**Sermon analysis of the Korean evangelical preachers**

With a considerable number of variables, selecting five evangelical preachers from five different mainline denominations that would adequately represent evangelical preaching for preaching analysis was not arduous, nor was it complicated. However, to assume that the five preachers characterise their denominational preaching and represent evangelical preaching in Korea is a separate matter in the initial stage of the study. Analysing evangelical preaching in Korea deserves a suitable methodology for encoding sermons.

While there is more than one variable for a reason behind the recent church membership decline in Korea, the researcher has chosen one variable, preaching, which is the study’s only presupposition as the starting point in the study. Any study that endeavors to analyse preaching would need to minimise bias and presupposition. However, the study needs an appropriate methodology to guide practical theology research for an objective preaching analysis.

As a result, the study has undertaken Pieterse’s *grounded theory approach* since the study analyses Korean evangelical preaching that one has “no theoretical knowledge” (2010:118). Furthermore, the researcher does not have a preconceived solution to suggest what needs to change or improve in evangelical preaching in Korea.

The study limits evangelical preaching, i.e., expository preaching, as one of the factors for the membership decline in Korean churches. Therefore, the primary step for the preaching analysis is what concept(s) “tends” to appear in preaching rather than what “needs” to appear. Moreover, by considering a fundamental question in preaching, “What is the preacher *doing* in the sermon?” While taking notes during the sermon, the following five dominant concepts emerged in

preaching: what the preacher is doing with the *text*, *scriptural verses, theology, story* or *literature*, and *statement*.

Based on the answers to what the preacher is doing in preaching and having gone through several processes, the researcher finalised the sermon codes of the five preachers from twenty-five sermons.

After completing a substantial list of codes of evangelical preaching from the *grounded theory approach,* the researcher implemented McClure’s *four codes of preaching* to comprehend theologically for a more in-depth preaching analysis in practical theology. After going through each preacher’s sermon *selective codes,* the researcher further analysed the five preachers with the *four codes of preaching* that identify what each preacher does with McClure’s four concepts. As a result, the researcher summarised each preacher’s sermon coding and observed what style(s) dominated from each sermon code by the preachers.

In relationship to the *scriptural code*, Korean evangelical preaching is dominantly transformational that lacks any “direct application of the text to the contemporary context” (McClure 2003:39). If there is any application in preaching, then a story or literature would serve as an application that connects the message with the listeners.

All preachers’ preaching style is *assertive* in the *semantic code.* The preachers’ use of words and concepts is constrained to a household language, Christian jargon that would be problematic for the visitors to comprehend during the preaching of the message. Although the younger generation prefers and seeks western culture, the current Korean culture is still very much eastern, especially in their thinking. Regardless that the Protestant movement was once one the dominant religions in Korea, when a preacher’s “paradigm of meaning is a tradition of concepts, examples, and assumptions” only within the church (McClure 2003:74), preaching would inevitably sound exclusive and irrelevant, and be separated from the current culture.

Every preacher has a “synthetic theological product” that “manifests” in preaching, which is evident in the category of the *theosymbolic code* (McClure 2003:93). Like

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the *assertive style* in the *semantic code, high-positive style* dominates the Korean evangelical preaching, where the preachers present God as a “giver ... [who] is powerful and independent” providing “new life ... the gifts of the Spirit, eternal life ... and abundant life” (McClure 2003:121). However, expecting the listeners and outsiders to understand and accept such incomparable and unparalleled concepts from preaching could be erroneous.

While the preachers preach from their *synthetic theological product*, ironically, they all seek to be relevant to the current culture in preaching by using a story and event that comes from testimony, social media, or literature. While a story may dominate and form a preaching structure, the current Korean culture is valid only for an illustrative purpose. The gospel is separated from the existing culture. Rather than redeeming and speaking into the culture, preaching tends to gravitate towards overcoming the culture, making the Korean evangelical preaching style *synthetic* within the *dialectical style* in the *cultural code* (cf. McClure 2003:150).

As a result, the Christian religion and the social culture remain separated; they are two separate entities. The listeners may have to learn and adapt to two different styles of life. Either one is ill-equipped to practice Christian faith in the world outside of church or wholly immersed into the culture where the salt loses its saltiness (Mt 5:13) while the religious practice remains within the church.

In hermeneutics, there could be two aspects that need to be taken into consideration; relevancy and science. Considering the evangelical preachers’ hermeneutics in Korea, one needs to consider either “the text’s meaning for a contemporary audience, that is, its relevance for modern hearers” or “as

the *science* that governs exegesis” the “expositor ... must include a text’s significance for his audience as an application in his sermon” (Blue 2001:265). The study shows neither of the two aspects was apparent or dealt with by the preachers based on the evangelical preaching analysis.

The Korean evangelical preaching comes short in interpreting the society and the people affected by the recent pandemic amid the public distrust of the church. While the preachers may be aware of their knowledge of the listeners’ struggles, there is a vast chasm between the listeners’ issues in life and what the preachers

attempt to convey in their sermons. In short, preaching betrays connecting the text to the listeners’ trepidations. Relating to the text, predominantly, what governs the preacher’s exegesis is not the science of interpretation but rather the preacher’s cultural and traditional understanding of the text.

All five preachers received theological training from reputable and accredited graduate schools in Korea. Some of them have studied abroad. Although theology may vary from one preacher to another, from the homiletical stance in practical theology, the study has shown some overarching elements that reveal characteristics and uniformity in the five preachers’ sermons regardless of their denominational beliefs.

Although the preachers assume the role of an expositor or at least deal with the text substantially and meaningfully in their preaching, somehow their preaching reverts to topical. This researcher does not claim nor advocate one type of preaching over another. However, a question remains: if not their academic training, then what could potentially be the influential factor(s) that affects the way they preach? The question leads to the next step in the study and considers the hypothetical cultural influence components in Korean evangelical preaching that might be a potential reason for reverting to topical while making their claim biblically based and expository. In the following chapter of the *interpretive task,* the study undertakes to respond, "Why do the evangelical preachers in Korea preach the way they do?”

**Sermon notetaking of the five preachers**

2021.04.25 **Presbyterian Preacher A**

**Small beginnings could move the mountain (Mt 17:14-21)**

1. The preacher encourages the audience to go out to a forest and enjoy nature rather than have wishful thinking.

1. 1.1  The preacher says that all diseases are curable if one commits daily walking based on a book.
2. 1.2  The preacher compares contemporary problems with a mountain that the listeners can remove

with a small beginning.

2. The preacher makes a distinction between unbelievers and Christians. 2.1 The preacher says that a righteous person has hope (Ps 14:32).

1. 2.1.1  The preacher says having hope in God is believing that God can move the mountain.
2. 2.1.2  The preacher says that Elijah heard the hope of rain when others could not (1Ki 18:14).

2.2 The preacher says that the listeners can hear hope by hearing God's word through preaching. 2.2.1 The preacher says that God's word is hope (Mk 9:23).

3. The preacher retells the narrative from Matthew 17:14-21 dramatically in the Korean cultural context.

3.1 The preacher says that the "mustard seed" in verse 20 is the "small beginning."

1. 3.1.1  The preacher says that people do not experience change because they are too huge without a

strategic plan.

1. 3.1.2  The preacher supports what he said based on a book by a psychologist who heals people by

helping them start small.

1. 3.1.3  The preacher distinguishes between faith for salvation and faith for removing the problem of a

mountain.

4. The preacher gives several suggestions on how the mustard seed can grow with faith.  
4.1 The preacher says that hearing God's word can make the mustard seed grow (Rm 10:17). 4.1.1 The preacher mentions a problem in the way people listen to God's word (Jas 1:21).  
4.2 The preacher says that prayer in faith can remove the mountain (Mk 9:29).

1. 4.2.1  The preacher says that prayer can either remove or overcome the mountain.
2. 4.2.2  The preacher says that the church sunrise prayer is a seed of miracle that removes the

mountain.

4.3. The preacher says that faith is not enough, but the listeners need to command based on verse

20.  
4.3.1 The preacher says that speaking positively and repeatedly can remove the mountain based on a

book by a psychiatrist.

5. The preacher concludes by briefly going over the suggestions he had suggested and with Philippians 4:13.

**Presbyterian Preacher B**

2021.04.11

**Reality Apart from Our Volition (Ps 42:1-11)**

1. The preacher says that things happen in life usually against our will, like Corona.

1. 1.1  The preacher gives several cases where people suffer.
2. 1.2  The preacher says that Jesus told His people to endure and fight, which is not easy.

2. The preacher explains what the psalmist went through from Psalm 42.  
2.1 The preacher says that a person with faith in God is not exempted from troubles in life.

3. The preacher investigates the text and sees how the psalmist responded.

1. 3.1  The preacher says that the psalmist wept in verse 3a, which the people of faith usually do.
2. 3.2  The preacher says the most hurtful thing for the psalmist is mocking from the people questioning

God’s existence in verse 3b.

