

Public Reading of Scripture Workshop

First Presbyterian Church of Schoolcraft, MI Nov. 18, 2006

Introduction: Words have meaning

My desire for 9.11: James Earl Jones doing "The Gettysburg Address"

Imagine the power, the healing power, the defining power

1. Importance of reading scripture in worship
 - a. Story of last minute sub
 - i. Should she say yes? Should she say no?
No chance to prep, to test mic, learn tricky words, check phrasing
 - b. primary form of proclamation; preaching is secondary
 - i. whose word is it?
 - ii. Should be done with reverence and awe
 - iii. Should not be casual, haphazard, incompetent
2. why is it so poorly done?
 - a. everyone knows how to read, no practice needed to sight-read
 - b. it doesn't really matter!
 - c. don't want to add any interpretation; let it stand on its own
3. who should do it?
 - a. those with spiritual gifts; story of Marilyn
 - b. those with related skills: teaching, communications, news broadcasting, acting or theater
 - c. gifted readers may also be the better teachers; pastors teach the biblical stuff, but they may even teach us how to read better (preachers are not usually better than others!)
 - d. pastors and worship ministers: spiritual talent scouts
 - e. establish teams of readers; have classes to teach; have students critique one another; have ongoing small group whose ministry is to train, to critique, to bring Word alive in midst of God's people
4. Oral interpretation IS our job-to communicate God's Word
 - a. to read without interpretation does interpret, wrongly
 - i. what message is conveyed about scripture when read plainly?
Give example: Luke 4 (handout)
 - ii. no interpretation is misinterpretation: redo Luke 4 with meaning
 - iii. interpretation is Incarnation; we embody, bring to life again
TS Eliot: literature turns blood into ink
Oral interpretation: turns ink back into blood
Scripture: turn ink back into the real flesh and activity of God's people; reveal God's actions and interactions with humanity by making them come to life in a new way.
Interpretation is imperative.
 - b. Show Richard Ward DVD

- c. Discuss difference between reading and recitation; Gesture, eye contact
5. Interpretation means study, preparation
- a. not full exegesis, but enough to get the sense of the text and how it fits into the larger picture
 - b. to get the words, phrases, places, to know what you are doing, to speak confidently
 - c. pastors can give commentary resources; buy for church library
6. Introductions to readings:
- a. story of Sociology Professor who loved (too much) to introduce the lesson
 - b. short, only what is needed to make reading meaningful: ONLY 2 SENTENCES or so!
 - c. not place to preach or demonstrate your learning; know what is needed, what is not
 - d. know when to introduce and when to omit; some lessons need little or no introduction: parables, psalms (which are prayers), stories that are self-contained
 - e. some need some set up: Paul's theological arguments, the setting of Revelation, the issues at stake in prophecy, etc.
7. Incarnation: Ink into blood, blood into ink: means we use our bodies
- a. Voice: breath, chest, muscle control, diaphragm, volume, pitch, inflection
See list of ten vocal reminders (handout)
 - b. eyes: 3 places to look
 - 1) material; 2) audience (use sparingly, only to underline important phrase) Examples (handout); 3) to cast an image (eyes are mirrors of thought)
 - c. face: highly communicative
 - tone matches mood, material, voice
 - face is seen, even from distance; don't cover with glasses
 - don't bury face in material
 - d. hands: do not use (demonstrate from Luke reading below)
 - e. animation: as much as in regular, interesting conversation
practice: read children's stories to children
abandonment (handout)
 - f. rate of delivery
 - g. use of pause
 - "Her name was | || Elizabeth"
 - h. phrasing: not always at commas, but at sense units (handout) from pp. 92-93
 - i. Marking your text; the throwaway Bible; computer printouts
8. Emphasis: pitch or inflection, volume, length, pace, pause: always work out where to place emphasis, for that indicates the meaning.