

Formation Chapter 9

*Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins,
and give us the liberty of that abundant life
which you have made known to us in your Son
our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns
with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and for ever. Amen.*

This new collect was drafted by the Rev. Dr. Massey Shepherd (1913-1990), Episcopal priest and prominent liturgical scholar, who played a strong role in developing the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. He was one of the few Americans and Protestants honored with an invitation to participate in Vatican II (the great Council of the Roman Catholic Church, 1962-1965 which greatly impacted all Christian churches) . The Scriptural allusions in this collect include Galatians 4:3-5, Romans 8:15 and 8:19-21, John 10:10, and Luke 4:16-21.

The Sermon

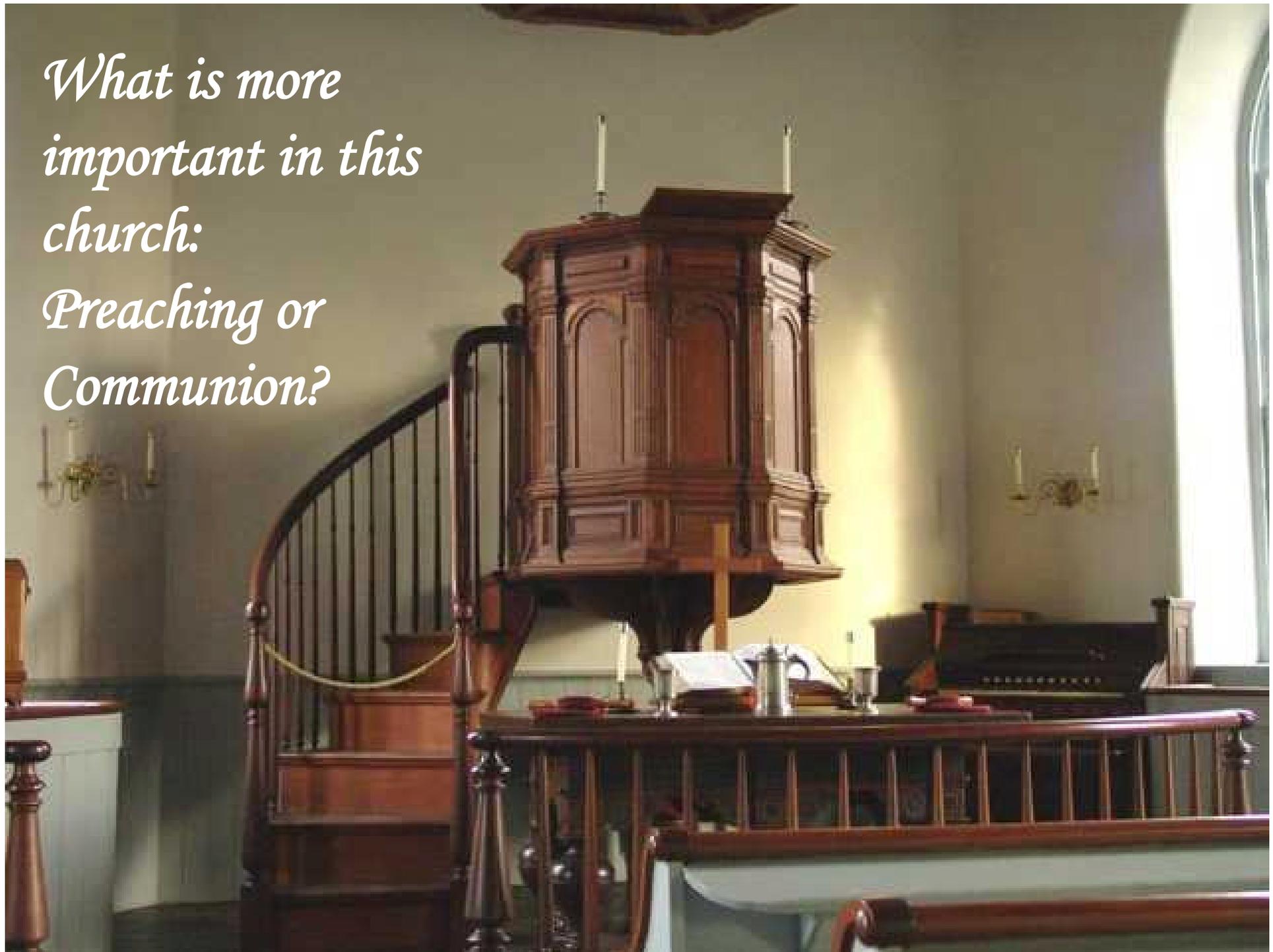
Books and books have been written on the role of the sermon in worship, types of sermons, the purpose of the sermon, etc. The viewpoints are all across the board.

