

**“Oh Be Careful Little Eyes What You See”:
Homiletical Analysis and Preaching to Youth, A Case Study**

ABSTRACT

Many youth find themselves regularly engaged in the practice of preaching. Unfortunately, preaching and sermons for/to youth undergo little to no homiletical analysis by members of both academy and church. In order to encourage more strategic thought about preaching to youth, this essay analyzes a sermon preached to youth groups on a mission trip. The analysis draws out fundamental issues of biblical exegesis as a function of context, careful use of theology, intentionality with regard to language, and appropriation of rhetoric, all factors at work in preaching specifically to youth. These large issues provide a framework out of which other sermons to and for youth might be analyzed and/or written. Though the sermon and comments about it take place within a Protestant Christian context, the categories used here are broad enough for use in analyzing religious communication to youth in multiple faith traditions.¹

Background Information

This sermon was one of a series of four sermons preached for a group of Presbyterian Church (USA) youth groups on a mission trip in Atlanta, Georgia in the summer of 2007. The young people from these congregations were in middle and high school and from the Northeast Tennessee area, from communities at the feet of the Appalachian Mountains. These communities' populations are over 90% white and the students were from middle- to upper-middle-class backgrounds. Traveling to work in diverse, underprivileged communities in Atlanta put them in

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a situation largely outside of their normal contexts in terms of race/ethnicity, and class. This was intentional on the part of the group leaders and it was also for this reason that they asked me to preach four sermons on the themes of racial reconciliation and justice.

The workweek rhythm proceeded this way: the youth got up early in the morning, ate breakfast, had a time of morning prayer/devotion, went to various worksites in the city, then came back for free time, dinner, evening worship, and small group time. I led the morning devotion time in addition to preaching. On the day that this sermon was preached, the devotion was an audio recording of a sermon, “He Was Born in a Manger,” by Reverend J.M. Gates, a popular African-American preacher from Atlanta from the ‘20s to the ‘40s.² The sermon speaks about how Jesus was “born low,” yet this appearance did not match the reality of his heavenly origin and destination. It paired well with the theme of the day, “Seeing,” which was supported by the text of the day (also the main text of the sermon), Matthew 25.31-36.

Text of Sermon: “Oh Be Careful Little Eyes”

Sight is a very risky sense. When I was little, we used to sing a song in children’s church that went (sung) “Oh be careful little eyes what you see, oh be careful little eyes what you see, for the Father up above, is looking down with love, oh be careful little eyes what you see.” This song ingrained in my head that God was some form of eternal Big Brother watching every single move that I made, keeping track of every image that came through my eye. Though the song was a bit weird that way, it is fundamentally right that sight is a risky sense.

Have you ever seen something you immediately want to unsee? Something that bothered you so much that you wish you could get the image out of your head? Once you see something, of course, you can’t unsee it. There’s no going back. People slow down on the highway to see a wreck, mostly because they want to see blood and carnage, smoke and fire. But once they see something, they can’t unsee it. Some of us cover our eyes when we watch a horror movie, because we know that the sight of an axe murderer or guy in a hockey mask can scare us and haunt our dreams. If we see it, we can’t unsee it. Some of us would probably like to unsee some of the things that happen in our homes or schools. But once you see something, it’s done. Sight is a very risky sense.

The Bible seems to know about this risky sense. Using the sense of sight with God is dangerous business if you read some of the stories of the Bible. When Moses asks to see God, all God allowed him to see was the glory. It affected him so much that Moses’ face glowed and he had to wear a veil. When Moses asked to see God, God responded that Moses could only see God’s backside, because no one can see God and live. Without a doubt, the narratives in the Old Testament let us know that seeing God is such a grand thing, so grand that it can cost you your life. But something changed along the way. Somewhere along the way, God decided that it would be good if people saw God.

The Gospels tell the story of how God's plan came into action, of God's appearance in the world in human form: how Jesus came into the world so that people could see God. It also tells of how people might respond to God in the flesh. Matthew 25.31-46 gives an account of a great judging of the nations. Here we find a big mix-up on how people see others and react to them. Some have given to the less fortunate and cared for them, while the other group disregarded the hungry, thirsty, the stranger, those without clothing, and the prisoner. However these people responded, no matter what they did or who they thought they saw, they were actually responding to Jesus.

For them, the problem wasn't knowing who Jesus was. They knew. And they knew he wasn't supposed to be hungry. He was the one, after all, who could turn a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread into a feast for five thousand. Thirsty? Come on. This was the guy who turned water into wine. Sick? Massive crowds followed him around and brought their sick to him and *he* healed *them*. Naked? Up until his final day he had a fine cloak – the one with no seam.

What is clear is that some of the people addressed in this text acted generously without knowing it was Jesus whom they were serving. They saw Jesus when the person they were looking at didn't look even the slightest bit like Jesus. They had a hunch that God created others and they deserved to be taken care of. They knew something about how the image of God is buried deep into every fiber of our being – every single one of us. Jesus is all around us and the way we respond to others indicates how we respond to him.

We are tempted, though, to miss Jesus – to look right past him in others. We look past others all the time. Sometimes we want to unsee people that we see as if they are some horrible monster who will haunt our dreams. So who are these people? What do they look like and why do we look past them? We all know the “isms” that urge us to look past those people. Racism, classism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism all tempt us to look past the image of God in others. I suspect that even our schools and churches urge us to look past the image of God in others. Sometimes our parents or friends tell us to look past people who really look an awful lot like Jesus.

Looking past others is an option, I suppose. All we have to do is ignore others in our midst. And if we look past others, we don't have to act. It makes it easy on us. If we close our eyes and ignore others around us, we don't have to act. If we look past others, we don't have to get off our seats. We don't have to go on mission trips and to places we wouldn't otherwise go. We don't have to try to see the people we are seeing this week – we can simply attempt to unsee them.

But there is grace in looking at others because when we do, we see Jesus. When we look and see Jesus in others, we are compelled to act on behalf of them. So open your eyes! Open your eyes and see Jesus! Encounter Jesus in each and every person around you.

And when we begin the process of seeing, our world becomes a sign of the reign and rule of God. When we dare to open our eyes and see Jesus in others around us, we open up the possibility of a new sight. This new type of seeing is what God desires for the world. Our world begins to look more and more like the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem we read about in Revelation – a place where there is no hunger, death, crying, mourning, or pain. When we begin to open our eyes

and act according to the picture that Matthew's Gospel paints, the Jesus we see works with us to change this world into what God intended.

The world looked a little more like God's vision on prom night at Turner County High School. Prom night. It's a huge event in most high schools that brings the whole school together. Tons of money gets poured into dresses, hair, make-up, tuxedos, flowers, cars, meals, decorations, and photos. But in Ashburn, Georgia, prom night has until now been a night of division. You see, Turner County High School has always had two proms – and neither of them official. There was always a prom for African American students, organized by African American students and a prom for white students, organized by white students.

That's the way things have always been in Ashburn. But this year something changed. James Hall, the senior class president said, "Everybody says that's just how it's always been. It's just the way of this very small town." In other words, everyone in that town had always seen each other on the basis of race. All they had seen was that two different skin tones meant that there were two different proms. They had also always had two different homecoming queens – one white and one black. They couldn't even dance with someone of a different color! The four senior class officers – two whites and two African Americans – decided that they should have one prom. James Hall said, "It's time for a change."

Those four students had a different vision. They saw that their classmates were real people. They realized the power of what happens when you open your eyes to see Jesus in someone else, even though they have not been seen that way before. That kind of vision can change schools, cities, nations, and the world.

What are the ways that "it's always been" in X City, City Y, City D, the boro of Z?³ Even if it's not as major as two different proms, what are the visions that are in your communities? How are others seen? What are the rules in your community for those that are supposed to go unseen? What are the visions in your schools, your youth groups?

