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ABSTRACT

This project presents the views of a teacher of homiletics who teaches among the Lisu people in Myanmar. It draws on the writings of international theologians I find helpful, as well as my own experiences and observations, to argue the thesis, which is that effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher's awareness of God, message, and audience.

On the preacher's awareness of God, I argue that every preacher should have a knowledge of God, which includes knowing the nature and the work of God as well as possible. Besides, when it comes to effective preaching, I argue that the preacher should also possess a deep spirituality. In order to have such spirituality, every preacher ought to practice personal prayer and daily Bible reading. In addition to this, the preacher's faith must be unconditional.

With regard to the preacher's awareness of message, I argue that the preacher's discernment plays a vital role in effective preaching because the message is the main content of preaching. Moreover, I argue that the preacher should also be convinced of the interpretation of the text because the people need to understand the text according to their contextual situation. In relation to this, the applicable methods for the Lisu preachers are the theories offered by Thomas G. Long and Fred Craddock because both of them contribute a precise ways to interpret the biblical text and which are applicable to the Lisu context. Long and Craddock's method help the Lisu preachers to build a contextualized preaching model, which I call the "crossbow metaphor," by which I mean the archer, arrow, and target. The archer represents the preacher, arrow refers to the message, and the target stands for the audience.

The question of context is particularly important to a discussion of the preacher's awareness of audience. In this chapter I argue that the preacher needs to observe

the contextual situation in order to discern the congregation well and preach to them more effectively because preaching aims at meeting the needs of the congregation. In addition to this, the preacher's knowledge of cross-cultural differences also plays a vital role in effective preaching because people try to find God within the bonds of culture, and thus their cultural values and theological perception go together. I also argue that the preacher's knowledge of communication theory, to a certain degree, is significant when it comes to effective preaching because the very nature of preaching is communication. In order to bring God's message to people, every preacher needs to communicate with others. In this sense, the preacher's knowledge of using nonverbal elements is also important to preach effectively.

Key Words: Effective Preaching, Preacher's Awareness, Message, Audience, Communication, Cultural Difference, and Homiletics.

INTRODUCTION

The main focus in this thesis is the preacher's awareness for effective preaching. Specifically, I argue that effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher's awareness of God, message, and audience. Thus, my major concerns in this thesis are these three important factors including a theology of preaching and communication theory. As far as I understand, preaching is not just the transmission of knowledge. Preaching aims at internal transformation instead of merely sharing information to people. In addition to this, preaching is not to entertain the ears, but to touch the hearts and souls with the message of God. Moreover, to go much deeper, preaching is not merely to help people to know about God, but to help them encounter God in their daily lives.

In this thesis, I intentionally focus on the preacher's awareness of God, message, and audience because these three aspects are crucially important to preach effectively. As I describe in subsequent chapters, this approach (speaker, message, and audience) has classical roots but is also maintained in some modern communication theories. My primary intention for writing this thesis is to help the contemporary Lisu preachers in order that Lisu preachers can preach more powerfully and effectively. The reason is that we Lisu people live in one of the poorest countries in the world. As a consequence, many of my people have to struggle for their living. Moreover, it is fair to insist that most of our people inevitably have to live with fears, doubts, and uncertainties. Therefore, Lisu preachers are much challenged by such difficult situations, and at the same time, are responsible to help, guide, and encourage people in the midst of their daily struggles. Effective preaching means meeting human's needs, empowering their minds with the living words of God, guiding their faith journey and ensuring them of God's truth through preaching.

Hence, in order to help people more effectively through preaching, every preacher in my community ought to be aware of God, message, and audience. In addition to this, the preacher is also to be convinced of the theology of preaching, and communication theory in terms of effective preaching.

In Chapter One of this thesis, I discuss the importance and necessity of a theology of preaching. The preacher's understanding of a theology of preaching is the foundation for delivering the sermon well and effectively. To some degree, the effectiveness of preaching is dependent on the preacher's understanding of theology of preaching. In this chapter, I define preaching, and especially discuss the nature, purpose, and place of preaching. In homiletical perspective, these aspects constitute a theology of preaching. I think, preaching is transmitting God's message to the people. Then, to be able to transmit the message to the people more effectively, preaching relies on awareness of God, message, and audience. In addition to this, the preacher's knowledge of communication theory plays an important role in the preaching process.

Chapter Two will deal with the preacher's awareness of God. I argue that without the knowledge of God, which includes the nature and the work of God, it is impossible to preach effectively because the power of preaching comes in part through the preacher's intimate relationship with God. Then, this intimate fellowship with God will only be implemented when the preacher is well aware of God. In this chapter, I also discuss how the preacher's unconditional faith is required for effective preaching. After having the knowledge of God, and unconditional faith, then the preacher becomes more confident in God's power which makes the sermon inspired, who anoints the mouth of the preacher to bring the message to the people well, and who anoints the ears and hearts of the listeners to discern the message.

Chapter Three discusses the necessity of the preacher's awareness of message

through three subsections: the definition of the message, using the Bible as the source of the message, and the message speaking to the needs of the people. Undoubtedly, the preacher's awareness of the message is of great importance to effective preaching because the content of every sermon is its message. In preaching, we have nothing to share or transmit to our audience except the message. Thus, each preacher should be aware of the message. It means the preacher ought to be convinced of what message is to be brought to the people. In this sense, each message that we preach must be relevant to the needs of the congregation. I also describe the importance of the correct interpretation of the texts, and incarnation as meeting the needs of the people in this chapter.

In Chapter Four, I describe the importance of the preacher's awareness of audience. Under the subtitle of preacher and congregation, I especially discuss the necessity of the observation on the contexts, and the interpretation of the congregation. Then, my attempt focuses on the needs of observing the cultural differences for preaching in the cross-cultural contexts. It is true that the audience is the target of every sermon delivery, the preacher's awareness of the audience is equally important with the awareness of God, and of message. It is sure that without knowing the target, we cannot hit the point. The preacher's awareness of audience otherwise means the knowledge of the contextual situation such as the social, cultural, intellectual, spiritual, and other conditions. Besides, it also includes the preacher's knowledge of the people.

In addition to this, when it comes to effective preaching, every preacher should draw on aspects of communication theory, including the use of non-verbal elements because the very nature of preaching is communication. It means preaching is impossible without communicating with people. To put it another way, even if a preacher is well aware of the theology of preaching, and the relationship between

God, message, and audience, then the likelihood of effective preaching increases. Therefore, the preacher's knowledge of communication theory and aspects of preaching necessary to communication with the audience will be described in the last section of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

A THEOLOGY OF PREACHING

In his article entitled “The real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching,” J. Mark Beach writes that “The Word is sterile unless it is spoken.”¹ This short statement vividly shows the importance of preaching the word of God. Indeed, the act of preaching is worth calling as a “divine activity” because it is appointed by God Himself to the preachers with the purpose of saving humanity from the bondage of sin. Mark Beach refers to Luther’s view of preaching by saying that, “Luther saw the preaching of the gospel as nothing less than divine activity.”²

It is true that preaching is the most precious act, and it is the highest and holiest task. Eternity for each one of us is awakened and assured through our preaching, and each one of us is encouraged to prepare for it by preaching. Besides, the guidance and providence of God are reaffirmed, and God’s presence here on this earth is expressed through preaching. Dennis Ngien, a faculty member in Systematic Theology at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Canada, writes in this way, “The Word of God comes to us only in the spoken form because here on earth God cannot be seen but only heard. God speaks and reveals himself through the external word and tongue addressed to human ears.”³

This statement also commends the importance and role of preaching. However, Ngien does not offer his view with regard to Jesus Christ as God incarnated in Human flesh. To my understanding, Jesus Christ is a human face of God. (John 1:14)

¹ J. Mark beach, “*The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching*,” <http://www.midamerica.edu/resources/journal/10/beach.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2011).

² Ibid., 84.

³ Dennis Ngien, “Theology of Preaching in Martin Luther,” *Themelios* 28.2 (Spring 2003): 32.

To put it another way, God was visible here on this earth in Jesus Christ until 30 CE. In John 14:9, it says that God is with us as the Holy Spirit in our daily life. (NRSV) However, Ngien's notion is also true for our time. For us in this century, God is visible with our spiritual eyes here on this earth by hearing. We know it through the teachings of the Bible, and we feel it in every single day of our lives. And we are encouraged with God's presence through preaching. Therefore, preaching is the most important God-given task that affirms God's presence on this earth. Preaching is the vehicle to carry God's words to people. God can be seen with our spiritual eyes and felt with our hearts on this earth in preaching. When we talk about preaching, it has two aspects. First, God gives the message to the preacher, and second the preacher passes this message on to people in the context of preaching. Therefore, it can be said that preaching is a process of God-human activity or a divine-human task. It means God is at work in preaching. With regard to this opinion, in his article, "Theology of Preaching" in Luther, Ngien also says that "the Word of God spoken is itself the Word of God in preaching or God's own speech to us. Thus preaching has a dual aspect: divine activity and human activity, God's Word and human speech."⁴

Karl Birth also points out the significance of preaching when he writes that "if you want to transform the whole world begin it from the pulpit."⁵ It is obvious that preaching is the starting place to transform the whole world to be the "Shalom-Community" that guaranteed a better place for us to live. Preaching, acted out at the pulpit, is the starting place to transform the hearts of the people, to lift the minds up, to awaken the souls and to share good news with people. Therefore, preaching is an important task that God purposefully has assigned us to implement

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Simon Pau Khan En, *A Christian Theology for 21st Century* (Yangon: Alin Ein Publishing House, 2005), 125.

here on this earth. It can even be said that preaching is the central task for God's salvation. Then, to go much deeper it is necessary to define the term "preaching" first.

A. What is Preaching?

It is not strange that different scholars have given different definitions of preaching based on their understanding of the term. However, it is profitable to take a look at these distinctive definitions of preaching. According to Philips Brooks, "preaching is communication of truth through personality."⁶ On the other hand, A. W. Blackwood defines in this way, "preaching is divine truth voiced by a chosen personality to meet human needs."⁷ In *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, John A. Broadus has defined two statements about preaching. "Preaching is giving the Bible a voice. It is letting God speak out of his Word."⁸

Again, Broadus goes on to say that "preaching is the proclamation of God's message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity."⁹ There are three basic elements in preaching: God's message, the chosen speaker (preacher), and the needs of human beings. This definition can be described as the linear model of preaching. It is the "archer-arrow-target" model stated by Myron Chartier, the model of "encoder-message-decoder" offered by Dominic Infante, and also echoes Aristotle's model of "speaker-message-audience." In order to create a contextual preaching model based on the "crossbow metaphor" of the Lisu people, I follow John A. Broadus' definition and nuance it through the preaching model of Myron Chartier.

Another description goes as followings:

⁶ John A. Broadus, *on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1979), 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

The Word of God cannot be separated from its proclamation; the gospel is in fact a preached gospel; preaching is a redemptive event in contemporary time; the act of preaching is part of God's encounter with a contemporary listener; preaching is not merely a means of conveying content but is in a real sense bound up with the content; it is part of God's saving activity; and it is God's means of giving life to us.¹⁰

In *Prescription for Preaching*, Woodrow Michael Kroll also describes preaching which embraces the view that "preaching is the use of the Bible for sermons which are hermeneutically accurate, theologically oriented, psychologically directed, rhetorically structured, and orally communicated to the audience by God-called minister led by the Holy Spirit."¹¹ According to *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology*, "Preaching is not like lawyers arguing a case or salesmen pushing a product, but it is like poets seeking to suffuse the mind with light, to empower the emotions with the splendor of revelation, therefore it captures the will for God."¹²

So far as I understand, preaching is transmitting God's message to meet the needs of human beings, it is to hit the target, to bring the biblical message to people which solve their life-problems. But, on the other hand, it is wise to recognize the sinfulness of human nature. We cannot fully or completely transmit God's message to people because of our human nature of sinfulness.

When it comes to a theology of preaching, if we are just concerned with the role and place of preaching in the life of the Christian church, our theology will be incomplete. Indeed, theology of preaching cannot be fully expressed by stating the role and place of preaching. Instead, preaching should include at least three main

¹⁰ H. C. Brown, JR et al., eds., *Steps to the Sermon : An Eight-Step Plan For Preaching With Confidence* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 7.

¹¹ Woodrow Michael Kroll, *Prescription for Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 2.

¹² Ralph G. Turnbull, "Imagination in Preaching", ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 23.

things to take into consideration: the nature of preaching (what preaching is), the purpose of preaching (why we preach?), and the place of preaching (where it be placed?). Therefore, I will consecutively discuss these three aspects of theology of preaching.

B. The Nature of Preaching

With regard to the nature of preaching, Mark Beach, in his article, “The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel,” says that “when a faithful preacher proclaims the word of God, God himself labors through his words, takes them as his own, and uses them according to his purpose. For this reason every faithful preacher needs to understand the momentous nature of the preaching event itself.”¹³

It is necessary to understand the nature of preaching since preaching is the holy call, the divine task which is appointed by God Himself, it is the life, the spinal cord, and the backbone of the church and its ministry. When we trace back to the New Testament, we can find some terms used for preaching. And the nature of preaching should be expressed by the terms used in terms of preaching in the Bible. The first term frequently used in New Testament for preaching is *keryssein*, and which can be translated as “to proclaim”, or “to herald.”¹⁴ Thus, preaching, by its nature, is the act of proclamation.

Another term used for preaching in New Testament is *evangelizesthai*, which means “to preach good tidings or good news.”¹⁵ Therefore, preaching based on this term should be understood as preaching good news. There are still four terms which

¹³ Beach, “The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of preaching” <http://www.midamerica.edu/resources/journal/10/beach.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2011)

¹⁴ Brown, *Steps to the Sermon*, 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

indicate preaching- *didaskein*, meaning “to impart divine truth through teaching,” *dialegethai*, means “to discourse or reason with others with a view to persuade,” *lalein*, “to talk or to discourse”, and *parakalein*, meaning “to call to one’s side or to admonish.”¹⁶

With regard to the nature of preaching, it is again wise to bear in mind that witness is another term which refers to the word “preaching.” When we look back to the ministry of Jesus, he reminded his disciples that everything written about him in the scriptures had to be fulfilled. It especially means his crucifixion and resurrection and preaching of repentance to the end of the world and forgiveness of sins in his name. When we take a look at Luke 24:48, Jesus declared that, “you are witnesses of these things. Then, Luke again describes it in Acts 1:8, Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”¹⁷

Jesus was saying to his disciples that they were eye-witnesses of what he did for the people, how he healed the sick, the paralyzed, and lepers, how he raised the dead, how he showed humility in serving to others, how he casted the demons out, and what he taught about the kingdom of God. Therefore, the disciples were to be the eye-witnesses of all these things. That is what Jesus ordered them to do. When we trace through the book of Acts, a reserved word for those who had seen Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection was “witness.”¹⁸ Hence, witness portrays preaching.

In his book *Preaching*, James W. Cox points out in relation to the significance of witness for preaching by that “this aspect of witness has been of crucial importance to the preaching of those were not eyewitnesses.”¹⁹ He continues to say that “Christian preaching through the centuries and our preaching today has relied on

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ James B. Cox, *Preaching* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

their testimony. No one living today can be a witness in the sense of eyewitness.”²⁰ It is true especially for us that we are still sharing in this witness in our preaching today, we are still passing this testimony on to our younger generation, and this witness or testimony will continuously be handed-over to the next generation until the rapture reaches us. For this reason, it is fair to say that witness is one of the natures which stand for the word “preaching.”

In addition to this, teaching is also a characteristic of preaching because we teach through our preaching. In accordance with C. H. Dodd, the distinction between preaching and teaching can be made in this way, he says, “teaching (*didache*), along with exhortation (*paraklesis*), was for the most part ethical instruction and appear addressed to persons already established in the faith. Preaching (*kerugma*), was addressed primarily to non-Christians. It was proclamation, not instruction or exhortation.”²¹

However, these two terms offer us a precise link between preaching and teaching. Indeed, preaching is proclaiming truth to both believers and non-believers. It is however to edify and exhort to both Christians and non-Christians with regard to God’s will and purpose for their lives. Thus, it is wise for us to remind ourselves that we teach through our preaching.

It is especially true for Lisu churches in Myanmar today, because some of the non-believer participants can be seen at almost every worship service. Thus, the Lisu preachers should be aware of this mixture congregation, and are strongly encouraged to be aware of the link between preaching and teaching. It is necessary for us to know that we have to exhort and teach, and at the same time we are conditionally responsible to preach or proclaim the good news and explain it. Knox makes a very

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹ John Knox, *The Integrity of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 49.

clear statement in relation to this notion. He writes,

One could not proclaim the good news of Christ without attempting at the same time to explain its meaning and to support this meaning with arguments and examples, and without drawing out some of its ethical implications. And one could not, in the manner of the teacher, interpret the meaning of the Christian life itself without reminding one's hearers constantly of the event of Christ.²²

Besides, he goes on to insist that "unless preaching is teaching, it is not preaching."²³ In addition to this, Luther once said, "a good preacher should be able to teach well, in a correct and orderly fashion."²⁴ Again, Calvin also advocates this notion by saying that "the purpose of preaching was to be edification."²⁵

A thorough study of the great commission recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 proves three inseparable charges of Jesus to his disciples and that is to make disciples, baptize, and teach. It is necessary for us to consider some Greek terms with regard to this point. In the New Testament, the term *kerusson* is used for preaching, *evangelisomenos* is used for bringing the good news of the kingdom of God, and the term *edidasken* is used for the purpose of teaching.²⁶

Jesus' ministry is also characterized by these modes of preaching. Jesus travelled around the lake of Galilee in order to preach (*kerusson*), to bring good news about the heavenly kingdom (*evangelisomenos*), and to teach or to give moral instructions (*edidasken*). Cox also writes that, "proclamation-*kerygma*- is its basis, yet it is explicitly and consciously teaching- *didache*. What the pastor is supposed to do is to

²² Ibid., 49- 50.

