

## Outline

The Outreach/Evangelistic Sermon

The Special Occasion Sermon

    The Wedding Sermon

    The Funeral Sermon

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## Required Reading

None Required

## References

- Brian Chapell      *Christ-Centred Preaching – redeeming the expository sermon*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). Appendixes 6-8 – Wedding, Funeral and Evangelistic Sermon principles.
- Brian Chapell      *The Hardest Sermons you'll ever have to Preach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). For examples and instruction on a wide range of occasional and difficult sermons.
- John Chapman      *Setting Hearts on Fire – a guide to giving evangelistic talks* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 1999). Chapter 3. – Principles for evangelistic sermons.
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones      *Evangelistic Sermons at Aberavon* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983 – for examples of evangelistic sermons.
- SMBC Press (ed.)      *How to prepare a Bible Talk* (Croydon: SMBC, 2003). 47-52, 68-78 – Preaching at Weddings and Funerals and Preparing Evangelistic Talks.
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## Set-up:

- *Chocolates for students – to say well done at getting through the course.*

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- *Pray to begin*
- *Check to see how the 'Preaching assessments' have been going as many would have been preaching in churches recently.*

## Introduction

### Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching

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Well done, you have just about made it to the end of *Introduction to Preaching*! Before we move through to the hard work which is the next fifty (or so) years of regular expository preaching, it is worth considering two uniquely special kinds of preaching – that is the evangelistic or outreach sermon and the occasional sermon, such as that for a wedding, funeral or special event.

These kinds of sermons deserve special attention, not because you are doing anything fundamentally different to the weekly congregational sermon, but because they each come with a collection of additional factors to consider.

Today I want prepare you for what may be some of the most difficult sermons you have to prepare and deliver.

### **The Outreach/Evangelistic Sermon**

First the *Evangelistic* or *Outreach* sermon.

- If I am totally honest with you evangelism is not my favourite form of ministry. I am a reluctant evangelist and I have to work to keep it on the agenda in my life.
- Why do it? For several reasons:

1. **To give God the glory he deserves.** Revelation 4:11 helps us to remember that God is worthy to receive glory and honour and power for creating all and giving all their being. We should hallow his name on earth – as it is hallowed in heaven.

2. **It matters to Jesus.** Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and that was me. It is Jesus commission to his disciples to ‘*go and make disciples of all nations*’ (Matt 28:19) and so as workers of the harvest we should compassionately seek to save people (Matt 9:36-37). If it matters to Jesus it should matter to us.

3. **People are going to hell.** Not a particularly popular reality but a real one none-the-less. There is a hell, the devil exists, he wants people there, and people really do go there. But Jesus is a real saviour, he exists, he saves and he really takes people with him to heaven. We tell people so that whoever believes in the son has eternal life rather than reject him and remain in God’s wrath (John 3:26).

4. **We are told to evangelise.** Paul’s instruction to Timothy when instructing him to preach is to ‘*do the work of an evangelist*’ (2 Tim 4:5). We are not under any less compulsion.

### **Evangelistic Preaching**

### Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching

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- In a sense, all preaching should be evangelistic – when you preach the Bible and point to Jesus it is evangelistic.
- Look at John 5 - Jesus in speaking to the Jews speaks about John the Baptist's testimony of him – verse 36 [READ - John 5:36-40]. He rebukes the Jews for diligently studying the scriptures in order to understand eternal life, but refusing to see that those scriptures point to Jesus. In verses 45-47 he rebukes them for believing what Moses wrote, but not believing what Jesus said. (See also: Luke 24:19-27, 44-47)
- When you preach the Bible and correctly point to Jesus – you call on people to believe – so all preaching should be evangelistic.
- As you preach you help the listener to understand **that we are sinners in need of a saviour**. In any given book of the Bible, it is worth asking, where and how does the particular author make that point.

Some clear examples:

- Isaiah tells Israel that because of their iniquities they are in need of a man of sorrows *'he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed'* (Is 53:1-6 ,esp. verse 5.)
- Paul makes it quite clear in Romans 3:23 *'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'*.
- John makes it clear in 3:19-21 *'This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.'*
- If you don't know how the passage before you relates to Jesus and his salvation – then you aren't ready to preach it because you have not fully understood the passage.
- So, in a sense, all preaching should be evangelistic – when you preach the Bible and correctly point to Jesus.
- But for the sake of this topic, let's make the distinction between *evangelistic preaching* and *other preaching* by saying this:
  - a. Evangelistic preaching is *totally focused* on the unbeliever.
  - And b. Evangelistic preaching *assumes much less* from the listener (e.g. no understanding of the gospel/Bible).

### **Preachers Pre-suppositions**

- What should we pre-suppose as we contemplate preaching evangelistically:
  - We speak so that people respond.
  - We call for a specific response – that is repentance and faith.
  - Our efforts need to be genuine and dependant on the work of the Spirit.

