹

The images of TV and other media engulf this society. The role of mass communication in this society is such that:

Everyday 4.2 billion advertising messages pour forth from 1,754 daily newspapers, millions of others from 8,151 weeklies, and 1.4 billion more each day from 4,147 magazines and periodicals. There are 3,895 AM and 1,136 FM radio stations broadcasting an average of 730,000 commercials a day. And 770 television stations broadcast 100,000 commercials a day. Everyday millions of people are confronted with 2,500,000 outdoor billboards, with 2,500,000 car cards and posters in buses, subways and commuter trains and 51,300,000 direct mail pieces.⁴⁰

Many of these messages use indirect communication to reach their audience. Images use a variety of means such as story,

humor, persuasion, and suggestion to sell a product or communicate a message. These forms address the right hemisphere of the brain and are forms of indirect communication.

Implications for Preaching

I believe that the findings here presented give evidence to a much needed change in form for preaching in the 21st century. The implications for the indirect method of preaching are many. If indirect communication is prevalent in our culture, we are then being bombarded daily with language which addresses the abilities of the right hemisphere of the brain. In the past God has used the language of the people to communicate His Word. The Old Testament was written in the original languages of Hebrew and Aramaic. The New Testament was written in the Greek language, which was the common tongue of that day. The Bible is continually being translated into language which is more common to the people of a specific culture. Similarly, if we are accustomed to thinking in terms which use language friendly to the right hemisphere of the brain, does it not make sense to couch the preached Word in language which is used in this age?

We live in an image-dominated culture. These images are largely shaped by the media around us. Certain studies indicate that the attention span of a television viewer lessens due to the its influence. Other studies indicate that children remember and respond favorably to images projected on the TV as opposed to

lectures by an instructor. While there still are questions concerning the feasibility of additional research and its findings, there is evidence that television has influenced how Americans think, receive, and respond to information.⁴¹ Communicators in the Church seek to convey the message of salvation by using techniques with which the public is familiar, specifically in the visual and aural realms.⁴² As a result of the influence of the media, the issue for the preacher is how should the form that the sermon takes be adapted to the listening and learning habits of this day?

In the book Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15, Bailey suggests that the Eastern culture thinks in different terms than the Western culture. Those from the East think and argue in terms of images and concepts. The Western world has been largely influenced by Aristotle and the logic of the Greeks. Americans, therefore, have been culturally conditioned over time to think logically in terms promoted by Aristotle. This mindset and way of processing information has changed with the advent of media and its influence upon our culture. The evidence now suggests that the media's language has changed the way in which we listen, receive, process, and respond to information. Thirty and sixty second commercials have shortened the attention span of the listener. In turn, the expectation of the parishioner has changed. A twenty to twenty-five minute sermon that speaks rationally to the listener and uses language which addresses the left hemisphere of the brain is more difficult to process. The listener has been conditioned to think in images, using indirect language. On the other hand,

sermons which use indirect language will be better suited to the listener because the listener is accustomed to hearing this type of language daily. Sermons need to be more user friendly. The language, images, and time frame must be adjusted in order to take into account the needs and the ability of the listener to process the message. Simply put, sermons today need to address the right hemisphere of the brain, for this is the predominant hemisphere used by Americans today.

There are different ways to address the right hemisphere of the brain in the sermon. One way is to use more illustrations in the sermon. The preacher who is sensitive to the hearer will make a concerted effort to use more illustrations in the sermon so that the message will be pertinent to the listener.

A second way to address the right hemisphere of the brain uses the overhearing method. Indirect language, when used exclusively in the sermon, will enhance the ability of the listener to hear the Good News of Christ. Stories evoke the interest of the listener. The ability to remember the message is enhanced because language is used that is familiar to the listener. Even as the media uses indirect language to sell a product, so the Church can use the indirect method to offer the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. The indirect method is used to serve the Gospel of Christ. There may be instances where a more direct approach in form and language is preferred by the preacher. Yet the preacher needs to be sensitive to the way in which Americans communicate today so that the indirect method may be appropriately used in

service of the Gospel.

Conclusion

The astute preacher will take advantage of God's unique design of the human brain and will speak in a language which will aid in the understanding of the Gospel. The Scriptures declare that a person comes to faith in Christ by the hearing of the Good News. To that end even as God gave humanity ears to hear, He also created the human brain to think in concepts which will aid in one's understanding of the Gospel.

The media understands this concept in the way it communicates messages to an audience. People today are bombarded with images to communicate a variety of messages. People now think in images and use the right hemisphere of the brain freely in processing information. Thus it is prudent for preachers to use indirect language in order to address the right hemisphere of the brain so that the sermon is readily received by the listener.

In the next chapter the process of constructing an indirect sermon will be discussed and a model sermon will be offered as an example of this method.

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A MODEL FOR THE INDIRECT METHOD

General Observations

The purpose of this major applied project is to improve the ability to preach utilizing the indirect method. Books such as Telling the Story, Quest For Better Preaching, How to Preach a Parable, and Overhearing the Gospel give input as to how a preacher can improve his methodology. While helpful, I believe these books fall short by failing to address issues pertinent to the sermon. As a pastor trained in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod system, there are certain presuppositions which are important in the construction of sermons using this method. These presuppositions are an outgrowth of the doctrine of Scripture. How the pastor views Scripture dictates how he will approach the Scriptures and construct the sermon. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the Lutheran principles of interpretation of the Scripture and how these principles are applied to the hearer. (I will call this the Lutheran Hermeneutic.) The sample sermon demonstrates the application of these principles.

The Lutheran Hermeneutic

It is apparent in the reading of the literature available in the field of homiletics that there are two fields of biblical interpretation. One field of biblical interpretation bases

interpretation upon the higher critical method. Presuppositions of this approach include the belief that the Bible is no more than a human book and must be treated as such. Other presuppositions include the belief that the higher critical method is the only valid method for exegesis today, that layers of tradition comprise the text of Scripture, and that the stripping away of these layers help the exegete understand the message. I reject the presuppositions used in the higher critical method. It must be noted, however, that this method is the prevalent method of interpretation in the literature available to date. This study is unique in my opinion, for I use a different set of presuppositions in the model of indirect preaching.