²³ Ibid., 55.

²⁴ James D. Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship: Practical insight from a cross section of ministry leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1997), 41.

²⁵ Ibid., 41.

²⁶ Cox, *Preaching*, 51.

teach, for the pastor is the chief teacher of the congregation.”²⁷

In addition to this, preaching, by its very nature, is done in the mode of communication, God initiated the communication with humanity to reveal Himself, to uncover the covered humanity by the sinfulness. God is a God of revelation or a God of self-disclosure. More precisely, God’s saving activity is conveyed by way of communication, and the event of the incarnation is the best example of it. In order to communicate with human beings, God needs to incarnate in the form of human flesh.

Thus, it can be said that the obvious nature of preaching is communication. And we preach this good tidings or good news to the contemporary listeners in the context of communication. Cox says, “Preaching is one-way communication. We have received a message, and we have to pass it on.”²⁸ But, I argue that preaching should be understood as two-way-communication: the communication between God and the preacher, and the communication between the preacher and the congregation. Preaching is communicating with people for God’s message. Therefore, the nature of preaching can be summed up by saying that it is proclaiming, evangelizing, witnessing, and teaching in the context of communication.

C. The Purpose of Preaching

In short, the purpose of preaching is to proclaim the Word of God. It is necessary to note that the preacher’s discernment of the purpose of preaching plays a vital role in the preaching ministry. We can imagine how dangerous it is if someone drives a car full of passengers without knowing how to drive. By the same token, the danger of preaching without being aware of its purpose is beyond words because preachers

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

are called to lead the souls to greener spiritual pastures.

Thus, every preacher, unexceptionally, must be aware of the purpose of preaching. This is God's supreme purpose for His saving activity. *In steps to the sermon*, H. C. Brown, JR, H. Gordon Clinard, Jesse J. Northcutt, and Al Fasol made a very short and precise statement with regard to the purpose of preaching in this way, "the total objective (also called the ultimate, supreme, or comprehensive objective) is to bring life to people."²⁹ This notion should be recognized as the primary purpose of God's salvific process. But, relating it to preaching the word of God, there are several purposes. I would call other intentions of preaching as the secondary purposes of preaching the word of God. In deed, preaching is also to edify, exhort, encourage, challenge, teach, and inspire, and so on.

In *Preaching* James W. Cox also clearly makes a statement in relation to the aim of preaching. He says, "The purpose of preaching is to get what is in the mind and heart of the preacher into the mind and heart of the hearer."³⁰ Cox can explain it in a much more specific way: the mind and heart of the preacher must be the message that the preacher received from his or her constant relationship with God. I argue that that message must not be what the preacher gets from his or her own view on life or on secular world, but it must be what God revealed to him or her to share with the people and to meet their needs. "Preaching centers not in human ideas about God but in what God has done for man; that it must be derived from the scripture."³¹

Indeed, each one of us needs to be saved, to grow spirituality, to develop our knowledge of God's truth, to serve God much more submissively, to get in better relationship with others and to find strength and comfort in our daily struggle. In short, the purpose of preaching is to assure them of the eternal life that God has

²⁹ Brown, *Steps to the Sermon*, 9.

³⁰ Cox, *Preaching*, 51.

³¹ Ralph G. Turnbull, *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology*, 1.

given to us (Ps.119:50, NRSV), to fill up the needs of the people, to solve their life problems, to wipe out their tears, to heal their spiritual wounds, to touch their souls, to offer the biblical answers for their life problem, to explain the scriptures and encourage to apply it in their daily life, to strengthen faith(Acts 9:20,22a, NRSV), to reveal hope (IPet.3:15, NRSV). It needs to consider that the real preaching directly deals with human needs.

However, preaching has two purposes that I would call the primary purpose and the secondary purpose: Preaching about eternal life and preaching to help people with their daily needs and concerns. The primary purpose of preaching is to assure of eternal life that God has given to us. It is to announce the assurance of salvation (eternal life) for those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and for those who really understand and accept God's works on the cross.

This is what I call the primary purpose of preaching. I believe that every preacher must precisely preach about the forgiveness of God rather than pointing out and reminding people's sins. With regard to this point, Karl Barth also once reminded the preachers that "sin undoubtedly has to be taken seriously, but forgiveness even more seriously. Sin must be spoken about only as the sin which is taken away by the Lamb of God. Christian preaching deals with sin as forgiven sin."³²

Therefore, preaching is not to judge the people by pointing out their sins, but to bring God's grace and forgiveness to people and encourage them to come into the presence of God. I believe this is what the churches are assembled for, and this is what I prefer to use the term the "primary" purpose of preaching.

Then, preaching also has its secondary purpose. This is to encourage the listeners to endure or resist all the hardships that they face in their every day life here on this earth. It means that preaching is, on the other hand, to encourage the audience with

³² Karl Barth, *Homiletics* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), 52.

regard to their daily life's struggles of filling their physical needs. This is especially true for my own community because our Lisu people inevitably and unfortunately have to struggle for their daily survivals due to living in one of the poorest countries in the world. Encouraging the listeners by quoting Jesus' three-year-ministry which includes healing the sick and lepers, feeding the crowd, letting the blind see, and ordering the deformed to walk is the best example of this pastoral encouragement. Obviously, the message of Jesus' earthly ministry did focus on the people's physical affairs as well. Thus, the preacher also needs to encourage the people with regard to their physical needs so that they can gain some mental encouragement to endure and resist all the hardships that they face in their daily lives.

In addition to this, the feeling or disappointment they have from the severity of their physical needs directly or indirectly bother or hinder their spirituality. For example, even while they are sitting in the worship service, their minds could be occupied by the worries for their daily lives to a certain extent. As a consequence, they cannot fully attend to the sermon delivery. Thus, preaching should include this secondary purpose based on the condition. In my observation, most contemporary preachers fail at this point. Focusing on the issue of life after death or pointing out the heavenly affair unfortunately becomes our main emphasis in our preaching today.

Therefore, preaching, by its very nature, is bound up with two purposes. These must go together because the secondary purpose is also essential for the life of the people here on this earth as eternal life is important for the heavenly kingdom. Then, how can we focus on these two purposes effectively in our preaching? My answer for this question is, of course, by the preacher's awareness. I argue that every contemporary preacher must be aware of emphasizing these two purposes every time we preach.

Otherwise, our preaching will not meet with both physical and spiritual needs of the people at all. Thus, being aware of these two preaching purposes is very helpful to effective preaching. Moreover, preaching is to bring the good news that we have found in incarnation, and to share it with people. The good news we found in incarnation is the main message for our preaching. That is what Lisu people are currently needed because they are in ambiguity due to living in fears, uncertainties, and difficulties.

Incarnation is of great importance to God's saving activity of humanity. The crucifixion and resurrection are impossible without the incarnation. To put it another way, I would say that "no incarnation, no resurrection". God took human flesh means that God lives with us, suffers with us, and God is with us in the midst of our daily struggle. This is what we found in incarnation. As preachers we are called to bring this message to people, and that is one of the purposes of our preaching.

However, in addition to the message, it is also crucial to be aware that effective preaching depends on the preacher's awareness of God, of audience, and of communication theory as well. Then, what do we mean by "effective?" Indeed, effective means hitting the target, meeting with the people's needs. In other words, effective preaching means the message is received by the listeners without any hindrance; the audience understands and feels the message told by the preacher; it is when the audience is inspired by preaching.

Indeed, preaching must be both theoretical and practical to be effective. I mean that the preacher should acquire theory of preaching and of communication prior to practical application in the preaching event. The people's daily struggle should be managed at least to a certain extent through preaching. Preaching, in other words, means bringing biblical answers to help people solve their daily problems. Therefore, people's daily difficulties or problems or hardship should be reduced to a certain

extent through preaching, or the people's needs ought to be met with the biblical answers through our preaching.

From practical theological point of view, this is a very important task of preaching. Therefore, when it comes to preaching, every preacher should be aware of focusing on both; eternal life and the earthly life as Jesus did focus on during his three and half year's ministry around the lake of Galilee.

D. The Place of Preaching

Putting preaching at the right place is as important as knowing the nature and purpose of preaching. In *Prescription for Preaching* Woodrow Michael Kroll quotes John Killinger's sentence which goes, "with regard to the total life of the ministry, preaching holds the central place."³³ When we trace back to Jesus' ministry, it is so obvious that preaching was central. Preaching was also central in Paul's ministry and in the apostolic period. It is necessary to be convinced that preaching is the life and the center of the church and its ministry. Preaching is the spinal cord or the backbone of the church. Its rightful place is always at the center of the Christian ministry.

Kroll also insists that "preaching is the central, primary, decisive function of the church."³⁴ He goes on to say that, "a healthy congregation means less time spent on healing sick hearts and minds. A healthy congregation is, in large measure, produced by healthy preaching."³⁵ In addition to this, P. T. Forsyth once vividly said that Christianity stands or falls with preaching.³⁶ These statements point out the significant role and place of preaching in Christianity.

³³ Kroll, *Prescription for Preaching*, 14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 5.

Preaching is also the central and climatic place in the Christian assembly. It is wise to bear in mind that nothing can replace preaching. Preaching is the place from which spiritual victory comes. It is the place where the congregation celebrates the glory of God. It is the place from where we can change the world. With regard to this point, when we take a look at the Old Testament, it is obvious that preaching was in the form of explaining the scriptures in public worship and gatherings. The law was explained, and the words of God were read by the leader to the people in their gatherings. For example, in Nehemiah 8:6-8, Ezra gave praise to the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered and said, "So be it, so be it; lifting up their hands; and with bent heads they gave worship to the Lord, going down on their faces to the earth." (NRSV)

Again, Joshua and Bani and Sherebiah and Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maasiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hannan, Pelaiah, and the Levites made the law clear to the people: and the people kept in their places. (Nehemiah.8:7) Again, in Nehemiah 8:8, it says that "And they gave out the words of the book the law of God, clearly, and gave the sense of it, so that their minds were able to take it in." (NRSV)

By the same token, when we trace public teaching or preaching back to the New Testament, the Jewish synagogue again practiced this model. Luke 4:16 plainly states that Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and he read the scriptures from Old Testament especially from the book of Isaiah, and he was not fail to make interpretation. Jesus said, "Then he said to them, Today this word has come true in your hearing." (NRSV)

The same was in the apostolic period. For example, in Acts 13:14-15, it is said, "But they, going through from Perga, came to Antioch in Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and were seated. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Brothers, if you have

a word of comfort for the people, say on. Then, Paul stood up and started preaching.” (NRSV) Thus, it can shortly be concluded that Preaching is the central in God’s people’s assembly.

My understanding of homiletical theology is that preaching is transmitting the message of God to the people. And this transmitting process necessitates the preacher’s awareness of God, message, and audience. Besides, the preacher’s knowledge of communication theory is also required to preach effectively. Effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher’s awareness apart from the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit. I argue that no preacher can preach effectively without being aware of God, self, message, and audience. Therefore, these are my major concerns in this thesis. I briefly describe them in this section but these points will be discussed wider and deeper in their respective chapters.

The preacher’s awareness of God plays a very significant role in preaching because God’s truth is central in every sermon delivery. In short, God’s truth here refers to God’s grace and love for every human being. It also stands for God’s salvation for all who believe in Jesus Christ. Thus, the more the preacher is aware of God’s nature and work, the more he or she gets intimate relationship with God. To put it another way, if the preacher is well aware of God, then this awareness keeps him or her living faithfully, trustworthily, and holily. Consequently, this characteristic becomes a very good example or ideal for the congregation, and will be very helpful to effective preaching. Thus, every preacher is to be well acquainted with God’s truth to preach powerfully and effectively.

Moreover, the preacher is also to be aware of the message for effective preaching because the message is the core of our preaching. In every sermon delivery, we have nothing to transmit to our audience apart from the message. Moreover, the very aim of preaching is meeting the needs of human beings. Again, the humans’ needs can

only be met when the preacher is well aware of the message. Thus, it is important to note that the preacher's awareness of message is equally important with knowing theology of preaching, and being aware of God.

Besides these factors, the preacher is also to be aware of the audience to preach effectively because the audience is the very target of every sermon delivery. Without knowing the target, no preacher can hit the point in the preaching event. Generally, the preacher's awareness of audience includes the preacher's knowledge and observation of the contextual situation, and the congregation of a local church, and the people's worldviews, theology, intellectual level, and culture. Besides, it also includes knowing different age groups as well. I discuss the importance of the preacher's awareness of audience for effective preaching in the final chapter of this thesis.

Another important thing that we need to consider for effective preaching is the preacher's awareness of the functions and significance of communication theory. Indeed, the preacher's knowledge about communication theory plays a vital role in preaching since preaching is acted out in the context of communication. It can be said that even if the preacher knows the theology of preaching, is well aware of God, message, and audience, preaching will not be effective if he or she does not know how to communicate with others well. Therefore, I do insist that the preacher's knowledge of communication theory also plays a very crucial role in effective preaching as other important factors do. Thus, I separately discuss them in the following chapters in this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

EFFECTIVE PREACHING IS FACILITATED BY THE PREACHER'S AWARENESS OF GOD

In Chapter One, I described the theology of preaching by examining three subjects: the nature of preaching, the purpose of preaching, and the place of preaching. Indeed the theology of preaching is the foundation for every preacher to preach effectively. An important part of this, that merits special attention, is an examination of the preacher's awareness of God. Therefore, my major concern in this chapter is the preacher's awareness of God. I argue that effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher's awareness of God.

More specifically, the preacher's awareness of God in this chapter stands for how the preacher knows who God is. It is how he or she encounters God in everyday life. It deals with the questions like how does the preacher understand the nature and the work of God? Or how much does the preacher believe in the power of God for preaching? The preacher's awareness of God has to do with these questions. To answer all the questions that I stated, I discuss three subtitles in this chapter: first, the preacher's knowledge of God, especially the nature and the work of God. Second, I describe the importance of the spiritual life of the preacher, including daily bible reading and personal prayers. Then, the preacher's unconditional faith will be presented in the third section of this chapter.

A. The Preacher's Knowledge of God

The preacher's knowledge of God plays a very significant role in the preaching ministry because it is the primary necessity to be aware of God. Then, how can we know about God? What do we mean by the knowledge of God? In accordance with Calvin, we can have a general knowledge of God through the creation - or in

humanity, in the natural order, and the historical process.¹ Calvin provides two categories of grounds such as subjective and objective. The first ground, he says, is a sense of divinity or a seed of religion which is implanted within every human being by God. It is something about God that has been engraved in the heart of every human being. The second ground he offers lies in an experience of and reflection upon the ordering of the world. He explains it by saying that, “the fact that God is creator, together with an appreciation of the divine wisdom and justice, may be gained from an inspection of the created order, culminating in humanity itself.”²

However, most of us have already accepted that God cannot be fully known by our limited brains. God is beyond human beings’ understanding. Nevertheless, I argue that we can search for God’s nature to some extent because God reveals Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ, through the nature, culture, and history which all are recorded in the Bible. In addition to this, Genesis 1:27 says that we are created in God’s own image or likeness (*Imago Dei*) so that we intuitively have a sense of fellowship with Him. Hence, we can examine God’s nature through our fellowship with Him. We can at least have an approximate understanding of God’s nature. We can at least define a definition of God that works. Even though God is beyond our understanding, God’s answer to Moses, “I am who I am” gives a hint of what God is like. This reminds us of knowing that God is the Supreme Being, Ultimate Reality, and absolute Truth.

To go much deeper, however, the preacher’s knowledge of God must not only be what he or she had heard, but also it must be what the preacher had experienced or felt in his or her inner life. To put it another way, the preacher’s heart must first be filled with the knowledge of God before he or she is going to preach. Rightly, before

¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1994), 189.

² *Ibid.*, 190.

we give others spiritual food, we must first delve deeply into the scriptures and our souls be nourished with the living words of God. We must first feed our minds with the word of God. In his book entitled *Principles and Practice of Preaching*, Ilion T. Jones expresses in this way, “A firsthand experiential knowledge of God is a basic requisite for preaching.”³

Jones goes on to say that “when the people know a preacher is talking about what is going on in his soul, as well as about their souls, they will listen more eagerly to what he says.”⁴ Jones also rephrases John Bunyan’s words that “I preached what I did feel- what I smartingly did feel.”⁵ Jones again affirms it by saying that, “unless the preacher feels keenly the truth of what he says, it is almost certain to leave others unmoved.”⁶ It is absolutely true that no preacher can share about God to others without having the knowledge of God in his or her own life. This knowledge of God must not be hearsay, but it must be known inside of the preacher. With regard to the knowledge of God, it includes the nature and the work of God. I describe these two aspects consecutively in the following sections. In the section of the nature of God, I especially discuss the attributes of God that the preacher must be aware to preach effectively.

a. Knowing the Nature of God

When it comes to the nature of God, it is necessary to note the characteristics of God because nature also includes characteristics. Then, what are God’s characteristics? God’s characteristics are of basically two categories. The first type of characteristic belongs to God alone. These include a wide range of adjectives:

³ Ilion T. Jones, *Principles and Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

independent (ps.115:3), infinite (Ps.90:1-2), supreme (Col.1:15), sovereign (Isaiah 46:10), all-knowing (1kings 8:39), all-powerful (Gen 18:14), unchanging (Ps. 102:27), transcendent (Job 37:23), and eternal (Gen.21:33).⁷

However, God shares another category of His characteristics with human beings to some extent, which can be listed as holiness (Ps.77:13, Isaiah 6:3), wisdom (Isaiah 28:29), truthfulness (John 3:33), love (ps.33:5), goodness (2Chronicles 7:3), faithfulness (Deut.7:9), mercy (2Samuel 24:14), kindness (2Samuel 22:51), patience – longsuffering (1Tim 1:16), justice (Deut. 32:4), righteousness (Isaiah 51:6), and grace (Nehemiah).9:17.⁸ Effective preaching requires knowing God’s characteristics because preaching also means sharing God’s characteristics such as love, mercy, kindness, and patience.

With regard to the nature of God, the preacher must also be aware of God’s attributes. While there are many choices available, I purposefully emphasize four attributes: wisdom, sovereignty, faithfulness, and holiness. Because the Lisu preachers need the wisdom from God that refers the spiritual prudence to preach wisely since Lisu people mostly live with non-Christians in Myanmar. In relation to God’s sovereignty, every Lisu preacher contextually needs to feel a sense of God’s presence and power to preach bravely and powerfully in the midst of difficulties. With regard to faithfulness, Lisu preachers need to imitate God’s faithfulness to stand firmly, and encourage their people more effectively in the midst of fears, doubts, and uncertainties. Again, I intentionally focus on God’s holiness because it helps the preacher to be morally upright, and to have good characters since the preacher is to be morally an ideal person for the congregation. Every pastor would find more effective preaching by focusing on these aspects. First, the aspect of God that I want

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

to discuss is wisdom. Then, what does preaching have to do with wisdom? Indeed, every preacher of today's world needs wisdom to interpret God's words rightly, apply it into the right context, and preach effectively.

The Bible talks about wisdom in so many places. For example, "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.(Psalms 111:10, NRSV); Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7, NRSV); wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding (Proverbs 10:13, NRSV); Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding." (Proverbs 4:6-7, NRSV).

The preacher must first be acquainted with Wisdom. By knowing and communicating with God's wisdom, the preacher will preach prudently. It means the wisdom of God assists the preacher while the sermon is prepared and delivered, and this divine wisdom helps the preacher to preach effectively. In my observation, many contemporary preaching miss this point. It is true especially in my own context that some preachers are weak at differentiating the audience due to lacking this divine wisdom. I mean, at times, the children inevitably and unfortunately have to listen to the adult sermons. Very often, by the preachers who do not have such wisdom, some uneducated congregations have to listen to the sermons with complicated theological terms that are oblivious of audience. Some contemporary preaching appears something like feeding the goats instead of caring and feeding the sheep because of preaching without this divine wisdom. I, therefore, argue that being convinced of this wisdom is of great importance for effective preaching. To put it differently, effective preaching also necessarily needs this divine wisdom especially in

this age.

Second, in addition to this wisdom, the preacher must also personally discern about God's sovereignty. Sovereignty includes three aspects of God such as God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Every preacher who wants to preach effectively should not fail to believe that God's sovereignty as the Holy Spirit will assist him or her in the preaching event. Every preacher ought to know and trust in these three aspects of God's sovereignty, and should feel God's presence while he or she is delivering the sermon. It provides a divine power to the preacher while the sermon is delivered. This discernment about God's presence and guidance in preaching will help the preacher to be confident. Then, this confidence will lead the preacher to effective preaching. It is true that no one can preach effectively and powerfully without being confident of God's guidance and help in the preaching event. Indeed, the Holy Spirit helps us as the power of God in our preaching moment. The more we are aware of God, the clearer we feel a sense of God's presence and power.

Third, we turn to another aspect of God's nature: faithfulness. God is always faithful to us, and thus, being aware of God's faithfulness is also crucial to effective preaching. More precisely, if the preacher is convinced of God's faithfulness well, then this knowledge helps the preacher imitate God's faithfulness and apply it into his or her daily life. Then, this imitation of God's faithfulness will help the preacher to be a faithful person. The preacher's faithfulness to God and others is considered crucial because every preacher seek to be a spiritually and morally ideal person for the congregation. George Herbert once encouraged the preachers of his time by saying that, "you are in God's stead in your parish."⁹ It is necessary to remind ourselves that we are caricatures of God, and as preachers we are representatives of

⁹ Jones, *Principles and Practice of Preaching*, 59.

God here on this earth. With regard to this point, Ilion T. Jones says:

Charles Spurgeon once told of a man who preached so well and lived so badly, that when he was in the pulpit everybody said he ought never to come out again, and when he was out of it they declared he never ought to enter it again. On all the days of the week he nullified everything he said on Sunday. A preacher may think he does all his preaching from the pulpit, but in the eyes of the people he is preaching everywhere he goes by everything he says and does.¹⁰

In addition to this, St. Francis also adds that “Unless you preach everywhere you go, it is no use to go anywhere to preach.”¹¹ It is sure that no one will listen to the sermon preached by an unfaithful and untrustworthy preacher. If the preacher knows well about God’s faithfulness, then he or she will be also very faithful even in a tiny thing. Therefore, I argue that the preacher’s knowledge about God’s faithfulness is also one of the prerequisites for effective preaching. In *Preaching for Today*, Clyde E. Fant writes this way, “an untrustworthy preacher of the word of God is unthinkable; and if people begin to think it, the credibility of the preacher is ruined. No amount of theological genius or biblical competence can save him.”¹²

Indeed, trustworthiness is crucially important for every preacher to preach attractively and powerfully. The preacher’s trustworthiness could be also the spiritual ideal for the congregation. Being convinced of God’s faithfulness forms this trustworthiness in the preacher’s inner mind. The preacher who is really aware of God will not fail to imitate God’s faithfulness. Therefore, the preacher’s faithfulness and trustworthiness come from the awareness of God. Then, this faithfulness of the preacher is one of the spiritual bricks to construct the house of effective preaching in

¹⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹¹ Ibid., 59.

¹² Clyde E. Fant, *Preaching for Today* (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1957), 72.

which every audience will joyfully and hopefully enter in and live in.

Fourth, now it comes to consider about holiness. It is one of God's attributes with regard to His nature. The preacher's holy life is crucial to effective preaching because he or she is called for God's Holy ministry. In response to God's calling, every preacher should be a man or woman of holy life or Christlike life because God is holy and we are created in His own image or likeness. It is true that the more the preacher knows God's holiness and applies it into his or her life, the holier he or she becomes. Holiness of the heart, mind and soul necessitates effective preaching. God wants us to be holy men and women. God is holy and therefore the channel of God's message to be holy also.

As preachers, our minds, and souls should be cleansed by God's Holy words. Then, consequently, our daily living, and conducts will become holy. Then, we are spiritually purified. Consequently, the preacher's character will meet with God's will. No doubt, the preacher's character must be in line with what he or she preaches. In consequence, the preacher's purification affects the audience. Otherwise, it is impossible to be the channels for God's message for the source of that message is holy and so does the message. Being the channel for God's message, serving as the material for God's message which is shared at the pulpit requires purification.

Purification here refers to the preacher's holy living including mind, heart, and body. It refers to the preacher's spiritual sanctification. Lots of scripture verses teach us about holiness. For example, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church saying that "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." (2Corinthians 7:1) In addition to this, Hebrews 12:14 vividly says, "strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Again, Leviticus 20:26 reminds us that "You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy

and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” There are still some other scriptures verses in the Bible that tell about holiness. The preacher’s knowledge of God’s holiness motivates him or her to live purification life marked by purity. Ephesians 1:4 says that the preacher must be blameless before God and human beings. (NRSV)

God indeed commands us to be holy.¹³ “The only road to Christian maturity and Godliness (Christlike and holiness) passes through the practice of the Spiritual discipline.”¹⁴ In relation to holiness, Jonathan Edwards once said that, “I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The Heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness.”¹⁵ E. M Bounds also writes that, “It is not great talents or great learning or great preachers that God needs, but men great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God-men always preaching by holy sermons in the pulpit, by holy lives out of it. These can mold a generation for God.”¹⁶

I, therefore, strongly argue that Living a holy life is crucially important for the preacher himself or herself because effective preaching demands the preacher’s personal holiness. Holiness refers to the preacher’s morally uprightness. Tan Jin Huat rephrases Robert Murray McCheyne’s word in relation to this point, “my people’s greatest need is my personal holiness.”¹⁷ Effective preaching at the pulpit is also determined by this personal holiness. Clarence E. Macartney’s statement vividly points out this notion when he says:

¹³ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life* (Colorado: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Publisher, 2009), 20.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷ Tan Jin Huat, *Preacher Prepare Yourself: Toward Better Preaching* (Kuala Lumpur: Good News Resources, 2000), 52.

The better the man, the better the pulpit. When he kneels by the bed of the dying or when he mounts the pulpit stairs, then every self-denial he has made, every Christian forbearance he has shown, every resistance to sin and temptation will come back to strengthen his arm and give conviction to his voice. Likewise, every evasion of duty, every indulgence of self, every compromise with evil, every unworthy thought, word or deed, will be there at the head of the pulpit stairs to meet him on the Sunday morning, to take the light from his eyes, the power from his blow, the ring from his voice and the joy from his heart.¹⁸

This statement is a very concrete and vivid reminder for every contemporary preacher with regard to the preacher's personal holiness, trustworthiness, and faithfulness to be effective and powerful preachers in this day and age. I would insist that the preacher's personal holiness is the best sermon he or she preaches to the congregation. Therefore, every preacher of today's world must be aware that we are preaching through our daily living, through our activity, our relationship, words, and so on. In short, we are preaching through everything we do in every single day of our lives. It is necessary to remind ourselves that what we preach must match what we practice in our daily life.

Hence, every contemporary preacher ought to be convinced of that knowing and applying God's nature and attributes is crucial to effective preaching. Without it, the hope of preaching effectively and powerfully will be like the idea of "Utopia." It will be like a daydreaming. In addition to the preacher's knowledge of God's nature, it is also necessary to be convinced of the work of God because the preacher's knowledge of God will be incomplete without being convinced of the work of God. Therefore, I discuss the work of God in the following section of this chapter.

b. Knowing the Work of God

¹⁸ Ibid., 52.

Another aspect of the knowledge of God required for effective preaching is to know the work of God because in preaching we share what God has done, is doing, and will be done for us. The work of God for humanity is of upmost gracious. It can even be said that the preacher's knowledge and discernment of the work of God is the theological foundation for preaching. What is the work of God? How do we measure God's works?

Generally, we tend to think about redemption and salvation when it comes to the work of God. For Jonathan Edwards salvation and redemption are the same.¹⁹ However, in my view, salvation means the sum, the core of the whole process of God's work to save humanity, and redemption is a part of that process which the Son Jesus Christ has done for us. "Salvation encompasses the entire act of the deliverance from the righteous justice of a holy God, including justification, redemption, and sanctification."²⁰

The Old Testament term used for the sense of salvation is liberation. In its fullest sense, in my view, salvation must include two aspects such as 'salvation from' and 'salvation to'. It means salvation from the penalty of sin and salvation to the realm of eternity, and that is what we call holistic salvation which includes physical, mental, and spiritual. This is what the contemporary preacher must be convinced of about salvation because this is the core of God's work in the process of salvation.

With regard to the work of God, I intentionally quote Jonathan Edwards' explanation because it is precise and easy to understand on the work of God. In accordance with Jonathan Edwards, God's righteousness and salvation are cause and effect respectively. He says, "God's righteousness or covenant mercy is the root of which his salvation is the fruit. Both of them relate to the covenant of grace. The one

¹⁹ John Erskine, *History of the Work of Redemption* (Portsmouth: Worcester, 1808), 13.

²⁰ Rich Deem, *Salvation in the Bible*. <http://www.godandscience.org/doctrine/redemp/html> (January 3, 2012)

is God's covenant mercy and faithfulness, the other intends that the work of God by which this covenant mercy is accomplished in the fruit of it."²¹

We are at this point to think about the time bound of God's work of salvation. In fact, God's salvation cannot be confined by time frame. It is indeed guaranteed for the past, present, and the future. In relation to this, Jonathan Edward insists that "Till the end of the world God will go on to accomplish deliverance and salvation for the church, from all her enemies; for that is what the prophet is here speaking of; till the end of the world."²² Therefore, being aware of God's work is of great importance to effective preaching.

It is again fair to say that we are also facing some false teachings in our contemporary churches in this era. Some contemporary preachers do not truly discern about the nature and work of God. Because of their misunderstanding and misinterpretations of the work of God, they preach falsely and give the wrong message to the people. Many people of our churches today are spiritually being killed by these false teachings. Very recently in my community, a young preacher who has graduated from an unrecognized Bible school preached that a person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior can do everything he or she wants. It is no matter, he said, even if he or she commits a murder, for his or her salvation cannot be lost by deeds. The message of this sermon was that after accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior we can do everything we want.

After the worship service, the congregation divided into two groups. Some people got angry at this preacher, and on the other hands, some people accepted this sermon. The danger of false preaching is obvious. Some people even go astray from God's presence due to these kinds of false teachings. Thus, every preacher

²¹ Erskine, *History of the Work of Redemption*, 11.

²² *Ibid.*, 12.

should be aware of this preaching danger. Besides, every preacher ought to clearly discern the work of God. This is what P.T. Forsyth reminds us of when he says with preaching Christianity stands or falls.

Therefore, preaching effectively also means preaching rightly, preaching in accordance with God's will, and preaching the message God wants the preachers to share with the people. For this reason, I argue that every preacher ought to know the work of God in order that we can be the right channels for the message of God. We can be the relevant or right materials for the living words of God. Then, how can we know God's nature and work? I do believe that the knowledge of God can only be achieved by the preacher's personal relationship with God. Therefore, in the following section, I describe the importance and necessity of the preacher's intimate relationship with God required for effective preaching.

B. The Preacher's intimate-personal relationship with God

In the previous section of this chapter, I discussed the importance of knowing the nature and the work of God for effective preaching. And now it comes to discuss about how and why the preacher needs to have intimate relationship with God to preach powerfully and effectively in this era. The preacher's intimate relationship with God includes at least three aspects such as the preacher's spiritual life, personal prayer, and private daily Bible reading. Therefore, the significance of these aspects for effective preaching will be described in this section.

God is the one who sends the message and the preacher serves as the channel for that message to reach people. The preacher's intimate relationship with God forms the preacher's personality, and the truth (God's message) is to be shared with the audience through that personality. For this reason, the preacher's intimate fellowship with God must constantly be maintained. God works through the

preacher's personality in the preaching event. Therefore, the source of the message and the receiver of that message should not be blocked. The connection or communication between God and the preacher must be maintained in good condition. If not, the preacher will not have any message to bring to people.

In *On Preparation and Delivery of the Sermons*, quoting Philips Brooks' definition of preaching, Broadus says that, "the preacher is not the source of the message; it is from God. But he is the channel of the message. The message moves through his personality. He is the transmitter."²³ In my view, personality and spirituality are related to each other. And spirituality only comes from the preacher's personal relationship with God. Therefore, it is important for the preacher to keep relating intimately with God in everyday life.

a. The Preacher's Spiritual life

It might be fair to say that it is still hard to define the word 'spirituality' precisely until this present time because spirituality is differently defined based on different religious doctrines in the world. For example, the way Christians view spirituality may not be the same as Hindus and Muslims. However, it is profitable for the preacher to take a look at some definitions offered by different scholars. Mark A. McIntosh states, "Spiritual is what is under the influence of, or is a manifestation of, the Spirit of God."²⁴ McIntosh tries to refer to 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 by saying that "It is important that in both Pauline and later Christian writings the spiritual person is not someone who turns away from material reality but rather someone in whom the Spirit of God dwells."²⁵ He goes on to define spirituality: "Spirituality, in other words,

²³ Broadus, *On Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 13.

²⁴ Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*. <http://books.google.com.tw/books?id=theology>

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

is not something the believer has but is a new pattern of personal growth taking place in the community of those who have been sought out, converted and cherished by the risen Christ.”²⁶

With regard to spirituality, Philip Sheldrake, a Professor at University of Wales, who has greatly involved in the development of Christian spirituality, says “Spirituality refers to the deepest values and meanings by which people seek to live.”²⁷ In the early Christianity, it refers to spirituality as the dimension which is engendered and empowered by God. It means that God is the agent who animates and releases new life and understanding in the believer.²⁸

Spirituality has been defined by several scholars and theologians throughout the history. Spirituality is not confined within Christianity because it deals with people of all cultures. People of different religions have their respective discernment or definition of spirituality. In my view, the preacher’s spiritual life means the preacher’s constant discernment over his or her inner life. John Westerhoff’s statement with regard to the spiritual life is preferable. He says, “The spiritual life, as I understand, is ordinary, everyday life lived in an ever-deepening and loving relationship to God and therefore to one’s true or healthy self, all people, and the whole of creation.”²⁹ The preacher’s spiritual life I seek to describe in this thesis closely resembles this definition. Spirituality is what we know as the inner self which biblically called ‘God’s image.’ We are created in the image or likeness of God. Thus, discerning this image is what we call spirituality. Calvin calls it a “sense of divinity” that God has implanted in every human’s heart. Our attempt of regaining this sense can thus be regarded as spirituality. Therefore, this inner self must be connected with its Creator constantly

²⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁷ Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing House, 2007), 1.