### **Marks of an Evangelistic sermon**

- What are the necessary marks of an evangelistic sermon:
  - It is Biblical – not necessarily a verse by verse exegesis.
  - It preaches Jesus as Saviour.
  - It explains...
    - a. the seriousness of sin (our need)
    - b. the significance of the cross (the answer)
    - c. and the nature of faith (the result)
  - It is aimed at Unbelievers
  - Its style is controlled by
    - a. the target listener (e.g. free of jargon, technical terms and is user friendly) and
    - b. the location of the presentation (i.e. closed room as opposed to open air).

### **Principles for Evangelistic Preaching**

- There are some governing principles to bear in mind:
  - *It should be positive* – based on what God has done, is doing or will do for those who place their hope in Jesus. Not based on what people should or should not do, otherwise it becomes moralistic.
  - *Tap into a common felt need* - an evangelistic sermon will often win a hearing when you connect in with where an unsaved person thinks or hurts (e.g. uncertainty when it comes to death, disappointment with the world etc.). The answer can then be shown found in Christ.
  - *It should be clear* – not above a primary school level of aptitude (says Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, page 360). Your efforts in the talk should spell out concepts using simple and understandable terms (replacing the big theological terms e.g. repentance, salvation, gospel etc.)
  - *It should be brief* – circumstance, nature of message, location, skill of preacher can all influence – but generally never longer than 20 minutes.

## **Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching**

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- *It should communicate urgency* – there is a reason to respond. Say it!

➤ QUESTION/COMMENT??

### **The Evangelistic Talk**

#### **1. Pick the Passage.**

- The occasion will often stand alone and so the passage can often stand alone. There are gold passages (to name just a few):
  - Genesis 3:1-5 – Temptations
  - Isaiah 53:1-6 – Pierced for our transgressions
  - Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18-30 – Rich Young Ruler
  - Luke 15:11-31 – Parable of the Lost Son
  - Luke 19:1-10 – Seek and save the lost
  - John 3:16 – God so loved
  - John 3:36 – Believe in the Son
  - John 14:6 – I am the Way, Truth, Life
  - Romans 5:6-8 – While we were still sinners, Christ died.
  - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 – By this gospel you are saved
  - 2 Corinthians 5:19 – God reconciling the world in Christ
  - Ephesians 2:1-10 – Dead in transgressions, alive in Christ.
  - Philippians 2:1-11 – Christ humbled himself to the cross
  - 1 Peter 2:4-10 – Christ the cornerstone
- In the course of your regular expository preaching, when the passage opens a door to be evangelistic – then take the opportunity. Why wait for an ‘outreach Sunday’ when every Sunday is really an ‘outreach’ Sunday!

#### **2. Know the Listener**

- Knowing the listener for any preaching (as we have discussed in this course) is important. For the evangelistic sermon, the particular person you have in mind is not the Christian person who you regularly have sitting before you. We have said it is primarily the unbeliever. Do your work to understand them.
- Recognise and understand the differences between a believer's mindset and a non-believer's mindset.

## Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching

**Exercise – [In pairs]** Fill in the table below contrasting the believers and non-believers mindset on key gospel topics.

Topic	Believers Worldview/Mindset	Non-Believer Worldview/Mindset
<b>God</b>	e.g. Loving creator, sustainer, provider	e.g. Unloving, Non-existent or removed or powerless
<b>Jesus</b>	<i>Lord and Saviour</i>	<i>Good Man or Moral Teacher</i> <i>Swear word! Baby in a crib.</i>
<b>Gospel</b>	<i>Great news</i>	<i>Great Music (from deep south US)</i> <i>What is 'gospel'?</i>
<b>Sin</b>	<i>Rebellion, Rejection of God</i>	<i>Bad behaviour</i> <i>Inconveniencing the other or something which is a serious grievance (i.e. paedophilia, murder)</i>
<b>Guilt</b>	<i>A condemned state</i>	<i>An emotion, a legal term.</i>
<b>Forgiveness</b>	<i>Offered to restore</i>	<i>Weakness, saying 'sorry'.</i>
<b>Salvation</b>	<i>No longer under condemnation</i>	<i>Unnecessary</i>
<b>Death</b>	<i>The start of something glorious</i>	<i>The end</i>
<b>Heaven</b>	<i>Home</i>	<i>Somewhere good people (like me) go</i>

- Give 5 minutes
- Debrief – get the women in the group to give the believers mindset and the men in the group to give the non-believer mindset.

- As you preach to the non-Believer (bearing in mind the different mindset's they may hold) you want to:
  - provide the right information
  - in an understandable way (i.e. free of jargon)
  - to persuade them that this information is both true and reliable
  - and that they should decide to act accordingly.

Ultimately you want people to follow Jesus and to bring their lives into alignment with God's word – stepping out of line with our world.

- As your aim is to bring them to repentance and faith, the sermon must discard the stuff that will not do that.

### 3. The Talk itself

- There is no reason that the form of the talk cannot be the same as what has been taught in *The Preaching Model* – although everything should be tight and the body may be shorter.

