

**As Equal Images of God:
Preaching to People in Finnish Congregation who Immigrated to Sweden in the
1960s and 70s' to Affirm towards Confident Encounters for Dialogue between the
Minority and Majority**

by

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Abstract

Most of the congregants regularly attending worships in the Finnish Congregation for the Finnish minority in Stockholm belonged to the unemployed who moved to Sweden 50 – 60 years ago during the vast wave of Finns' immigration. They worked in underrated working-class areas, impacting their self-image. Thus, this thesis aims to see if testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus can increase the self-esteem of these immigrants and help them boldly meet people in the majority with confidence as equal images of God. The thesis consists of three preaching projects. Sermons were video filmed. To get data on how well the goals were received, questionnaires were made for the Parish Project Group and the congregants attending worships. The responses to the answers of the questionnaires showed a line towards the conclusion that preaching had an uplifting effect on self-esteem and encouraging effect on the confidence encounters with the majority.

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In the end, I could not have done it without God as my guide and strength in the Holy Spirit. Thus, I end up with the words, “All glory to God. Amen.”

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Introduction

Background

After serving thirteen years as a minister, I felt I needed renewal in my ministry in preaching. I needed to deepen my preaching and learn more about how to meet the needs of my congregation in my preaching so that the message will keep on living in everyday life, make a change, and help congregants live their faith in practice.

In 2018 I was accepted into the KFP (Kvalificerad Fortbildning i Predikan, which means qualified further education in sermon)-Sweden Program, with an agreement connected to the ACTS DMin Program at LSTC (Lutheran Seminary of Theology at Chicago). I studied preaching for two and a half years with KFP and received a Diploma. This was an exciting and intensive learning period in my life – especially regarding two preaching projects with the reference group. The program had nationally recognized guest lecturers, guest preachers, and lecturers from the USA.

Being encouraged by the positive feedback from the first and second Preaching Ministry Project with KFP, especially from my advisor, I became interested in deepening my preaching as testimony. The opportunity came when I applied and was accepted to the ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching Program at Chicago to do the last year in this program. Already before finishing the KFP-Sweden Program, I told my advisor about the possible issue for the thesis project, and she encouraged me to "tell their story."

The Issue of the Thesis Project

I have chosen as my focus group congregation members in my congregation, the Finnish congregation, who moved to Sweden during the massive immigration wave in the 1960s and 70s'.

Most of the congregants who regularly attend worship in the Finnish congregation are those immigrants who moved to Sweden from 1960 through 1979. I have served as a minister among these immigrants all the years after my ordination. For ten years, I served as a minister for the Sweden-Finnish congregational working field in the Diocese of Karlstad, with at most thirteen congregations to drive to regularly. Those congregations had the Sweden-Finnish congregational working field as a minority amid the majority's congregational working area. Now I have served over seven years in the Finnish congregation in the Diocese of Stockholm. All these years, I have been working in the Sweden-Finnish congregational field among immigrants who moved to Sweden in the 60s' and 70s'; I have noticed how this significant change in their life concerning country, language, and culture has had a debilitating effect on their self-image and self-esteem. These 300 000 Finns who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s during the massive wave of Finns' immigration¹ were people who moved because the unemployment rate was high in Finland, especially in the north and in the upper western part of the coastline. The culmination in immigration was reached during 1969–70 when about 80,000 immigrants

¹Häggström, Borgegård, Rosengren, *När finlännderna kom: Migrationen Finland-Sverige efter andra världskriget* (When Finns came: Migration Finland-Sweden after World War II, trans. from Swedish to English L. Mänttari), 55.

moved to Sweden in both years.² Even many representatives from different companies in Sweden traveled to Finland and recruited people.³

Many of these immigrated people, mostly young ones, had hardly any professional education or Swedish language skills,⁴ but they dreamed of a better economic living. In their life situation, Sweden was a paradise on the other side of the Gulf of Bothnia, often called "the Bay." These people were hard workers who worked in working-class areas that were – and still are - underrated, mainly in factories, forests, hotels, and hospitals.⁵

“Sweden got not only labor but also human beings,”⁶ who needed to be accepted and appreciated, although they were lower-class people belonging to a minority. Many thought about moving back to Finland after earning enough money, especially those immigrants who did not learn the language properly. Still, many stayed because of their children, who were starting to integrate into the system. Small Finnish societies were "founded" amid Swedish society.⁷ According to the stories in the communities, while these people were on the way to finding a new way of living, they could not help letting the majority more or less influence their identity, which impacted their lives, self-images, and self-esteem.

It is human that the majority has more or less prejudices towards persons of another nationality and background belonging to the minority. However, between Finns and

² Ibid., 55.

³ Wiklund, *Möte som skapar – Luova kohtaaminen: Erfarenheter, tankar och utmaningar kring svenskt, finskt och sverigefinskt i samhälle och kyrka igår, idag och i morgon* ((Creative encounter: Experiences, thoughts and challenges around Swedish, Finnish and Sweden-Finnish in society and church yesterday, today and tomorrow (trans. from Swedish and Finnish to English L. Mänttari), 5.

⁴ Häggström, Borgegård, Rosengren, *När finlänarna kom*, 59-60.

⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁶ Wiklund, *Möte som skapar – Luova kohtaaminen*, 5-6.

⁷ Lainio, ed., *Finnarnas historia i Sverige*, Vol. 3, 143-144.

Swedes, there is much in common, as Sweden and Finland have had a shared history due to Finland being a part of Sweden for about 700 years to the beginning of the 19th century.

An investigation from 1969 about Swedes' attitude towards different immigrant groups was published in 1974. Finns were placed second last.⁸ This awoke strong feelings in Finland, and voices for immigrants to return back to their homeland got stronger in Finland. The negative attitude towards Finns was reflected in the articles in the newspapers, and derogatory headlines, such as "A Finn again!" or "A Finn, son of a bitch!" got more space in headlines.⁹ Historically, the media uses its power, and the majority stereotypes the minority. However, those Finns who found it difficult to adapt and used alcohol due to feeling unwell and got into fights formed a minority – and in spite of all, they were still hard workers. The majority lived an everyday life working hard and raising their children, which did not interest sensational magazines. It was not until Finland's ambassador in Stockholm intervened that those newspapers started to write more objectively about Sweden-Finns.

Sweden's prime minister Olof Palme in 1970, in an interview for Swedish Radio, stated a very important message to Swedish society:

We in Sweden have received a significant number of Finns who have come to work here. Some have already become Swedish citizens and are thinking of staying. Others consider moving back to their homeland when job opportunities arise. Whichever path they choose, we try to make Swedish society such that they can feel at home here. We will not succeed in this without the immigrants' own efforts. It is important that they seek access points to our country. I hope that with our immigration policy, we can together solve these problems, which largely coincide. I have made it clear to myself that Sweden-Finns have made a very significant contribution to our production life, and I hope that Swedish society can show such hospitality that corresponds to their fine contribution.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁹ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰ Ibid., 127 (trans. from Swedish to English L. Mänttari).

Almost 30 years passed from the Prime Minister's interview until in 1999, five minority groups got an official status as national minorities and minority languages. Sweden-Finns and Finnish were among them.¹¹ National Minorities and Minority Languages Act came into force in 2010 and allowed people living in the administrative areas (Finnish-speaking minority language areas) and who have Finnish as their mother tongue to have everyday services in Finnish if needed and wanted.¹²

The role of the Finnish congregation for the Finnish minority in Stockholm has always been there over all these years, especially during the first and second decades after the immigration, as well as later. The Sweden-Finnish congregational work in the Church of Sweden during 1960-1980 was conducted in association with the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. Since 1985, the Sweden-Finnish congregational work has been conducted entirely as an activity in the Church of Sweden.¹³

As previously discussed, the institutional and structural levels of the social transformation have already been taken care of. However, the need for social transformation at the personal and interpersonal level still exists, i.e., among Finns and the relationship between Swedes and Finns.

¹¹ Ewalds, *En Flerspråkig kyrka – del 2: fakta och fördjupningsmaterial till policy och mål för Svenska kyrkans arbete på andra språk än Svenska* (A Multilingual church – part 2: facts and in-depth material for policy and goals for the Swedish church's work in languages other than Swedish (trans. from Swedish to English L. Mänttari), 11.

¹² Ibid., 74.

¹³ Ibid., 19.

The Question, Goals, and Thesis Statement

In the thesis project, I am interested in the question: “Does testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus help affirm the self-esteem of the people in the Finnish congregation who moved to Sweden during the massive immigration in the 60s' and 70s' to create confident encounters between the minority and the majority?" Thus, the goals for the thesis project are:

1) To affirm the self-esteem of those congregants who immigrated to Sweden from Finland in the 1960s and 1970s by helping them see themselves as the images of God and the values of the realm of God in their present-day life.

2) To help them boldly meet people in the majority as equal images of God by encouraging them to find confident encounters of dialogue between the minority and majority.

The Thesis Statement, and thus the main claim of this research, is in terms of preaching: Testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus can help Finnish immigrants from the 1960s and 70s' be bolder to meet people in the majority with confidence, as equal images of God.

To find the answer to the research question, this is how I go about it:

First, it is useful and essential to include in the thesis those of my learnings and experiences from the first and second Preaching Ministry Projects in the KFP-Sweden Program that have greatly helped me on my way.

For testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus to be strong and effective, I need carefully consider the delivery performance in the

sermon. Everything I have learned about how to draw listeners into a scene and the dynamic of making a scene in my first Preaching Ministry Project *Deepening and developing the narrative expression in the sermon* helps me with the delivery performance. Later, in the ACTS DMin Preaching Program, Alice M. McKenzie and Paul Scott Wilson have broadened and enriched my ability to make a scene. Without all these learnings and experiences, my final sermon, Four Pages Preaching, would not have turned out the way it did in making a scene.

The learnings from the second preaching project, *Preaching as testimony*, in the KFP-Sweden Program guide me with testimonial preaching. Testimony involves both the telling of the events and the confession of faith. It is important that these two are connected. As a preacher, I tell what I have seen and heard in the biblical text by the Holy Spirit and then confess what I think about it and, in this way, testify my faith in Jesus.

My learnings from the method of Anna Carter Florence, “The Wide-Awake Sermon,” on how to engage the biblical texts at a deeper level, live in them, experience them, and let them go through me are very useful for finding an answer to the thesis question. It is also helpful that I have learned to put life experiences into sermons and interlace them with the biblical text, Jesus, and the cross. By doing so, the Word goes through me and makes my preaching even stronger. Testimonial preaching is good to preach without notes, which I have learned from Joseph Webb to prevent barriers between the preacher and the listener.

Elective III class “Four Pages Preaching” by Paul Scott Wilson helped me by enhancing my biblical testimonial preaching and interlacing between life and the Scripture in the sermon. It is excellent that this grammar can be used in any form of a biblical sermon

and thus in testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus. The Four Pages Preaching with 35 exegetical questions opens the biblical text and gives a reliable focus for writing a sermon that I need to answer the thesis question.

To find an answer to my thesis question, I need to go further with testimonial preaching. What I am going to do is broaden the perspective of testimonial preaching. I deepen it by adding a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus.

Core III class “Preaching as Social Transformation” by Jan Rippentrop Schnell in Summer residency 2021 guided me to understand that social transformation exists at four different social levels: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and structural. As I stated earlier, the institutional and structural levels have already been taken care of. However, the need for social transformation at the personal and interpersonal level still exists among Finns and the relationship between Swedes and Finns.

Instead of stories of my life, like in the second preaching project, I include - directly or indirectly – into sermons stories of those congregation members who moved to Sweden during the massive immigration wave in the 1960s and 70s, stories from my congregation's Creative Writing Group. I retell the stories in the light of God’s grace, love, and promises. I use Bible texts to reflect the congregants back to themselves anew, as people in relationship to a living God, and encourage them to live into the identity as a child of God.¹⁴ The learnings from Maria Ottensten and Tina Johansson with KFP and in the Summer Residency classes of the last year about stories and criteria for choosing a story are helpful and give me guidance.

¹⁴ Wilson, et eds. *The New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching*, 492.

In essence, identity – a picture of oneself – defines self-esteem. To bring up a biblical perspective, who we are in the eyes of God, what our identity is in God, gives a way to affirm or uplift self-esteem. The perspective of every human being is unique and valuable because of being created by God and in God's image leads the way. Theologians whom I use for helping me with this are Miikka Ruokanen and Lenny Luchetti.

Values in the world guide a person's value in front of other people and thus affect in person's self-esteem or self-image. By offering an alternative to them, the values of the kingdom of God help people to see values and thus themselves in the broader perspective, which has an uplifting impact on self-esteem. For this purpose, I use theologians like Luther and Charles Campbell.

When it comes to the minority meeting the majority, the concepts of "Integration" and "Inclusion" enter the picture and help me understand this process from different perspectives. Theologians, such as Kjell Wiklund and Svante Ewalds, guide me in this matter. Gregory C. Ellison II shows me how to create confident encounters between familiar strangers, applied in this thesis between Finns and Swedes.

Implications

If testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus can affirm the self-esteem of those congregants who moved to Sweden during the vast immigration wave in the 1960s and 1970s in order to create confident encounters between the minority and majority, the implementation of this preaching form could be taken on a broader picture to help congregants in the Finnish Congregation, people in the minority, find confident encounters with the majority.

Even a broader implementation could be found when thinking about the minority meeting and living with people in the majority. Assimilation as an alternative obliterates all differences. Isolation means, in the long run, the death of the minority's culture. Integration provides an opportunity to grow together both in the church and in society.¹⁵ By venturing from the comfort zone of habitual and safe out into the border areas, previously unimagined possibilities and values can be discovered. In the encounter with "the other," there may be a hunch that life in this particular encounter can deepen and open new dimensions. To cite the Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky, "The outskirts is not the place where the world ends. It is where it opens."¹⁶

However, after reading more about inclusion,¹⁷ I am convinced that it is more descriptive for the meeting between the minority and majority than integration.

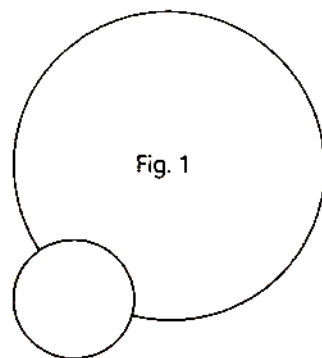


Fig. 1 Integration
Risk of opposition between the minority and majority and risk of outside identity of minority.¹⁸

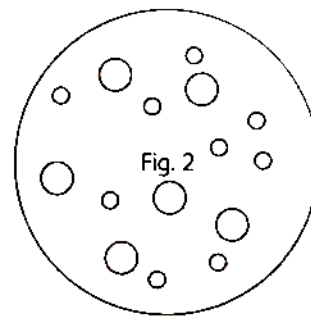


Fig. 2 Inclusion
No opposition between the minority and majority, inside identity among minority.¹⁹

¹⁵ Wiklund, *Möte som skapar – Luova kohtaaminen*, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7,9.

¹⁷ Ewalds, *En flerspråkig kyrka*, 28-30.

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

Inclusion is not to be mistaken for assimilation. Moving from integration towards inclusion is moving from a distinctive perspective to a common perspective and thus a shared responsibility. A clear distinction between majority and minority (Fig. 1) risks strengthening "us and them" thinking. Then the minority quickly takes on the role of guardian of the interests of its own group.²⁰

Hence, taken even broader, testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus applied to different circumstances could help with inclusion between minority and majority in congregations with minority groups, multicultural congregations, and thus in society. On the bottom line, it is a question about identity – a picture of yourself. Identity, also Sweden-Finnish identity, is more than a language. However, the essential question is, "What is our identity in front of God, and where does it lead to?" This is where preaching comes into the picture and provides the way.

Thesis Outline

Chapter One provides necessary information on the ministry context, the Finnish Congregation I am working on in Stockholm's Old City.

Chapter Two puts the issue identified in the thesis in conversation with the homiletics who offer insight, guidance, and methodology to address the issue appropriately. Thus, I have chosen the following homiletics: Maria Ottensten, Tina Johansson, Alice M. McKenzie, Anna Carter Florence, Charles L. Campbell, Paul Scott Wilson, Jan Rippentrop Schnell, and Lenny Luchetti.

²⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

Chapter Three expands the issue beyond homiletics and describes how it is connected to the homiletical issue of the thesis by the cognate field of social transformation as it applies to the specific history of Finnish people in Sweden, especially to those who immigrated in the 1960s and 70s'. Hence, I have chosen the following scholars mainly from biblical and systematic theology: Martin Luther, Walter Brueggemann, Miikka Ruokanen, Lenny Luchetti, Gregory C. Ellison, and Paul Ricoeur.

Chapter Four is about the project plan and process, the practical part of the thesis. This chapter is on the methodology used in developing the thesis. It also includes the processes engaged, including the sermons preached throughout the years of the program.

Chapter Five reports the interim and overall project results and evaluation. It also identifies future plans to accomplish the thesis project within the ministry context.

Chapter Six is about the homiletical significance and describes the impact of the thesis project on the preacher, ministry context, and beyond to the wider community of preachers. It identifies the significance for the field of homiletics.

Chapter One: Ministry Context

I am serving as a minister in the Finnish congregation of the Church of Sweden, which is an Evangelical Lutheran. The congregation is located in Stockholm, opposite the Royal Palace in the Old City. The congregation was founded in 1533 when the first service in Finnish was held in the Monastery Church of the Dominicans. The church building was originally built in 1648 to serve as a minor royal ball hall. With the approval of King Fredrik, the building was sold to the Finnish congregation at a low price in 1725. It was renovated to be a church, and finally, after over 200 years of worshipping in different churches in the Old City and its surroundings, the Finnish congregation got a church of its own. Because of this historical background, the Finnish congregation worships twice a year (the New year and the Ascension Day) with the following congregations in the Old City: the German congregation and the Cathedral congregation.

The Finnish congregation is the only congregation in Sweden that entirely serves people who have Finnish roots and belong to the Finnish minority. The Finnish congregation is non-territorial. Congregation members live in the area of the Stockholm diocese. Also, many Finns are members of the diocese's territorial Swedish-speaking congregations located closer to their homes and have little or no Finnish activities.

The congregation is bilingual, for Finland has as a historical remnant of two mother tongues: Finnish and Swedish. Finland was an integral part of Sweden under Swedish rule from the late 13th century to the beginning of the 19th century.

Our congregation in Stockholm operates amid a rapidly growing metropolitan region. It is located in the central area, but most members and non-member Finns live in the suburban areas, which challenges our work. Simply it takes notable time for

congregation members to travel to the church. Young families live very stressful lives, which affects their priorities. Older people are afraid to come to the Old City when it is dark and harsh weather. Besides, climbing a hill causes concrete problems for older people and those who come with small children. However, we have two Swedish-speaking congregations in the periphery where we have activities in Finnish regularly, mainly for older congregants, and we visit senior homes regularly.

There are over 700,000 inhabitants in Sweden with Finnish background, of which approximately 76,000 live in Stockholm. Nowadays, the Finnish congregation has a little less than 6,700 members. Finns' immigration to Sweden has steadily declined since the great wave of migration in the 1960s and 1970s. Back in those days, the number of congregation members was over 25,000. In 2017, altogether, 3140 persons moved from Finland to Sweden. Almost four out of five were under 45 years old.²¹

Finns who moved to Sweden over 50-60 years ago had hardly any professional education nor Swedish language skills. They moved because the unemployment rate was high in Finland. They were hard workers working mainly in factories. By the end of the 1970s, ten percent of the immigrants had a high school or university education.²² Nowadays, on the contrary, Finns who move to Sweden are primarily students or well-educated people with good positions in international companies. Many of them come to work for a limited time and move back to Finland or other countries, while others stay. These people, with their families, are eager to participate in the activities held for the babies

²¹ *Församlingsinstruktion, Finska församling* (The Parish Instruction, Finnish Congregation, Church of Sweden, trans. L. Mänttari), Dr.nummer 2020-04-15-207.

²² Häggström, Borgegård, Rosengren, *När finlänterna kom: Migrationen Finland-Sverige efter andra världskriget*, 59-60.

and toddlers in our congregation, which makes this working field a very active one. Over 40 families are involved in these activities.

Participation in the activities among young people has, delightfully, been increased in our congregation. Confirmations have become more popular among 15-year-olds. We have about 15 confirmands every year, but the pandemic has caused a temporary decline in participants. There have been camps and trips in Sweden and abroad. We also offer a summer job as a church guide for our active teenagers during summertime. These jobs are partially financed together with Stockholm City. From the Ministry of Youth, visits are made regularly to two primary and secondary schools in the suburb area that conduct teaching in Finnish and Swedish. Universities are located in different regions of the city. It has proven difficult to reach the students who move from Finland - not only because of the location but because many of them will integrate into Swedish society.

Those who belong to the first generation of Sweden's Finns who moved to Sweden in the 60s' and 70s' are the aging ones who visit the church regularly. For them and the late-middle-aged people, our congregation offers different groups. These include a Bible group, a group for creative writing, evenings for women, and theme evenings. Celebrations of Mother's Day and Valentine's Day are popular. The number of attendants in the groups varies between 10 and 25. On Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, it may increase to between 60 to 70 people. Our congregation is like another home for many of these people, especially those who are 75 and older. They need to hear and speak Finnish. I am pleased to see that people who retire at the age of 60 and up are interested in being active in parish life in many ways (e.g., volunteering) since they have reached a stage in life when they have time for this. Some of these people are talented specialists who have much to offer.

The sowing group and the group for the mission work actively for the Church of Sweden's international work through ACT Alliance. Most of the money comes from the bazaars before Christmas and Easter, as well as Christmas concerts.

The deacon's working field is overloaded, and this congregation is no exception. There are many congregation members or non-member Finns, primarily those who belong to the first generation of Sweden's Finns, who need someone to talk to, financial help, or assistance in social affairs as well. The Stockholm area is an expensive area to live in. Many live alone; within Stockholm, it is about every fifth person.²³ Small-sized retirement payments make the situation even worse.

Finnish congregation has one worship in Finnish every Sunday except on the second Sunday in a month when the worship is in Swedish. Our congregation also has bilingual services at Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day for those killed in Finland during the Second World War, and the Independence Day of Finland. In addition to this, the congregation worships once a month in the Swedish church in the suburb. Our community regularly has worships for families. The number of worshippers varies between 20 and 40. On Christmas Day and Independence Day, the Finnish Church may have close to 300 worshippers.

The Finnish congregation is also a congregation in the limitless digital world. This allows for many access to church activities no matter where they live. At the same time, many aging congregation members are digital outsiders and feel very lonely and insecure in today's digital society.

²³ *Församlingsinstruktion, Finska församling* (The Parish Instruction, Finnish Congregation, Church of Sweden, trans. L. Mänttari), Dr.nummer 2020-04-15-207.

The Finnish congregation is a bilingual congregation with congregants who, with their families, form a rich cultural forum, which includes not only Finnish and Swedish. This is also a challenge. The congregation uses traditional methods for different activities, but taking advantage of technology and social media, especially now during Covid-19, has been proving that the congregation reaches much more people in this way.²⁴

The assignment of the Finnish congregation is to proclaim the gospel from the Sweden-Finnish context. Faith and culture are firmly based on language, so the Finnish Congregation has an obligation to maintain activities in Finnish but also, of course, in Swedish.²⁵ However, the second and third generations speak less and less Finnish, but culture and identity include more than language.

The congregation has ten employees nowadays and does not have the resources to increase activities in the suburban areas. It is clearly seen that personnel resources will decline in our congregation over the next few years.

The number of congregants who immigrated to Sweden in the 1960s and 70s' is decreasing. The age group, our congregation has most, belongs to the late-middle-aged people. Working among youth and children is prioritized.

The congregation needs to keep the current members and get new ones since the congregation's economic resources depend on this. In addition, the Church order, with its chapter 35, section 5, determines who can be a member of the Finnish congregation. According to this chapter, if you are born in Finland or have a parent(s) born in Finland or married to a Finn, you can be a church member. This means that if you belong to the third generation and your parents are not born in Finland but in Sweden or another country, you

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

cannot be a member of our church even though you have Finnish roots and would like to be. The process to get this chapter changed in the synod has started.²⁶

Unlike in the US, the budget congregations in the Church of Sweden work with is mainly based on the Church Tax every member pays from their salary monthly. The amount of the tax varies from congregation to congregation and is around 0.800 – 1.850 %. In our congregation, it is 0.935%.²⁷ This shows that in Sweden, parishioners are not financially committed to the parish on the same scale as in the US. This has a reflection of the commitment in general. Many belong to the church because it has been a tradition for generations, even in our congregation.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/filer/1374643/Kyrkoavgiftssatser%20per%20f%C3%B6rsamling%202021.pdf>

Chapter Two: The Issue from the Homiletical perspective

In this thesis, I am interested in if preaching can affirm and increase the self-esteem of the immigrants in the Finnish congregation who moved to Sweden in the 1960 and 70s, help them see themselves as God's images and the values of God's kingdom working in their present-day lives. Chapter two puts this issue identified in the thesis project in conversation with those homileticians who offer insight, guidance, and methodology to address this issue appropriately.

In the thesis project, I used testimonial preaching as a preaching form in the first sermon. Being a guest lecturer in Summer Residency 2019 in the KFP-Sweden program, Anna Carter Florence had a significant impact on my testimonial preaching. I read her book *Preaching as Testimony*. Carter Florence's expertise in preaching as testimony, both lectures and rehearsals, gave me a new perspective on testimonial preaching. In a sermon in the testimony tradition, preachers tell what they had seen and heard in the biblical text and life and then confess what they believe about it.²⁸ So through confession and narration, preachers testify to their faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, testimony involves both the story of events and the confession of belief.²⁹ It is essential that these two are connected. The preacher is called to engage the liberating power of God's word in the biblical text and in life — "to live in and live out God's word."³⁰ These thoughts of Carter Florence opened tools for me to find effectiveness in my testimonial preaching, tools that are useful in affirming the self-esteem of immigrants in my congregation who moved to Sweden 50 – 60 years ago.

²⁸ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 69.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xviii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xxvii.

As a result of Anna Carter Florence's preaching method,³¹ I started to engage the biblical texts at a deeper level, live in them, experience them, let them go through me, and especially ask for the Holy Spirit to guide me all the way.

Carter Florence summarizes testimony as follows, "Testimony is a way of interpretation, a way of knowing, a way of speaking, a way of preaching." She continues, "It converts us, makes us stronger, frees us. It reveals our secrets, our systems."³² The following words of hers I really tested in the second and I test in the thesis project, as well, "Testimony insists that we change the subject of the sermon from ourselves and our words to God's word as the sermon moves through life and text."³³ This guidance is indeed true. The sermon's central move is the subject change to God, who He is, and what He can do. This subject change, which is in line with Paul Scott Wilson's Four Pages Preaching, which is later introduced in this chapter, opens a new world or a new perspective for the listeners to see them as individuals in the light of the values of the Realm of God and who they are as God's children.

Anna Carter Florence quotes Brueggemann's thoughts on "core testimony" and "countertestimony" in her book *Preaching as Testimony*.³⁴ God of Israel is unparalleled, almighty, good, great, and listens. However, God is also absent, silent, hidden. All this of God belongs to core testimony. If we say only good things about God, we have no room for doubt, and so we make God narrower. At the lecture in Summer Residency 2019, Carter described that "countertestimony" can be, for example, "God can be great, and God can be

³¹ Ibid., 131.

³² Ibid., 109.

³³ Ibid., 131.

³⁴ Ibid., 71-74.

good, but right now God is absent and silent." We want God to act as we expect, but God does not. Questions come into the picture, questions, like: *Why God? How long, God, are you quiet? Is God among us? God, why have you abandoned me?*³⁵ By testifying from my own life in the second project and those of others in the thesis project, I had the opportunity to test both "core testimony" and "countertestimony."

Carter Florence also reminds us that the sermon's purpose is not only to proclaim good news but also to make good news.³⁶ The preaching creates something! In the thesis project, I had a clear direction for this "something" the preaching as testimony can create: social transformation at a personal and interpersonal level. And how? By affirming the self-esteem of those congregants who moved to Sweden during the massive moving wave in the 1960s and 1970s in order to create confident encounters with the majority, Swedes.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, Anna Carter Florence writes in her book *Preaching as testimony* that testimony involves both the story of events and the confession of faith. Hence, finding a story and making a scene are important learnings in light of the thesis project, especially in the second sermon, Four Pages Preaching. Maria Ottensten and Tina Johansson, in their book *Predikan växer fram*, point out that which story to choose and when to use it in the sermon needs to be thought carefully. A short story could serve as an input or interpretive pattern so that listeners would have a common platform to continue reasoning and conversing. However, what is also important to remember or consider in the choosing process, according to Ottensten and Johansson, is that the story

³⁵ Ibid., 71-72.

³⁶ Ibid., 107.

involves four cornerstones: a person, a place, a dilemma, and a beginning and an end.³⁷ This information in the book was a guiding one for me. I chose to use a short story with all four cornerstones in the second sermon of the thesis project, and the story formed a common base to continue towards the goal of affirming the self-esteem of the listeners.

From the information I received from Ottensten and Johansson, choosing a story is important when thinking about the thesis project. However, in *Four Pages Preaching*, a preacher should not just tell or report the story but make a scene about it. Alice M. McKenzie offers excellent tools for this purpose. She zooms in on a story segment called a scene in her book *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners*. She advises preachers to make scenes, to have scenic sermons, either single-scene sermons or multi-scene sermons. The great benefit of preaching in scenes is that it revitalizes exegetical and theological teaching by placing it in the context of a scene. This is in line with the *Four Pages Preaching*. McKenzie states:

The core strategy of the scenic sermons is to invite listeners into scenes – from Scripture, history, literary, or the preacher's own contemporary life or that of others – and once they are there, to point them toward the larger story of God's forgiving, transforming relationship with humankind – and then to send listeners equipped out into the scenes they will play in their lives during the following week.³⁸

I became curious about making a scene in the two sermons of the thesis project. These scenes were from the Scripture and from the life experience of a Finn who moved to Sweden during the massive wave of migration. I invited listeners into a scene, retold the scene's story in the light of God's grace, love, and promises, and by doing so, I sent them

³⁷Ottensten, Johansson, *Predikan växer fram* (*The sermon grows*, trans. from Swedish to English L. Mänttari), 121-129.

³⁸McKenzie, *Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners*, 6.

equipped out into the scenes they will play in their lives while living as the minority among the majority.

Paul Scott Wilson taught an Elective course, “Four Pages Preaching,” in Summer Residency 2021. What made me interested in this particular course was that Wilson pointed out at the beginning of his book *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* that the book is about developing a grammar of preaching the gospel using almost any form of preaching.³⁹ It is a guide for biblical preaching, which I found excellent because it connects this work to my previous projects’ preaching goals and can be applied to testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus. This grammar of preaching, Four Pages Preaching, I had in the second sermon in the thesis project.

In Four Pages Preaching, in line with Anna Carter Florence’s method, the sermon’s central move is the subject change to God, who He is, and what He can do.⁴⁰ This subject change opens a new perspective for the listeners to see them in the light of the values of the Realm of God and also who they are as God’s children.

Four Pages Preaching underlines the importance of visualizing that is making a movie or scene, creating the event instead of just telling or reporting.⁴¹ Wilson is here in line with Alice M. McKenzie; the great benefit of preaching in scenes is that it revitalizes theological teaching by placing it in the context of a scene.

³⁹ Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, xiii.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 91.

The huge benefit of this grammar is that it is very clear, logical and helps keep the preacher on course while writing the sermon. Wilson provides four different Pages, four grammatical principles, tools, or quarters to undergird sermons in his book *The Four Pages of the Sermon*.⁴² Those pages are: "Page One: trouble in the biblical text," "Page Two: trouble in the world," "Page Three: grace in the biblical text," and "Page Four: grace in the world."⁴³ Trouble is "the consequence of turning from God's life-giving Word to go it on our own," Grace is "an empowering action of God,"⁴⁴ These four pages serve as an outline, a stem, a guideline for the sermon.

Wilson underlined in his book that all these pages should appeal to logos, pathos, and ethos (or reason, passion, integrity). Words like "must, should, have to" belong to Page One and Two. On Page Two, it is good to use the word "seem" when taking up countertestimony in a sermon. When wounds have been opened, it is time to move to the healing on Page Three and Four. On Page Three, a movement of God turning to people is more important than people coming to God. Page Four is about where God is and what God can do in a particular situation - God's action of grace in the world bringing hope⁴⁵ - and can be ended to any of the gospel genres of proclamation.⁴⁶

Wilson guided in his book in an exciting and unique way how to address sermon unity while composing the sermon. Six words contribute to sermon unity: one text, one theme, one doctrine, one need, one image, and one mission. To be memorized this, the

⁴² Ibid., xiv.

⁴³ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid., xiii.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 225.

following nonsensical acronym is of help to have: TTDNIM: **The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine.**⁴⁷

Preachers need to decide what kind of trouble to use in the sermon. Trouble, vertical or horizontal, is a burden that makes us do something. Vertical trouble awakens a guilty conscience and judges with the Word. Horizontal trouble is of social sin and uses empathy to stand with people under the Word. Vertical trouble leads to horizontal grace and vice versa. Wilson stressed that grace focuses on God, the burden on God, who has excepted it in Christ. Grace is God's action! The word "gospel" refers to God's saving acts found anywhere in the Bible, culminating in Jesus. Gospel equals trouble plus grace. Movement from trouble to grace is a movement from lament to celebration.⁴⁸

The book takes preachers, step by step, through to composing sermons. These sermons challenge in a positive way and provide hope. Focusing on trouble and grace in the Bible perspective and in the world is vital if the listeners are to leave worship with renewed hope. Because of this statement, I also wanted to try the Four Pages Preaching, for my intention was that the listeners leave worship with hope. After experiencing a social transformation at the personal and interpersonal level, the transformation which gives the listener value as an equal image of God and brings up the values of the kingdom of God as an opposite to the values in the world, the listener leaves worship with renewed hope.

Jan Rippentrop Schnell taught a Core III course, "Preaching as Social Transformation," in Summer Residency 2021. In her first Core III video lecture,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 113-118.

“Preaching as Social Transformation,”⁴⁹ I learned that social transformation exists on four different social levels: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and structural. Personal level concerns a person; interpersonal is between persons. Institutional concerns institutions like a church, and structural concerns, for example, public health and education. Rippentrop-Snell took examples of transformation in the Bible: Genesis, Deuteronomy, the torn of the veil of the temple, renewing of the Holy Spirit, Revelation.

Rippentrop Snell underlined that social transformation takes a long time, “it is a long walk, do not break things!” She defined social transformation as a process that transpires over time, by which individuals or collectives alter relationships, norms, values, hierarchies, et cetera.⁵⁰ According to her, for preaching as social transformation, foundational realities of social transformation are, for example, that it is Jesus-centered, Holy Spirit inspired, and faith and action can not be separated. The goals for social transformation are to let God be seen, elevate and deepen theologically sound love, partner with God in God’s transformation, and help people envision a new reality. It is vital that whatever a preacher says is heard; less important is what a preacher is trying to communicate. The word of God functions to transform.⁵¹ Like Charles Campbell, she underlines that courage is paramount. Like Lenny Luchetti, she brings up the importance of empathy, and like Anna Carter Florence, she urges that to be true to your identity defined by God is essential.

The social transformation has already been a long walk among Finnish people who immigrated to Sweden 50-60 years ago. The institutional and structural levels have already

⁴⁹ <https://prezi.com/view/oFgQOUzX0FaEZb2oX2EI/>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ <https://prezi.com/v/w3dtlp6aaagh/>

been taken care of, the most significant issues at the beginning of the 21st century. However, the need for social transformation at the personal and interpersonal level still exists, i.e., among Finns and the relationship between Swedes and Finns. The sermons in my thesis project have a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus, and thus these learnings I learned from Rippentrop Schnell guided me in the preaching process.

Charles L. Campbell is specifically interested in the role of preaching in relation to the "principalities and powers."⁵² Campbell was a guest lecturer in the KFP-Sweden Program in Summer Residency 2020. He guided us in preaching ethics through his book *The Word before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching*. It is essential to realize that the rebellious activity of the powers and the helplessness of human beings before them, according to Campbell, is not the end of the story, for Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, has engaged and overcome the powers.⁵³ "The preaching of the Word is a critical practice of nonviolent resistance to the work of the principalities and powers."⁵⁴

According to Campbell, Jesus is the center of the Christian proclamation. Jesus resisted the powers and offered an alternative to them.⁵⁵ By preaching that there is another way of seeing things, by preaching the values and principles that are characteristics of the kingdom of God, preachers can make a difference in attitude to the powers in the community. This kind of preaching does not concern or include only political situations but injustice or unfairness in life in general. These Campbell's thoughts, especially the last one, provided direction to this project concerning the massive wave of migration of Finns to Sweden and the powers and principalities they had to face as a minority. The first sermon

⁵² <http://divinity.duke.edu>

⁵³ Campbell, *The World before the Powers*, 43.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 90.

of the thesis project concentrated on offering an alternative, the values and principles that are characteristics of God's realm, a transformative word to make a difference, a social transformation at a personal and interpersonal level, and give hope for the present-day life and for the life to come.⁵⁶

With his book *Preaching with Empathy*, Lenny Luchetti opened new perspectives for me concerning preaching with empathy. I consider myself an emphatic preacher. As Luchetti articulates, "The present age demands not only exegesis or eloquence but empathy."⁵⁷ In my preaching ministry, empathy is an essential quality for a preacher. Most of the congregants attending the worship are immigrants who moved to Sweden 50 and 60 years ago and need to be encountered with empathy in the sermon. Luchetti underlines, "Homiletic empathy is the grace that enables preachers to imagine their way into the situational shoes of others, to understand the thoughts and feel the emotions of listeners. Only then can they preach in a manner most responsive to the listeners' deepest needs."⁵⁸ Hence, homiletic empathy leads to the social perspective – leads to the listeners.

By being led by the Holy Spirit, I am willing to let the text lead me where it wants me to lead. Earlier I thought I could not do so; a careful, precise scholarly reading needs to be done first, but now I am encouraged to act in this way, and I have a label for this: empathic biblical exegesis.⁵⁹ Of the many practices for cultivating empathy in preachers,⁶⁰ going for a praying walk in community was not listed in the book but, according to my experience, is a good one to practice.

⁵⁶ Campbell, *The World before the Powers*, 43.

⁵⁷ Luchetti, *Preaching with Empathy: rafting Sermons in a Callous Culture*, 13.

⁵⁸ Luchetti, *Preaching with Empathy*, 11.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 52.

Luchetti states that we can develop our empathic potential throughout our lives, but it has its challenges. I admire our late Reverend Juhani Rekola, who in the 70s' and 80s' really went to the marginalized Finnish people, mainly men, under the bridges of Stockholm, dressed poorly, filled up the alcohol bottle with water (the liquid looked similar) just to be there, listen to them, helping if possible.

Among interesting practices for infusing empathy in preaching, Luchetti presented a Concentric Contexts method that puts contextual flesh on the exegetical bones.⁶¹ It has similarities with Carter Florence's approach. It starts from the point of how the Scripture confronts the preacher and then moves into the congregational, community, nation, and world level. Luchetti has observed, "What happens globally impacts us locally." This is true, not always, however. It may also happen that a preacher cannot work outward more than to the community level, but nevertheless, it is a movement. In the thesis project, I used this way of consideration in the second sermon by widening the radius at the end of the sermon. By first concentrating on affirming the self-esteem of the listeners in the Finnish church, I moved on from the congregational level to the community level by talking about creating a confident encounter between the minority and the majority called "The Long Loving Look at the Real."⁶²

Joseph M. Webb, in his book *Preaching Without Notes*, states that preaching is good to preach without notes. This does not exclude the fact that a script can be written in advance and that the planning of the sermon is careful. Why preach without manuscripts or notes? Because according to Webb, then there is no barrier of paper between the preacher and the audience – that is, to reach the strongest possible connection and maximum

⁶¹ Ibid., 74–75.

⁶² Ellison II, *Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice*, 95.

intensity. At this moment, time stops; no one looks at the clock or wants this experience to end. Then you listen to "words that are spoken and even behind and under the words." ⁶³

When the pulpit or ambo is a place where you can genuinely, wholeheartedly testify, it is essential that the preacher stops reading, following notes, and stands up and speaks. Then the sermon also sits better in the preacher's body.⁶⁴ According to Webb, credibility and intimacy play a significant role. The preacher needs to have the attention of the audience all the way. How to deliver the sermon is then very important. Especially when it comes to preaching as testimony. Then the preacher goes through such points that are significant. What needs attention is where and how the preacher stands and moves. Eye contact is central. Gestures and facial expressions come into the picture when you say something that calls them out, and they should match the words you speak. At its best, the audience becomes as interested and involved as the one who creates gestures and facial expressions. The preacher's voice, pitch, and speed are also important to pay attention to. When a preacher is aware that he or she is "all of one piece," the foundation for maximum credibility and intimacy has been laid.⁶⁵

These homileticians offered insight, guidance, and methodology for this thesis project on preaching to affirm and increase the self-esteem of the immigrants in the Finnish congregation who moved to Sweden in the 1960 and 70s'. Anna Carter Florence offers insights for testimonial preaching, which I used in the first sermon of the thesis project. Paul Scott Wilson's Four Pages Preaching guided me in testimonial preaching in the second

⁶³ Webb, *Preaching without Notes*, 25-27.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-107.

sermon. Alice M. Mc Kenzie and Wilson taught me how to make a scene to revitalize my theological preaching. Maria Ottensten and Tina Johansson guided me on how to choose a story. Jan Rippentrop Schell guided me with preaching as social transformation; Charles Campbell gave me insight into the role of preaching in relation to the "principalities and powers." Lenny Luchetti taught me about homiletic empathy. Finally, Joseph M. Webb gave me valuable tools to preach without notes.

It is now time to expand the issue beyond homiletics.

Chapter Three: Expanding the Issue beyond Homiletics

While expanding the issue beyond homiletics, I looked for the cognate field that connects biblically, theologically, and practically with my thesis project. The cognate field turned out to be about social transformation as it applied to the specific history of Finnish people in Sweden, to those who immigrated in the 1960s and 70s'. The impact on the wave of immigration, and its reflection even in present-day life, shows that social transformation at the personal and interpersonal level is still needed. I have used theologians who, in their literal publications, can give biblical, theological, and practical insights into the area of my thesis project.

Martin Luther brings a historical context to this thesis. As a reformer, he is significant to the history of the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland as well. Luther writes in his open letter *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520) in line with apostle Paul, who urges Galatians in his epistle chapter 5, verse 1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage," and in 1 Cor. 9: 19, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, and in Rom. 13: 8, "Owe no one anything except to love one another."⁶⁶ Likewise, Luther underlines that "a Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none" - but at the same time, he emphasizes that "a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."⁶⁷ Luther's idea was to link the concepts of spiritual freedom and servitude, but how?

⁶⁶ New Testament and Psalms in English (NKJV), Swedish, and Finnish, 382.

⁶⁷ Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 20.

Luther goes further in his thought and explains that through faith in Christ, the inner man is entirely free and not subject to anyone. At the same time, the outer man is a servant to the neighbor and subject to all, and bound to all others by ties of Christian love. Faith in God is the only way to be free from sin, the law, and the false gods and principles that interfere with Christian servitude.⁶⁸ According to Luther, work is a part of worship, for, in everyday life, a man is God's fellow worker. When work is hard, one could think about how Jesus carried his cross. Theology of the Cross is a theology of hope. This gives life meaning.

Why are these thoughts of Luther so important to this thesis? In the final sermon, the elective sermon, I use Luther's thoughts to uplift the self-esteem of the listeners. Most of the immigrants who moved from Finland to Sweden during the massive immigration wave 50 and 60 years ago were hard workers who worked in working-class areas that were - and still are - underrated, mainly in forests, factories, hospitals, and hotels. This could not but affect their self-esteem. They had a need to be accepted and appreciated, although they were lower-class people.

In line with apostle Paul, Luther's writings bring in front of our very eyes the values of the Kingdom of God, in which God's love and grace and "favoritism to no man (Gal. 2: 6)"⁶⁹ are central. Thus, a conclusion can be made that "no external orders or the authorities, and politics, can threaten man's inner freedom and right to see himself with God's eyes as free and loved."⁷⁰ Hence, even low-status professions get their dignity before God.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ New Testament and Psalms in English (NKJV), Swedish, and Finnish, 376.

⁷⁰ Gerle, Elisabeth, ed. *Luther som utmaning: Om frihet och ansvar (Luther as a challenge: about freedom and responsibility)*, trans. from Swedish to English L. Mänttari, 39.

⁷¹ Ibid., 40.

The reformational mindset that we work not only for ourselves but also for others - the fact that people work for the common good - could have promoted the meaning of work back in those days 50 - 60 years ago.⁷² Most likely, this thought was brought up in the sermons in the Finnish Church back in those days, but how many of those immigrants who moved had time or interest to go to the church in the midst of all the changes they had in life? How many of them saw themselves with God's eyes as free and loved?

Walter Brueggemann offers biblical perspectives on testimony. In the light of my thesis question, I am, first of all, interested in his testimony as a biblical speech. Brueggemann states, "Israel's speech patterns for God are, in fact, a model of how to go about biblical interpretation. Those speech patterns closely resemble testimony, or telling about what Israel has seen, heard, and received from God."⁷³ According to Brueggemann, Israel offers four kinds of testimony: core, counter, unsolicited, and embodied. For the purpose of my thesis project, I focused on the first two: core and counter.⁷⁴

Brueggemann's work with psalms also provided direction for my preaching. In the first sermon of the thesis project, I used Brueggemann's thoughts and reflections on Psalm 77: "The 'turn' from self to God" in one of his latest books, *Virus as a Summons to Faith*. The change in the psalm from "I" to "Thou" to God is a turn from a self-centered life to God-centered life where obedience and trust in God's guidance and care lie in focus. This turn is essential for seeking God's righteousness.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid., 39.

⁷³ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 70.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 71-74.

⁷⁵ Brueggemann, *Virus as a Summons of Faith*, 46-56.

Paul Ricoeur has a crucial philosophical base to write about testimony. He argues that Christian hermeneutics is not based on facts but on testimony. Testimony is not perception; it is the report itself or the narration of what has happened. Ricoeur stresses that it is only in the hearing that we can decide if the testimony is true or false. The focus is on what is said. For instance, when Ricoeur describes evangelical testimonies, he turns to the New Testament, for there is a focus on eyewitness accounts. Witnesses testify to what they have seen and heard.⁷⁶ In my second project, I had testimonial sermons that arose from experiences in my own life. I testified what I had seen in life in guidance with the Scripture.

Miikka Ruokanen is a Professor of Dogmatics Emeritus and, nowadays, a Research Director in Systematic Theology at the University of Helsinki. His research and teaching focus is, e.g., on dogmatics, Biblical hermeneutics and theology, theology of worship, and contextual theology.⁷⁷ Ruokanen is also appreciated for his way of explaining and transposing theology into everyday life. This has been of great help when I have been composing sermons. I especially engaged with Ruokanen's texts of God-image for my second sermon, elective sermon, in the thesis project.

In the light of this thesis project, it is vital to bring up the following aspects in Ruokanen's book *Ydinkohdat* concerning man in God's image. First of all, the Bible tells us that God wanted to create man, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our

⁷⁶ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 60-65, 68-70.

⁷⁷ www.researchportal.helsinki.fi

likeness (Genesis 1: 26)."⁷⁸ God as the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit created man.

Every human being is unique and valuable because of being created by God and in God's image. According to the Christian faith, our human value is based on this.⁷⁹ Therefore, people have a right to live a secure and free life. Achievements, such as social status, education, and wealth, do not increase nor decrease the value of a human being. God treats us equally, so as images of God, we should treat and respect each other equally – as equal images of God.

God is love. When God created man in God's image, God created man to be able to love. Ruokanen states, "Love is the most personal attribute of a hidden God." Thus, we are in a loving relationship with God. We all need love and need to be loved. The purpose of a human being is love. With the love God has given to us, we can love others created by the Lord.⁸⁰ The essence of God's creation is expressed in the following Bible text, where Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22: 37, 39)."⁸¹

As an image of God, a man can realize God's presence and own presence and communicate with the Lord. However, because God is infinite, God is the Creator, and people are created by God, we cannot understand all that God is. Accordingly to Apostle Paulus, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but

⁷⁸ The Holy Bible (NIV), 1.

⁷⁹ Ruokanen, *Ydinkohdat (The Main Points)*, trans.from Finnish to English L. Mänttari), 31.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁸¹ *New Testament and Psalms* in English (NKJV), Swedish, and Finnish, 52.

then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Cor. 13: 12)."⁸² Man as an image of God reflects God's love and other qualities in everyday life.

People lost the intimate connection of love to God in the Fall of Man. The image of God is a broken picture in us. However, as so, we are still God's images, and God's love for us never ends. The greatest manifestation of God's love for us is Christ's crucifixion and resurrection for atonement for our sins and for opening the way to Heaven. There we are, whole again, unbroken.

God's love for us is unconditional. Human love is easily conditional. We prefer to love other people if they are worth loving: nice, beautiful, successful. In his book, Ruokanen brings up God's model of love through Luther's way of thinking. Luther states that God loves a man who "is nothing" to make something out of him or her. God's agape love is directed at the worthless and evil. God's love does not look for good but brings good with it. It is a selfless love that creates kindness and beauty.⁸³ When we experience this kind of heavenly love, it changes our hearts and makes us able to meet and love others in the way God has shown us. Not perfectly, but as a reflection – as an image of God. All these previous thoughts in Miikka Ruokanen's book were of essential guidance for the elective sermon in the thesis project.

Lenny Luchetti follows the same pattern as Miikka Ruokanen concerning a human as *imago Dei*. In his theological anthropology reflections, he states, "Our essential core of human nature, our true DNA, is not in the Fall of Genesis 3 but the creation account of

⁸² Ibid., 350.

⁸³ Ruokanen, *Ydinkohdat*, 37.

Genesis 1: 27."⁸⁴ In this light, Luchetti sees that the image of God is more essential than marks of the fall in a human being.

To be created as imago Dei means, according to Luchetti, that we humans have "the relationality of God in us." God is an emphatic God who, after the Fall, chose love, grace, forgiveness, not apathy. The most significant sign of God's empathy is that God became one of human beings in Christ. Since human beings are imago Dei, they reflect God with more empathy than apathy. Thus, Luchetti claims, "Homo empathicus, not homo self-centricus, is a core of who we are at creation."⁸⁵ This, as the thought, was a turning point for me. And more was coming when I kept on reading Luchetti. Because of the Fall, we need Jesus, right? However, the way Luchetti connects Jesus to his theology of empathy is fascinating. If we believe that Jesus came to put us back to the stage before the Fall, that is, to the creation state, we are not doomed to be homo self-centricus for the rest of our lives. I know that Jesus is a Redeemer of all our sins and, in this way, restores what was lost in the Fall, but I have not before thought so directly about the connection of all this to the division of Homo empathicus and homo-centricus. Luchetti quotes Athanasius: "Christ became what we are so that we might become what He is."⁸⁶ To rediscover Homo empathicus in us through Jesus is a crucial element for not only understanding other people but also for being able to meet them, to create confident encounters. These thoughts of Luchetti were crucial in guiding me with the elective sermon.

Gregory C. Ellison II challenges us to see and hear differently, be changed internally, and thereby change the world - three feet at a time. However, change and

⁸⁴ Luchetti, *Preaching with Empathy*, 14.

⁸⁵ Luchetti, *Preaching with Empathy*, 15.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

transformation require a willingness to sit down with the stranger, the unlikely partner, to see, hear and work for change and positive transformation.⁸⁷ His book *Fearless Dialogue, a New Movement for Justice*, guided me on how to move forward in life by creating spaces for dialogue, confident encounters between familiar strangers of Finns and Swedes.

We all have prejudices towards persons of another nationality, tribe, and background, especially those who belong to the minority. To focus attention on the real is essential. Ellison II has adopted a Jesuit priest, Walter J. Burghardt's contemplative practice called "The Long Loving Look at the Real," drawn from the wisdom of the Carmelite monk William McNamara. "The real, reality, is not reducible to some far-off, intangible God-in-the-sky. Reality is living, pulsing people."⁸⁸ "The Long loving look at the real" is a start-up spiritual practice. According to the book, it "heightens awareness of reality and places individuals in communion with the Divine."⁸⁹ I agree with Ellison II, "Once you begin to see a person as one who is made in the image of God...once you see, you cannot not see." I firmly believe that seeing yourself and others as equal images of God is the key to the confident encounters between minority and majority, in this context between Finns and Swedes.

There is a need for unheard voices to be heard in communities, but fear of the other, including the stranger, is on the way. Ellison II presented five different fears that became familiar to those immigrants from Finland, too. Two first fears are the fear of the unknown and the fear of the strangers, which is divided into four categories: public stranger, familiar stranger, intimate stranger, and the stranger within (inside you). The other three fears are

⁸⁷ Ellison II, *Fearless Dialogues*, 6.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 95.

the fear of plopping, the fear of appearing ignorant, and the fear of oppressive systems.⁹⁰ For communication to take place, space must be intentionally created. I have planned to talk about this practice, "The Long Loving Look at the Real," in my final sermon as a possible way to help create safe spaces between familiar strangers of Finns and Swedes.

According to this practice, to move toward transformation, an extension of radical hospitality is necessary, that is, a very warm greeting with eye contact that makes the other person feel that he or she has been seen, welcomed, expected, accepted, appreciated, which requires moving beyond the fear of strangers. As adults, it is time to move beyond our fears. We need to understand the kind of stranger we encounter, each requiring a different response.⁹¹

Kjell Wiklund is a retired reverend and director of the Development Department in the Diocese of Strängnäs diocese in the Church of Sweden. He is a Swede, that is, belongs to the majority and has no Finnish roots. In 1973 he started as a vicar in the Oxelosund congregation, where he got to know Finnish congregants who had moved from Finland. This was a starting point and reason for him to learn more about Finnish life in Sweden, especially in the Swedish Church. His publication *Möte som skapar – Luova kohtaaminen: Erfarenheter, tankar och utmaningar kring svenskt, finskt och sverigefinskt i samhälle och kyrka igår, idag och i morgon* talks about the importance of creative encounters and contains experiences, thoughts, and challenges around Swedish, Finnish, and Sweden-Finnish in society and church. In this publication, Kjell Wiklund introduces the concept of “integration,” which I already have brought up in the introduction (p. 10) and will come

⁹⁰ Ibid. 15, 38, 65, 85, 119.

⁹¹ Ibid., 70.

back in the conclusion part (p. 111). Within the Swedish church for over 30 decades, Wiklund spoke and wrote about the rights of the Finnish minority based on the theology for margins.⁹²

Ph.D. Swante Ewalds is a retired reverend and director for minority languages in the diocese of Stockholm. He has roots in Finland. For decades, he has also actively written and spoken about the rights of the Finnish minority, especially from the language perspective, and later on about the multilingual Swedish church. He prepared a proposal for a policy and goals for the Church of Sweden's work in languages other than Swedish, where he introduced the concept of "inclusion" to describe meetings between the majority and the minority.⁹³ I have brought up this concept in my introduction and will come back in my conclusion.

These theologians gave me important theological contents for preparing the sermons in the light of the thesis question. The reformational mindset of Luther concerning the appreciation and meaning of work and people's equality in front of God helped me uplift the self-esteem among the listeners in my congregation. Likewise, Miikka Ruokanen's and Lenny Luchetti's thoughts concerning a human as *imago Dei* guided me in this matter. For confident encounters, George Ellison II guided the way.

It is time to move on to the practical part of the thesis, the project plan and process.

⁹² Wiklund, *Möte som skapar - Luova kohtaaminen*, 2.

⁹³ Ewalds, Svante. *En flerspråkig kyrka*, 29.

Chapter Four: Project Plan and Process

It is stated in the ACTS DMin in Preaching Program that "in other, less frequent instances, a student may have a different project in each of the three years of the program. In such cases, it is important that the student describe the trajectory of their work that brought them to the point of the thesis"⁹⁴. There is also stated that "thesis is the culminating document of the entire program."⁹⁵ When it comes to the Project Plan and Process of the thesis there is stated that "the process engaged including sermons preached throughout the years of the program."⁹⁶

As a student from Sweden, the whole 3-year program for me consists of the KFP - Sweden Program (2½ years) and the last year with an agreement connected to the ACTS DMin Program at LSTC (Lutheran Seminary of Theology at Chicago). Because of this, I belong to those students who have had three different projects. However, as I already wrote in the introduction of the thesis, a clear trajectory between these projects can be seen mostly related to the area of methods used in the projects. Hence, the trajectory of the work that brought me to the point of the thesis project will be first described in this chapter. As I already have mentioned, it is a question of two and a half years of work that gave me important learnings, insights, and guidance I needed for the thesis project to reach the goals and answer the research question. Without those learnings and experiences from the first and second Preaching Ministry Projects, this thesis would not be the same. Thus, including the two first projects gives a fuller and richer picture of the process as a whole. The third project, the thesis project, is the one to be dealt with in this thesis.

⁹⁴ ACTS DMin in Preaching Program Manual, 2021-2022 Cycle, 32.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 36.

The First and Second Preaching Ministry Projects

Methodology

As for the methodology, the sermon projects were video filmed with a tablet standing on a special tripod quite at the beginning of the church aisle. The link to the web page was created, which enabled the sermons to be sent to an advisor and a colleague in the program.

To get a response to the sermons to know if the project's goal was reached, I gathered a reference group around me. I looked for congregants both "inside" and "outside" the regular worshippers, such parishioners I knew could give me objective and honest reflection in a relevant and wise way. In addition, it was vital for me to get a spread not only on church habits but also on the tradition of piety, age, gender, profession, and language - Finns, Sweden-Finns, Finland-Swedes, but all were bilingual in practice. It was also essential to find people who had time for this in their life. The group represented our assemble.

The reference group met once before the project in an introductory meeting and had no sermon formation meetings in the first and second projects. In a meeting after each sermon on the same day as the sermon was, I gave out the questions they answered in Swedish. The questions were such as "What did you hear?", "What did you feel?" and "Did the story help link the message of the Bible text to everyday life?" Then there was a conversation around the table, and everybody got to say their thoughts of the sermon in the language of the heart.

After each sermon, I wrote a summary of the response of my reference group, including my insights of the sermon, and sent it together with the manuscript of the sermon and the video film to my advisor D.Min. Hanna Brande. After sending this document, I received a response from my advisor, except for the second sermon when a group member in the KFP-Sweden Program gave feedback. To a shorter written version, I received feedback by phone from my sparring partner, a colleague of mine, D.Min. Eeva-Liisa Kettunen (the first project). At the end of both projects, I wrote the Project Report. I also wrote a diary during the projects.

Sermons of the First Preaching Ministry Project

I preached all three sermons in the first ministry project in Swedish, which is not my mother tongue, but Finnish.

Deepening and developing the narrative expression in the preaching was the title of the first Ministry Preaching Project. The purpose or goal of this project was to deepen and develop my preaching and for this process to become a part of the sermon's deepening in my congregation. To be able to do this, I developed and deepened the narrative expression of my preaching. Because I consider myself a practical Bible teacher, my question was: "Does the narrative expression help congregation members link the message of the Bible texts to their everyday life?"

In the First Ministry Preaching Project, all three narrative sermons had one theme according to the theme for the preaching Sunday. The theme for the first sermon was "Jesus' baptism," for the second "Sowing and reaping," and for the third "Moment of trial." Before each sermon, I wrote the manuscript with SPS, Sermon Purpose Statement, including "To

whom,” “What,” and “How.” The sermons included a single scene from a Scripture (1. sermon), a novel (2. sermon), or an anecdote (3. sermon).

In all sermons, I used the narrative sermon method. I thought carefully about which story I chose and when I would use it in the sermon. What was important to remember in the choosing process was that the story involved four cornerstones: a person, a place, a dilemma, and a beginning and an end. A person, main character, or subject could be a narrator.

For the first sermon, "Jesus' baptism," the gospel was from Luk. 3: 15-17, 21-22. I took the congregants on my journey to Israel. As a narrator and an observer, I draw conclusions about the Bible text during the journey. The sermon moved on to an interactive part: reflections on what it means to be God's beloved and chosen one. In the beginning and at the end, I took one step aside, perspective shift, when visualizing the transition to citing the Gospel text.

As a preacher, I did not want to merely tell the story about my journey to Israel but to make a scene of it. As a narrator, I painted the scenery and was in the story by making observations and thinking aloud. In terms of contents, I had the beginning, and I had "I" in the story, the place, and the dilemma. My story had not only a beginning but also an end. All four cornerstones of the story that Maria Ottensten and Tina Johansson wrote about in their book *Predikan växer fram* fell into place in the sermon.⁹⁷ I felt afterward that I really developed the narrative expression in the sermon. However, the preacher being, at the same time, a narrator and an observer in the story was something new and partly confusing to the reference group members as listeners.

⁹⁷ Ottensten, Johansson, *Predikan växer fram*, 123.

The perspective shift was also important for me to test and see if it makes the sermon's message more effective. I enjoyed the perspective shifts connected with citing God's words.

As a preacher, I also discovered something very important while listening to the reference group and reading their answers to the questions afterward: I did not have control over what could happen inside the listener during the sermon. Scenes could open up earlier experiences in life or fantasies. The scene can also live its own life long after leaving the preacher's mouth.⁹⁸

As an overall expression, the reference group thought that the first sermon was bright, calm, warm, and had the priest's particular theatrical form.

According to the advisor Hanna Brande, I am a preacher with strong eye contact and have living, expressive gestures that make it easier to follow the preaching. I also work a lot with my facial expressions and voice, underlining words, speed, and pauses. I had learned how to draw listeners into a scene and the dynamic of making a scene: to go out of my comfort zone by using space and my body in a new way: to take steps aside, causing perspective shifts in different roles as a narrator. All learning regarding making a scene helped me with the sermons of the first Preaching Ministry Project and especially with the second sermon of the thesis project.

For the second sermon, "Sowing and reaping," the gospel was from Mark. 9: 38-41. Before the sermon, I made changes by continuing and polishing smooth the narrative and the narrator. I came up with the idea of having one narrator in the sermon and otherwise

⁹⁸ Ibid., 128.

being a preacher who had interlaced a story *Babette's Feast* (according to Karen Blixen's short story) in the sermon. The story was "baked" in the sermon all the way.

The perspective shifts were used when citing God's words. I followed my sparring partner's advice, and instead of taking one step, I took a few steps sideways, stopped, and continued the sermon. I felt that the change of scenes and moving during the sermon became better, more natural.

When I summarized the conversation, conducted in Finnish or Swedish, with the reference group, the members thought that the sermon had drama with the preacher's stage setting, was lively, moving, warm, and also contained joy.

My colleague in KFP wrote in her response that the story made it easy to follow with the action. The colleague appreciated my straightforward and clear preaching - that I believe what I say and say what I believe. The colleague continues that my smile, kindness, and outstretched hand made Babette in my body distinctly Christ-like. She even added that I had a lot of eye contact, felt safe and warm, and absolutely managed to tell the story in a captivating way.

As a preacher, I was still experimenting with leaving the ambo/pulpit totally and submitting more storytelling in the sermon; therefore, my feet were still, and my torso was moving while preaching; yes, as my colleague wrote, "You stood simply in front of an invisible ambo."

However, I did move a few steps to mark that now I am quitting the story and starting the practical part. However, these few steps I should have taken sharply, not so slowly and devotedly.

Regardless of having "the opportunity of a lifetime" to try new things and learn more, I decided to "back up" a little bit more and have a sermon in a more traditional way next time. It turned out in the conversation with the reference group that the parishioners may feel safe when the sermon does not become too modern. I preferred this opinion and decided to preach some parts of the sermon at the ambon next time.

In the third sermon, I did not need to concentrate on developing or deepening the narrative expression in my sermon but keeping – retaining - what I had learned so far. For the sermon, "Moment of trial," the Bible texts were from Matt. 16: 21-23, James 1: 12-15, and Genesis 4: 3-7.

The sermon included these plans: I had a real ambo in front of me – not an invisible one. I also preached in the aisle when the stories came into the picture. I moved freely and switched between the aisle and the ambon as naturally as possible. I spoke conversationally and clearly so that all the words could be heard; the voice varied – but I also tried to let the words "carry," as my sparring partner suggested. Pauses were also important.

Here is how I thought about the message: it was from a practical point of view. I had a new structure: all the biblical texts, a dialogue, and a story, together with the theological perspectives, were included. Interlacing Bible texts, an anecdote, and a story in the sermon deepened narrative expression and helped to understand the biblical texts.

As Webb recommends in his book *Preaching without notes*, I also wanted to deliver the sermon by starting at a certain level. Then I built up the intensity by adding a new dimension of a little deeper level around the theme that I was spinning.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Webb, *Preaching without Notes*, 113.

Afterward, I was very pleased with the sermon. I started in the aisle with two questions that I saw to arouse interest among the audience in a good way. I alternated between the aisle and the ambon at the beginning of the sermon and at the conclusion in the end – it was just right, I felt afterward. Most importantly, everyone focused on listening to the message.

Most members in the reference group thought the sermon was educational, contained questions, and gave answers. Listeners were able to bring practical advice on how the Christian faith can work in everyday life, which was important to me as a preacher. The sermon was easy to listen to. My voice was clear, and I moved freely and seldom needed a manuscript.

The advisor Hanna Brande began her response, "It is great to see the change from the first sermon of this project to now, the last." She "saw a safe and stable preacher." According to Brande, I used my whole body and the whole area in front of the altar to reinforce what I wanted to say. "It was a big difference compared to your first sermon," she continued. She found that I was much more relaxed and moving more naturally between the different parts of the sermon as a preacher. Using the floor for the stories and ambo for the more teaching parts gave the sermon dynamism visually.

However, listener-wise, it was not so clear to my advisor how the different parts of floor/storytelling and ambo/teaching were connected. According to Brande, a listener needed time for thinking before a preacher made the next move.

In the stories, Brande felt that I had a very painterly, vivid, and bold language that went right in, but at the ambo, I used more of a theological church language that could have created distance. Although everything I, as a preacher, said was true, it did not feel like it

was true at the ambo. The advisor suggested that instead of saying that “we should surrender to God” and that “Christ is the one who has paved the way for us,” it would have helped if I had given examples of how to surrender to God and how to let Christ be a role model. “You say God is love, but not what it feels like to be affected by God's love.” Brande continued along the same line: “I simply believe that you also need to find stories that show how we are affected by God's love rather than us doing so. Had you done so, we would have followed you all the way.”

It is not easy, but I felt strongly after the third sermon that I needed to dare. Then my message most likely will be received better and in different ways by the audience. Learning this was essential when thinking about the thesis project and its goals.

Sermons of the Second Preaching Ministry Project

Speaking in the mother tongue in the second Preaching Ministry Project was a whole different matter than preaching in Swedish. The second Preaching Ministry Project was *Preaching as testimony*. The purpose was to explore how those who listen to my sermons as testimony comprehend God through my honest and genuine wrestling with the Lord. Besides, I wanted to explore if I feel at home as a testimonial preacher. My primary question was, “How is God perceived when I preach through testimony?” I paid particular attention to how the congregation comprehended God through core testimony, respectively countertestimony. My secondary question was, “Is preaching as testimony a preaching form for me?”

The questions for the reference group varied a little in each gathering and were such as “What did you hear and see?”, “What did you feel?”, “Could you recognize yourself in

the sermon?", "How did you experience the sermon?", "What was the sermon about according to you?" and "What image of God or what images of God were in the sermon according to you?"

After my first project, my advisor commented that I need to find stories for my sermons that show how we are affected by God's love rather than saying we are affected. So, in my second project, I used stories of my life to reach this purpose. I noticed that when I started to practice saying "I" and began to preach as testimony by bravely putting my own life experiences into sermons and interlacing them with the biblical text, Jesus and the cross, the Bible word went through me and made my preaching even stronger.

I wanted to work more with Bible texts, and to this, A-C Florence gave excellent tools. Learning and practicing these tools was for the first sermon in the thesis project.

According to Carter Florence's teaching method, "The Wide-awake Sermon,"¹⁰⁰ I went into the text, experienced it, and let it go through me. I wrote the text and memorized it. I emphasized the words in the text that stood out to me.

Then I paid special attention to the verbs according to Carter Florence's book *Rehearsing scripture*.¹⁰¹ Answering the questions like, "Who gets the verbs?" "What do the verb tense and mood tell you?" "What do the verbs stir or evoke in you?" "Where have I heard this verb before in the Bible – the biblical echo chamber of the verb?" guided the sermon process. More questions are to be read in connection with the first sermon of the thesis project on page 62.

¹⁰⁰Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 131.

¹⁰¹Carter Florence, *Rehearsing Scriptures*, 34-50.

I went through these questions, thinking about what each verb raises in me, who gets the verb, and what is the "echo chamber" of the verb, not only in a biblical context but also in my life. I took the gospel text with me to the subway to dislocate it and take it to another place, where I thought about it. I also thought about lyrics from the perspective of drama. I talked about the biblical text with my friend and colleague from the interpretation perspective. Then I asked what images I saw in the text and rewrote the text in my own words in my mind.

In Anna Carter Florence's lessons and book *Rehearsing scripture*, she raised six essential questions that led her from reading the text to talking about the text - to writing the sermon. These questions are:

- 1) What is the place/moment in the text that gets your attention?
- 2) Why does it get your attention?
- 3) What do you know about God because of that moment in the text that gets your attention?
- 4) Why does your community need to know about what you know about God?
- 5) What do you want to say in this sermon? – Write your focus statement.
- 6) What do you wish that your sermon will do? - Write your function statement.¹⁰²

The Sermon Purpose Statement for my sermons came to light by going through these questions.

I preached without a manuscript, which was meaningful learning in this project and when thinking about testimonial preaching in the thesis project. Script-free sermons need

¹⁰²Ibid., 86-95.

to start thinking early. Moreover, it is good to work with several senses than just hearing.¹⁰³ I used Webb's method described in detail in connection with the first sermon of the thesis project on page 66.

I preached three times: first with the theme "Jesus Creates Faith," then "The Path of Love," and last with the theme "The Fight against Evil." Before each sermon, I wrote the sermon with the manuscript and the Sermon Purpose Statement.

For the first sermon, "Jesus creates faith," the gospel text was from John 4: 46-54. When I was writing the sermon, I wondered about questions I got from Anna Carter Florence with the KFP and noticed that the words of Jesus to a certain nobleman from Capernaum stood out strongly in the text to me: "Go home, your son is alive." Why? Because my son died. I moved the text in my mind back in time to the hospital 32 years ago. What could I tell about God in this light? The sermon turned out to be mostly "core testimony" but also strong "countertestimony."

Why was it necessary for the audience in the church hall to hear this? Because those sitting on the pew would not lose their faith when things do not turn out the way they have thought in life - when a miracle does not happen. That the struggle with God and comfort that the preacher received from God can help them in grief or adversity and encourage them to trust in God. The Lord is almighty and good. God's being is love regardless of whether we know, notice, or understand it.

After starting to write the sermon, I felt it was essential to have the gospel within the sermon all the way and compare it to the story of my own life - weave them together. The experience of learning weaving helped me in the second sermon in the thesis project.

¹⁰³Ottensten, Johansson, *Predikan växer fram*, 114–115.

I had an opportunity to test both "core testimony" and "countertestimony." According to Carter Florence, it is possible to preach in this way. On this path, I wrestled with God for real. I dared to be brave and honest when I told about my own life. It was real, and I felt that those who were present were genuinely present and close to me. I had intense contact, and it felt safe.

Afterward, when I met congregants over a cup of coffee, I received positive, heartfelt feedback from several of them – some had tears in their eyes.

In general, according to the feedback from the reference group, the sermon was calmly spoken and had a slightly sad atmosphere that turned towards the hope and comfort that God wants to give us. They heard a personal story about how the preacher herself had given birth to a "stillborn child."

As a summary of the contents of the sermon, the reference group wrote that I was in my self-pity until I realized that God was and is. I had not been hateful to Jesus, had not lost faith. I understood that I went to a different level in my faith; it was important to see what God is, not to judge God. God is almighty.

Also, according to the advisor Hanna Brande, the turning point was where I turned my gaze to Jesus, and there I met the gospel, and there was hope. Perspectives widened, and I was able to put my loss in a context of hope, future, and a promise that we will see each other again, my son and me. Brande continued: "In that sequence, you show for the first time why the cross, the empty, is really crucial to your life and your faith." She continued, "I have met the symbolism of the cross in almost all your sermons. That is where you always end up. However, this time is the first time I understand why. It is precisely because of the experience you preach through this testimony."

My wrestling with God was something my advisor could see, too. She wrote that I had really worked with "core" and "counter" and pointed out that God is both omnipotent and silent. The reference group came to the same conclusion when answering the question about how God was portrayed in the sermon.

For the second sermon, "The Path of Love," the gospel text was from Mark. 10: 32-45. When I wrote the second sermon, I thought about Carter Florence's questions. I noticed that these words of disciples stood out strongly in the gospel text: "Let us sit beside you in your glory, one on the right and the other on the left."

However, what does it mean to really sit or walk next to a human being — it is to serve a man on the path of love Jesus as a role model. Why was it important for the congregants in the church hall to hear this? In order for those sitting on the pew to realize that there is nothing wrong with the fact that man wants to live in Jesus' presence and even strive for it — quite the contrary — but the motivation behind this is important. Jesus showed that the most important thing is to serve on the path of love, and this path is the way of suffering and has its price, but also, on the path where you do not choose to do so has its price.

I told my own life story in the sermon and compared it to today's gospel text. I told honestly how I, for a pretty long period of my life, wanted to be something else than God had created me to be. