

Luke A. Powery, *Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2009. 184 pages. \$19.

Preaching through the chaos or even the emptiness of life is always one of the more difficult tasks we face. Whether suffering or wandering, the wilderness echoes often with what feels like no less than the confusing silence of God. Powery steps into the void to offer a beacon of direction. *Spirit Speech* challenges us to spend time in the grind and grist of life to discern how the gospel message of grace in Christ witnesses to God's presence and commitment to life—yes, even our daily lives. Our rush into resurrection celebration in our sermons may actually distort that message. The space at the foot of the cross transforms our lives already in the grace of God's love. Powery carefully tethers lament and celebration together to grasp in them a necessary dialectic for preaching a living Word.

With the help of the Psalter, Pauline pastoral teachings, and African American theological hermeneutics, Powery argues how we may discern the work of the Spirit in our sermons. He identifies five manifestations of the Spirit through the use of language, the focus or content, and how we structure the sermon. These manifestations are lament, celebration, our encounter with grace, ecclesial unity, and social outreach and fellowship with the world. The text itself is structured under these manifestations. Powery holds together lament and celebration to form what he calls the doxology of preaching. The reader may find that the author may at times uncritically conflate the five foci as manifestations. Instead, it seems more germane that lament and celebration offer the paradigmatic structure, with grace, unity, and social outreach forming the theological content or themes of lament and celebration. Notwithstanding, Powery does helpfully point out the latter three are complementary to the former, and spends important time developing the biblical and theological reasoning behind their interwoven character in our preaching and lives of faith.

The payoff of the text comes with Powery's direct attention to the rhetoric of preaching along with the marks of lament and the marks of celebration. Powery peers into how some preachers have effectively woven lament and celebration together in preaching. This venture into praxis is rather brief at times, but the author quite insightfully analyzes various sermon moves and preaching practices that the reader will find particularly resourceful. We learn to discern and work with the manifestations of Spirit in our preaching through lament and celebration together because the very Spirit of teaching graces this text.

Dale P. Andrews, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN