

Gennifer Benjamin Brooks. *Good News Preaching: Offering the Gospel in Every Sermon*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2009. 158 pages. \$25

Immediately following a recent academy of homiletics worship service, Gennifer Brooks said of my sermon, “I was listening for the good news.” Indeed she was. In fact, she listens for good news in every sermon, the central topic for her new book. Brooks teaches homiletics at Garrett – Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Gennifer Brooks’ words challenge homileticians to prepare students to become ministers and pastors who bring good news to audiences and congregations. She urges them to shape congregants’ Christian worldview and discipleship by reminding them that God’s grace is synonymous with God’s love in the world, and that is the good news (xv). She provides students of preaching with practical ways to appropriate her homiletic into their ministries. This book is replete with outlines that demonstrate how her homiletic process evolves through stages.

Brooks defines the sermon of good news in part as, proclamation for a particular audience’s context, interpretation that makes the proclamation relevant and alive, that helps people to experience the good news as grace, and celebrate and claim the love of God in Jesus Christ and respond and live socially and ethically through the gospel (2). Those who employ Brooks’ homiletic of good news preaching are not limited to a single passage in sermon delivery. Their source is “the entire message of scripture and theological beliefs of the church concerning God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit” (14). Brooks concedes that finding good news in all biblical texts as she describes is a struggle because of language and convoluted streams of historical contexts; but is God who works through these, and untangles the good news (15).

Brooks demonstrates thorough knowledge of her craft. She provides her readers an interpretive method of reading texts and then a map for students to follow from exegesis to hermeneutics and homiletics, something she calls homiletical exegesis: Identification of good news; Interpretation of the biblical text or the topic; and Analysis of the congregation – the situation of preaching. Included in her homiletical exegesis model, Brooks helps students, ministers, and pastors identify different scripture genres and suggests different sermon types that enhance proclamation of the good news (31).

Throughout this book, Brooks closely and consistently follows her definition of good news preaching definition; for example, she claims that the nature of preaching is contextual. By this she means that good news preaching must take into consideration the culture and needs of a congregation and their connections through shared experiences (often found in families or class mates). Therefore, contextualization makes preaching communal and provides for the congregation informal conversation that serves as an informal way to transfer information and knowledge (63). Brooks then restates sermon types but adds sermon styles for consideration: *The Traditional Sermon, Puritan Plain Style, The Narrative, The Journey to Celebration and The Four Pages of the Sermons* as building block or stages of learning how to effectively communicate good news. She then adds concrete ways to frame a sermon outline for students, ministers, and pastors: Introduction, Body and Conclusion (77-78).

Brooks concludes as she begins, demanding that preachers learn to listen and look for good news in their sermon passages. “I believe that every preacher is responsible for offering the good news of divine grace every time he or she preaches” (111). For Brooks, people who may be referred to as “broken” do not need someone to tell them that they are sinners; they get

that. They need preachers who can tell them that Gods' grace forgives sin and that this grace especially is for them. That is good news.

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