Who do you see in the people that are poor, handicapped, of another race, with mental disabilities, who are criminals? Who do you see in them? If you open your eyes, you will see Jesus in them and then you will see a vision of what the Kingdom of God looks like – a place where black students and white students have a prom together, a place where poor and homeless people have jobs and places to live. People will have clothes to wear that you folded, food to eat from gardens that you planted.

Are you curious enough to see the many faces of Jesus in this world? Are you courageous enough to go out into the world looking for Jesus in the faces of all? Are you compassionate enough to love the faces of Jesus you see?

Open your eyes to the vision that Jesus is in every person –

From alcoholics to athletes, artists and able-bodied

From breakdancers and ballers, butchers and bakers

To candlestick makers and crack dealers, class clowns and conservatives

From dropouts and dairy farmers, the disabled and depressed
To electricians, emo kids, and the elderly
Open your eyes and see Jesus in
Freaks and FFA kids
In gamers, Goths, and goofballs
In homosexuals and heterosexuals, the hungry and the homeless
In the incarcerated and isolated, ignorant and insecure
Open your eyes and see the vision. Do you see it?
Jesus in every person.
From jocks and jokers
To kindergarten kids and karaoke singers
From little people and liberals
To Muslims, the middle-aged, musicians, nerds, and oddballs
Jesus – in every person. Do you see the vision?
Pedophiles, preps, poets, the poor, the questioning, and rich people – Jesus in every person
From the substance abusers, the silent, and the self-absorbed
To the trouble makers and teachers, the unemployed, unpopular, uncool, and the violent.
These are the ones who look like Jesus! Do you see it?
Weirdos, Wiccans, xenophobes, and young adults, right on down to the Zen masters and zoo
keepers.
Open your eyes. Serve these people and you serve Jesus. Do you see him in every one? Open
your eyes. See Jesus.

Homiletic Reflection

Why reflect on a sermon that has long since been preached? And why is this important for the preacher, youth minister, volunteer worker, or young person? When ministry takes place at such a rapid pace and time runs short, why engage in this seemingly classroom-like activity? Why take the time to go back through the sermon archives and scratch around at these old words?

Preaching and participating in worship with youth places an incredible responsibility on the preacher, even though the language to describe preaching a sermon-- “youth talk,” “message,” or “teaching”—has changed drastically. These turns in language suggest difficulties surrounding authority in relation to preaching. To judge by the lack of scholarly and pastoral reflection on it, preaching to youth apparently does not warrant the same practical theological seriousness as preaching to adults.

The literature of preaching and youth ministry has largely eschewed theological rigor as evidenced by the titles and content of two of the most popular books in this area: *Speaking to Teenagers: How to Think About, Create, and Deliver Effective Messages* and *How to Speak to Youth...And*

*Keep Them Awake at the Same Time.*⁴ These well-intentioned but simplistic, cut-and-paste guides to “delivering” or “speaking” “messages” are inadequate to the complexities of the task. Stereotyping youth as hopelessly bored, they focus on speaking in such a way as to create and sustain interest. On the other hand, preaching classrooms in seminaries rarely, if ever, address preaching and its place with youth. The seminary preaching lab fails to place the preaching student before middle and high school students or young adults with the charge to bring the gospel to bear in the opportunities and challenges of that context.

In those gaps, homiletic reflection provides assistance to the practitioner who is concerned about how his/her preaching with young people functions within the larger context of ministry. Sermon analysis can help uncover a preacher’s assumptions about a number of homiletic issues and, in turn, lead that preacher to more informed, refined, and appropriate preaching practices for the context of preaching to young people.