#### *Introduction*

- Needs to be snappy, engaging and provide a point of entry for the gospel.
- It makes the link between God's word and the listeners world – between God's story and their story.
- The introduction also serves to introduce you as a person.
- It can be helpful to tell people up front where you want to end (e.g. *'In a few minutes, I am going to ask you if you would like to become a Christian...'*). This helps avoid any manipulation.

#### *Point 1*

- As brevity is important, then it may be that you can only establish a single point. Make it matter.

#### *– State and locate,*

- Nothing changes here from a 'normal' sermon. You still want to back yourself up by showing where you got your point in the Bible.
- Don't assume that the listener will know how to find it in the Bible – give page numbers, chapter (big number) and verse (little numbers). Or better still, have the passage printed before them.

#### *- Explain*

- Simple and use language and images that translate gospel terms into layman's terms.
- Quote the world to establish argument – show agreement before critique.
- Expose the clichés of our world.

*Clichés carry the theology of the average person. It is up to [the preacher] to expose them in the light of the biblical truth (Ray Galea, SMBC, page, 76)*

For example:

*Cliché: We believe that all religions are basically the same.*

*Critique: They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God and Salvation...!*

#### *- Illustrate*

- Draw from things that the listener would know.
- Don't proclaim to be an expert if you are not – especially if your listeners are experts [*Example: Illustration when preaching at the Conservatorium of Music, Sydney – difference between Con Campbell and Me*]

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### *- Apply*

- Due to the short nature of the talk – it may well be that your application is your conclusion. You want to call people to repentance and faith.
- We talked about this when we first looked at ‘Applications’ for sermons. It can be helpful to **think in terms of spiritual condition**. I use these five categories of possible response:
  - I already have a relationship with Jesus
  - No Thanks – not today.
  - I still have questions
  - I’d like to restart a relationship with Jesus
  - I’d like to start a relationship with Jesus.

### *Conclusion*

- Use language consistent with the sermon.
- The time to address the will of the person.
- Don’t wimp out. God calls, be that voice.
- The Prayer!

## **4. The prayer**

### *Before the talk*

- Do you begin with a prayer?  
That should depend on the occasion. In a non-Christian venue – no, in a Christian venue – yes.  
It can also depend on the expectation of the listener – prayer should not be a stumbling block.
- If you do pray, do so in a way that does not assume the listener to be Christian (i.e. call on ‘God’ rather than ‘Father’).

### *At the end of the talk*

- Before you pray, indicate the commitment or action you are asking for (as mentioned – this could be best right up front). You want the person making the commitment to know what is involved in making their decision.
- Speak plainly.
- Pray plainly (no ‘holy’ language).
- The prayer should include:
  - a. Confession of sin,
  - b. Thankful trust in Jesus,
  - c. Commitment to live for Jesus.

For example:

***Lord and Father,  
Thank you for revealing yourself in Jesus.  
Forgive me for not following you.***



### **Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching**

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***And forgive me for not seeing Jesus as my Lord.  
Help me to live my life believing and living for him.  
In his name. Amen.***

- And when you pray – be clear how the listener prays with you (e.g. following your lead, silently in their hearts, out loud, shouting seven ‘Hallelujahs’ at the end!!)
- Following the prayer – ensure that instruction is given (either by you or the event leader) regarding ‘what next’.

#### **5. Follow-up (the ‘What next?’)**

- Most work happens following the sermon – in fellowship with other Christians.
- For the person who (praise God) was challenged by the sermon it is helpful to have some things in place – either to suggest or to join.
- Some suggestions:
  - Someone to talk with to find out ‘next steps’
  - Encouragement to pray again
  - Information about how to learn more
  - Tip to tell a loved one or the person who brought them of the decision
  - Invitation to come to the front
  - Request to raise their hand to publically acknowledge their decision.
  - Instructions to fill out a response card
  - Details of how to join a ‘next step’ kind of course.

#### **What should you expect?**

- We are expecting that people will hear the voice of God and respond – not because of our superior ability to give the talk – because the gospel gives this confidence. The gospel is the chosen way that God uses to save people (Rom 1:16). Don’t be ashamed – preach it!

*‘Preach so that if the people don’t hate their sin, they hate you’  
(Martin Luther to Philipp Melanchthon)*

#### **➤ QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?**

**Exercise** – Have a quick read of John 14:1-6. You have 2 minutes to quickly come up with a possible evangelistic talk outline!

- *Give 3 minutes then Debrief!*

## **Occasional Preaching**

Let's now turn our attention to *Occasional Preaching*.

Where the *Evangelistic Sermon* or even the *Regular Sunday Sermon* is often dependant on the believer inviting the unbeliever, the *Occasional Sermon* has no such issue. Most occasional sermons (e.g. the Wedding, Funeral or significant event) the unbeliever is a mostly willing participant. The preacher's job is to preach the Word into the special events in life carefully and helpfully. The Christian relative who may have had something to do with the unbeliever being present knows this is a narrow window of opportunity for the gospel message to go out. The preacher then must send out the faithful and engaging word of God.