I commend to you the chapter in your manual.

What do you see?



*What is more
important in this
church:
Preaching or
Communion?*











**Here are symbols to remind us
of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font and pulpit,
here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
here in silence, as in speech,
here in newness and renewal
God the Spirit comes to each.**

F. Pratt Green, "God is Here"

In his book *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*, Leland Ryken writes:

To set the stage for my remarks about Puritan preaching, I invite you to accompany me to England near the turn Of the Sixteenth Century. Laurence Chaderton, first master Of Emanuel College, Cambridge, is preaching in his native Lancashire. People do not often hear good sermons there. Chaderton has preached for two hours. He is about to conclude and says something to the effect that he would no longer trespass on their patience. But the audience will not allow the preacher to stop.

"For God's sake, Sir, go on, go on' they urge. Hereat, Mr. Chaderton was surprised into a longer discourse, beyond his expectation, in satisfaction of their importunity".

That's the story. But here's the punch line. Ryken says,

"The incident is noteworthy, not because it was rare during the Puritan movement, but because it was common".

Puritan preachers would preach twice on Sundays (allowing the congregation to go home for lunch before coming back), and often 5 more times during the week – the most popular preachers preached far more than that!

In some places, a member of the congregation was given a long stick with which to poke listeners if they fell asleep.

The most noticeable Methodist preaching (because it was fairly unique) took place early in the morning, generally about 5:00 a.m. before people went to work. Wesley saw early morning preaching as important to the health of body and soul.

Wesley cautioned his fellow preachers not to preach more than twice a day, and to try to keep the service to an hour. He did not himself, however, abide by these instructions, often preaching several times a day and for 2-3 hours at a time.

What is the purpose of sermons?

*Again, the answers to this
question are all over the board.*

One author says, “The purpose of a sermon is to explain and apply the Scripture.” This was basically what I was taught in seminary.

Another writes: “A variety of sermon forms are possible. At times a narrative sermon will work, at other times a more didactic approach will be best. Our approach to sermon form should be as varied as the Bible’s own approach to genre. The intention of the text and the intention of the sermon will govern the choice of sermon form.”

David Buttrick, widely recognized as one of the foremost living authorities on preaching, states: “The language of preaching is a connotative language used with theological precision.” He stresses metaphor, symbol and mystery.

Time, you thief

Life is a journey

MORE IS UP

All the world's a stage

METAPHOR

LOVE IS A JEWEL

LESS IS MORE

Richard Rohr also emphasizes the necessity for metaphor:

“Metaphor is the only possible language available to religion because it alone is honest about Mystery.” ... “Once the Eternal Word has become human flesh it is very hard to put it back into words—only music, poetry, and art can begin to suffice.”

Rohr asks:

“What if the Bible is authoritative and alive and transformative but not full of simple thoughts that are easy to categorize?”

St. Francis is reported to have said: “Preach the gospel at all times – if necessary, use words.”

So, you can see the dilemma of the preacher!

Fred Craddock, master of the narrative sermon and author of a classic textbook on preaching, writes:

*“We all know and yet none of us seems to know what preaching is. It’s difficult to define, for it is determined by the situation, the message, and the manner. It is socially constructed and situated, and different people go about it in different ways. There is, of course, no one way everyone is to preach. We can learn from all sorts of speakers, but not one of them is to be copied. **David cannot fight in Saul’s armor.**”*

Craddock warns that preachers should not destroy the effectiveness of a metaphor by explaining it too much. Let the listener or the reader have the joy of discovering it on their own. "Being as obvious as high noon at every point is demeaning."

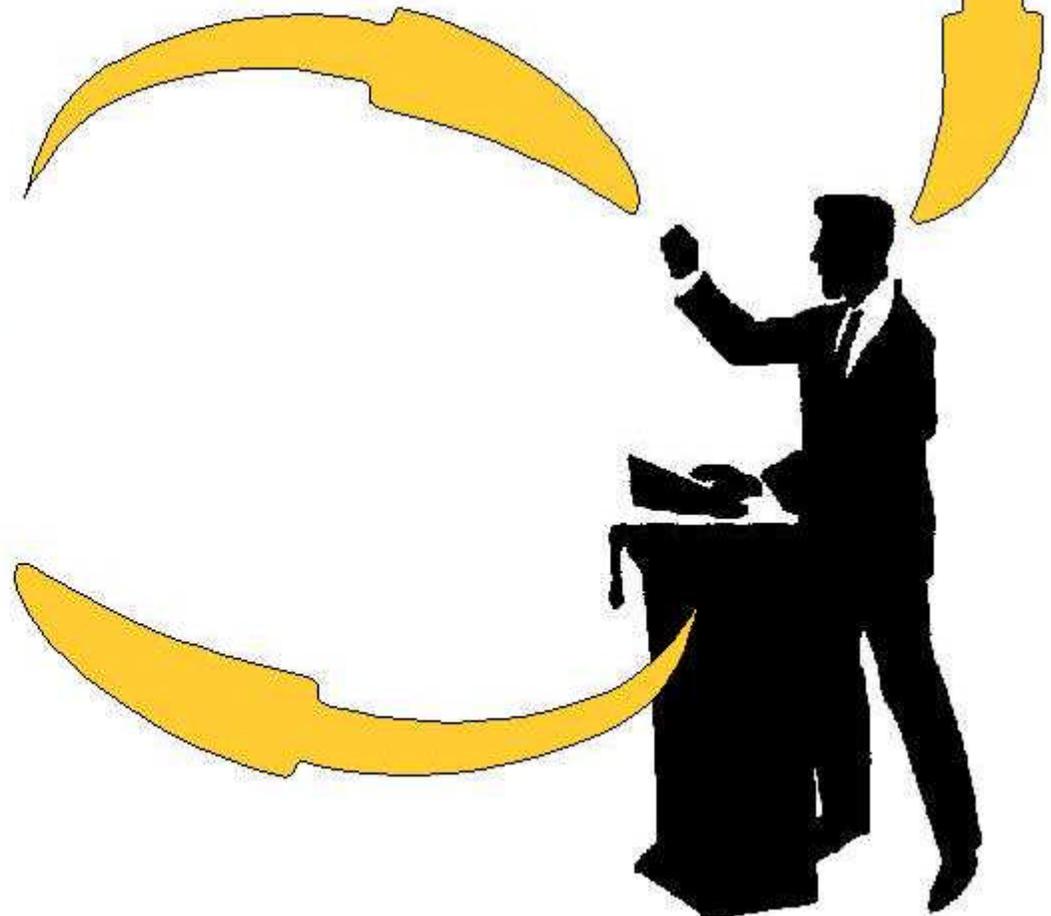
Craddock notes that God does not speak with a loudspeaker, or in such a way that he will be obvious to all. We are to speak boldly, yet realize that not everyone will respond in the way that we would like, no matter what volume we use, or how good our logic is.

Most every preacher I know will tell you that members of their congregation will sometimes come up to them after the service and say, “I really appreciated your message about...” and then describe a message which the preacher had not intended to say. In most instances, I find, God speaks to a faithful listener through the words of a faithful preacher, conveying the message the hearer needs to hear, whether the preacher intended that message or not.

I once had a parishioner come up to me after the service with immense relief and gratitude. She said, "Thank you for giving me permission to divorce my husband." I was shocked, and later re-read my sermon, finding nothing of the sort. But that woman was in a long-time abusive relationship, and given her Southern Baptist upbringing, she thought she would go straight to Hell if she divorced him. Somehow, through my sermon, God released her from this fear.

God

Preacher's
Prayer &
Study



The Bible is replete with verses regarding preaching. I've printed a list of some of them, and will post it on our web site. Hear are two from St. Paul:

Romans 10:13-15, 17

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:17

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