I accept the presuppositions and principles of the historical grammatical method of Biblical interpretation.¹ These presuppositions determine the message of the sermon and are Lutheran and Confessional in nature. The sermon constructed for this project and future sermons in the Church reflect the hermeneutical principles of the historical grammatical method.

The first presupposition is the belief that Holy Scripture is the very Word of God. It is unlike any other book ever written. God's Spirit is the author of the Bible, and thus the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God. The implication for the preacher is that he must allow his reason to reflect the interpretation of the pages of Holy Writ. The Holy Spirit's enlightenment helps the interpreter of Scripture to accurately interpret the Bible correctly.

history. The Apostle John states that this Word was God incarnate (John 1). God's Word also came to humanity through the writings of men as recorded in the Bible. God used men and their faculties to record His Word. Questions pertaining to the text help in order to understand the meaning of the text. These questions might include the following: When was the text written? Where was it written? By or through whom was it written? To whom was it written? And under what circumstance was the text written? The homiletician will therefore desire to work with the Biblical text in the original language.³ In spite of the large number of English translations available, it is necessary to work with the original languages for it is within these languages that the Gospel was originally proclaimed.⁴ The original languages are like the sheath containing the sword of the Spirit, the container containing the Gospel, the vessel holding the wine, and the lard which holds the food.⁵

This method of interpretation seeks to proclaim the justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Martin Franzmann calls this orientation the radical-Gospel approach to the Scriptures. The hermeneutical perspective of the preacher is of the utmost importance. Franzmann relates:

In a word, the radical-Gospel orientation leaves the interpreter open to the usefulness, the profitableness which Paul marks as the distinguishing quality of the inspired Word. And this is the most important point of all; for if interpretation does not lead to and serve proclamation, it is a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal--and the percussion section in the ecclesiastical orchestra is already disproportionately large. This orientation promises to let us get at the life of the text; we shall no longer be preaching edifying anecdotes larded with morals, and we shall be able to see beyond our snub little noses in dealing with prophecy and fulfillment. It promises that we shall get at the heart of

God's people; our hearts will burn within us, and fire has a way of catching and spreading. With a renewed religious appreciation of the Word we shall be enabled to get at the conscience of the world: "By the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Cor. 4:2).⁶

Preaching has a divine purpose, namely the salvation of sinners to the glory of God.⁷ Sermons are constructed and delivered so that the hearer will grow in faith in Jesus Christ. It is not enough for the sermon to be Biblical and orthodox. The preacher needs to craft the message to address the needs of the congregation. John Fritz explains:

The preacher must do more. He should preach the Word as the particular spiritual needs of his church-members demand it. That is why God gives preachers to Christian congregations. They are to be watchmen, who hear the Word at God's mouth and give warning unto men... they are to watch over the souls of men, as they that must give account... they are to be pastors, shepherds, who give heed to all the flock, protecting them against grievous wolves; they are to be overseers, who feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood,... they are by their teaching to advance their hearers not only in spiritual knowledge,... but in grace,... in faith,... and in good works,..... Not only instruction but instruction for the purpose of edification, as this is demanded by the particular needs of the people, that is the real purpose of preaching to a Christian congregation. By such preaching also the strangers who may be found in the church audience will be served.⁸

The preaching task applies the message of the Word to the situation of this age. God's Word is as valid today as when it was written. Despite the many differences of time and culture, humanity's heart still has an inextinguishable longing after God.⁹

The preacher dare not read anything into the text; rather, his mission is to make clear the message of salvation as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Reu writes:

The application dare not, however, be anything alien imported

into the text, as though the preacher needed to add to the contents of the text something of his own. He must, on the contrary, take the Word of God, whose meaning in the past he has ascertained, set it unaltered and unabridged, with all its winsomeness and all its severity, in the midst of the present, and let it say to the men of today what it said to the men of the past.¹⁰

The task of the preacher using the indirect method is to relate, in the language and pictures of this day, the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. The presuppositions made by the preacher influence the sermon delivered to the congregation. Having outlined the Lutheran hermeneutic, we turn our attention to the principles of indirect preaching and how they relate to the sermon.

Principles of the Indirect Method

Caemmerer in his book Preaching for the Church offers insight in the preparation of the sermon. He proposes six stages including deriving the meaning from the text, planning the persuasion, outlining the material, writing the working brief, writing the first draft, a revision of the draft, and final delivery of the sermon.¹¹ This is the prevailing method in first sermon theory courses. It is still in use in some form today. Each stage is important in the development of the sermon. The utilization of the indirect method of preaching falls into the planning the persuasion stage, and for the purposes of the project this is the stage that I will attend to.

The importance of planning the persuasion is noted by

Caemmerer:

Unless the preacher has the right intentions as he prepares his sermon, it may miss the mark. He expects too little of it if he plans simply to get enough material together in order to speak for the customary length of time. Even this problem is formidable for the beginner; too soon he discovers, however, that stopping is as difficult as going on. But the preacher expects too little if he is satisfied after he has found sense and meaning in his text. He now runs the danger of converting his materials into a Biblical lecture. His calling is to persuade people, to change them in the direction which God has in view for them. He himself must plan that persuasion. If the sermon is to persuade and move the hearer, it must have a clear goal. The preacher must be very clear in his own mind what it is and he should be able to express it in unambiguous terms.¹²

Caemmerer proposes the utilization of three categories in order to facilitate the planning of the sermon's form. These three categories include the goal of the sermon, the malady which alerts the hearer to a problem in his life that needs to be solved, and the means by which the preacher offers Christ as the Agent of change and hope.¹³ These categories are helpful for the preacher in constructing a Christ-centered sermon. I propose in the construction of the indirect sermon another model in addition to Caemmerer's. This model uses principles prevalent in television commercials today.

This model consists of the elements of orientation, complication, crisis, resolution, and coda. These elements are redefined for the preacher's use in order to construct the indirect sermon. The orientation element introduces the hearer to the scene, time, and participants in the sermon. In addition, the orientation element introduces the hearer to the goal of the sermon. The complication element unfolds a cycle of events to draw

the hearer into the sermon. Here the preacher can introduce the malady or the effects of the Law on the participants of the sermon. The crisis is the pivotal point where the sermon turns to a resolution. The crisis applies the Gospel in the sermon. The resolution shows how the Gospel is the means to a God pleasing conclusion to the sermon. The coda concludes the sermon, wrapping up any loose ends in the sermon. Here the hearer applies the message to his own life. Just as effective television advertising has used this formula, so also this formula effectively applies the utilization of the indirect method of preaching.

There are many advantages to using this formula. One advantage is that this is the formula in many commercials, and thus, this type of formula conditions the listener in the principles of the indirect method. Therefore, its use in the sermon would be a continuation of a method with which the listener is familiar. A second advantage is that this formula can be adapted to the present methods of sermon preparation. Caemmerer's methodology has been a standard used by both LC--MS seminaries in teaching homiletics. Many pastors today are familiar with and still make use of this methodology. The adaptation of the formula used commonly in television advertising to the Caemmerer methodology is helpful for the preacher in constructing the indirect sermon. In addition, the advertising formula, properly adapted, meets the concerns of preaching a sermon which rightly divides the Law and the Gospel.

Another advantage in using this formula is its application

in both the construction of a long sermon or a short illustration. A good illustration and a good narrative sermon both consist of the elements of this indirect formula. To illustrate, a preacher upon examining the text may conclude that the text is conducive to a more direct approach in the sermon. He wishes to demonstrate the points of his sermon with effective illustrations. A working knowledge of this indirect formula will benefit the preacher in the construction and selection of appropriate illustrations for the sermon.

The coda element offers a distinct advantage to the preacher who uses this formula. These advantages extend to a preacher in a mission congregation as well as to a pastor in an established congregation. The utilization of the indirect method places a major emphasis upon the ability of the listener to hear and apply the message to his own situation. The preacher who uses the indirect method relinquishes control of what the person in the pew hears. Conversely, the preacher places much faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to communicate the message that the preacher wishes to convey in an indirect sermon. The coda element allows the preacher to recapture some control by directly applying the message to the hearer.

In a mission congregation, the preacher can use the coda effectively as a conclusion to the indirect sermon. The indirect sermon preached in a mission setting will seek to tell the Gospel in an indirect way, in an effort to draw the listener into the message. The indirect language involves the hearer in the human

drama of the story. The indirect preaching shows the relevance of the message. The coda element in this situation will directly speak the Gospel, so that the hearer explicitly hears the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The coda element is also effective when it is used in the context of the established congregation. In this context, the believers have sufficient background knowledge of the Christian faith. Information is replaced with indirect language that proclaims the Gospel. The coda can be used in this instance to reinforce the message proclaimed indirectly (for example, through a Christ figure). When a character in the sermon proclaims the Gospel so that in the preacher's opinion the hearer has heard the Gospel explicitly, the preacher can then use the coda to bring the message to a fitting conclusion.

Some practitioners of the use of story in the sermon advocate that "the story is the preaching itself."¹⁴ In this instance the congregation is left hanging and the listener draws his own conclusion.¹⁵ The preacher must exercise good judgement when using the coda. It must not be too lengthy, so as to tax the ability of the hearer to listen what has been said. The coda effectively emphasizes again the point of the sermon in much the same way an advertisement reminds the hearer of the product to be considered.

Every successful story, whether used in advertising or the sermon, has certain characteristics which make it succeed. Two elements vital to the success of the indirect sermon are distance

and participation. Distance is described as:

That quality in a communicative event that preserves invaluable benefits for the message and for the listener. For the message, distance preserves its objectivity as history, its continuity as tradition, and its integrity as a word that has existence prior to and apart from me as a listener. In other words, the distance between the message and the listener conveys the sense of substantive nature and independence of the message, qualities that add to rather than detract from the persuasive and attention-drawing power of the message. I am much more inclined toward a message that has its own intrinsic life and force and that was prepared with no apparent awareness of me than toward a message that obviously did not come into being until I as a listener appeared and then was hastily improvised with desire for relevance offered as reason for the sloppy form and shallow content.¹⁶

Distance in the sermon allows the listener the ability to reflect upon, reject, accept, or make a decision concerning the message.¹⁷

The second important element of the indirect sermon is participation. The communication experience draws the listener into the message. The hearer experiences the thoughts that are related in the message. Participation is described as:

The free participation on the part of the hearer in the issues, the crises, the decisions, the judgment, and the promise of the message. Participation means the listener overcomes the distance, not because the speaker applied everything, but because the listener identified with the experiences and thoughts related in the message that were analogous to his own. The fundamental presupposition operative here is the general similarity of human experiences. It is this which makes communication possible...¹⁸

Another element of successfully using the indirect technique is simplicity. The preacher who uses the indirect method can take a page from television advertisements. A simple approach is preferable to gain the attention of the hearer. The plot or theme of the message should be concise. The language in the sermon should model an advertisement in that it will be simple and direct.

Simplicity in the indirect sermon will increase the ability of the listener to understand and apply the message to his context.

The indirect sermon should have the element of vividness and memorability. Dull sermons are usually a result of a lack of vividness.¹⁹ The language and story need to penetrate the emotions and imaginations of the listener. Descriptive words add to the memorability both on the part of the preacher and listener. A story with vivid detail adds to the comprehension in pointing out important information to the listener that is worth remembering.²⁰

The aspect of relevance is an important element in any sermon, especially in the indirect sermon. The art of preaching has been described as "bridge building" wherein the preacher speaks to the needs of the people with the Word of God. John Stott elaborates the need for relevance in that:

Although we must not overestimate our congregation's intellectual capacity, we must not underestimate it either. My plea is that we treat them as real people with real questions; that we grapple in our sermon with real issues; and that we build bridges into the real world in which they live and love, work and play, laugh and weep, struggle and suffer, grow old and die. We have to provoke them to think about their life in all its moods, to challenge them to make Jesus Christ the Lord of every area of it, and to demonstrate his contemporary relevance.²¹

The indirect sermon takes on a character all its own. It will:

Have the scope that ties it to the life of the larger community; it means the message has memory and hope; it means to be life-size in the sense of touching all the keys on the board rather than only intellectual or emotional or volitional; it means conveying the sense of movement from one place to another; it means having this movement on its own, as though the presence of the listeners were not essential to its process; it means thinking alongside the hearers.²²

The final element of a successful indirect sermon is the delivery. The appropriateness of the delivery is extremely important. The effectiveness of the sermon will depend in large part on the style of delivery.