Time in this Preaching Course prevents us looking at sermons for occasions such as Mother's or Father's Day, Anzac Day, Baptism (although we listened to a sample sermon at a Baptism earlier in the course), Christmas or Easter.

We'll look at the *Wedding Sermon* then the *Funeral Sermon*.

### **The Wedding Sermon**

- This is a difficult beast!
- The Preachers job is counter cultural and there is little or lost thanks that goes with it. Many of those gathering (including the bride and groom) are in the prime of life and can be totally absorbed with themselves. The wedding often overruns the marriage. The occasion overruns the promises and significance of the marriage vows before God. The couple and those most involved are often concerned with logistics, looks or family dynamics. And further the lead up to the wedding is usually a pressure cook of anticipation and activity that is diffused like a balloon popping as soon as the (hopefully) happy couple say 'I will'.
- And that is just for those who are getting married for the first time. Add all sorts of other complexities when either the bride or groom or both have been married previously, when kids are involved, or when co-habiting couples are coming together to 'makes things official'!
- The Preacher stands up to tell us what the Bible says about marriage and often the working illustration of 'marriage' standing right before everyone is not what you would say upheld the Biblical presentation of marriage.

- And that may be the 'Christian' weddings!!

### **Wedding Sermon Considerations**

#### *1. Be clear about what you are doing*

- Preach to honour Christ, explain God's Word, challenge the Outsider and feed the Insider. Tall order – so needs preparation.
- It is a great goal to work to change the listeners perception about Christianity by showing that God's ways and ideals for marriage are clear, wise, profound, interesting and available.

#### *2. Preach from an appropriate Bible text*

- I was once asked by a Christian friend to preach at his wedding and when I asked if he had a passage in mind, quick as a flash his response was 'Mark 10:52 – *'he fled naked, leaving his garment behind'*!!
- It makes sense to use passages chosen by the couple – and indeed often requested by Christian couples. If not there are many passages you could suggest. For example:
  - Genesis 1:26-31 – God creates man and woman in his image
  - Genesis 2:15-25 – a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.
  - Proverbs 31:10-31 – A wife of noble character.
  - Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 – A cord of three strands is not easily broken
  - Song of Songs 8 – The Lover and the Beloved
  - Malachi 2:15-16 – The Lord makes them one (Note – take care with this passage as it also mentions divorce)
  - Matthew 19:1-9 – Marriage is a gift (Note – take care as the context is a question about divorce)
  - Matthew 22:1-14 – The Parable of the Wedding Banquet.
  - John 2:1-11 – The wedding in Cana
  - 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 – Love, the most excellent way (but note this is not specifically about Marriage – it is a rebuke for unloving behaviour)
  - Ephesians 5:21-33 – Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
  - Philippians 2:1-11 – Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus.
  - Colossians 3:15-19 – Let the Word dwell, wives and husbands.
  - 1 John 4:7-21 – God is Love.
  - 1 Peter 3:1-7 – Wives and husbands
  - Revelation 21:1-8 – The heavenly marriage is even better.
- Picking a passage and talking with the couple what the passage means is a fantastic evangelistic opportunity.

### Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching

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- It is important that you as the preacher feel comfortable with the text as you need to be faithful to the text in your delivery.
- Follow *The Preaching Model*, but as with Evangelistic sermons – aiming to communicate one clear point or theme will serve all well.

#### *3. Keep it short*

- The wedding service is very short – so should the wedding message.
- 7 to 10 minutes is about the best you will get with unbelievers weddings. Up to 15 minutes for Christian weddings.
- If the venue is outdoors – half the time again!
- Leave the listener pleasantly surprised by being short and snappy rather than confirm their fear that they will have to sit through a ‘boring monologue’.

#### *4. Build bridges*

- In preaching the sermon, do what you can to get the congregation on side and keep them on side. The sermon is pretty much the last thing the listeners came for and so it only really has value (in their ears) if it is interesting, funny or personally connected to the couple they love.
- Address the couple, but with their loved ones in mind.
- Mentioning some personal things and tying it to gospel truths can be very helpful.
- Note that often Non-Christian Weddings are very small affairs – in contrast to Christian weddings which are often very large.

#### *Caution:*

- Don’t idolise the couple – it is Christ who deserves the glory
- Don’t reveal matters told to you in confidence.
- Don’t embarrass the couple (the sermon is not the time to offer advice about sex, fighting, budgeting or any other particular issue that may have come up in pre-marital counselling!)