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁹ John H. Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life: the Foundation for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 1.

for being 'whole'. Likewise, the preacher must be convinced of this inner self in order to communicate with God timelessly. Westerhoff vividly writes that, "The health of our spiritual life is directly related to our image of God."³⁰

Spirituality is not a short trip, but it is a life-long journey. It is the constant practice that we should keep as long as we live here on this earth. Every preacher must be always spiritually refreshed. In accordance with James D. Berkley, spiritual freshness involves two things. First, we must be aware of a sense of promise in what we have been called to do. Second, it also involves a sense of God being involved in what we do.³¹ In this section, the spiritual life of the preacher includes the preacher's personal prayers and private Bible reading.

b. Personal Prayer

I discuss personal prayer as the essential requirement for the preacher's spirituality for effective preaching. Prayer indeed is of great importance to the formation of the preacher's spirituality. "Prayer, which is the chief exercise of faith, and by which we daily receive God's benefits,"³² said John Calvin. He continues to say that in Christ God offers all happiness in place of our misery, all wealth in place of our neediness. Besides, God in Christ opens to us the heavenly treasure. Calvin again goes on to say that we human beings must dig all these treasures by prayer.³³

In this sense, as preachers, we are to dig the spiritual power for effective preaching from such heavenly treasure in the act of prayer. The reason of this point is so clear when Calvin says, "Whatever we need and whatever we lack is in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the father willed all the fullness of his bounty to abide

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship*, 84.

³² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), 850.

³³ Ibid., 850.

so that we may all draw from it as from an overflowing spring, it remains for us to seek in him, and in prayers to ask of him, what we have learned to be in him.”³⁴ The preacher’s upmost need for effective preaching is indeed spiritual power. But, the preacher does not intuitively have it. However, this power is not impossible for him or her to attain. The preacher can have it throughout his or her life long journey of prayer. In *Power in Preaching* Johnson T. K. Lim concretely insists that the power for effective preaching comes from ardent prayer. He calls this power as ‘unction’ or ‘anointing.’³⁵ With regard to contemporary preaching, he complains by saying that “much of contemporary preaching is powerless because the preacher is prayerless.”³⁶

Therefore, every preacher should be an ardent lover of prayer in order to achieve the spiritual power for effective preaching. The great preachers call this power differently. For example, Charles Spurgeon calls it as ‘sacred anointing’ while E.M. Bounds prefers to name it ‘heaven’s knighthood’. For Lloyd Jones this power is ‘the conscious smile of God’. This power is also called as ‘power from high’, ‘anointing’, ‘divine flow’, ‘second blessing’, deeper life’, and ‘higher life’.³⁷ The name does not matter, but the important thing is to have or possess this power in our lives for effective preaching, to transform lives, to touch the hearts, and to alert the souls. Then, how can we pray?

With regard to right prayer, Calvin also offers some considerable rules of right prayer to us. It includes reverence, a sincere sense of want, penitence, self-confidence, and plea for pardon, and confident hope.³⁸ Why is personal prayer so important for effective preaching, then? How this prayer relate to effective preaching? True preaching is to make something happen in the lives of the listeners.

³⁴ Ibid., 850.

³⁵ Johnson T. K. Lim, *Power in Preaching* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 125.

³⁶ Ibid., 126.

³⁷ Ibid., 120.

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 853-862.

To be able to change something in the hearers' lives we need spiritual power.

Therefore, we are to pray unceasingly because prayer has transformative power that we need for effective preaching. This power stands for spiritual power that we gain from the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is the spiritual authority that we attain from constant and intimate relationship with God through prayers in every single day of our lives. It is the power that we get from the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the triune God who inspires the message and helps the listeners contemplate the message, anoints the mouth of the preacher and the ears of the hearers. "It is the Holy Spirit who opens our hearts to receiving the Word, who enlightens our minds to understand the Word, and who makes the reading and preaching of the Scripture a means of grace."³⁹

Prayer, on the other hand, means spending our time with God whence the Holy Spirit as the power of God forms our spirituality. During personal prayer, the power of God flows to us through the help of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the more we pray, the stronger our spirituality will be. Personal prayer is something like the way by which the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to empower our spirituality.

There is an English saying which goes prayer changes things. Effective preaching is determined by the inner changes in the lives of the audience. The change in the preacher's life is prerequisite for the changes in the lives of the audience. Thus, this three-word-sentence: 'prayer changes things' is a good suggestive sentence for every preacher to let changes happen in his or her life first. If daily Bible reading is letting God talk to us through God's words, then, prayer, in turn, means we talk to God through our language. These two dimensional relationship between God and the preacher is constantly necessitated for effective preaching. But if we just talk to God

³⁹ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Volume 4* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 50.

and never listen to God while we are praying, then it is not having a true relationship since prayer is an intimate relationship between human and God. James D. Berkley writes, “true prayer is attentiveness to God. The basic concern here is not asking but being attentive, opening ourselves to meet with God in a willed encounter- on God’s terms.”⁴⁰

Hence, it is necessary to note that prayer has a dual focus: talking and listening. With regard to this point, John Westerhoff writes this way, “Further, in the world of friendship, we do not develop much of a relationship if we do all the talking. There are many people who confess that they have never heard God say anything. If they treated people the way they treat God, people would not say anything either. Every time they pray they talk and never listen.”⁴¹ Thus, it is spiritually wise to be convinced of the dual focus of prayer: talking and listening.

Indeed, the more the preacher prays, the more powerful he or she becomes in spirituality. Charles Grandison Finney once said in this way, “in regard to my own experience, I will say that unless I had the spirit of prayer I could do nothing. If even for a day or an hour I lost the spirit of grace and supplication, I found myself unable to preach with power and efficiency or to win souls by personal conversation. In this respect my experience was what it has always been.”⁴² Whitesell also adds to this by saying that prayer releases the Holy Spirit, opens human hearts, and chains the Devil.⁴³ In addition to this, E. M. Bounds also writes in this way, “Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction, and makes it stick. In every ministry weighty for good, prayer has always been a serious

⁴⁰ Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship*, 84.

⁴¹ Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching*, 7.

⁴² Faris Daniel Whitesell, *The Art of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1950), 86.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

business.”⁴⁴

Hence, it is wise for us to note that prayer is a key for powerful preaching. Effective preaching starts from the constant personal prayer of the preacher. However, the desire or will to pray is located within the awareness of God. Thus, effective preaching is born out of the preacher’s awareness of God. In order to have a deeper understanding of the prayer life, we need to define what prayer means to us. Dr. David Yonggi Cho, the pastor of Full Gospel Central Church, the largest Church of the world, describes a very strong theological definition of prayer in his book entitled *Successful Home Cell Groups*. He says, “Prayer is our spiritual breathing.”⁴⁵

A preacher without regular private prayer will be a person who is spiritually dead. But, the message is always alive, active, and in action. Zwingli also spoke of the Word of God being alive.⁴⁶ How can the preacher of the spiritually dead be a channel for a living message? Every preacher should be aware of this fact. “Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill.”⁴⁷ Zwingli states a concrete reminder for the preacher when he says, “Salvation never finds its way to a prayerless heart. The Holy Spirit never abides in a prayerless Spirit. Preaching never edifies a prayerless soul. Christ knows nothing of prayerless Christians. The gospel cannot be extended by a prayerless preacher.”⁴⁸

For this reason, we take fellowship with God in the mode of prayer. I am arguing for the importance of personal or private prayer for the contemporary preacher. I am insisting that the one who is really aware of God will not fail to pray fervently or ardently along with his or her faith journey. Thus, the preacher’s awareness is the key and way to the constant prayer life. Prayer is our relationship

⁴⁴ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁵ David Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Alachua: Bridge-Logos, 1981), 128.

⁴⁶ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 49.

⁴⁷ Bounds, *Power through Prayer*, 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 100.

with God and it expresses our dependency upon God. At its simplest, prayer means our personal talk to God. It can be said that prayer is a direct communication of human beings to God.

Bounds offers an idea that “prayer changes the heart and actually makes the person. It takes away our impatience, harshness, selfishness, and cluelessness, and replaces them with patience, gentleness, loving-kindness, and understanding. It takes away our blindness and replaces it with fresh vision and clarity. It takes away our weakness and gives us strength.”⁴⁹ He goes on to say that “Prayer, to the preacher, is not simply the duty of his profession, a privilege, but it is a necessity. Air is not more necessary to the lungs than prayer is to the preacher.”⁵⁰

Obviously, Bounds’ words point out the importance of the preacher’s personal daily prayer for effective preaching. The Holy Spirit illumines the preacher through personal prayers. Every preacher may feel a sense of inner power through his or her personal daily prayers. The preacher who wants to preach effectively will pray more than others because he or she is clearly convinced of receiving God’s power through personal prayers, because he or she has experiences of receiving power through which he or she preaches powerfully. Being an effective preacher requires spending much time with God. In relation to the preacher’s life of prayer, Westerhoff’s remind helps us to see the importance of time with God;

It is difficult to develop an intimate friendship with someone unless we spend a significant amount of quality time with that person. Would we develop much of a friendship with someone if we spent only one or two hours a week or what amounts to about four days a year with her or him? Why is it, then, that we wonder why our relationship with God is not as good as we desire when we spend quality time with God only for a few

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 99.

hours each week, mostly on Sunday mornings? Our relationship with God is directly related to the amount and quality of time we spend consciously with God daily.⁵¹

Rightly, the more we spend our time with God, the more powerful we become. The sequential connection between the awareness of God and prayer can be stated in this way. I would say that, ‘no awareness of God, no will or desire to pray.’ ‘No prayer, no power,’ then, ‘no power, no effective preaching.’ Thus, I strongly argue that effective preaching is initiated by the awareness of God. To put it another way, the preacher’s awareness of God gears him or her to pray constantly and unconditionally. Then, this constant personal prayer again steers the preacher to effective preaching. Undoubtedly, the preacher who is really aware of God knows what God’s purpose for his or her life, what God wills him or her to do here on this earth. I would say that, ‘no prayer no power.’ Every preacher must be a man and woman of self-discipline for personal prayer.

Tan Jim Huat insists, “The preacher who wishes to prevail with man from the pulpit must first prevail with God in private prayer.”⁵² Hence, having daily personal prayer is of great importance to effective preaching. The preacher who fails to pray will surely face with great preaching failure especially in this apathetic world. Then, the preacher’s personal- intimate relationship with God also includes the preacher’s daily Bible reading. So, I move to discuss the significance and necessity of the preacher’s daily Bible reading in the following section.

c. Daily Bible Reading

In *Steps to the Sermons* Brown insists that, “The reading of the Bible is a primary

⁵¹ Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching*, 6.

⁵² Huat, *Preacher Prepare Yourself*, 49.

aid to effective preaching.”⁵³ Every preacher, without exception, must be a spiritually mature person because spiritual maturity is one of the prerequisites for powerful preaching. Only the word of God can build the preacher’s spiritual maturity. Reading the words of God indirectly means being fed of our spiritual bodies by the spiritual food. Effective preaching is making something change in the lives of the audience, and only the word of God can change something in the listeners. Thus, daily Bible reading is of great importance for every preacher to preach effectively. The preacher who really encounters God or is really aware of God’s nature will never fail to read the Bible privately.

Reading the Bible daily is as important as personal prayer for every preacher. It is the cousin of personal prayer. Personal prayer and daily bible reading need to go together. I strongly insist that daily bible reading is motivated by the awareness of God. To put it another way, if the preacher is not aware of God, then, he or she rightly fails to read the Bible. With regard to the importance of the Bible, it is worth noting some famous people’s sayings.

“One reason why preachers dry up homiletically, and lose their evangelistic and spiritual power, is because they neglect their Bibles,”⁵⁴ complained Faris Daniel Whitesell. Indeed, daily Bible reading is not a temporal task for the preacher, but a constant journey because it nourishes our spiritual life and it empowers us to preach powerfully. I would say that private daily Bible reading is a lifelong task. We should read it thoroughly as long as we are alive. The day we quit reading the Bible means the moment we lose the power for preaching. Whitesell goes on to say that “persistent Bible-reading not only gives an abundance of homiletical suggestions, but

⁵³ Brown, *Steps to the Sermon*, 182.

⁵⁴ Whitesell, *The Art of Biblical Preaching*, 75.

it has a spiritually renewing effect upon the life.”⁵⁵

“In *Anointed Expository Preaching* Stephen F. Olford makes a comment referring to this scripture verse. He says, “this is one of the most neglected areas in the minister’s life. The devil sees to this. He knows that if he can distract or divert us from this daily tryst with our Lord, the consequences will be defeat, despair, and disaster.”⁵⁶ In addition to this, he goes on to say that, “without this heavenly nourishment, it is impossible for the preacher to serve victoriously in a demonically dominated world.”⁵⁷ We are called to encourage our congregation with the living words of God. In order to encourage and give spiritual food to others, we must first deeply delve into the scripture. Our souls must first be nourished by the Spirit of God through our private bible reading and meditating them. Our hearts and minds are first be filled with the words of God in order to share with other people. Otherwise, we have nothing to give others. Therefore, the preacher’s daily Bible reading helps a great deal to effective preaching.

Therefore, the preacher should acquaint with the words of God in his or her heart so that the Power of the Holy Spirit can work through him or her. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit will not deal with the preacher who has no zeal to study and read the living words of God. Thus, this transformative power also needs to be possessed by the preacher to make something change in the lives of the hearers. Then, so far, I discussed the knowledge of God, and the preacher’s personal relationship with God in this section. Now, it is necessary to consider the preacher’s unconditional faith.

C. The Preacher ‘s Unconditional Faith

There is an English saying which goes, “a little faith will take you to heaven but a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁶ Stephen F. Olford, *Anointed Expository preaching* (Nashville: Broadman&Holman,1998), 21.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 21.

great faith will bring heaven to you.” This saying tells of the significance of great faith in our daily life. However, it is necessary to consider what faith really means to us. What is faith? Faith differs from belief. Belief is just something like a trust, but faith deals with action and commitment. In accordance with Jim Cymbala, “Faith is total dependence upon God that becomes supernatural in its working. People with faith develop a second kind of sight. They see more than just the circumstances; they see God, right beside them. Can they prove it? No. But by faith they know he’s there nonetheless.”⁵⁸ The definition of faith given in the Bible in Hebrews 11:1 is very clear which goes, “now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.” (NRSV) This is the clearest meaning of faith which the Bible offers to us.

In addition, John William Beaudean offers a vivid and concrete view on faith. He says, “faith is the freedom from sin.”⁵⁹ Faith keeps us free from doing sin. To put it another way, when our hearts are occupied by faith, we have no desire to do evil things. When our minds are filled with firm faith, there will be no place for evil desire in our hearts. Then what does it mean by unconditional faith? At its simplest and shortest, unconditional faith means believing God in any situation. It indirectly means unshakable faith. The preacher’s firm faith is also of great importance to preach effectively. It is equally important as the knowledge of God and the spiritual life of the preacher.

Thus, the preacher must believe in God in any kind of situation to be the best example to the people, to be a spiritual ideal for the congregation, and to preach powerfully. When we take a look at the Old Testament, some stories give us a clear explanation about what unconditional faith means. For example the story about Daniel and his friends is the best example to point out it. Besides, the stories of Noah

⁵⁸ Cymbala, *What happens when Real Faith Ignites God’s people: Fresh Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 16.

⁵⁹ John William Beaudean JR, *Paul’s Theology of Preaching* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), 7.

and Abraham vividly explain us what unconditional faith means. For Luther, faith is always based on the words of God. He says,

“In fact, one cannot even speak of faith without speaking of God’s words. The two belong to each other, because faith depends on God’s Word, and because the Word of God is basically a call to faith and faith is basically an answer to the Word. The Word produces faith. Faith is not some sort of human quality. It is not the same thing as faithfulness. It is rather a response to the Word of God. It is a matter of saying yes to God when he calls us, of believing the promises of the Word of God.⁶⁰

Luther’s understanding of faith is significant for the contemporary preacher because his contribution of the connection between the Word of God and faith is still relevant to effective preaching for today’s world. Our faith must be rooted in the words and promises of God because we preach about God’s words. In preaching, we try to make an assurance of God’s promises of salvation to our people.

As the preachers of God’s living words, our faith steers us to the right path to God’s salvation. Faith is our gear to proceed to a higher level of our spirituality especially when unexpectedly hardships and troubles come to us. The preacher’s unconditional faith will fearlessly and faultlessly lead the people to the realm of the eternity. I, therefore, insist that the preacher’s faith should not be conditioned by any circumstances that we face in our daily life. It is especially very true for the preachers of my own context. It is fair to say that our context is totally different from the western context and that of other eastern contexts even.

It is again no wonder to insist that when compared to people of any other different contexts, the people in my context are under much harder, harsher, tougher, and more difficult situation in every area such as economics, politics, education,

⁶⁰ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 42.

social, communication, religions, racial affairs, and health issues. The necessity of firm and steadfast faith of the contemporary preachers in my context is of the highest importance to preach effectively in this challenging situation.