I am convinced that a style of delivery for overhearing comes to the communicator who experiences, reflects on, is persuaded of the appropriateness and power, and employs discriminately, this dynamic. Voice and frame will announce loudly if it was a clever Saturday night notion. Effectiveness increases as comfort with it increases, as it comes to fit the contours of your self, much in the manner of an old sweater.²³

The indirect sermon will be effective when the preacher makes the message a part of himself. The hearing of the message consumes the preacher so that the preacher and listener are moved. The emotions of the sermon become the emotions of the preacher so that the sermon moves at a natural pace that accurately recreates the story for the listener.²⁴ Thus the sermon draws the hearer into the message so that the Spirit works actively in the life of the listener. The following model sermon uses exclusively indirect language in the presentation of the message. In this sermon, I attempt to apply the principles of the indirect method. In the evaluations submitted by the members of Redeemer Lutheran Church, I hope to discover the effectiveness of the indirect language and its effects on the hearer.

A Model Sermon

The text that I have selected for this model sermon is from John 15:13. The text reads: "Greater love no one has than this

(love), that someone lays down his life for his friends" (my translation). Jesus speaks these words in the context of His final days on earth. Previous to this Jesus washed the disciples' feet in an example of servanthood (John 13). He speaks at length about the person and work of the Holy Spirit (John 14), and in this chapter He deals with the subject of sanctification. He states that He is the vine and His disciples the branches. The disciples and followers of Christ will bear much fruit for Him if they are grafted into and remain faithful to the Savior (John 15:1-8). In this paragraph where we find our text, Jesus is telling His disciples about the love God has for them. The followers of Christ will find true joy that will last forever when they have the love of God in Christ Jesus. Our text states that the greatest love known to people is the sacrificial love that one human being has for another. This sacrificial love is supremely expressed in the sacrificial life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus for humanity. As a result of God's love for us in Christ, we are called friends of God and are moved by His love to show love to others. This thought is also expressed in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth where we read:

A new way of living has come into existence. God has done all this. He has restored our relationship with him through Christ, and has given us this ministry of restoring relationships. In other words, God was using Christ to restore his relationship with humanity. He didn't hold people's faults against them, and he has given us this message of restore relationships to tell others. Therefore, we are Christ's representatives, and through us God is calling you. We beg you on behalf of Christ to become reunited with God. God had Christ, who was sinless, take our sin so that we might receive God's approval through him(II Cor. 5:17b-21).

The outline for this sermon utilizes the elements of the indirect method as previously stated. These elements are orientation, complication, crisis, resolution, and coda. The outline is as follows:

Orientation: The characters of the story are Chris, Ken, and their friends. The scene takes place on a summer's day at the beach.

Complication: At the beach Chris is the subject of much ridicule. He never has measured up in the eyes of his company of friends. He is mocked for the way he acts and looks. He would like to be considered a friend but has been ostracized because of the way he dresses and looks. In spite of the treatment by his "friends," Chris still likes them and yearns for their acceptance in return. Chris has been employed as a lifeguard at the beach for the summer months. As a result of their ridicule Chris' day at the beach has turned into a day where he is once again rejected by his friends. His yearning for their friendship quickly turns into Chris's questioning of why he wants to associate with those who continually ridicule him.

Crisis: The crisis occurs in the water. While swimming after lunch, Ken cramps up and screams for help. His friends think that he is pulling one more practical joke at Chris's expense. At first, Chris thinks that this is just one more prank, and ultimately, he would be subjected to ridicule. The seriousness of the job of being a lifeguard presents Chris with a dilemma. Should he take this plea for help seriously? Chris ventures out into the

water to help by throwing a preserver. He was still wary and did not want to get involved. Seeing the life and death situation, he ventures further out into the water to seek to save his friend's life.

Resolution: With life preserver in hand, Chris throws out the preserver and Ken grabs on for dear life. Ken's life is spared but Chris is pulled in because of the swift undertow. The one who seeks to save his friend's life ends up giving his own. Search teams conduct a massive search for Chris. Hours later Chris' body is found. Ken weeps at the corpse of the one who gave his life for him. He resolves to change his ways by showing love and concern for others in the same way Chris showed his love for Ken.

Coda: In order to bring the sermon to fitting conclusion and relate the story to Christ's love for us, the text (John 15:13) would be read as a conclusion to the sermon.

The following is a sermon based on the principles previously discussed. The text is John 15: 13 and the title of the sermon is "The Greatest Love."

Sermon: It was a typical hot summer day on the beaches of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The sun burned brightly and glistened off the waves of the Atlantic. A group of high school seniors decided to spend one last day on the beach before school would begin on Monday. One such student, Ken, was by everyone's accounts the All-American boy. He had the looks and charm which attracted many people to him. Ken, though, played favorites. He associated with some and made fun of others. He thought he was

funny as many adolescents do, but his sense of humor was biting. When he made a joke, it was often at the expense of one his classmates, Chris.

Chris liked Ken and seemingly had unending patience with Ken. Chris was the usual focal point of Ken's humor and practical jokes. It wasn't that Chris was all that unlikable; it was just that he was such an easy target, a marked man, when it came to being the butt of Ken's jokes.

Chris wanted to fit in but never quite felt like he made the mark. He was a nice kid, but the imperfections and unpolished side showed at times. While Ken might have appeared to be the All American boy, with perfect complexion and clothes that fit well to his young body. Chris was just the opposite. However, he didn't set out to be the opposite. His skin wasn't perfect, the acne and its scars showed in the light of day. The glasses he wore were not the latest model; in fact it looked like he'd probably had them since junior high. He never wore the clothes which were considered up-to-date by his peers. His parents took good care of him, but they felt like many of us might, that the Starter jackets and expensive tennis shoes were excessive and unnecessary for someone his age. They felt their hard-earned money could be spent better in other ways. It wasn't that Chris or his family were less well off than his friends and their families; let's just say that their priorities were different. However, to this group of teenagers the differences were noticeable, and his friends rarely let an opportunity pass not to remind Chris that he looked and acted

differently than they. Chris never did fit in with the "in crowd" the way Ken did. Chris hung around with Ken and was willing to do almost anything to be accepted. Ken, though, usually saw Chris as a nuisance and an easy mark for his pointed humor.

Chris worked as a lifeguard at the beach during the summer. On this particular hot summer day Ken took advantage of his friendship with Chris to leave his valuables and towel near Chris's lifeguard post. Chris saw Ken leave his bag near the base of his post, imagining that Ken would kindly ask him to keep his eye on his valuables. At last, a perfect time to help out Ken.

Ken, though, did not say a word. Instead, he glanced back, satisfied that his billfold would be safe near the lifeguard station that Chris was manning. Ken calmly walked to the shore of the ocean and began to swim out into the deep areas. Even though Ken hadn't even said "hi" to Chris, Chris, seeing Ken swimming, shouted a word of warning, "Be careful, there are riptides out there today. Don't stray any farther than the buoys!" Ken, being confident of his swimming skill as well as his tanned body, quickly scanned the beach for any young women that might occupy his time this sunny day. Unsuccessful in that venture, he settled on another game to pass his time. "I wonder how far out I can go before Chris stands up on that lifeguard stand and makes a fool of himself," Ken thought. It would be fun to goad Chris into deep waters. Not to mention what an ideal time it would be to show Chris that even though he was the lifeguard, that didn't make him the better swimmer.

Ken bounded farther into the water, waves hitting him in his chest. Ken was an excellent swimmer and it showed as Ken glided effortlessly across the waves. Swimming some 500 feet offshore, Ken dove under the surf. Soon he became a speck on the surface of the water. Chris marveled at the confidence Ken showed in the water. But wait! Something didn't quite look right. "Something's wrong out there," thought Chris. Chris took the life preserver and started to run out to the banks of the shoreline. "Knowing him," thought Chris, "this is probably some stupid practical joke. I'll just wait and see what happens. This is one time when he won't make a fool of me...." Chris started to venture out into the ocean. The waves started to swirl around Chris' ankles. A crowd was starting to form at the shoreline. "It's okay, folks, don't worry, everything is alright." Still Chris sensed something was wrong. Ken bobbed up and down in the water once. Twice. Three times. Then, he was nowhere in sight. Chris ran further into the water holding the lifebelt tied to a long rope wrapped around his ankle. A larger crowd started to form around the shore. Two other lifeguards ran to offer their assistance.

Chris swam as fast as he could, the waves pounding against his body, water spraying in his face. Some 50 feet away he saw Ken's head struggling to stay above water. Gasping for air, Ken yelled, "I'm drowning." Chris threw the lifebelt like one would throw a boomerang. Ken reached for it and grabbed on for dear life. The crowd gathered at the shore grew larger, and one noticed the eerie hush of a group of people breathing in unison. Ken struggled to

grasp onto the belt, waves pounding onto his chest. His hands slipped off and he went under. He tried again and grabbed a firm hold on the belt. But Ken couldn't find Chris. Normally the rope would be wrapped or tied around Chris' ankle, but this time something had gone terribly wrong. The force of the waves and undertow separated Chris from his lifebelt. He was nowhere to be seen. Two other guards attempted to reach Ken as he fought against the waves. With belts attached to their ankles they swim to Ken, reaching and stabilizing him by holding onto the rope. The waves grew higher and stronger in their intensity. The guards began to pull Ken towards shore. Looking out to the water, there was still no sign of Chris. Ken braced himself as he felt the undertow pulling his legs out towards the ocean's depths. Others rushed towards Ken to offer their help. Again the undertow tried to pull those in the water out farther into the sea. Exhausted from the heat and strength of the ocean, Ken was lifted up onto the beach.

Within minutes search teams in boats patrolled the beach looking for Chris. The EMS personnel attended to Ken. He told them of the strong undertow and how Chris saved his life by throwing the preserver. Still, there was no news about Chris.

Hours pass which seem like days. Around seven that evening the search teams concentrate on one area of water about two miles from shore. They are seen pulling a lifeless body into the boat.

Ken meets the search teams at the dock. Weeping, he is able to identify the body as that of the one who gave his life that he might live. The ocean had not been kind to Chris since he had died

at sea. Ken was only just beginning to realize what Chris had suffered for him. Sobbing uncontrollably, Ken asks all who will listen for forgiveness. Taking Chris into his arms, Ken speaks for all to hear, "You really loved me. I should be dead and you should be alive. I promise that I will never forget you." A promise in the passion of the moment, but a promise that Ken knew he'd keep.

One often hears that near death experiences create a powerful and immediate change in the near victim's life. It was no different for Ken. He grew older quickly in the course of one sunny afternoon. Life seemed much more precious than it had just hours earlier for him, and a sense of kindness and love overtook him.

"No one has greater love than this, that a person lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Conclusion

The indirect method of preaching is a challenging task. If left to the last minute the preacher will find it difficult to create a sermon in limited amount of time. The ideal practice for the utilization of this method involves advanced planning on the part of the preacher. Planning will allow time for the preacher's creative juices to flow.

This sermon model is not the only procedure that can be used. There are many sources which the creative preacher can employ. Historical narratives can prove a rich resource from which to draw

material. Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story is one such resource which is readily available. Whatever means is used, it is imperative for the preacher to use sound exegesis in order for the message to be Biblically grounded. Appropriate homiletical methods aid the preacher in producing a well-constructed sermon. The indirect method of preaching will be an asset to both preacher and listener.