#### *5. Have fun, be positive*

- God instituted marriage and loves it. Marriage is and will hopefully be a joy for the couple. Make sure in your presentation you are all for marriage as well. This is the time to speak *for* Christian Marriage, not *against* it or society’s view of marriage (i.e. don’t talk about the reducing number of people committing to marriage, the increased rates numbers of de-factos, divorce, the latest political debate about same-sex marriage). *[Illustration – my sister’s Wedding sermon which mentioned Divorce – which was the only thing my non-Christian Grandmother remembers! She was aghast!]*

### **Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching**

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- That said (as you will see in the Sample Wedding Sermon – Appendix 1), there are times when some of the past or particular trauma needs to be acknowledged because people will be thinking it anyway. The elephant in the room so to speak. *[Illustration – Nae’s grandfather dying the night before our wedding – that needed to be acknowledged!]*

#### *6. Influence the Wedding Order of Service*

- Be intentional about the Wedding Order of Service.
- Most *Orders of Service*, get the consent, vows and declaration of marriage over and done very early and before the Bible reading/s and sermon. This makes it difficult for the preacher to follow, because the anticipation bubble has been popped. That of course could be a good thing because it means that people may be more open to listening rather than distracted by the anticipation.
- My personal preference is driven by my theology and pragmatics. I would push back the ‘Marriage’ component of the Service (or at least the *Declaration of Marriage*) to after the Bible reading and sermon – so that the marriage is confirmed in the context of the Word of God being read and explained. In the end that is a decision for the couple – and you as the preacher just needs to make the best of however it plays out.

#### ➤ *QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?*

Appendix 1 is a Sample Sermon of a Wedding Sermon on Song of Song 2 (humorously picked by the non-Christian couple) which may illustrate some of these sermon considerations. Note the introduction given before the reading then the sermon which follows.

### **The Funeral Sermon**

Unlike the Wedding Sermon where it can be difficult to focus the congregation’s attention on things that matter, the Funeral Sermon brings with it a reality that the listener is often happy for the preacher to speak to.

One of the places where faith is extremely tangible it is when confronted with death and the death of a loved one can be a good (albeit difficult) reality check.

What can make a Funeral Sermon difficult for the preacher are the emotions that they may have to control within themselves while they try to lead others in their grief.

### Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching

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Many of the preaching considerations are similar to the Wedding Sermon – but the reasons behind each might differ.

#### **Funeral Sermon Considerations**

What should the Preacher keep in mind:

##### *1. The role of the Preacher*

- Lead in grief
- Comfort in the gospel and to hold the cross and resurrection high (but not to evangelize)

##### *2. Preach from an appropriate Bible text*

- Deut 29:29 – The secret things belong to God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children.
- Job 19:25 – My Redeemer lives
- Psalm 23 – The Lord is my Shepherd
- Psalm 46:1-7 – God is my strength and refuge
- Psalm 90 – The Lord has been our refuge
- Psalm 121 – My help comes from the Lord
- Psalm 130 – My soul waits for the Lord
- Psalm 139 – Lord, you have searched for me and have found me.
- Isaiah 40:1-11 – Comfort, comfort my People
- Jn 5:19-29 – The Son of God has power to give life
- Jn 6:35-40 – Jesus the Bread of Life
- Jn 11:17-44 – Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead (c.f. v25 with 43)
- Jn 14:1-14 – In my father's house there are many rooms...
- Rom 8:31-39 – God's love in Christ Jesus
- Rom 14:7-9 – We belong to the Lord
- 1 Cor 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-58 – there is a resurrection of the dead through Jesus Christ.
- 2 Cor 1:3-5 – All our help comes from God
- 2 Cor 4:7-15 – Death and life at work in us
- 2 Cor 4:16-5:10 - Living by faith
- Phil 3:8-21 – God's purposes for us
- 1 Thess 4:13-18 – The coming of the Lord
- Rev 21:1-4 – The new heaven and the new earth

Child

- Mark 10:13-16 – Jesus blesses little children

### Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching

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#### *3. Praise God more than the person*

- The person should not be painted in such a light that it would be a privilege for Jesus to have him/her in heaven.
- It is appropriate to honour the achievements of the person but not if it overshadows the hope of the gospel which is what those left behind really need to hear.

#### *4. Craft the message*

- As with the Evangelistic Sermon and the Wedding Sermon, *The Preaching Model* is again a good guide – but using one point or focus. An exegetical analysis of the text will most likely be unhelpful in the funeral setting.
- It can be helpful to acknowledge what you are doing in the sermon right up front (e.g. 'We have been able to remember Jack, it is my job to help us now look forward...')
- Keep the message personal – speak to the family of the deceased and relating something you know or appreciated of the deceased will tell the family members that you care for them.
- Tie the personal references to the gospel
- Show the Gospel hope which is the best way to comfort someone who is faced with the reality of death.
- If the deceased was Christian – speak the gospel as the personal hope of the one who has passed. Talk of death as the closing of this story before the start of the eternal story.
- If the deceased person was not Christian – speak the gospel to comfort those who are left behind.
- If the death has occurred suddenly or tragically – that manner of death needs to be stated to help people grieve (e.g. Suicide, murder, stillbirth needs to be acknowledged but sensitively)
- Rid yourself of clichés (e.g. 'He always called a spade a spade', 'She is smiling down from heaven now' etc.)

#### *Caution:*

- Do not damn to hell
- Do not convert the deceased (preach them into heaven)

#### *5. Be brief*

- 5 to 10 minutes is about as much as you should have.
- That will lengthen (somewhat) if the deceased is:
  - a. a committed Christian
  - b. publically well-known
  - c. The death occurred in tragic circumstances.

#### *6. Take care with your language*

- No swearing!!

### **Evangelistic and Occasional Preaching**

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- Speak truths clearly, simply and sincerely – let the Word do its work.
- Be cautious with the words you use (e.g. ‘We are here to *celebrate* the passing...’)
- Indicate sympathy, but don’t assume more than you can (e.g. ‘I know how you are feeling at this moment...’)
- If you are unsure of the eternal state of the deceased, don’t declare more than you can (e.g. ‘I just know that she would be having a party in heaven right now...’)
- Don’t exaggerate the person’s good life (i.e. – you don’t want make him/her sound like a saint when no else thinks that is remotely possible!)
- Don’t guilt trip listener to respond or make decisions to something they would not when free of grief.
- Don’t give answers that you don’t have (e.g. ‘I know God has taken Susie to glory because he wants to relieve her of her pain...’)

#### *7. Control the platform – to control the message.*

- Looking back – Looking Forward.
- The length and point of Eulogies – two at most. Limit to 1000 words and get the speakers to give you a copy before the funeral (so that you back them up, recognise overlaps or contradictions, and you can also then have more confidence in the restraint of the persons delivering the eulogies.
- Funeral Directors and Other interested parties (i.e. Retired Service-people, Masons etc.)

#### ➤ *QUESTIONS/COMMENTS??*

Appendix 2 is a Sample Funeral Sermon for a Still-born Infant. The hardest sermon I have ever had to preach.

### **Conclusion of the Course**

Well, friends that brings us to the end of our time together in this course. Thank you for applying yourselves as well and asking such great questions.

My prayer is that you will grow in your love of God and his gospel as you preach it. That you will develop in your ability under God to proclaim his Word. That those who hear you will open their hearts and minds and give themselves to the Lord – for eternity.

To God be the Glory.

#### ➤ *Give out Chocolates to say ‘Well done’.*



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- *Finish by praying for these wonderful preachers*

## Appendix 1 - Sample Wedding Sermon - Song of Song 2

### *Context of the Wedding:*

*The following sermon was given at the wedding of a young Non-Christian couple. They picked the passage after initially asking for a wedding 'that was not too religious!'. Parents on both sides were divorced and in the case of the Bride also estranged. There was a bridal party of 16 (very large by any account), yet there were only 40 or so people at the wedding! The 'Declaration of Marriage' had already occurred. The reading was printed as you see below in the wedding order of service.*

*The surname of the couple has been removed for privacy.*

### Reading Intro

- Friends now we turn to the Bible to hear about what God thinks of love and marriage.
- The reading which Thomas and Beck have chosen is somewhat appropriate – it comes from the Bible, it is poetry, love poetry.
- It is about love. The love between a woman (the beloved) and her man (the lover).
- The part that David (a Wedding Guest) will be reading is a dream of the woman as she thinks about her man, and about their relationship, and about their upcoming marriage – and so it is very appropriate for today.
- Song of Solomon – Chapter 2 (NIV).

*Beloved (Wife)*

<sup>1</sup> *I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.*

*of the Lover (Husband)*

<sup>2</sup> *Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.*

*Beloved (Wife)*

<sup>3</sup> *Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste.* <sup>4</sup> *He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.* <sup>5</sup> *Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.* <sup>6</sup> *His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me.* <sup>7</sup> *Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.* <sup>8</sup>

*Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills.<sup>9</sup> My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice.*

*<sup>10</sup> My lover spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. <sup>11</sup> See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. <sup>12</sup> Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. <sup>13</sup> The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."*

*Lover (Husband)*

*<sup>14</sup> My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. <sup>15</sup> Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.*

*Beloved (Wife)*

*<sup>16</sup> My lover is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies. <sup>17</sup> Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the rugged hills.*

## **Talk**

- It's beautiful isn't it?
- Rich in imagery, much of it sensuous.
- It is about love and the hopes of love.
- It's saucy, it's provocative, it glorious.
- If you don't look at the Bible much you may be surprised to learn that the Song of Solomon is a book all about love and sex.
- It shows how highly God thinks about the relationship between two lovers and about the sex between a man (the Lover) and a woman (the Beloved) who are married to one another.
- The subject is love –there is an intimacy which is both delightful and slightly embarrassing.
- Could you picture our newlyweds as the reading unfolded
- The woman, Beck 'I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.'
- And Thomas replying' <sup>2</sup> Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.

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- Okay – well maybe we couldn't picture these two saying those things, exactly – but the sentiment is there!
- In this dream, the bride to be is dreaming about her wedding day and the love that will follow and the romantic transformation of her prince and of her own grand and royal occasion.
- She adores her man, and hopes he will love her before all others and she basks in that thought.
- Look at sentence 3 ...