We need what I call unconditional faith to resist all kinds of disturbances and hardships in my community. Indeed, unconditional faith means a lot for the contemporary preachers in my context. It is very meaningful and essential for us to preach effectively. We need spiritual courage which is born out of firm faith for effective preaching. Without this spiritual courage it is impossible to preach effectively in such difficult situations. Therefore, the necessity of unconditional faith for the preacher in my context is even beyond words to preach bravely and effectively.

To sum up, I believe that the preacher's awareness of God plays a vital role in the preaching ministry because it includes some significant aspects such as the preacher's knowledge of God, personal relationship with God, and an unconditional faith. When it comes to the preacher's awareness of God, the preacher's knowledge of God should come first since it includes the nature and the work of God. These two aspects could be regarded as the foundation to know God more intimately. The preacher who is really aware of God will be convinced of the nature and the work of God. It is necessary to note that the knowledge of God's nature will help the preacher imitate God's faithfulness, holiness, and trustworthiness and apply them into practical life. In addition to this, the preacher's knowledge of God's work helps the preacher to avoid the contemporary heresies and false teaching in the churches.

Second, every preacher should be convinced that the knowledge of God only can only be achieved by the preacher's personal-intimate relationship with God. More

precisely, personal daily prayer and daily Bible reading should be practiced in every single day of the preacher's life. The preacher's private prayer and daily Bible reading constitute the preacher's spirituality with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then, the preacher's spirituality produces or enhances the spiritual power required for effective preaching.

Finally, when it comes to the preacher's awareness of God, the preacher's unconditional faith is also crucially important. It is necessary for the preacher to resist all the hardships and temptations that he or she encounters in daily life since the preacher is spiritually ideal person for the congregation. Then, in order to resist or endure these difficulties, the preacher unconditionally needs firm faith.

As far as I understand in relation to faith, there are three steps. First, there should be the content of the faith. In this sense, the preacher's faith must always have the content. Second, the preacher must have confidence that his or her faith content is true. If the preacher is not confident in his or her faith content, then he or she cannot stand firmly in the midst of difficulties and temptations. Third, the preacher should trust in the content of the faith unconditionally. I believe that the preacher who is aware of God will be convinced of these three steps of the faith, and then his or her faith cannot be conditioned by any circumstances. As a consequence, he or she will become man or woman of unshakable faith. To put it another way, this unshakable faith can only come from the awareness of God. For instance, if the preacher is really aware of God, then he or she has firm faith on God's words and promises. Consequently, this preacher will preach bravely in any kind of situation. This spiritual brevity or unconditional faith again inspires and encourages the congregation. Therefore, the preacher's unconditional faith is essential for effective preaching.

CHAPTER THREE:
EFFECTIVE PREACHING IS FACILITATED BY THE PREACHER'S AWARENESS OF MESSAGE

In Chapter Two, I described the importance of the preacher's awareness of God for effective preaching. Now we turn to another important aspect required for powerful preaching: the preacher's awareness of the message. The preacher should discern that preaching is the proclamation of the message of God. Thus, it can be understood that the centrality of our preaching is the message. The message is the core and the pillar of our preaching. It is the heart of preaching. With regard to this point, John Albert Broadus, the famous nineteenth century preacher, makes a precise statement when he says:

Preaching is the proclamation of God's message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity. The central part of this definition of preaching is God's message. The preacher has nothing to transmit apart from God's word. Ideally the preacher stands in God's stead and speaks for him.¹

It is the message which speaks to the souls of the audience. The message is what the congregations are longing for to hear. It is important to note that what audience is feeling spiritually thirsty they need words that help them draw close to God. Hence, it is incredibly important for the preacher to be convinced of the message for effective preaching.

In this chapter, I attempt to seek out how preachers are aware or can be aware of the message they preach. Besides, I describe the importance of the preacher's awareness of the message using four sections. First, I describe the definition of the message stated by some scholars. Second, under the title of "Message and the Bible" I discuss the Bible as the major source of the message, and the necessity of acquiring

¹ Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 18.

the knowledge or theory of interpretation of the text. Third, I investigate the danger of lacking the knowledge of the message in our preaching, and the awareness of the importance of preaching different themes or topics. Fourth, I focus on the message and the needs of people. In this section, I describe the situation of Myanmar as a case study. Since effective preaching indirectly means letting the message meet with the needs of the hearers, I discuss the message as the needs of the people. To be more precise, I divide human needs into two categories such as God's salvation as universal need, and particular need or contextual need. In the last section of this chapter, I describe the message for the Lisu people in Myanmar. Then, in accordance with the contextual demands, I emphasize on the significance of incarnation for the Lisu contextual situation in this section. Now, I describe what the message means to the preachers and the people.

A. What is the Message?

In order to have a deeper understanding of the message, it is necessary to define the meaning of message to a certain extent. There might be several meanings of the message stated by the scholars. In the *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* it says that the two most commonly translated terms are the Hebrew *davar* (thirteen times) and Greek *logos* (seventeen times). These terms are translated as "the word of the Lord/God, or the message of God, or message from God. In the New Testament it is expressed as message of salvation, or message of the good news, or message of God's grace."² From this perspective, the preacher can have an understanding of the message as God's grace and salvation for humanity. We need the Gospel for eternity. That Gospel means the Good News. Then, what is good news? At its simplest and

² Katharine Dooh Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 58.

shortest meaning, good news is God's salvation based on God's love for us. In relation to this, Reuel I. Howe insists, "the Gospel is the good news that God, who is love, lived and died and lives again for us. It is not what we have to do but God has done."³ This is the message that the audience needs to hear. This is the ultimate need due to its relation to eternity.

Acquiring sufficient knowledge about the message is crucial to the preaching ministry since preaching is the proclamation of God's words by a chosen person to meet the needs of humanity. It can be seen that the central part of preaching is message. Therefore, the preacher should be well aware of the message for effective preaching. "There are many people who have read and heard the Bible for years, but who have never received its real message,"⁴ writes L. Harold DeWolf.

As the preachers are the bearers of God's message to the people, we must bring the relevant message to the people. For example, the children are to hear the message in their own ears, and in the level and scope of their understanding. The young peoples are to hear God's message based on their cognitive scope. Likewise, we must bring a message that is relevant to the adults.

B. Message and the Bible

In the contemporary Christian churches, I observe that some preachers are preaching without really being aware of the message, and as a consequence bringing an irrelevant message to the congregation. They are feeding the goats, instead of feeding and caring for the sheep. As a consequence, many religious related problems appear day after day. Lacking the knowledge of a message among the preachers in the Christian community makes unwanted problems within the church community.

³ Reuel I. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action* (Connecticut: Greenwich, 1962), 7.

⁴ L. Harold DeWolf, *The Enduring Message of the Bible* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), 7.

Many church people go astray due to the wrong or irrelevant message that they unfortunately and inevitably have heard. Some Christians try to change the church, or some change to another denomination. What's wrong with the message? What is the cause of this case? It is because the preacher is not aware of the message. Therefore, I argue that the effective preaching is dependent on the preacher's awareness of the message. In order to prove this statement, the preacher should not fail to know the source of the message. To put it another way, knowing the source of the message is necessarily required when we talk about the preacher's awareness of the message. In my view, the Bible is the major source of the message for effective preaching. Thus, I discuss the Bible as the source major of the message in the following section.

a. The Bible as the major source of the message

After having known the meaning of the message, then the preacher must find the place to gain the message. I would call it as 'the where of the message.' Since preaching is proclamation of the gospel, we have nowhere to go apart from the Bible to search for the message to preach. The Bible is the main source where we get the message to share with the people. In relation to this, Broadus writes, "if the preacher is to speak for God, he must of necessity go to the place where God has spoken most clearly. This means that the preacher must search the Scriptures for an authentic word from God."⁵ He goes on to say, "The Bible always gives something to preach, and it is spiritually relevant."⁶

For this reason, the preacher should go into the scripture in order to find the message which is relevant to the people and bring it to them. Indeed, the Bible is all

⁵ Broadus, *On the preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

things we need for our physical and spiritual lives. Everything we need in our lives is revealed in the promises of God recorded in the Bible. For instance, there is a concrete assurance for eternal life in John 3:16, 1John 5:12-14. Besides, in the Bible, there are many promises with regard to fulfilling human's needs and answers to reduce or solve daily life's problems. In short, the promises of eternal life for life after death, and the abundant life for this earthly life are assured in the Scripture. In John 10:1-18, an abundant life refers to the fullness of joy and strength for mind, body, and soul. As preachers, it is our responsibility to search for these biblical resources and bring them to the people.

It is important to note that when it comes to the Bible as the major source of the message it necessarily includes the preacher's knowledge of interpreting the text. A correct or an appropriate interpretation of the text is of great importance for the preacher because it is the God-given task of the preacher to bring the truth to the people. It needs to interpret the biblical text in order to have a contextual understanding on that text. For instance, Romans 13: 1-6 which says to obey the rulers who have authority because only God can give authority to anyone, and God puts these rulers in their places of power. If this text is not interpreted based on contextual situation, God might be doubtful to the Lisu people in Myanmar, and then this text may make the Lisu people ambiguous. In *Steps to Sermons*, Brown writes:

To interpret and apply the text in accordance with its real meaning is one of the preacher's most sacred duties. This is true because Scripture is the revealed truth of God given for the purpose of redemption. Serious and eternal issues are involved in the proclamation of this truth. Lives today and eternal destiny tomorrow depend upon accurate and effective interpretation of the truth of God as revealed in Scripture.⁷

⁷ Brown, *Steps to the Sermon*, 47.

Then, what does an exegesis of the text have to do with the preacher's awareness of the message? Effective preaching requires the knowledge of an exegesis or interpretation of the texts rightly. I would insist that in order to dig the relevant message from the chosen text for a particular group of people, we must have the right knowledge of interpreting theories offered by scholars, and are to be aware of the importance and necessity of interpretation of the text for effective preaching. The preacher's awareness of the message has also to deal with the interpretation. Speaking more precisely, in order to use the Bible as the source of the message, the preacher needs to have the knowledge of a theory of interpretation. Undoubtedly, without knowing the theory of interpreting the text, it will be very dangerous for both preacher and the audiences as we have heard and studied about the false teachings and heresies in the church history. Thus, in the next section, I discuss the necessity and importance of the interpretation of the text.

b. Interpretation of the text

The preacher's awareness of message includes a familiarity with different methods of biblical interpretation, since we are to interpret the texts, hear a voice or find a message from that text, and then share that message with the people. However, we need to keep in mind that although we are called to preach the words of God, we cannot fully bring the message to the people due to our sinful nature. At this point, every preacher is in need of the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit to preach inspiringly. Nevertheless, the preacher is responsible to interpret the texts to find the message which is relevant to the needs of the people as much as possible.

"Every text demands to be interpreted; Scripture is no exception,"⁸ said by Alister E. McGrath in *Christian Theology*. It is important to interpret the texts because

⁸ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 204.

the preacher needs to find the relevant message from the biblical texts for his or her own current contextual situation because the preacher is responsible to explain what the chosen text means to the his or her congregation. I argue that the congregation needs to conceptualize what the text actually means to their contextual situation. Therefore, the art of interpretation becomes so important for the preacher for effective preaching. James Thompson says, “to preach the word of God is to interpret texts through which God speaks, to offer good news to the community, and to invite the listeners to participate in God’s story.”⁹

From this perspective, it can be understood that what God’s revelation recorded in the Bible actually means to the current contextual situation of the congregation. Thus, the preacher’s knowledge of interpretation of the texts plays a vital role in the preaching ministry. I mention the theories of biblical interpretation offered by some homileticians later in this section. But, I now discuss another term ‘exegesis’ in order to interpret the text in detail.

Generally, interpretation and exegesis mean almost the same. But, exegesis is also the art of interpretation, but it goes in a much deeper and critical way. Therefore, based on the contextual circumstances, it is necessary for the preacher to exegesis the texts to explain critically or analyze it in detail so that he or she can explain what the text actually means to the current contextual situation of his or her own people.

The term “exegesis” is derived from the Greek word *exegeomai* and it literally means to lead. But, its extended meaning is “to relate in detail” or “to expound.”¹⁰ When we apply it to the text, this term refers to an interpretive exercise in which we explain a passage. It can be extended to mean that the term refers to any act of

⁹ James w. Thompson, “Interpreting texts for Preaching,” in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*, ed. Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 61-74, at 61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

interpretation or explanation.¹¹ For this reason, at its simplest definition, exegesis means the art of interpretation. Actually exegesis is not strange to us. We all engage in it whether we are cognizant of it or not. John H. Hayes vividly says, “exegesis is a normal activity all of us practice every day of our lives. Whenever we try to understand something we have heard or read, we are doing exegesis.”¹²

However, with regard to interpreting the biblical texts, we should give our careful attention to it. To put it another way, the interpretation of biblical texts is to be handled with great care because it can otherwise derail the preacher from the real meaning of the texts. Many false teachings and heresies in the history of the Christian church are the proofs of it. In addition to this, the story of a young preacher who preached about God’s salvation, whom I stated in the previous chapter, reminds us of the danger of poor exegesis. Therefore, the contemporary preachers should be aware of the importance and necessity of the art of interpretation for effective preaching. For this reason the study of the art of exegeting or interpreting the texts is worth our efforts and attention.

There are several theories of interpreting the Bible offered by different homileticians. Among the scholars who offer suggestions to interpret the texts, Thomas G. Long’s contribution is particularly applicable to my community. Thus, I quote his theory in this section. He explains that “the whole aim of a preacher’s study of a biblical text is to hear in that text a specific word for us.”¹³ This fact is especially worth noting for the contemporary preaching in my community. From this view, it can be understood that in the study of the biblical interpretation of the text, it is necessary for the preacher to hear the relevant message from that text for his or her people. Then, in order to bring the relevant message to people, the preacher

¹¹ Ibid., 1.

¹² John H. Hayes, *Biblical Exegesis: A beginner’s Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster, 2007), 1.

¹³ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 60.

must have sufficient knowledge about the contextual situation of his or her congregation. With regard to this, I will discuss it in the last section of this chapter. But, I describe the importance and theories of interpreting the biblical text offered by some scholars for effective preaching in this section.

In *The Witness of Preaching* Thomas G. Long shares a precise and applicable theory of interpreting the biblical text which includes five points. In the first part entitled 'getting the text in view' he suggests to select the text, to reconsider where the text begins and ends, and to establish a reliable translation of the text. Second, under the subtitle of 'getting introduced to the text', he advises to read the text for basic understanding, and to place the text in its larger context. Third, under 'attending to the text' he discusses to listen attentively to the text. In part four which is entitled testing what is heard in the text, he includes four remarkable points such as exploring the text historically, exploring the literary character of the text, exploring the text theologically, and checking the text in the commentaries. Finally, he suggests moving toward the sermon to state the claim of the text upon the hearers (including the preacher).¹⁴ This suggestion is very crucial and helpful to contemporary preachers in the art of exegeting the biblical text for effective preaching because it approaches a text from the most important views such as historical, literary, and theological points of views. Long's way of interpretating the text is relevant and applicable to my contextual situation because it is precise and easier to apply for the Lisu preachers. However, Long fails to remind the preacher to read the text several times, to discuss the preacher's idea and feeling while reading the text, and to invite the preacher to come back again to the text and read it thoroughly before he or she is going to deliver. Thus, I also put Fred Craddock's theory in this section.

Fred Craddock also offers a theory of interpreting the text. There are three stages

¹⁴ Ibid., 61.

in Craddock's theory. He says, "the first and perhaps most important aspect of interpretation is a sensitive, but unassisted, listening to the text."¹⁵ He continues to insist that in the first stage of interpreting the text, the preacher should read the text several times and responds immediately with ideas, questions, feelings, and triggered recollections.¹⁶ The second stage of interpretation involves the contributions of commentaries and other resources. In this stage, the preacher is encouraged to look at the commentaries and some available resources with regard to the chosen text.¹⁷ The final stage of Craddock's way of interpreting the text is to put aside all the secondary resources and to come to the text once more. In this time, the preacher should reread the text carefully and the notes made during the first reading are reviewed.¹⁸ Long's method and Craddock's strategy of interpretation are invaluable for the preachers of my own community because both of them explain it in an understandable way. Both of them contribute to the Lisu preachers to interpret the text more completely. If the Lisu preachers apply interpretation methods of Long and Craddock, then, it will be much easier for the Lisu preachers to build contextual preaching model based on "crossbow metaphor" because Long's theory can help them read and understand the text from historical and theological points of view. The crossbow metaphor by which I mean the archer (speaker), the arrow (message), and the target (audience). Every Lisu is familiar with a crossbow since it is one of the Lisu traditional tools to prevent from the dangers of the enemies, and for hunting. Again, Craddock's method suggests the Lisu preachers to read and to listen to the text attentively, and come back again to the text after working on the commentaries. I believe this is an invaluable advice because through reading the text carefully and

¹⁵ Richard L. Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching: New Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

attentively several times, the preacher can hear some voices from the text with the help of the Holy Spirit. Then, this can help the Lisu preachers to build the contextualized preaching model. After acquiring the theories of interpretation of the text, it is also necessary for the preacher to observe what is going on with regard to the message. Thus, in the following section, I discuss what the preacher needs to be aware of the message.

