

Topical Preaching: Notes taken from a session led by Mark Thompson for 4th year women at Moore Theological College, May 21, 2014.

- The staple of preaching ought to be expository so that the agenda isn't set by us but by God.
- Keeps us from hobby horses, and forces us to teach things that might not otherwise preach on.
- Topical preaching teaches:
 - How to synthesise the teaching of the Bible. How to bring the teaching of the Bible together.
 - How to apply a passage to the people that you are speaking to.

2 types of topical preaching

- doctrinal: eg predestination, judgement
- ethical issues: eg environmentalism, feminism

Questions to ask:

- How does the big picture of the Bible, *Biblical Theology*, form a framework of the topic?
 - What does the whole of Biblical theology help me to say? In preparation we need to think about these things. The fall and the cross each have something to say as to how we approach our lives.
- Is there a *particular passage* of scripture that addresses this topic directly? We don't want to miss this passage out in our preaching.
- What is *distinctively Christian* about our take on this issue? How does the Christian view on this issue challenge the worlds view on this issue? The Christian view will often challenge the world view, not always, but often.
- Can the issue be divided into sub issues? You can't always say everything. A sermon needs to be "bite sized" so they can digest what is being said.
 - Eg, marriage: a sub point might be: the way in which marriage is designed in the beginning for the common fulfilment of Gods purposes given to humanity in Genesis.
- Can I sharpen the aim of the sermon? What am I wanting to say? What am I trying to achieve? How am I helping people get to know God better?
 - What needs to be addressed in the current climate about this topic? What is the goal and aim? How do I expect life to be different if people were to start to put this into practise?

Warnings about Topical Preaching

- *Don't try and say everything.* Trim the content so that it fits the aim.
- *Remember your audience.* It's a piece of communication. Who are these people that I am talking to? You want to advance people in the knowledge of God, and then exhort people to live in light of this knowledge of God. Be concerned about the communication process. It's no good at all if they can not understand what you are saying.
- Beware that the *agenda is not set by you and the contemporary world.* In the end, make sure the agenda is set by God. Ask yourself: "How do I make sure that I am not skewing what the Bible is saying?" It is God's perspective and not your own.
- *Be careful not to let other texts and other opinions obscure the Bible.* In the end they are all people that help you to understand what the Bible says. But the most important thing is not what eg John Calvin said, but what the Bible says. We want people to think "the place to go to think more about this is the Bible".
- *Don't go beyond what the Bible says.*
- Don't let the background (eg history) become the foreground. The foreground has to be the Bible!