Beloved (Wife)

*<sup>3</sup> Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. <sup>4</sup> He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. <sup>5</sup> Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. <sup>6</sup> His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me. <sup>7</sup> Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires. <sup>8</sup>*

- Her expressions are about how she feels and how she wants to be loved.
- Ladies, you would know better than I, but does this not capture for many that longing to be loved and to be loved well?
- **Thomas** – there are things to learn here.
- Beck, loves and adores you. And in coming to join with you today, she comes with high hopes, and you are the one to fulfill those hopes.
- Having spent some time with you both in preparation for your marriage, it is pretty obvious that you are excited about getting married. That is such a good thing.
- Alongside that, it would be normal if there was some apprehension – and you can see that expressed in the passage where the woman's hope is that things will turn out as she imagined.
- The Woman longs for love, but she also fears it and as she dreams her fears rise up and confront her – but yet the overwhelming impression is that despite the fear, love is a beautiful thing and almost too beautiful for words to express.
- Look at the picture she paints of her husband to be – from sentence 8:  
*Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills. <sup>9</sup> My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice.*

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<sup>10</sup> My lover spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. <sup>11</sup> See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. <sup>12</sup> Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. <sup>13</sup> The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

- There is an invitation. The woman is hoping her man we ask her to come with him.
- And the time is right – the winter is past, the rains have gone – Spring has come, the doves can be heard cooing, the season of mating has begun.
- That's a little awkward isn't it!!

**Beck**, today your man has asked you to arise and come with him.

- Thomas, as we have heard, has said that he wants to join with you, and he has made you promises – promises to stick by you – to have and hold you, in good and bad times, when wealthy or not, when sick or healthy. To be your lover through all things.
- Beck his promise is not for this moment only – his promise is for what is to come.

And **Thomas**, Beck has returned those promises. She has taken your hand, risen to stand by your side, through the seasons of life, until your life's end. Your beloved for life.

#### PAUSE

- If you kept reading through Song of Solomon you would find that there is much more to say. In fact the lovers don't get married until the last Chapter (8) – so we hear much more about their hopes and dreams as they wait for them to be realized.
- The picture as we read, is not always as beautiful as what seems to be drawn here in Chapter 2.
- There are struggles and tensions, there is the voluntary but painful separation for a time as the lovers sort out different issues, and even in this book there are family members who disapprove.
- There are shadows of those struggles here
- – the mention that they have to come through a winter before they get to spring,
- the mention in sentence 15, that they have to sort out the foxes who ruin their vineyard and harm their plans,
- and the mention at the very end that the man (the young stag) will come through, but be standing on the rugged hills presumably meaning that there are rocky paths that will occur for this couple on the road through to marriage.

Friends, you know Thomas and Beck better than I, but even in the short time I have been blessed enough to know them, it is clear that they have had to overcome some hard pressures and some rocky roads.

- Be it things that they have had to sort out between themselves
- Be it the pressure that may have been placed on them from others who love them
- Be it the expectations which they have which may drive them in the decisions they make.
- Be it the circumstances of life and death which just have a habit of throwing curve balls when least expected.

**Thomas and Beck**, you have come through that – and you’ve have done that together. Love in the face of several odds.

- Today is your wedding day – and it is a good day to draw a line in the sand.
- To recognise so many wonderful things that have brought you together and put the tough stuff in its place.
- To recognise that love matters, but that it will be shown differently going forward.
- To recognise that as you move from here into the future that love should grow.
- To recognise that there is something very special and exclusive about what you two should share together.
- But I also want you to realise, that you are loved by others.
- Weddings are special for all sorts of reasons – one, because it brings together all the people closest to you. The ones who love you most. As you enjoy today, with your family and friends, Tom and Beck, recognise that those here are the ones who want to support you as a couple. They love you.
- Let them show their love and care in the days and weeks and months and years to come.
- And to all here – your job is to do just that. Show your love to them and support them in the days and weeks and months and years to come.

PAUSE

When I first met with this couple, one of the first things they said to me (quite humorously) was ‘we want to get married in church, but we don’t want it to be too religious!’

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- Thomas and Beck, you have picked your Bible Passage from one of the two books of the Bible that doesn't mention God by name!!
- But that does not mean God is out of the picture
- The love that is talked about in Song of Solomon, is created by God.
- It is beautiful, and it waits, it anticipates, that wonderful wedding day to come.
- There is another wedding day to come that is talked about in the Bible – again one we have to wait for – it is in the third last chapter of the whole Bible – Revelation 19.
- Like Song of Solomon, it paints a beautiful picture of God putting on a wedding feast for a groom and a bride.
- In this picture, the groom is Jesus the wedding lamb – who lays down his life in love for his bride.
- And the bride are all those who long to be with him – those he calls his saints.
- Let me read it

*<sup>NIV</sup> **Revelation 19:7** <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give [God the] glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. <sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) <sup>9</sup> Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'"*

**Thomas and Beck** – today you have made promises – to one another, before those here who love you most, and before God.