There are multiple methods by which this and any sermon can be analyzed.⁵ In order to provide practitioners with youth a pattern for sermon analysis, what follows are some comments analyzing major themes of context and exegesis, theology, language, and rhetoric in relation to the sermon above. Analysis takes time and energy, so I suggest that practitioners take a day out of their schedule and analyze a number of sermons, or incorporate this activity into a sabbatical or strategic planning session for preaching. Analyzing a number of sermons together rather than only one is more likely to give an accurate composite picture of how a practitioner approaches these themes; such analysis will suggest or confirm tendencies a preacher has, or even highlight surprising areas where the practitioner does not agree with his/her claims.⁶

The themes I analyze below are major components of the preaching task particularly salient for this sermon, but are also significant especially for the relationship of preaching with young people. I have not included comments concerning the structure of the sermon, delivery/embodiment of the sermon, or comments about my own identity in relation to the writing and delivery of the sermon. These issues are crucial points to be considered in the preaching task, but are beyond the scope of this essay. At the end of these sections I include questions for those who preach among youth to use in their own sermon analysis.

1. CONTEXT AND EXEGESIS: “DISLOCATED EXEGESIS”

As mentioned above, the students and leaders from the churches being addressed in the sermon were predominantly white (out of approximately fifty students and leaders, only two were African American, and no other ethnic backgrounds were represented), they came from fairly affluent households, and from a privileged mainline denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA).

As such, a critical task for this group and a purpose of this mission trip was to read their own lives and the Christian scriptures outside of their familiar, often isolated contexts. Charles Campbell calls this practice “dislocation,” whereby “the church is called intentionally and habitually to

move out of the places of security and comfort into those ‘unclean’ places where Jesus suffers ‘outside the gate of our sacred compounds,’ whether those compounds are shaped by religion or class or race or culture.”⁷ The purpose of this practice is so that “through such dislocation, privileged Christians cross the boundaries that keep the privileged and oppressed apart and take a first step toward solidarity with the poor, which, in a consumer culture, is one way of radically contesting the Domination System.”⁸

Mission trips, of course, are deeply and intentionally rooted in the notion of dislocation, even if this is not articulated. So how could preaching in this context work together with the purpose of this trip? While students and leaders were working in urban gardens, folding clothes for community organizations, helping with community child care, and feeding the homeless, it was important for them to hear and interpret this text from the gospel of Matthew within these contexts so different from their own. This group was intentionally crossing the boundaries of class and race/ethnicity in order to understand the systems of domination that exist in the Atlanta area. To read the Matthean text, to understand systems that portray things as “the way they have always been,” and then to “see Jesus” in the faces of those with whom they had come into contact was crucial in asking students to see the world differently from what they experience every day.

Those who preach to youth should be highly sensitive to the effects of context when analyzing their own preaching.⁹ Even if the preacher has not intentionally engaged in dislocated exegesis, he/she might ask questions such as “How do contextual factors shape the way that I read this text?” or “How does my context affect the different dimensions of my preaching (e.g., delivery, relationship with listeners)?” or “How do the particular contextual features of this group of young people affect the way that they hear this sermon? How might my understanding of their context help ‘negotiate a hearing’ with them?”¹⁰ Whether that context involves factors of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, geography, denominational commitments, or age, intentionally engaging the contextual dimensions of preaching can help students who find themselves in an egotistical cultural landscape see beyond the borders of self as well as understand their own familiar contexts with new readings of biblical texts.

2. *THEOLOGY: IMAGO DEI AND A VISION OF GOD’S JUSTICE*

Theologically, this sermon prompted the group to ask hard questions about theological anthropology. At stake for this sermon is what it means for all people to be human before God, and what it means for the image of God to be in those who come from radically different situations from our own. Part of the work of the week was to see how the image of God has been denied in many people by the economic realities that afflict people daily. In this sense, the sermon enacts the ways that Christine Smith sees preaching working as theological act:

Preaching is also an act of naming. The naming of reality functions in many ways, but whether naming calls persons to claim the fullness of their own created worth and the

worth of all creation, or whether naming enables the demonic powers of hatred and injustice to be exposed and dethroned, one can hardly dispute the power of publicly proclaimed words. Preaching is an act of public theological naming. It is an act of disclosing and articulating the truths about our present human existence. It is an act of redeeming and transforming reality, an act of shattering illusions and cracking open limited perspectives. It is nothing less than the interpretation of our present world and an invitation to build a profoundly different new world.¹¹

The sermon, by naming the realities of denied humanity helped “spark the Christian community to enlarge its theological vision or to recognize fresh possibilities in its theology, life, and witness.”¹² Since I was asked to preach on the topics of justice and racial reconciliation, this sermon provided an opportunity to help students frame the views of their community or their own views with the theological concept of *imago Dei*. During the week, I hoped that the students would see each other and those they would continue to encounter in a radically different way through this theological concept and its presence in the Matthean text.

Preaching to youth need not avoid sophisticated theological concepts. In fact, preaching should be intentional and strategic in helping students name theological concepts in ways that are meaningful and concrete for them.

One of the ways the sermon named theological realities and framed the issue of theological anthropology was the story of the prom in Logan County, Georgia. The story of the prom served two major purposes for the sermon.¹³ (1) The story helped frame a theology of culture. Often preaching for/to/with youth includes stories and illustrations that use what John McClure calls a “sectarian style” of relating to culture by which an oppositional church versus culture theological system operates.¹⁴ The homiletical rendering of culture in this sermon, however, fits McClure’s category of “dialectical style” where the preacher “is generally suspicious of the adequacy of culture to contain or express the fullness of the gospel and worries about the need to distinguish culture from the gospel, while at the same time expresses some positive relationship between the two.”¹⁵ This story provided a way outside the “sectarian” theological worldview and named ways that grace operates outside the church.

Those who preach to/for/with youth do well to be conscious of how they portray the relationship between church and culture, particularly in light of the importance of popular culture for youth in America and the way youth ministry models mediate theologies of culture.¹⁶ While I have used McClure’s categories for analyzing how culture operates in the sermon, the particular categories used are not as important as being intentional about the relationship between theology and culture in one’s preaching.

(2) The story contained the language of entrenched systems of institutional racism. From this sermon, students would be able to recognize the colloquial language of “that’s the way it’s always been” and phrases like it as rhetorical devices for perpetuating institutional injustice. Christine Smith asserts that as all preaching acts as theological naming, preaching about justice issues calls the preacher to three movements: weeping, confession, and resistance.¹⁷

In this instance, narrating the situation of the racial divide in the community gave listeners a chance to mourn/weep over the way that injustice divides communities while they themselves were temporarily removed from their own communities. The language of “the way it’s always been” is an avenue toward both identifying injustice and also confessing how that injustice has been a reality in that community and in the communities of the students. The call to “see Jesus” and serve others is a call to resist those injustices in their work that week and when they return home. Smith’s movement provides a way to frame a theological response to injustice for those who preach to youth without being stuck in any one of those moments. If that happens (which it often does), weeping without confession or resistance leads to hopelessness or despair; confession without weeping or resistance leads to guilt; and resistance without weeping or confession results in unfounded philanthropy.

Those who preach to young people must wrestle with how to be intentional and strategic about their theological claims. This means avoiding unhelpful technical theological vocabulary, quoting his/her favorite theologian *ad nauseum*, as well as being flippant or uncritical about the theological claims of a sermon. In analyzing and writing sermons, preachers should ask themselves, “How are we naming the world theologically for young people in our preaching?” and “How are we leading/helping them to live and respond to a theological worldview in clearly defined, embodied ways through our preaching?” or similarly, “What would it look like if these young people took these theological claims seriously?”

3. LANGUAGE AND JUSTICE: THE LANGUAGE OF SIGHT

A limitation of this sermon is the privileging of language concerning vision and sightedness. Though the sermon intentionally does not mention blindness, it does lean heavily on language to do with the ability to see. Kathy Black rightly observes that “we use blindness and deafness in ways that have nothing to do with persons today who are blind and deaf. We preach about faith and sin and healing, and apply a first-century worldview to persons with these disabilities today without really considering what effect this has on their lives. But, we argue, the rhetoric sounds good, it preaches well, and it is biblical. What harm can it do?”¹⁸

Vision and sightedness serve as a metaphor for a proper understanding of justice in this sermon and blindness implicitly serves as its opposite. Black argues that “the main problem in using these terms metaphorically in this way is that blindness, deafness, and paralysis are always used in negative ways in religious vocabulary. The metaphorical use of these terms is then identified with ‘refusal to understand’ or ‘disobedience to God’ or refusal to act according to the will of God’ and are therefore labeled as willful, selfish behaviors.”¹⁹ So I avoided using blindness to describe those who fail to recognize Jesus in others. It was extremely difficult, however, to find alternatives to language of sightedness, and is something with which I continue to wrestle in this sermon.

Those who preach to youth should be conscious of this dynamic and purposeful in their language, not simply in order to be “politically correct,” but because the language used in preaching itself can work toward the justice, reconciliation, theological responsibility, and inclusiveness en-

visioned in this sermon and the Christian gospel. So we preachers do well to ask ourselves: “What are the assumptions at work in my language and how do they promote reconciliation, justice, healing, and understanding (or fail to do so and need to be corrected in the future)?” and, “What language in use among the young people before me might be repaired through preaching?” and “What language in use among the young people before me is worthy of lifting up as an example of reconciliation, justice, healing, and understanding?”

4. RHETORIC: THE ALPHABET OF AN ENDING

The ending of this sermon was particularly well-received and sparked small group conversations after worship. The ending was crafted in the rhetorical form of celebration, most often attributed to African American preaching. I had three major reasons for doing this:

(1) As stated, these students and leaders came from overwhelmingly white, mainline denominations and had rarely, if ever, experienced preaching that incorporated celebration. In the same way as they were encountering types of people they had not before, I found it important to incorporate a homiletical dynamic that they had not encountered.

(2) Rather than ending in a more explicitly directed way, I wanted those present to experience the call to “see Jesus” in those around them not as an ethical burden but rather as an opportunity to celebrate the good news of all being made in the image of God.²⁰ In this sense, the medium became an opportunity to express the message more fully. Frank Thomas states that “celebration, moving at the level of emotional process, is the most effective method and vehicle to facilitate the assurance of grace in Jesus the Christ reaching the core belief of people...Celebration is the culmination of the sermonic design, where a moment is created in which the remembrance of a redemptive past and/or the conviction of a liberated future transforms the events immediately experienced.”²¹ In this sermon, my impetus for celebration was God’s vision for a present in which the presence of Christ is seen in all people.

(3) The playfulness of this celebration provided an opportunity to place some surprising groups of people in the list (e.g. pedophiles) to help the group test the limits of this theological claim in a serious way. Obviously the celebration of this sermon moves in and among different groups of people in an alphabetical progression. As intended, many students and leaders questioned if some of these groups belonged in the list. Others sought to add more “x’s” or some of the more difficult letters to the list.

In addition, many students commented about when they “got” that this portion of the sermon was an alphabetic progression, indicating their attention to the unfolding logic of the sermon. This counters the stereotype that most students are bored and do not pay attention to sermons. In fact, these students, even after a day of work in the heat of an Atlanta summer, were fully engaged in the logic of this sermon’s progression. Perhaps more attention to the internal logic of sermons for/to youth is warranted, not merely in service to creating and sustaining “interest,” but in order to

honor students' commitments to listening to preaching.²²

A final observation concerning rhetoric and this sermon is warranted. Both the progression of the device and the content seemed particularly important to one student in the group who had Asperger's Syndrome. This student picked up on the device well before the others did and was highly engaged at this moment, leading him to specific theological reflection. For those who preach to groups or congregations who have special needs, this should spur more reflection on the impact of planning the rhetoric of preaching in those contexts and the capacity for that rhetoric to be a vehicle for theological reflection among our young listeners. Certainly not all youth are alike and have different listening needs. It can be useful to remind ourselves of this occasionally by asking ourselves: "Is my rhetoric targeted to a one-dimensional picture of youth? What rhetorical strategies are needed for the different youth who are listening?"

We who preach to young people do well to be intentional and strategic about the rhetorical conventions of the sermon. Does this mean that busy preachers should head to Aristotle and Quintillian before crafting their sermons? By no means! But I am suggesting that preachers pay particular attention to the crafting of their words and the purposes behind that crafting. My use of celebration here had a specific *rhetorical and theological intention*, so I encourage those who preach to approach their sermons with similar intentionality. For instance, preachers could ask of their sermons: Did this story/joke/image/illustration/quotation/genre of speech/etc. have a particular rhetorical and theological purpose? Did I use it to entertain/blame/condemn/shame/etc. or for a more constructive reason? And is this type of rhetorical convention appropriate for my hearers?

Conclusion

Those who preach to youth do well to craft and analyze their sermons with regard to how context, exegesis, theology, language, and rhetoric contribute to preaching. Analyzing preaching among youth can help sharpen the larger dimensions of ministry with youth, by identifying the major themes communicated through these important moments. Even though there are contexts in which the preacher does not see the long term outcome of his or her sermonic work, such as my being a guest preacher in this situation, critical attention to preaching for and to youth will help sustain that practice as young people and religious contexts continue to change.

Notes

1 These categories seem to be at work across the spectrum of communication in many religious contexts: contextual interpretation and appropriation of sacred texts, effort to make sense of the divine and the human, sincere and responsible use of language, as well as careful attempts to compose oral discourse. While the particularities of how they are enacted in this case will differ, the categories operate within diverse religious communicative contexts.

2 A transcription of the sermon, “He Was Born in a Manger,” may be found at: <http://dust-digital.com/resources/where-will-you-be/transcriptions-and-notes/11.htm> (accessed February 16, 2009).

3 I have intentionally omitted the names of the cities from which these churches came.

4 Duffy Robbins and Doug Fields, *Speaking to Teenagers : How to Think About, Create, and Deliver Effective Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), Ken Davis, *How to Speak to Youth-- and Keep Them Awake at the Same Time*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

5 For a detailed method of analysis, see John S. McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching : Rhetorical Strategies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

6 This is also the way by which McClure suggests preachers approach sermon analysis.

7 Charles L. Campbell, *The Word before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 153. See also Charles L. Campbell, “Dislocated Exegesis,” in *Papers of the Annual Meeting of the Society of Homiletics* (West Palm Beach, FL, 2006), 7-11.

8 *Ibid.*, 154.

9 Contextuality is, incidentally, a key issue to which the Robbins/Fields and Davis texts fail to attend.

10 I borrow the term “negotiate a hearing” from McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching: Rhetorical Strategies*.

11 Christine M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance : Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/Knox Press, 1992), 2. In this sense, preachers who preach for/to/with youth would do well to sharpen their understanding of how their preaching acts as theological naming for youth.

12 Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching Is Believing : The Sermon as Theological Reflection*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 74.

13 For this story, see <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18034102> (accessed February 16, 2009).

14 McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching: Rhetorical Strategies*, 162-66. This book provides an excellent diagnostic for both understanding and planning how preachers systematically “encode” the church’s relationship with culture. McClure identifies the sectarian style with postliberal theological configurations of the relationship between church and culture, particularly those of Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon.

15 *Ibid.*, 149.

16 For a superb analysis of how theology and culture interact, see Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, *Guides to Theological Inquiry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

17 Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance : Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 4-6.

18 Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic : Preaching and Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 45.

19 Ibid., 54.

20 Celebration is not illogical or “merely emotive,” which is a denigrative understanding of the role of human emotionality. Rather, celebration contains within it the logic of pathos. Preachers would do well to explore the rationality of emotion. For more on *pathos*, see Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* (London, England ; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books, 1991), Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation : Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1999).

21 Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1997), 31.

22 Here, I am drawing on the ancient rhetorical category of *logos*. For more on *logos*, see Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, as well as Hogan and Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching*.