C. What's wrong with the Message today?

In this section I offer what will our preaching becomes if we preach without being aware of the message? I believe it is worth investigating the result of preaching without the knowledge of the awareness of message. In this section, I offer some dangers of preaching without being aware of the message. As I stated above, the message is the heart of our preaching. The centrality of our preaching is message. Therefore, it is vital to know what will be the positive result of preaching with concrete message to the right congregation, and the dangers or the destructive results of preaching without the awareness of message.

Generally, the entire message of God for the whole humanity is the same. It means that the message of the final destination of God's salvation for the humanity is eternal life. However, specifically, the message for particular audience is different based on the contextual situations, or the contextual needs of the people, the time, and so on. For example, when we take a look at the Old Testament, each book typically has its own message made by God to the prophets for the chosen people in the particular time. Each book of the Old Testament contains its own central message. For example, the message of Exodus is liberation for the people of Israel to come out of the bondage of Egypt, the message of the book of Joshua is conquest for the Israel to defeat the Canaanites, and to occupy the land. Likewise, the message of the book

of Isaiah is about the Messiah, the message of the book of Jeremiah is justice, the message of the book of Daniel is survival, and the message of Hosea is the meaning and essence of love¹⁹

It is obvious that God sent different messages to different prophets in different time and different contextual situations. Hence, although the main message of God's salvific process is the same; we still need to be aware of the distinctive message for our preaching ministry. It is spiritually unwise if we preach based on only one emphasis. To put it another way, the message or the sermon theme in our preaching needs to change with regard to the contextual situation and distinctive audience. For example, preaching only about the end time will make our audience bored because the audience needs to hear new hope; they should feel excitement as they prepare to listen to the sermon. They hope to hear other new and fresh messages from the preacher instead of hearing only one topic all the time.

It is necessary to note that the theme of our sermon should not be the same every time we preach. I mean the sermon theme should be changed as we preach many places and just as we have a wide range of sermon patterns, and just as the contextual needs of the people differ. "Hearers possess many different styles of listening."²⁰ In *The Witness of Preaching*, Thomas G. Long marks regarding this point when he says:

A sermon that includes many personal references and pastoral experiences will be for one listener powerful and touching word, while another hearer will find it intellectually thin. A free-flowing, artistic, image-rich sermon will stimulate some hearers to see the faith in new ways, while others will find the same sermon opaque and confusing. A carefully ordered, tightly argued sermon will be received by some as a model of clarity and the occasion for

¹⁹ Denver, *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made*, 9-10.

²⁰ Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 130.

deep insight, while others will find such a form dull and confining.²¹

Thus, it is necessary to note for the preacher that our audience needs different spiritual nutrition for their spiritual bodies, just as our physical bodies need many diets and different kinds of nutritious meals. Again, preaching about obedience all the time is also spiritually unwise. What I am arguing for here is to avoid keeping our focus on only one thing in our preaching. The message of our preaching needs to be changed based on the situation, the audience, and the context.

In addition to this, it is also necessary for the preacher to consider about the message for the particular age group. It is unwise if we use many complicated theological terms when we preach to the uneducated congregation. Likewise, the adult sermon should not be delivered to the children. Unfortunately, I have seen that a minister once preached to the children (Kindergarten) at the worship service of the Sunday school Christmas celebration about God's salvation with the terms which were beyond the children's understanding for 45 minutes. As a result, almost all the children left the room before the sermon is finished. As far as my memory is concerned, around about 10% of the participants were in the room by the time the sermon stopped. It also reminds us of the time frame and the importance of differentiation of the message.

I, therefore, would like to insist that the pendulum of the message in our preaching needs to be adjusted to the contextual situation and congregation, and age groups. The peril of preaching without being aware of the message is immeasurable in this era. Therefore, the preacher who wants to preach effectively in this century needs to have prudence to differentiate the message, context, and age group. Then, there comes another aspect for the preacher to preach effectively. It is to be aware of

²¹ Ibid., 130.

the needs of the people.

D. The Message and the Needs of People: Myanmar as a Case Study

Now we turn to consider another aspect: the message as the needs of the people.

It is wise to note that the primary aim of preaching is to meet the needs of the people. Again, I previously stated that the message as the core and heart of preaching. Thus, the message in our preaching must be what the people need. With regard to the needs of humanity, Christopher J. H. Wright says:

Human beings, living as mortal, weak and fallen creatures, have an almost limitless range of needs, in which, or out of which, we constantly call for some form of deliverance or another, we just keep on needing to be rescued, it seems. This is not said to demean human worth or dignity. On the contrary, the reason God acts to save us in so many different ways is precisely because God loves and cares for us. God is moved to grief and anger by our sin, and moved to compassion by our weakness. And so God saves us. And the Bible shows so many ways in which God does exactly that.²²

Therefore, we are to think at this point about the needs of our people. Hence, in this section, I first discuss about why people are in need of God's salvation. Then, what should be the most relevant message for people? In order to answer the latter question, I will focus on the incarnation because the message we found in incarnation is what the Lisu people need in their lives in this century. In this section, I also describe the situation of Myanmar as a case study.

In order to have an overview of the present situation of my community, it is necessary to describe about the history of the Christian Churches in my country. The

²² Christopher J. H. Wright, *Salvation belongs to God: Celebrating the Bible's central Story* (New York: Intersity Press, 2007), 16.

Christian churches in Myanmar unfortunately had to face many challenges under several ruling systems throughout the history. However, the Christian churches in my country grew steadily amidst various political transitions such as monarchical rule (1554-1885); colonial rule (1885-1948); Parliamentary democracy (1948- 1962); Burmese Way to Socialism (1962-1988); and the State Peace and Development Council (1988-2010),²³ and Parliamentary Democracy (2010- present). With regard to the situation that the churches have been facing inside the country, Dr. Samuel Ngun Ling, a professor of systematic theology at Myanmar Institute of Theology, describes it this way:

Myanmar is a country in crisis, with a high record of human rights violations. Millions of people live in fear, doubt, ambiguity, misery, and below poverty line that is under a dollar per day so that suffering has become part of people's daily life's culture. Politically speaking, the military regime which numbers about four hundred thousand members has largely maintained control for political leadership in Myanmar over most of the past 46 years. In fact, the prolonged period of social and economical hardship, physical suffering, malnutrition, low educational and intellectual standards, and isolation from international community have all created negative impact and great challenges to the life of the church in Myanmar. Christians in Myanmar have no choice but are to face with such economic and political challenges in order to help liberate people from their long suffering and oppression.²⁴

Nevertheless, recently the situation is getting much better when compared to the past situation as the new government is stepping to the process of parliamentary democracy. The country has recently received some international recognition and

²³ Samuel Ngun Ling, "Revision Ecclesiology in the Baptist Tradition as Confesses and Practiced in the Context of Christian Churches in Myanmar," In *Our Theological Journey* (Yangon: MIT Practical Department, 2009), 93-119, at 99.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

appreciation for its rapid positive changes. However, the churches and the people are still being challenged by difficult situations in relation to economics, the educational system, and religious restrictions.

Indeed, the people are still struggling for their daily survival. They are wrestling with unwanted circumstances in every single day of their lives. The people are struggling with doubts, and are still being frightened by uncertainties in everyday life. I dare to insist that the preachers in my community are being challenged much more severely by many inconvenient circumstances and unwanted hardships than the preachers of other contexts. It is true that the challenge of the preachers in my community is much tougher and harder when compared to the preachers of other countries. By the same token, the level of the needs of my community is higher than people from other contexts.

Frankly speaking, Lisu people are suffering from many kinds of difficult situations, and have to struggle for their daily survival. For example migrant work has unexpectedly become commonplace especially among the young people who struggle with their families' financial insufficiency. Many of the churches in my community have seen youth and families leave to go to the cities. Most of young people have been heading for other cities or neighboring countries to work with the purpose of earning some income and of supporting their families.

This new trend of migrant work in turn has a negative impact on the families and the churches. For instance, migrants have less of a chance to attend the worship service in the host countries because some of them do not have off days even on Sunday, and consequently their spirituality is unfortunately decreasing. Many of them have been attracted by the culture of living together which opposes God's Will, and which in turn leaves them spiritually weakened. In addition to this, some have become depressed or mentally ill because of homesickness, challenging work

situations, and a salary with which they cannot support their families sufficiently as they expected to do so before.

Drug addiction, especially among young people, is another big problem that affects the churches. The preachers in my community are being challenged by this evil habit, are responsible to cure this addiction, and help these drug addicts find or regain their whole beings again in the mercy of God. For these reasons, the preachers in my community are being much challenged by unexpected and unwanted situations. Lisu preachers are to encourage their people and lead them to find other options for their daily living. In addition to preaching the word of God it is also the Lisu preachers' task to find livelihoods for their people. Then, what kind of message do the people need in Myanmar?

Certainly, the preacher must be aware of the need of his or her people. He or she must recognize and respond to the people's need since effective preaching also means meeting human's needs. If our preaching does not meet with the needs of our people, then this preaching is not effective preaching at all. Hence, the preacher who wants to preach effectively should have the knowledge of his or her people's needs. Knowing the needs of the people is prerequisite for effective preaching. Generally, human's needs are of two kinds: Universal need and particular need. Thus, I describe these two kinds of human's needs in the consecutive sections.

a. The need of human beings:

In relation to human needs, In *Understanding human need*, Hartley Dean's classification of human needs are listed as basic need, absolute need, circumstantial need, ontological need, real need, relative need, social need, and universal need.²⁵

However, Dean's view of human needs can be summarized into two categories such

²⁵ Hartley Dean, *Understanding Human Need* (Bristol: Beacon House, 2010), xvi-xvii.

as universal need and particular need. It means the preacher should be convinced of God's salvation as universal need for the redemption of humanity, and the human needs in a particular context. I describe these two needs in the following sections.

i. Universal Need

I first discuss the universal need. For the spiritual life, we all need God's salvation because we are born with sin. In Psalms 51:5, the psalmist confirms, "Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me." (NRSV) And the consequence of sin is vividly mentioned in Romans 6:23a, "For the wages of sin is death."(NRSV). Spiritual salvation (eternal life) is the same for those who accept and believe in the Son, Jesus Christ (1 John. 5:12-14, NRSV).

To go much deeper, why do we need God's salvation? What is the reason why we search for God? To trace the cause of this searching, biblically, the disobedience of humanity in the Garden of Eden is the main cause of it because it makes us to be fallen before God. In the Bible, we are told that God created us in His own image (*imago dei*). It means our souls are created in God's image, or likeness. For this reason, it can be thought that we had no need before falling into sin. Humanity was in complete condition and lived with God in a harmonious situation. The consequence of the fall of man is the main cause of this universal need of God's salvation for the redemption.

God purposefully created us to have fellowship with Him and each other. With regard to this, Howe insists that, "The religious man understands the meaning of relationship in the light of his belief about God and His purpose in creation. God created persons and things to stand in a meaningful relation to each other and to Him. Indeed, this is our faith: God created us to live in relation to one another and

Him, and we depend upon this structure of relationship for life and meaning.”²⁶ We are purposefully created to have a good fellowship with our Creator and with our fellow human beings. This shows the need of the interrelatedness of human beings. Howe illustrates this by a family metaphor:

A baby at the moment of birth has the potentialities for personhood, but in order for them to be realized, it will be necessary for him to be accepted into the warm, welcoming, loving, and caring relationship of his family of persons-father, mother, brothers and sisters. To the degree that this is his experience he will become a happy, lovable, and loving person. To the degree that he is not so accepted, he will become an angry, frightened, and deformed person.²⁷

It cannot be denied that we, as mortal beings, are in need of interrelatedness or interdependence since every human is a social being. The fall of man unfortunately put humanity under the worst condition. From that time on, we are in need of someone’s help to reach the former condition, to meet with God’s original purpose of creating humanity. Therefore, the need of God’s salvation becomes the supreme need of humanity in the universal scope. Therefore, the preacher should be vividly aware of God’s salvation as universal need for the redemption of humanity. Then, he or she should move to another need: particular need of human beings. Thus, I discuss the need of human beings in a particular context in the following section.

ii. Particular Need

After being aware of God’s salvation with regard to humanity’s universal needs, the preacher also should be convinced of what his or her people particularly need. I believe this particular need is also important for the preacher to preach effectively

²⁶ Howe, *Human Need and God’s Action*, 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

because the message has to deal with the needs of the people. Thus, without knowing the needs of his or her own people, the preacher cannot be aware of what kind of message to be preached. I would call this kind of need as contextual need. I believe that this contextual need is not the same for all people. For example, the contextual needs of the people from the first world countries and of the people from the third world countries will not be the same. I do not mean the biological need of a human being's physical body, but the level of the contextual needs of people for their daily lives.

Likewise, the message for those who are imprisoned is liberation, while justice is the message for those who are being oppressed. Therefore, the contemporary preacher should be aware of these distinctive messages to bring the relevant message to the right congregation. As preachers, we should have divine wisdom to discern the particular need of the people for effective preaching. I argue that when it comes to the preacher's awareness of message, the preacher's discernment of this particular need plays a vital role because the message must meet the needs of the people in terms of effective preaching.

b. The Message for the Lisu People in Myanmar

When it comes to the message for the Lisu people, it is necessary to observe the contextual need of Myanmar first. Thus, I describe the current situation of Myanmar. I could say that the needs of my community are many times higher than people from other countries. According to the norm of United Nations with regard to the daily income, we are still among the poorest countries. I mean at this point that the contextual needs of Lisu people in Myanmar are of several kinds. We are still in the most challenged circumstances in almost every area of life, such as economics, education, social status, religious affair, ethnicity, transportation system. This is one

of the points that the preachers from my community are to be aware for effective preaching.

To insist straightly, the Lisu people in Myanmar live with fears, doubts, and uncertainties. Thus, the people from my context are in need of hearing the message of courage, faithfulness, and assurance respectively. In relation to this, I offer some suggestions for the Lisu preachers later in this section. In addition, we are living in the midst of injustices in almost every area such as racial, political, religious, economical, educational. Therefore, the Lisu preachers should find the message of justice in order to preach their congregations more effectively. Moreover, the Lisu people need liberation from the bondage of oppression. Currently, the Lisu people are losing the right to express our whole beings which Christians see as the dignity. For this reason, the Lisu preachers are responsible to search for the best way to encourage their people more effectively in the preaching event. Then, where can the Lisu preachers find the answers to help their people to resist and overcome all kinds of inconvenient situations such as fear, doubt, uncertainties, injustices, and oppression? I argue that God's salvific process of humanity in the event of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is more relevant for the Lisu preachers to help their people. I have some reasons of insisting this fact.

First, in my view, the Incarnation gives the sense of God's presence because the incarnation means God became human flesh and lives with the people. In my spiritual eyes, Jesus Christ is the human face of God. This is what our Lisu people need to discern and feel. Hence, what the Lisu preachers are responsible to encourage their people is the sense of God's presence in their daily lives. With regard to the current contextual situation, the people from my context must be felt the sense of God's presence. Gracefully, the incarnation of God gives this sense to them. I would like to insist that the Word of God became flesh and lived with the people

around the region of the Galilee lake recorded in the Bible does not end in history. But, the essence of the incarnation of God is still alive in this present time, and Lisu people are to feel this sense of God's presence. What the message of the incarnation needed for Lisu people today is this real sense of God's presence in the sense of the third Person of the Trinitarian God, the Holy Spirit, in their daily-life-struggle. The reason is that Lisu people are struggling with uncertainties in every single day of their lives. Thus, each one of my people has to feel the real sense of the presence of God in order that they can courageously confront and resist all kinds of hardships, inconvenient conditions, uncertainties, and dangers. This is what the contemporary Lisu preachers are to be aware for effective preaching.

Second, another incarnational message for the Lisu preachers to preach their people is the concept of "God is living with us in our everyday life." In my view, it is not merely the level of feeling the sense of God's presence in our daily lives, but it refers to God's help for every single step of our daily struggles. Indeed, we are in need of special courage to bravely live in the midst of difficulties, inconveniences, uncertainties, and many unnamed challenges. In order to overcome all these kinds of unwanted circumstances, the Lisu people really need God's daily help, the power of resistance, and perseverance to overcome all the obstacles that the Lisu people face both in their spiritual and physical journeys.

When we take a look at Jesus' ministry on the region of the lake of Galilee, he did not merely focus on the issues of life after death. But, he also did focus on the contextual needs of the people around the region of Galilee. Specifically, Jesus lived with people and helped the needy such as healing the sick and lepers, giving the light for the blind, healing the paralyzed, offering the life to the dead.

Based on our contextual situation, this earthly ministry of Jesus Christ is still relevant to the present situation. It is especially true for my own community because

Lisu people are under a much worse situation, as I stated above. When compared to other contexts, the people from my community are struggling much harder. We face risks in our everyday life. The preachers in my community are being challenging by these inescapable or unavoidable circumstances.

Therefore, in order to preach effectively, it needs for the Lisu preachers to be aware of the current situation and the message found in the incarnation. Thus, the preachers in my community are responsible to find this message in the incarnation and bring it to the people. By preaching the living words of God, the listeners are to be encouraged and inspired, and to feel the power of the Holy Spirit that helps them in their daily struggles. This incarnational message helps them feel God's intimacy, help, and presence. When it comes to the message as the need of the people, the preacher ought to be aware of the essence of the Incarnation that is relevant to the contextual circumstances.

Hence, the incarnational message, by which I mean a sense of God's presence, becomes very crucial for the Lisu people at this point. This is what the contemporary preachers are to be aware to preach powerfully especially in my context in this era. To put it another way, without this awareness, no preacher can preach effectively. It is important to note that effective preaching indirectly means letting the message meet with the real needs of the people. Otherwise, it is impossible to preach effectively. For this reason, effective preaching is dependent on the preacher's awareness of the message.

To sum up, the preacher who wants to preach effectively and powerfully should be aware of the message. When it comes to the preacher's awareness of message it includes several aspects. First, the preacher should discern what the message means to his or her contextual situation well in order that the preacher can find the relevant

message which meets the needs of his or her people.

Second, the preacher should also acquaint with where the message comes from. It is important for the preacher to be convinced of the source of the message. As I stated above, the Bible is the major source for the message. In this sense, to be able to find the relevant message for his or her own people, the preacher should be acquainted with theory of interpretation of the text to some degree. For the Lisu preachers, the interpretation methods of Long and Craddock are much easier and applicable because they explain their theories in a precise way, and applicable to the context of Lisu churches.

Third, the preacher's awareness of the message also includes the preacher's prudence of differentiating or changing the sermon theme based on the contextual situation and the age group of the congregation. If the preacher is not aware of this point, then the danger of his or her preaching will be perilous or dangerous.

Fourth, it is also significant to note that the message of every sermon delivery should be relevant to the contextual situation or the needs of the people. The preacher should clearly discern God's salvation as universal need of the redemption for humanity, and the contextual demands as the particular need. At this point, the preacher should clearly know what his or her people are in need of. To put it another way, in relation to the message, the preacher should not emphasize on what he or she wants to preach, but the people's needs should be focused in terms of the message in sermon delivery. I am convinced that the preacher's awareness of the message plays a vital role in the preaching ministry because the centrality of every sermon delivery is the message. Therefore, it can be concluded that effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher's awareness of the message.

CHAPTER FOUR: EFFECTIVE PREACHING IS FACILITATED BY THE PREACHER'S AWARENESS OF THE AUDIENCE

Now we finally move on to another awareness of the preacher: the preacher's awareness of the audience. Since the audience is the target of preaching, it is important to be aware of the audience. It is true that a sermon will never be completed without the audience. To put it another way, the one who completes the sermon preaching is not the preacher himself or herself, but the audience. Fred Craddock correctly maintains that the listener completes the sermon.¹ It is to be understood that the sermon is not finished completely in the mouth of the preacher, but it is concluded in the minds of the listeners as they try to interpret and understand the words heard from the preachers, and apply them to their lives. For this reason, it is fair to say that the preacher's awareness of the audience is equally important with the preacher's awareness of theology of preaching, of God, and of message. Thus, the study of the preacher's awareness of the audience is worth great effort.

I divide this chapter into three subtitles. First, I discuss the preacher and the congregation that includes the need of observing the context of the congregation, and the necessity of the interpreting the congregation. Second, we will consider cultural differences, especially the challenge of preaching in the cross-cultural contexts. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, professor of homiletics at Yale Divinity School, and Princeton Theological Seminary will be my main dialogue partner for this section especially with regard to preaching in cross-cultural contexts, and exegeting the congregation. Finally, we will examine the communication between the preacher and the audience since the preacher is also to be aware of the function of

¹ Fred Craddock, *As One without Authority* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 46-50.

communication in preaching since preaching is acted out in the context of communication. Thus, communication between the preacher and the audience plays a vital role in effective preaching. Specifically, this section will deal with the importance of the preacher's social relationships, or friendships, or intimacy with the congregation, and the need of using non-verbal elements in the sermon delivery in terms of effective preaching. It cannot be denied that effective preaching will not occur without the use of non-verbal elements. Now, we first focus on what the preacher needs to do regarding the context and the congregation.

A. Preacher and Congregation

When it comes to the preacher's awareness of audience, the preacher first needs to observe the contextual situation of a local church on the whole. It is something like scanning the whole context of a church. After that it is necessary to scrutinize the people's conditions such as their view on God, worldviews, cultural values, intellectual levels. The Methods will be described in the following sections. In this part, I focus on the necessity of observing the contextual situation of a local church.

a. Observing the Context of the Congregation

The preacher's knowledge of context plays a vital role in effective preaching. It is one of the tasks of the preacher to be aware of the context of the congregation in which he or she is going to preach. Thus, it can be said that the observation of the context is one of the prerequisites for effective preaching. I believe that ineffective preaching is also caused by lacking knowledge of the context, especially in this complex era. For this reason, we need to define the context first in order that we can consider much deeper with regard to the context. What do we mean by the context? Why is the context so important in the preaching process?

The term context has been used in different fields throughout the history. In this century, the word context also denotes the particular social, cultural and ecological situation within which a course of events takes place.² From this perspective, in the preaching ministry, context can thus be understood as the situation of the whole setting of the place, church and people, culture, and the history and social conditions.

I would like to insist that the observation of the context in this section refers to the preacher's attempt of seeking to know the situations of social, cultural, spiritual, and economical, and so on which surrounds the church atmosphere in order to have a clearer understanding on the people of the church. Without this prior observation about the context, effective preaching will not occur because the effectiveness of preaching, to some degree, is dependent on the preacher's knowledge of the context.

To put it another way, if the preacher is not interested in the observation of the context, he or she will fail to bring the relevant message to his or her people. It is obvious in some church communities that many preachers are just focusing on what they want to preach instead of thinking of and emphasizing on what their people really need. The sermon ideas of some preachers come out of the themes that automatically appear in their mind instead of focusing on the relevant message to the needs of the people. This is due to lacking the pastoral sensitivity to the preaching environment. This is one of the important facts that the contemporary preachers should be convinced if he or she wants to preach effectively. I dare to insist that the value and importance of knowing the contextual situation is immeasurable in the field of preaching ministry.

Thus, when it comes to effective preaching, it necessarily requires observing the

² Burgmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology*, 2.

contextual situations of the congregational life such as the social, historical, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual, contexts. Then, after observing the contextual circumstances of the congregational life in general, it needs to take another step further: the interpreting the congregation.

b. Interpreting the Congregation

In the previous section, I described the necessity of observing the contextual situations, including the preacher's attempt of knowing the situations of the people. Now, it comes to interpret another text to preach powerfully, and it is the text of the congregation. Effective preaching also greatly necessitates the interpretation of the text of the congregation. Then, how do we interpret the congregation? Or how can we interpret the congregational life? Or what are the techniques to interpret the text of the congregation?

There might be several strategies to approach the interpretation of the congregation just as the text can be interpreted by many methods. However, in order to answers these questions, I will mainly dialogue with Leonora Tubbs Tisdale for this subtitle. She suggests some interpretive strategies. First, the pastor needs to seek out the symbolic texts that have value and meaning to the members of the congregation. It includes seeking of some symbols such as artifacts, mementos, stories, and written materials preserved by the congregation, and of the traditions including activities, rituals, and observances which are nearest and dearest to the hearts of the congregation.³

Second, it needs to take another step in the investigation of the symbolic texts that take a variety of forms such as verbal (sermons and favorite hymns); and

³ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 63.

nonverbal (ritual acts and gestures, architecture, visual arts); spoken (stories told by older members as they recount the congregation's history); and written (a history of prepared on the occasion of a church anniversary); audible (a musical presentation); visual (the spatial arrangement of chancel furniture); and tactile (elements used for communion).⁴

Third, Tisdale goes on to suggest that the preacher attend not only to texts that are disclosive of identity (worldview, ethos, values), but also to texts that are disclosive of social change. She writes:

One of the dangers of focusing primarily upon a study of subcultural identity in congregational life (What does the congregation believe? What does it value? What is its distinctive character or ethos?) is that concerns related to social change – both within the congregation and in relation to its surroundings – can be deemphasized. However, a lessened focus on change need not occur if the student of congregational culture intentionally seeks out texts for study related both to identity and to social change.⁵

Obviously, these three suggested strategies of observing the congregational life suggested by Tisdale are crucial to the preacher's attempt of interpreting the text of the congregational culture and its surroundings because these suggestions cover the overall situations of the congregation. In addition to her suggestions of interpreting the congregation, the preacher should be convinced that the congregation is a living organism, and thus, it will not be the same with interpreting the biblical texts. Actually, there are always some symbolic texts that represent, and that directly or indirectly express the beliefs and culture of a particular group of people. Thus, for

⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁵ Ibid., 63.

the preacher, interpreting the congregation otherwise means to become acquainted with the people and the surroundings.

In addition to this, Tisdale also offers some invaluable ways of exegeting the congregation including the aspects of how the people view God. Or how do they perceive God? Or what does God mean to their practical lives? Tisdale's observation of interpretation of the congregation is worth quoting in this section. Out of her suggestions, I describe only three points that are relevant to Myanmar contextual situation. Tisdale wisely suggests investigating the people's view of God first in terms of theology, christology, and pneumatology by asking the questions such as:

(1) Is God perceived by this congregation to be primarily transcendent or primarily imminent? (2) Is God most likely to be thought of: as judge and giver of law who exacts high standards for righteous behavior and exhibits wrath toward those who fall short? As merciful and forgiving parent who is quick to understand and forgive foolish ways? Or as one in whom both justice and mercy co-exist? (3) Is God perceived to regularly intervene directly into human affairs through the working of miracles? Or does God work primarily through natural processes? (4) Is any person of the trinity valued more highly than another? Is any one person of the trinity consistently devalued in congregational life? (5) What metaphor for God (Holy One, Judge, Shepherd, Father, Rock, Mother Eagle), for Christ (Bread of life, Light of the World, Son of God, Friend of the Poor, Savior, Suffering Servant), for the Holy Spirit (Wind, Fire, Healer, Empowerer, Gift-giver) are most prevalent in congregational life, and what do they indicate about the congregation's understanding of God?⁶

The above suggested questions to investigate the congregation's perception about God are invaluable for the contemporary preachers in the field of interpretation of the people because they deal with the congregation's theology such as the people's perceptions of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These three aspects are the most

⁶ Ibid., 80.

important to know for the preacher in order that he or she can be convinced of what he or she needs to prepare to bring a relevant message to the people.

Another suggested way of investigating the people made by Tisdale is to search for the people's view of the humanity, which is called theological anthropology. She writes it in this way, "What is the predominant view of human beings? (Are people primarily considered to be 'sinners without hope save in God's sovereign redemption through Jesus Christ,' to be 'children of God, created in God's image, loved and recreated through Jesus Christ,' or to be 'fallible yet perfectible through the inner workings of the Holy Spirit?'"⁷ The investigation of the people's view of humanity is also crucial to know much about the congregation because bringing relevant message to the people necessarily requires knowing about the people as much as possible. In addition, admitting ourselves as sinners or mortal beings is a prerequisite to receive God's salvation. Thus, the preacher's investigation about the people's view of humanity is crucially important. Moreover, this investigation helps the preacher to have a well interpretation of the congregation which is required to have preached relevant and effective sermon.

Then, when it comes to talk about the preacher's awareness of audience, it also includes the preacher's knowledge of cultural difference. Indeed, we cannot live and preach within the boundary of a single cultural bound in this century since we are already in a globalized world. I focus on the significance of the preacher's knowledge of cultural differences for effective preaching in the following section. And I will point out how and why the preacher's discernment of cultural differences is important for effective preaching. Thus, we move to another section: "The Preacher and Cultural differences."

⁷ Ibid., 81.

B. The Preacher and Cultural Differences

Why is culture so important in the preaching ministry? What does the culture have to deal with effective preaching? Indeed, culture plays a vital role in the liturgical perception of the local congregation. People also view and try to understand God within a cultural context. To put it differently, the cultural customs of the congregation also affect their liturgical perception. Thus, the preacher's knowledge of cultural differences is also crucial to effective preaching. With regard to it, Jorge L. Presmanes insists that there are basically four theological concepts that define the role of culture:

First, a theology of revelation asserting that God is revealed in human experience, which thus renders the cultural context of the faithful not only a social location and source for theology, but also a privileged source of revelation. Second, a recognition that the encounter between the tradition of faith and the culture of the local church, often referred to as inculturation, is central to the development of a sound liturgical theology of preaching. Third, an understanding that liturgy is always informed by culture and is indelibly marked by the worshipping community's history. Fourth, a belief that universal truth is found in the particularity of culture.⁸

It is necessary to bear in mind that theology and culture cannot be separated because God reveals Himself to us in the shell of specific culture. Thus, theology and culture go hand in hand, and we preach in the contextual linkage of theology and culture. I think every race tries to find and understand God within its own cultural location. Specifically speaking, theology is born out of culture. To put it another way, people theologize within or in the realm of culture. Again, effective preaching cannot be done without theology. For this reason, an awareness of culture is crucially

⁸ Jorge L. Presmanes, ed. Kenneth G. Davis, *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publication, 2000), 6.

important to preach effectively at a local church.

In addition to this, the preacher has also to understand what culture means to him or her because discerning the culture will help the preacher to be aware of cultural differences. Thus, I describe the word “culture” in the following section.

a. What is Culture?

When we trace to the history, the word ‘culture’ was first used by the pioneer English anthropologist Edward B. Taylor in his book entitled *Primitive Culture*, in 1871.⁹ From the anthropological view, Taylor has defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹⁰

It can be understood that culture is the way we live. It is the clothes we wear, the foods we eat, the language we speak, the stories we tell, and the way we celebrate. In addition to this, it is the way we show our imaginations through art, music, and writing, and it is also about our roots.¹¹ According to Roger Scruton, some early anthropologists prefer to express the culture as the practices and beliefs which form the self-identity of a tribe.¹² There might be several definitions of culture, but the above three definitions are more relevant to what I am going to describe with regard to culture in the following sections. I think that being convinced of culture means knowing the people and their surroundings which draw us to a closer and clearer understanding on the contextual situation that we are going to preach. Thus, the knowledge of culture for the preacher is vital for effective preaching. This knowledge helps the preacher scan the whole setting of the context or the situation of the

⁹ Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture*. http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture_1.htm (accessed February 3rd, 2012)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bobbie Karman, *What is Culture?* (New York: Crabtree Publishing, 2009), 4.

¹² Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture* (Chippenhan: Antony Rowe Ltd, 2007), 1.

people.

b. Preaching in the Cross-cultural Contexts

Culture is defined in many ways based on their respective fields by the scholars and anthropologists throughout the history. Then, what is cross-cultural preaching? It can simply and shortly be understood that cross-cultural preaching means preaching where there is “a crossing-over between two subcultures- the preacher’s and the congregation’s- based on his or her monolithic understanding of the congregational culture.”¹³ No doubt that every race has its own culture. It is to understand that every area has its own culture, and there still may be many subcultures. For instance, the Myanmar people have their own Myanmar culture in the national context on the whole. But, there are 136 racial groups in Myanmar. Thus, it means that there are 136 subcultures in Myanmar.

Generally, each Myanmar citizen has to know Bama Language (common language) for schooling, and communicating with the people of other tribes. In Myanmar, since Lisu people live in multi-racial contexts, they have to respect other cultures regardless of their religion or culture. For instance, a Christian in Myanmar is to take off shoes when he or she visits the pagoda or somewhere related the Buddhist religion. Wearing the shoes or slippers is not allowed when we enter into the campus related to the Buddhist religion. As a citizen who is aware of the culture of other peoples, we need to abide by their cultural disciplines.

I have been told by one of the senior pastors about the case of the missionaries from the Western countries. When the Western missionaries came to Myanmar (Burma), they failed to take off their shoes when they visited the houses of Buddhists, and the Buddhist temples or pagodas. This might be due to not understanding the

¹³ Ibid., 8.

local culture. No one can wear the slipper or shoes when entering into the Buddhist house in Myanmar. Unfortunately, the western missionaries failed to follow or to give respect to the local people's culture. As a consequence, the mission works at that time were not as successful as they expected. This lack of awareness of the local culture made it difficult for the Bama people to listen to the gospel at that time. This incidence reminds us of preaching with the knowledge and recognition of the cultural difference is of great importance to the ministry of sharing the gospel. This is also a very good lesson for the contemporary preachers of my community from the past history regarding preaching the words of God. There is still a history of conflict between the British and Burmese people with regard to the cultural differences during the nineteenth century when Burma was a British colonial country. It is true that wearing the shoes at the pulpit is not the problem for most cultures, but it is seriously restricted or prohibited in our culture or tradition. At this point, it is not to judge or blame which culture is good and the other bad. But, it is to be aware of the culture of other people if we want to preach effectively especially in the cross-cultural contexts.

This event reminds us of being convinced of the power of cross-cultural differences. It shows us the significance of seeking the knowledge of the culture of other people when we preach at different cultural contexts. These incidents are some examples of the significance of discerning the cultural differences.

With regard to the preaching ministry of our time, Teresa L. Fry Brown makes a very precise and concrete statement in relation to preaching in our day. She says:

In today's world, all preaching is cross-cultural. The preacher therefore must have an awareness of the cultural subsystems present in the congregation. Differences are present even if all those present "look" or "sound" alike. The oral-aural traditions, vernacular, ethnocentrism, and

cross-cultural language usage are established through listeners and speakers, dialect, regionalisms, “in-language,” age, gender, geography, culture, race, class, education, comfort/preparation, and Multilanguage levels.¹⁴

Thus, it is necessary to note that the world in which we are living has been dramatically shifting into a new world, characterized by globalization. Globalization indeed covers a wide variety of elements that includes the global spread of economic markets, instantaneous communication across the planet, and the relocation and integration of distinctive cultures outside the geographical origins. It can also be said that no country stays outside the web of globalization on this earth today. In the age of globalization, we feel that we “are living in increasingly complex ways in a web of interconnectedness as part of a global family.”¹⁵

Christian communities are by nature interdependent, and are also influenced by globalization. We inevitably have to live under the influence of this globalization. It is true that in our everyday lives and along the path of our faith journey, we as the believers experience interconnectedness with the people of other cultures, races, and nationalities from all over the world.¹⁶ For this reason, we should be aware that we are experiencing a new way of living. It means that we are now already in a new world in which the cultures are mixed. Hence, the contemporary preacher is to be aware of this complex environment. However, although the world is globalized, there are still the traditions and cultures of particular countries or places. In my observation, globalization mostly impacts the young people in terms of living styles, dress, and fashion, and so on. On the other hand, the adult groups and the elders maintain and observe their respective traditions and cultures.

¹⁴ Brown, *Delivering the Sermon: Elements of Preaching*, 18.

¹⁵ Kim, *Preaching in an Age of Globalization*, xi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xi.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, many of Lisu young people have gone to other cities or countries to earn for their livings. Consequently, the pews of the churches in Myanmar today are occupied primarily by older adults. It means, our audience is composed primarily by the elders or the adult groups who have kept their inherited traditions and cultures. Thus, an awareness of the cultural differences is one of the challenges to the Lisu contemporary preachers who preach especially in cross-cultural contexts. This is what the contemporary preachers of Lisu community have to be aware of. It indirectly means that effective preaching in this era necessarily requires the awareness of cultural differences. Kim says:

Preaching as doing theology or God-talk must no longer remain an internal dialogue within and among organized Christian communities. A Christian message that is relevant to our globalized world is not simply the imaginative conversation between individual minds restricted to the life of the church or addressing special doctrines or dogmas venerated in the church. Rather, it should be a wide – ranging conversation among many voices, beyond the boundaries of individual believers and denominations, representing significantly diverse viewpoints of urgent and crucial issues emerging from the impact of globalization. Therefore, in an age of globalization, the preacher and (his) or her message should represent one partner in the dialogue with diverse people, worldwide, regarding all aspects of their public lives.¹⁷

Therefore, all contemporary preachers should be aware that we are no longer remaining in and preaching within an organized church community. We cannot live and preach in an isolated community. But, we are to get in touch with people of other cultures today. Acquiring the knowledge of other cultures or subcultures is of great importance for cross-cultural preaching to be effective, and it will help us preach effectively in this era.

¹⁷ Ibid., xii.

It is essential to note that the congregation's subculture and tradition should be prioritized. I mean that if the preacher is to preach in other cultural contexts, he or she should prioritize the culture of that local church instead of holding his or her own cultural custom. It is necessary to notice that the impact of being unaware of the cultural differences in the preaching ministry is incredibly high. In the history, we have seen lots of such negative results made by the preacher's weakness of the knowledge and recognition of other cultures. This fact is still true in the present preaching ministry. Indeed, cross-cultural preaching is the most challenging when compared to preaching in the preacher's own cultural context. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that no preacher can avoid this cross-cultural preaching in this day and age because we are already in the globalized world.

The preacher's knowledge of the contextual situation of a local church, and of the people, and of cultural differences is crucially significant to preach effectively. However, apart from these factors, there is still an important thing to consider if we want to preach effectively and powerfully. Conveying message to audience requires an attention to modes of communication. These draw on cultural patterns, but also merit special attention.

C. The Communication between the Preacher and the Audience

After being aware of the necessity of discerning the congregation and the contextual situation of a local church, then, the preacher should proceed to another step in improving his or her communication skills with the people. The preacher's awareness of the audience includes the preacher's awareness of the necessity of good communication with the congregation. In other words, the observance of the context and the interpretation of the congregation cannot produce effective preaching without the preacher's practical skill at communication. At this point,

relationship and communication cannot be equally defined, but these two terms are indirectly related. Whenever I use these two terms in this section, both refers to the condition of the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. More precisely, I mean it as the relationship oriented communication between the preacher and the congregation.

a. What is Communication?

The exact meaning of communication is still debated. Marianne Daition writes that, “the everyday view of communication is quite different from the view of communication taken by communication scholars.”¹⁸ Myron R. Chartier also affirms this view by saying that “communication means different things to different people.”¹⁹ “Communication is the discriminatory response of an organism to a stimulus,”²⁰ writes Dominic A. Infante in *Building Communication Theory*.

There may be a wide range of meanings of communication stated by the scholars. However, I focus on the definition of communication from the homiletical perspective since this project is concerned with preaching. Thus, I prefer to use Chartier’s definition of communication. When the meaning of communication is related to preaching, Myron Chartier insists that, “Preaching is intentional communication that a sermonic message is conveyed from the preacher to the listening congregants, to achieve a specific goal.”²¹ In preaching, we intentionally communicate with the audience to let them get the message to touch their souls.

¹⁸ Marianna Daition, Elaine D. Zelley, *Applying Communication Theory for Professional Life*, 2nd edition (California: SAGE Publication, Inc, 2011), 2.

¹⁹ Myron R. Chartier, *Preaching as Communication: An Interpersonal Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981).

²⁰ Dominic A. Infante, Andrew S. Rancer, Deanna F. Womack, *Building Communication Theory* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1997), 8.

²¹ Chartier, *Preaching as Communication: An Interpersonal Perspective*, 18.

“The aim of preaching is to win a response.”²² From this perspective, it can be added that to win a response requires a better communication between the preacher and the audience. To put it another way, a response only comes out of effective communication because a response is related to both the speaker and the listener. Therefore, communication plays a very vital role in the ministry of preaching since preaching is acted out only by way of communication. Thus, the field of communication is worth studying for every preacher.

b. The Preacher and Non-verbal Elements

Action speaks louder than words. This English saying reminds us of the significance of being aware of our actions body movements when we communicate with others. “Good body usage makes the body a vehicle of communication.”²³ From this perspective it can be understood that effective communication happens only when the words and an appropriate gesture go together. And the same is true in our preaching because the very obvious nature of preaching is communication. Thus, effective communication means using the right words accompanied by the appropriate body movements at the same time. In relation to this notion, Brown writes:

Incorrect use of the body calls attention to itself rather than to the message. There is no easier way to disrupt communication than by awkward or poor use of the body. The preacher must avoid delivering two sermons: one with words and another with body language. One of the delights of an audience is to observe a speaker who speaks with the body and thus, by using the total personality, transmit an idea from the platform to others.²⁴

²² H.C Brown, *Steps to the Sermon*, 160.

²³ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

In this sense, the preacher's study of the importance of body movement in communication is worth great effort. As contemporary preachers who take the responsibility of bringing God's message to people, we should be aware of the significance of communication and acquire its theory. Having a good knowledge of communication theory, including the use of non-verbal elements and applying them in the sermon delivery, is crucial to effective preaching since preaching is acted out in the context of communication. In this section, I focus on nonverbal communication which includes gestures and postures in the preaching event. Actually, non-verbal may communicate a great deal in the process of communication.

Generally, there are two ways people communicate nonverbally: communicating with body movement such as facial expression, gestures, and posture, and with spatial relationships which includes the distance we put between ourselves and the other person.²⁵ In *Messages: The Communication Skills Book*, the importance of understanding the body language in communication is stated. This book says that over fifty percent of a message's impact comes from body movements.²⁶ With regard to this, Albert Mehrabian found that the total impact of a message breaks down as follows: (words) 7 percent, (vocal inflection such as volume, pitch, rhythm, etc) 38 percent, (body movements, primarily facial expressions) 55 percent.²⁷ From this observation, it is necessary to note that the oral component of the sermon is 45 percent (7+38) of the message we preach. Thus, the preacher should be aware of the importance of nonverbal elements in communication. The preacher should not fail to acquire the use of such significant body movements in an appropriate way.

²⁵ Matthew Mckay, Martha Davis, Patrick Fanning, *Messages: The Communication Skills Book* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publication, 2009), 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

In *Steps to the Sermon*, H. C Brown insists that, “The mastery of posture and movement of the body is so vital that some have said that no speaker can reach his maximum effectiveness- indeed, in many cases he cannot hope to reach even moderate effectiveness- unless he understands thoroughly the uses of bodily action.”²⁸ Discerning the use of body movement in the preaching event is crucial if the preacher to communicate with the audience, and preach well. However, there is no fixed stereotype for all preachers, but it may differ based on the preacher’s personality, the audience, the occasion, and the content of the sermon.

i. Posture:

When it comes to talking about nonverbal bodily movement, the first element that I discuss is the preacher’s posture. Indeed, good posture of the preacher plays a vital role in preaching because it aids communication visually, and it enables the speaker to breathe properly and to project the voice effectively.²⁹ Undoubtedly, the preacher’s posture while he or she is waiting for sermon delivery at the pulpit should be in the right position. “It is best to sit comfortably but erect and with both feet on the floor. A minister should also be careful that personal bearing indicates an alert personality, vitally interested in all phases of the worship service and in the people who will hear the message.”³⁰

To a certain extent, the preacher’s posture impresses the audience. However, the meaning of postures may differ in different contexts. In my own culture, on the pulpit stage, sitting with one ankle over the other knee or sitting with ankles crossed is a sign of disrespect to the audience. If a preacher sits in this manner at the pulpit, then this posture will really annoy or distract the audience. As a consequence, this will derail the attention of the audience while the sermon is being delivered. Thus, as

²⁸ H.C Brown, *Steps to the Sermon*, 204.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 207.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

a preacher, having a good posture at the pulpit is crucial to get communicated with the audience well in the preaching event.

ii. Eye-contact:

According to Brown, “No use of the body while speaking is of greater importance than eye contact.”³¹ It is true that the preacher should not fail having good eye-contact while the sermon is being. On the other hands, there are several dangers for the preacher if he or she looks at one place all the time. For instance, if the preacher looks at the corner all the time or at the floor all the time, then, it leaves a negative impression for the listeners. To our cultural understanding, this is a sign that the preacher is distracted or anxious and the listeners may feel that the preacher is not confident in preaching. According to Brown, “Good eye contact lets the eyes move over the entire congregation, not pausing too long with any one person or area.”³²

Thus, the preacher should maintain eye contact while addressing the whole audience. This kind of scanning of the entire audience through eye contact gives the impression that the preacher is looking at each individual hearer and interested in each listener. Therefore, every contemporary preacher should be aware of having a good eye contact in the preaching event.

iii. Facial expression:

Brown also notes that “The face has the tremendous potential for expressing the changing moods and meanings of the sermon. But, many never permit the face to express their inner feelings.”³³ In the preaching event, the preacher’s facial expression should be, to a certain extent, matched with the content of what he or she is speaking. I mean the expression of delightfulness or joyfulness should be

³¹ Ibid., 207.

³² Ibid., 207.

³³ Ibid., 208.

obviously seen on the preacher's face when he or she is preaching about the ascension of Jesus Christ on Esther Sunday, for instance. In *Steps to the Sermon*, it suggests that "facial expression must come from within. Therefore, the best method of improvement in this area is a willingness to be uninhibited in the expression of the deepest feelings. Again, a desire to communicate and the ability to speak with the animation of conversation are essential aids to improvement."³⁴

Undoubtedly, although the preacher is familiar with the local church, its people, and culture, effective preaching will be impossible if the preacher does not know about nonverbal communication such as posture, eye contact, facial expression. Thus, knowing the appropriate gestures is of great significance to communicate with the audience well in the preaching event.

It can be summarized that effective preaching is dependent on the preacher's awareness of audience. This includes the preacher's awareness of the contextual situation, including social, intellectual, and theological, factors. Apart from these facts, the preacher's analysis of the congregation is of great importance to effective preaching. Since the congregation is the target of preaching, the preacher should be familiar with them and their needs. The preaching failures or ineffectiveness in today's preaching is caused by the preacher's lack of awareness of the congregation. There might be other causes of ineffective preaching, but the preacher's insufficient analysis of the congregation also affects the preaching.

Moreover, it is also necessary to note that the preacher's knowledge of different cultural customs is as important as other things stated above in this chapter. Every group has its own cultural customs and each of them contains cultural meanings and values. And preachers are not confined to preaching in one settled place or context,

³⁴ Ibid., 208.

but go and preach to other contextually different places as well. It is especially true for Lisu preachers as they live and preach in the communities of non-Christians. Thus, the preacher's awareness of cultural differences becomes vitally important in the preaching ministry and it is true especially when we preach in the distinctive contextual differences..

Finally, acquiring communication theory is also crucial for the preacher to preach effectively because there is no other way to implement preaching except through the function of communication. It can be said that there will not be effective preaching unless the preacher sufficiently acquires and has some knowledge of communication theory since preaching is acted out in the context of communication.

CONCLUSION

Preaching is considered as a tool for God's salvific process. It is God's word and human speech. In addition to this, preaching is a divine- human act for the salvation of humanity because God intentionally calls the preacher and gives the message of His will for human beings to the preacher. With regards to the preacher, he or she who is called for God's purposeful task is responsible to share this God-given message with the people. Thus, preaching is a holy act and, at the same time, a very challenging task for the preacher. It requires a lot from the preacher, since it relates the word of God to the preacher's preparation and discernment and the culture of the audience

Effective preaching requires the preacher's discernment of the theology of preaching since it is the foundation of effective preaching. I argue that no preacher can preach effectively and powerfully without having a good theology of preaching because theology of preaching has to do with the nature of preaching, the purpose of preaching, and the place of preaching. Thus, without knowing these important aspects of preaching, effective preaching will be impossible. Therefore, every preacher should be aware that preaching an effective sermon requires the knowledge of a theology of preaching.

A good theology of preaching involves knowing or being aware of God. No preacher can responsibly participate in the task of preaching because preaching is being God's representative in the process of sharing God's message to people. In addition to this, the power and confidence for preaching can only be received by the preacher's intimate relationship with God. Moreover, it is also necessary for the preacher to note that the message of preaching comes from God. Apart from the preacher's observation of the contextual situation, discernment of the cultural

differences, God also gives the preacher a message to preach through daily Bible readings, or personal prayers, or quiet time. The preacher usually receives the message especially while he or she is spending his or her time with God. God usually envisions the preacher for the congregation. Therefore, the preacher is to be aware of God as well. To put it another way, each preacher should be acquainted with the nature and the work of God. The awareness of God does not merely mean knowing about God, but it means knowing God, and it is the preacher's personal encounter with God.

It is also important to note that being aware of the message is crucially important for the preacher to preach effectively. As I stated above, the preaching is bringing the God-given message to God's people. Without this message we have nothing to transmit to people. Thus, the preacher's awareness of message plays a vital role in preaching. To go much deeper, the preacher's awareness of message means discerning the relevant message to the contextual situation. It means each message we preach should meet the needs of people since effective preaching otherwise aims at meeting the needs of the congregation.

Moreover, the preacher should also be aware of audience. Even if the preacher is well aware of God, and message, but is not aware of the audience, effective preaching is impossible because the audience is the aim of every sermon. To put it another way, the target of every sermon delivery is the audience. The preacher's awareness of audience here refers to the preacher's knowledge of contextual situations. In addition to this, the preacher's knowledge of cultural differences also plays a vital role, especially preaching in cross-cultural contexts. It is important for every Lisu preacher to discern that cultural values and theological perception go together because people also try to find and understand God within the bondage of culture.

When discussing the preacher's awareness of audience attention was drawn to the helpfulness of communication theory. Communication theory is crucially important for each preacher in the preaching ministry because the very nature of preaching is communication. Frankly speaking, the only way to implement preaching is through the function of communication. Preaching also means bringing God's message to meet the needs of people. Then, in order to bring this message to the people, every preacher must communicate with people. For this reason, every preacher should learn communication theory and apply it practically in the act of preaching. It can be said that effectiveness of preaching, to a certain extent, is dependent on the preacher's understanding on communication theory including verbal and nonverbal elements. Therefore, it can be concluded that effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher's awareness of God, message, and audience, and a theology of preaching and communication theory as well.

There are other topics that facilitate effective preaching that this thesis has not had time to adequately discuss. More could have been said about communication theory. More could have also been said about the work of the Holy Spirit. Although preachers are called to be channels of God's message, they cannot fully transmit God's message to people because of sinful human nature. Every preacher needs the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit to preach more powerfully and effectively. More could have been written on such subjects, nevertheless evidence has been presented that demonstrates that effective preaching is facilitated by the preacher's awareness of God, message, and audience. This thesis will help contemporary Lisu preachers to some degree in terms of effective preaching, enabling them to build their own contextual preaching model rooted in the crossbow metaphor.

This thesis is considered to have some helpful contributions for the field of homiletics with regard to how the preacher needs to be aware of God, message, and

audience for effective preaching. It is anticipated that this thesis also contributes some homiletical advices for the preachers in relation to the importance of being aware of the theology of preaching, and knowing communication theory. In addition to this, this project also offers some helps to the contemporary Lisu preachers in Myanmar for building the contextual preaching model which I call crossbow metaphor. In a crossbow, there are three main parts: the archer, an arrow, and the target. Thus, by reading this thesis, every Lisu preacher in Myanmar can easily understand that the archer refers to the preacher with the knowledge of God's nature and work including theology of preaching, the arrow stands for the relevant message which meets the contextual needs of the people, and the audience represents the target of preaching. In addition to this, this thesis can be a part of teaching the subject of preaching at Lisu theological seminaries, and sharing the homiletical education at annual Lisu pastoral gathering.

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