- Keep your promises – and enjoy falling deeper and deeper in love.
- If Song of Solomon is rightly understood, it is a single poem about a love relationship between two people, in which fantasy and reality, idealism and realism, are held together by the commitment of the two lovers under God.
- **Tom and Beck** – you both have Biblical names
- **Thomas** - your name means 'twin' – it means that it is right that you have someone standing by your side.
- **Rebecca** – your name means 'bound' – there is something quite appropriate that one whose name calls for someone to stand beside him - gets married to one whose name indicates that they should be bound to someone.

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- Have a wonderful and commitment marriage. I do hope that the dreams of Song of Solomon are fulfilled in you your marriage under God.

Let me lead us in prayer.



**Appendix 2 - Sample Funeral Sermon - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: Grieve - but with hope!**

*Context of the Funeral:*

*The following sermon was given at the funeral of my niece – Ariel Jade Leuzinger. She was stillborn at 39 weeks and delivered on the same day as my daughter was born! This is the hardest sermon I had to preach – before my family (the parents were Christian, but many of my extended family are not-Christian as yet), very aware that this loss was in complete contrast to the joy that I was also experiencing at the birth of my own daughter.*

*It was preached in the crematorium. The readings were printed in the service outline.*

*The names of those mentioned are their real names.*

**Talk**

- I am very thankful for Ariel. She has in her death reinforced to me how important life is – how precious, how beautiful, how special, how tenuous, how miraculous and how important life is.
- Her legacy (at least to me) has already started.
- The question of ‘why’ seems to be an obvious question - Why God would you take this life? Why allow us to get so excited at the prospect of meeting her only to, at the last moment, peacefully take her away?
- I am not sure we can answer.
- We live in a world that always expects an answer, always expects that it would be possible if we searched hard enough to find an answer. I am not sure if there is an answer to every question.
- It is right to grieve. It may not feel right, but it is right to grieve.
- Our mourning, our longing, our sorrow indicates that there are things that are really important in life. It indicates that we love.

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- Bernard, Christina, Kaleb and Micah our sorrow this past week and for the coming days, weeks and years are not just because we so miss the opportunity to know Ariel better, but because we love you.
- It is right to grieve.
- PAUSE
- What at this moment feels and appears to be a tragedy would indeed remain a tragedy if we had not hope.
- But today there is hope. Our hope rests in what is promised for us.
- Briefly, I want to try and help us today by raising our eyes to that promised hope.
- The Bible makes promises – promises about life and death that are really important for us to hear.
- The reading from Isaiah 65 speaks of a time and place where sorrow, pain and death will be no more and there is a promise. You can see it there – the last sentence *‘Never again will there be in [this place] an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years.’*
- The promise is that God will do something about death.
- This passage tells us that to God there is something very wrong about death. It does not please God that a child should not live out her years.
- And we should not be surprised that God sees death as wrong, because he to lost his son to death.
- The 1 Thessalonians reading shows us that God was able to do for a child what we wish we could do – that is bring them from death back to life. And again there is a promise.
- The second sentence *‘Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep (those who have died) in him’*
- The promise is that, in Jesus, there is life for those who have died.
- A little further down in the same passage the promise is repeated *‘For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.’*

- God sent his son with a very specific purpose – it was to bring people from death to life.
- Today there is hope – our hope rests in what is promised.
- PAUSE
- Bernard and Christina, the labour of your grief, of our grief, is not about forgetting Ariel (we know you won't do that), it will be the difficult process of working through the feelings which may arise because of her death - anxiety, yearning, self-blame, bitterness, resentment, envy, loneliness, sadness and loss of self.
- But in all of that, there is hope. Because of your faith in Christ you can be confident that Ariel has risen with him.
- PAUSE
- But there is more comfort to speak of – it is a comfort for all of us who have been left behind.
- This passage promises more.
- It speaks of a time to come when Jesus returns to replace this faulty place with a new heaven and new earth which is totally free of death, pain, tears, suffering and mourning.
- The people who received this passage from 1 Thessalonians were worried that they would not be joined again with those who had died before them.
- They were worried that those who had died before them would miss out when Jesus returned.
- But this passage tells us not to worry for it says *'that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep'*
- The promise is that those who die in Christ will meet again. And to be sure the promise is reinforced in the second last sentence of the paragraph - *'we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them (with those who have died before us) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.'*

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- Bernard and Christina, Kaleb and Micah you need not fear that you will never see Ariel again. You will have her in eternity and we should keep in mind and be assured that eternity is much much longer than the temporary world that we live in now. For the Bible makes promises about life and death and life eternal in Christ which are really important for you to hear.
- For all of us, raise our eyes and hearts confident that in Christ we have seen life move through death and back to life again. Grieve, but grieve as one with hope in Christ.

Ariel –

*They will say that you did not live,  
Register you as 'still-born'.  
But we know you lived for us all that time  
in the dark chamber of the womb;  
And when we think of you now,  
Perfect in your little death,  
We know that for us you are born still;  
We shall carry you with us forever,  
And look forward to the days with you and Christ to come.  
Small child, you were ours, you are now God's.*