Endnotes

1. Ralph Bohlmann, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (St. Louis:Concordia, 1983), p.21.
2. A more detailed discussion of these principles can be found in Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions, by Ralph Bohlmann and The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, by C.F.W. Walther.
3. M. Reu, Homiletics (St. Louis:Concordia, 1977), p. 345.
4. Ibid., p. 346.
5. Ibid.
6. This quote is taken from a reprint in the April 1969 issue of the Concordia Theological Monthly. Originally it was presented as a paper which was heard and discussed by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations as part of the comprehensive study of Biblical hermeneutics called for by the 1965 Synodical Convention, p. 12.
7. John Fritz, "Why Preach?" Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. XI, No. 7, 1940, 509.
8. Ibid., 511.
9. Reu, Homiletics, p. 361.
10. Ibid., pp. 361-362.
11. Caemmerer, Preaching for the Church, pp. 81-118.
12. Ibid., p. 87.
13. Ibid., p. 36.
14. Jensen, Telling the Story, pp. 144-145.
15. Ibid.
16. Craddock, Overhearing the Gospel, pp. 121-122.
17. Ibid., p. 122.
18. Ibid., p. 123.
19. Marquart, Quest for Better Preaching, p. 154.

20. Eugene Lowrey, How to Preach a Parable (Nashville:Abingdon, 1989), p. 66.
21. Stott, Between Two Worlds, p. 147.
22. Craddock, Overhearing the Gospel, p. 137.
23. Ibid., p. 127.
24. Ibid., pp. 127, 137.

EVALUATION

General Observations

Evaluation aids in improvement in preaching. Evaluation can take many different shapes and forms. Self evaluation helps the preacher to know his own strengths and weaknesses and to take the necessary steps for improvement. Spousal or familial evaluation is a prevalent form which takes places in conversation over the Sunday dinner table. Still another form of evaluation is by the members of the congregation. Casual evaluation measures the number of "good message, Pastor" remarks received at the church door. Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses. Inherent drawbacks common to these methods for the preacher are lack of objectivity, a preoccupation with a certain aspect of sermon delivery, or the acquisition of bad habits or theology to compensate for past transgressions.¹

Nevertheless, criticism is important in evaluating the sermon. Criticism seeks to ascertain what the hearer is getting from the message.² Helpful evaluation seeks to aid the preacher in that it will analyze specific components of the sermon and how these components relate to the objective of aiding God's people.³ Good evaluation will aid the preacher in proclaiming the Gospel. One expert states:

One reason why this program of criticism is so necessary for every preacher is that he is inclined to measure his

performance by his intentions. He wants to preach the Gospel, and therefore he thinks he does. He has the Gospel of God in his mind and acknowledges it as the dynamic of God, and yet he speaks it perfunctorily or neglects to link it to the goal of his sermon as its major impulse. He wants to speak clearly, and he says facts that mean much to him and uses words which are clear to him--and yet the people may be sitting there as spectators of an alien show. Good preparation said every inch of the way: "What do the people think? How can I reach them?" Criticism says: "Did you?"⁴

The sole purpose of evaluating the sermon is to test and see that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been proclaimed to the edification of God's people. In order to achieve this goal the preacher then must craft his evaluation tool so that he receives objective answers as possible to this important question.

Criteria for Evaluation

Effective evaluation utilizes certain components of sermon evaluation. The criteria used for sermon evaluation take into account the language and style of the sermon, the doctrine and facts of the message, the preacher's voice, inflection, rate of delivery, and other general comments and suggestions.⁵ An evaluation of the indirect sermon will seek to use these components with slight modification.

The evaluation of the language and style of the indirect sermon will answer certain questions regarding the message. Are the sentences clear? Is there sufficient movement in the sermon? Is the listener able to picture the message as it is being delivered? Is the idea of the message presented in a logical manner?

The evaluation of the doctrines and facts of the message concerns itself with the presentation of Law and Gospel. Is the hearer confronted with the Law in the message? Is the Gospel preached? Is there proper distinction between Law and Gospel? Are the Law and Gospel presented in a manner which affects the listener's experience? Is the message textual? Does the imagery presented in the indirect sermon help or hinder the proclamation of the Gospel? Is the message relevant to the life of the person in the pew?

An evaluation of the style of delivery is important to the effectiveness of the indirect method of preaching. Is the voice used by the preacher appropriate to the message? Is proper inflection used in the delivery to help convey the message of the sermon? Is the rate of delivery appropriate to the message of the day? Is the delivery of the sermon suited to the material presented in the sermon?⁶

The following evaluation tool seeks to utilize these components. It is the instrument used by members of my congregation in evaluating the effectiveness of the sample sermon found in chapter four of this project. The method of evaluation that I have selected for this project is evaluation by a variety of members of my congregation. This evaluation makes certain assumptions. Comments in the evaluation may reflect the evaluator's general attitude towards the pastor. Parishioners who like the pastor are more likely to give more favorable evaluation than those who dislike the pastor.⁷ In selecting members to

evaluate the sermon, I chose members who I thought would be honest and fair in their evaluation and who could rise above their personal feelings. The team of evaluators include members of the Board of Elders because of their knowledge of Lutheran doctrine. One alternative to this method seeks the evaluation of peers or other members of neighboring congregations. I believe that the evaluation by members of my congregation is the appropriate method to use in this process. Sermon preparation addresses certain issues in the congregation. Evaluation outside of the congregation loses the congregational context. Therefore I believe that Redeemer Lutheran Church is an appropriate context in which to evaluate the effectiveness of the sermon using the indirect method.

The objective in preparing the evaluative instrument was to make certain that the form would be clear, concise, and specific in the questions asked. The congregation's evaluation of the sample sermon presented in Chapter Four of this project uses the following evaluative instrument. ⁸

Sermon Evaluation

You are invited to be a partner in Pastor Davidson's Doctor of Ministry project. Please share your reactions to today's sermon on this form. Give your reactions to the following questions to help ascertain the effectiveness of the sermon preached today. Thank you!

I. Content: How was the Law preached in the sermon today?

How was the Gospel applied in the sermon today?

Please explain from hearing the sermon today how the sermon related to the theme and text?

Were the ideas clearly presented in the sermon?

Did the story add or detract from your understanding of God's Word today?

II. Style: Was there an appropriate rate, inflection, and style in the delivery of the sermon?

Did the preacher speak personally to you in the sermon today?

Did you find your attention span greater or more taxed with this style of sermon?

Would you like this type of sermon preached again? Why or why not?

Please share any additional comments and suggestions on the reverse of this form. Thank you for your help.

Sermon Assessment

Eight participants from the congregation were selected to evaluate the indirect sermon. A summary of their findings follow.

I. Content: How was the Law preached in the sermon today?

From the eight respondents, two answered with a question mark, signifying that they could not distinguish the preaching of the Law in the sermon. One who answered with a question mark qualified the answer by stating that the Law was preached, but he could not discern how it was preached. Other responses were:

* No other God-- Life in Christ.

* Ken ignored the danger of the tides and waves.

* We are to live by faith.

* The wind and waves should have shown him the danger.

* The 5th commandment comes to mind-- "Thou shalt not kill" (hurt nor harm) was certainly evident both physically and mentally.

* Love your neighbor - "trying to fit in," honor your father and mother, different priorities about clothing, etc.

How was the Gospel applied in the sermon today?

These responses were:

* There is no greater love than that for another.

* Love at all times as Christ loves us and also forgive one another. A friend loves at all times.

* The greatest love you can show is to give your life for your friends- Chris tried to rescue Ken, who did not appreciate the love

of Chris.

- * Always be willing to give, be ready for the Lord's loving.

- * Chris' life was a living Gospel

- * He gave his life for a friend.

* Just as Jesus told His disciples to make their treasures in heaven, so Ken needed to look at his priorities. Chris was awake and ready, an example of the Gospel.

- * Chris died for Ken as Christ died for me (to save a life).

Please explain from hearing the sermon today how the sermon was related to the text.

The responses were:

- * Showed greater love, similar to Jesus.

- * At his own risk he tried to save a friend.

- * They both showed tremendous love.

- * The greatest love is giving our lives for someone else.

* Chris cared, served and showed love toward Ken, thus expressing "The Greatest Love" by laying down his life for a friend(John 15:13).

* The lifeguard really wanted to be the swimmer's friend. He turned out to be his best friend.

* Laying down one's life for a friend, to save a life, as Christ loved us, and laid down His life for us.

* The love was demonstrated by the act of Chris, trying to rescue Ken.

Were the ideas clearly presented in the sermon?

Seven responses said yes. One response gave the answer Ken

vs. Chris.

Did the story add or detract from your understanding of God's Word today?

The responses were:

- * Presented a very clear picture of the greatest gift.
- * It added to it.
- * It added to the understanding as a practical example.
- * Definitely adds. You get to see the main point in the story

and the Word.

- * Enforced my understanding.
- * Added.
- * The story carried the message very well.
- * Add, God sent His Son, just as the lifeguard went on or was sent to save the swimmer.

II. Style: Was there an appropriate rate, inflection, and style in the delivery of the sermon?

The responses were:

All responses indicated that the delivery of the sermon was appropriate to the message. One response noted that the sanctuary became very quiet as the sermon began, noting the interest on the part of the congregation.

Did the preacher speak personally to you in the sermon today?

The responses were:

- * Yes, especially to my eleven year old son, he listened in awe.
- * Yes, he always does.

* Well, not exactly, hope not personally.

* Yes, we are all to show love as it is shown to us.

* As storyteller.

* He always does.

* Yes, there was a strong message for all, including myself, to consider priorities, put first things first, be ready and "live" the love as a servant of the Lord.

One response was simply a question mark.

Did you find your attention span greater or more taxed with this style of sermon?

The responses were:

* Better, stories well done are always better.

* I am not sure my attention span was any greater but certainly not any more taxed. I believe the style would appeal to many individuals, particularly to younger members and visitors.

* Yes, greater. The subject truly touched me, we had been swimming for the last time this summer the day before!

* It was greater.

* Both.

* Greater, because you can see the build up to the main point of the sermon.

* Greater.

* What was the style of this sermon?

Would you like this type of sermon preached again?

The responses were:

* Yes.

* Yes, on occasion.

* Yes, because it shows the Word applied to everyday living.

* Whenever the situation prompts it. Points to us what Jesus did for undeserving us.

* Yes, because of the way it was presented. Kept it on an even keel, I wanted to hear what was going to happen next.

* Yes, I believe that everyday life situations (parables) help me to understand the Bible better and God's will in my life.

* Yes, it was an effective style and should be repeated but possibly not every sermon. The same style could lose its effectiveness in time. A variety of styles and presentations might better reach different needs, levels of understanding, and preferences.

* Yes, more stories about the life of Christ.

Please share any additional comments and suggestions.

The responses were:

* I walked away from this and got closer to His people.

* I was surprised at the abrupt ending but the closing statement relating to the text left a strong and lasting impression. I guess I was expecting some reference or summary relating back to the Gospel and Christ's love for us and application directed to us today. However, the point had already been made very effectively. What more could be said?

* I appreciate hearing from the pulpit parenting reminders, etc., when Pastor tells all of us something that reinforces the Bible.

* I enjoy this style of sermon because it helps you to relate how God wants us to apply ourselves in everyday living. To carry His Word on past Sunday sermons and into the other six days of the week.

* I would have liked a little more direct relation to the Word in summary and conclusion.

Interpretation and Assessment of Results

The central theme of this sermon was the sacrificial love of God in Christ. In reading the members' evaluation of the sermon I was pleased at the level of understanding the members exhibited in the main point I was trying to make. Over half of the responses (five of the eight) showed in some manner an understanding of the sacrificial love of God in Christ. Two members were able to explain in some manner a proper distinction of the Law and Gospel. Six members either confused the two or did not find the Law preached anywhere in the sermon. Two factors may have contributed to this result. One factor may be the members' lack of knowledge as to the doctrines of Law and Gospel. Another (and probably more important factor) is the difficulty to directly show the proper distinction in the sermon. The uniqueness of Lutheran preaching is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. I have discovered that this is very difficult for the preacher to convey and the listener to ascertain in a story sermon.

The variety of responses concerning what the members

understood was said in the sermon indicates a basic principle of this method. The participant is drawn into the message through the process of overhearing. The story becomes the message. I believe that this was the case in this sermon. The variety of responses indicates that the Spirit has free course in the message and speaks uniquely to each hearer's situation. The listeners are left to draw their own conclusions and apply the message in a way which is meaningful to them. Therein lies the strength and weakness of this method. While the hearer is left to draw his own conclusion, the message heard may be entirely different than the message intended. From the responses, it seems that each member listened to the message, including the younger members.

In my opinion, the attention span of the congregation was greater for this type of sermon as compared to a more direct style of sermon. I felt that every member was listening to my every word. I must confess to a feeling of emptiness after the service. I attribute this to a desire to speak more directly to the congregation in order to explain the points I was trying to make. In the course of constructing an indirect sermon, I sought to allow the story to be the message. I refrained from expanding the conclusion in order to explain the story. It seems as if some members either expected this or would like to see this feature added in future story sermons.

The members responding liked this style of sermon. In reviewing their comments I believe that they affirm the findings of this study, namely that this type of sermon is appreciated by

members and is conducive to holding their attention during the sermon. Of particular note is the comment from one mother who noticed that her son listened intently to this message. This confirms my opinion that future sermons should occasionally use this type of format in order to effectively communicate to a younger generation who will be fluent in many aspects of modern media and its imagery.

Conclusion

The findings of this chapter serve to indicate that there is value to the use of the indirect method of preaching in a congregation. The indirect method allows the congregation to participate in a greater way than before in giving the listener permission to draw his own conclusion. The indirect method must, however, be used with some caution. In the course of writing an indirect message, I discovered that I needed more time than I would otherwise need in sermon preparation. If the pastor uses the indirect method in the congregation, he must take care in giving himself enough time to properly prepare and write the sermon. The story must become a part of the preacher's life in order to effectively communicate the Gospel to the congregation. The preacher who decides to preach using this method at the last minute will do a disservice to the Word and God's people. Yet when the proper preparation takes place in using this method, the congregation will hear the Word, apply it to their hearts, and want

to hear more.

Endnotes

1. Lowell Erdahl, Better Preaching: Evaluating the Sermon (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), pp. 12-13, 18-19.
2. Caemmerer, Preaching For the Church, p. 235.
3. Ibid., p. 239.
4. Ibid., p. 241.
5. Ibid., pp. 245-248.
6. The preceding paragraphs are a modification of Caemmerer's criteria for evaluating a sermon. Taken from Caemmerer, Preaching for the Church, pp. 245-248.
7. Erdahl, Better Preaching: Evaluating the Sermon, p. 19.
8. Adapted from Better Preaching: Evaluating the Sermon, by Lowell Erdahl, p. 30.

CONCLUSION

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has addressed cultural change since its formation. One can imagine the tension in congregations as German speaking immigrants sought to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ in an English speaking culture. The future of the Synod dictated the way the Synod addressed the change in culture.

Today preachers in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have been trained in a direct method of preaching. When Caemmerer compiled his notes on sermon theory and published these in book form, television and computers were in their infancy. Society thought and argued in logical terms. Pastors were trained to present sermons with a clear central thought. Concepts were of primary importance. Illustrations were secondary. The use of story simplified the understanding of the sermon.

Our society has changed drastically since the time Caemmerer wrote his book Preaching For The Church. Technology continues to boom. The media and its imagery drive our culture. Politicians are more concerned about image than substance. Advertising affects the way society purchases products. Television and its images influence the way society thinks and makes decisions. Whereas concepts dominated the way a previous culture thought, today images dominate the culture.

Preachers and those who train them need to understand the change of cultures and construct their sermons accordingly. Right hemispheric language (imagery) is prevalent today. The images of the media condition the ways in which people in our society think and respond. Therefore, I believe there is a new model that needs to be utilized today. This new model, the indirect method, learns the language of the media, conveying the message of the Scriptures in the language today's people understand and use. The indirect method presents the Law and Gospel in story form, demonstrating how people are affected and changed by Christ.

Imagine the Church sending a missionary to a foreign mission field. No training is provided the missionary in terms of the culture or language of the people. The expectation is that one culture will understand another. Will the missionary successfully preach the Gospel of Christ in a meaningful way to the people? Not unless the missionary learns the culture and language of the culture. Once the language and its culture are mastered, then the process of mission work begins. It is folly to expect a missionary to speak the Gospel in English to a culture which uses another language. Proper training equips the missionary for success in his task of preaching the Gospel. Present seminary training addresses the need for missionaries to become culturally literate in the mission field.

The present day culture is different than the culture of our forefathers. The challenge facing today's pastor and those who train pastors in homiletics is to become literate in the language

of the present culture. Right hemispheric language is the predominant language used today. Effective communication of the Gospel today requires proper training. Such training includes knowledge of right hemispheric language and the ability to communicate in this language. Pastors should become fluent in the ability to speak to the people of this changed culture. The development of continuing education courses for pastors will assist pastors in this ability. Future pastoral training at the seminary level should include courses which introduce the concepts of the indirect method.

The spiritual state of humanity has not changed. Humans remain sinners condemned by the Law. The only hope for sinners remains the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The present culture differs greatly from the culture of our forefathers. God has equipped humans with the ability to think and understand in pictures. Our Western culture has moved from a culture which communicates in concepts to a culture which creates meaning through images. Seminary training can adapt in order to answer the challenges and changes witnessed in today's society. The utilization of the indirect method will enable pastors to effectively communicate the Gospel to a people through images that are easily understood.

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