4. The preacher suggests two ways the listeners can respond to hardship like the psalmist. 4.1 The preacher encourages the listeners not to give up on praying to God based on verse 1.

1. 4.1.1  The preacher says that the devil seeks to sever the relationship with God, who is the source of

life.

1. 4.1.2  The preacher says that God in His sovereignty might place the listeners in a deep valley, but

there is a gentle stream of water.

1. 4.1.3  The preacher says the devil schemes to have God’s people deny God when they face hardship

based on Job 2:10.

4.2 The preacher encourages the listeners to detach from the current situation and speak to

themselves in faith based on verse 5.

1. 4.2.1  The preacher says that the hardship is temporary while the devil may discourage the listeners

that the hardship will not end.

1. 4.2.2  The preacher says that the listeners need to confess that they are God’s children.

5. The preacher reminds the listeners that they have the power to overcome, and to turn away from God is a sign of defeat.

1. 5.1  The preacher says that just as the tomb could not keep Jesus, the listeners have the power of Christ’s resurrection.
2. 5.2  The preacher gives an example that the true victory belongs to God’s people based on 2 Corinthians 6:9-10.
3. 5.3  The preacher says that Jesus’ presence is with the believers regardless of circumstances based on Philippians 4:4 and Ephesians 6:24.

6. The preacher says that the influence of the Korean culture is inevitable, but God is sovereign who uses all things.

1. 6.1  The preacher compares God’s sovereignty with an artist’s multi-colored artwork.
2. 6.2  The preacher gives an example of Joseph and Daniel, who continued to speak to God and

spoke to themselves.

1. 6.3  The preacher quotes Romans 8:28.
2. 6.4  The preacher uses a well-known Christian author’s testimony, how God uses even cancer for

His glory.

7. The preacher goes back to verse 1 and explains the psalmist’s situation in the light of verse 5. 7.1 The preacher encourages the listeners to have God near them amid the pandemic and praise

God like the psalmist in verse 11.

**Methodist Preacher**

The preacher does not preach in series. However, he follows the Korean church family month calendar as most Korean evangelical preachers do.

2021.04.11

**Getting Caught in a Sinful Act (Jn 8:1-11)**

1. The preacher shares a story of a state penitentiary chaplain’s testimony that everyone is a sinner, and the only difference is whether one is caught in the act of crime or not.

1. 1.1  The preacher makes a statement that everyone is a sinner based on Romans 3:23.
2. 1.2  The preacher explains why everyone is a sinner based on the chaplain’s testimony.

2. The preacher retells John 8:1-11 narrative dramatically, interpretively, and imaginatively in the current Korean cultural context based on the chaplain’s testimony.

1. 2.1  The preacher concludes that Jesus purposefully exposed the woman’s adulterous acts giving the woman the opportunity to repent, so Jesus could forgive and save her.
2. 2.2  The preacher says that Jesus sees and knows everyone’s sin based on Revelation 2:18 and Proverbs 24:12.

3. The preacher uses the self-righteous Pharisees as an example of sinners, but their sins were never exposed.

1. 3.1  The preacher uses Zacchaeus (Lk 19:9) in a current cultural context in Korea to make a statement that Zacchaeus repented because Jesus exposed his sins.
2. 3.2  The preacher concludes that the sin exposure from God is a blessing.
3. 3.3  The preacher supports his conclusion with Numbers 32:23.
4. The preacher speculates John 8:3-5 how the woman lived a holy life afterward and became a child of God.
5. The preacher picks up the second half of the chaplain’s testimony that how he thoroughly confessed his sins.
6. 5.1  The preacher makes a statement based on the chaplain’s testimony that a genuine Christian is the one who truly repents because of Jesus exposing sins.
7. 5.2  The preacher leads the listeners in confessional prayer by going down the list of sins committed in the social context of Korea.

**Baptist Preacher**

2021.04.25

**When Believing in God Becomes Difficult (Jdg 6:36-40)**

1. The preacher shares the recent decline of church attendance, especially of young people.

1. 1.1  The preacher shares that many of atheists' parents were Christians.
2. 1.2  The preacher refers to Judges 6 and states how parents' faith does not guarantee the children's

faith.

1. 1.2.1  The preacher refers to the book of Judges and compares the current situation in Korea how

many young people are leaving the church.

1. 1.2.2  The preacher says that many young people question God's existence.
2. 1.2.3  The preacher raises the question of how one can be consistent in faith.

2. The preacher refers to Judges 6:39 and says that the listeners need to acknowledge their faith includes doubts and confusion.

1. 2.1  The preacher retells Judges 6:11-28 to show how Gideon was fearful and doubtful.
2. 2.2  The preacher draws out a principle that experiencing God does not free a person from doubting.
3. 2.2.1  The preacher says that it is better, to be honest and confess one's doubt than to pretend.
4. 2.2.2  The preacher says that the listeners can learn from Gideon's honesty.
5. 2.2.3  The preacher encourages those who doubt that they should not give up.

3. The preacher refers to a book and says that science and theology do not conflict.

1. 3.1  The preacher shares a Christian philosopher that how a fellowship with other Christians

increased his faith.

1. 3.2  The preacher encourages the listeners not to give up but seek God's sign like Gideon (vv. 36-

37).

1. 3.2.1  The preacher says that God answers the prayers of those new to the Christian faith more

quickly to increase their faith.

1. 3.2.2  The preacher refers to God's patience with Gideon's request and encourages those in doubt to

pray.

3.2 The preacher refers to verse 12, that God foresaw Gideon as a warrior in the future.

4. The preacher says that the listeners can have faith if they experience God's love since God does not give up on them.

1. 4.1  The preacher encourages the listeners to continue showing love and praying for their children if they have gone astray.
2. 4.2  The preacher suggests including their names and children in Ephesians 1:17-18 and Ezekiel 36:24 for prayer.

5. The preacher draws out a principle from Judgers 7:4 and 13-15 to say that faith-growing is a process.

5.1 The preacher says that the listeners should put their faith in the fact of the cross and resurrection

1. 5.1.1  The preacher says that the listeners could doubt when relying on their emotions.
2. 5.1.2  The preacher refers to a well-known scientist to emphasize the importance of faith resting on the

fact.

1. 5.2  The preacher refers to Acts 17:11 to encourage the listeners to have an excellent attitude to

God's word if they want to have faith.

1. 5.3  The preacher refers to Romans 10:17 to say that faith comes from hearing God's word.

5.3.1 The preacher encourages the listeners to read the whole Bible from God's perspective and

participate in the Bible reading program.

6. The preacher refers to 1 Corinthians 10:12 to warn those who are prideful. 6.1 The preacher refers to Judges 7:18 to show how Gideon fell in his pride.

1. 6.1.1  The preacher says that the listeners need to place faith in God rather than themselves to avoid

pride.

1. 6.1.2  The preacher says that the listeners need spiritual discipline to avoid the sin of pride.

6.2 The preacher encourages the listeners to seek God if they have doubts.

**Holiness preacher**

2021.04.25

**Fear Not! (Mt 28:1-10)**

1. The preacher says that the listeners can miss Christ’s presence without knowing Christ's resurrection.

1. 1.1  The preacher uses Mary and others to show those who did not know Christ was in their midst.
2. 1.2  The preacher says that the world's people only look at the empty tomb.

1.2.1 The preacher says that it would be pointless if the listeners only stare at the empty tomb.

2. The preacher states that to meet the risen Christ, the listeners need to know that Christ went to Mary and met her first (v. 9).

1. 2.1  The preacher states that Christ initiates salvation, and when the listeners realize it, all fear dissipates.
2. 2.2  The preacher says that Christ defeated all sadness, disappointment, and death through the resurrection.

2.2.1 The preacher says the listeners can experience joy and victory with Christ's resurrection.

3. The preacher interprets verse 9b and says that Christ can come to the listeners' real life. 3.1 The preacher interprets verse 10 and interprets that there is a better meeting with Christ.

1. 3.1.1  The preacher assumes that the better meeting is receiving the Holy Spirit, transcending time

and space.

1. 3.1.2  The preacher shares how he wished to see Jesus as the apostles did, but not anymore (Jn

20:29).

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4. The preacher states that the listeners can meet the risen Christ in their ordinary life. 4.1 The preacher says that people often met Jesus in the context of a meal in the Bible.

1. 4.1.1  The preacher interprets that Jesus pours out His resurrection power in the listeners' ordinary

life.

1. 4.1.2  The preacher spiritualizes how Jesus broke the bread to distribute to His disciples (Mk 6:41).

4.1.2.1 The preacher says that Jesus takes all the listeners' sadness and brokenness and transforms

into life, power, and grace.  
4.2 The preacher refers to Matthew 28:20b to encourage the listeners that Jesus is with them daily.

5. The preacher summarizes his message by reminding the listeners that Galilee symbolizes the listeners' discouragement and how he waits there to give them hope and healing.

1. 5.1  The preacher says Galilee symbolizes the place of recommissioning the listeners.
2. 5.2  The preacher reminds the listeners that Jesus came back to life to be with them daily.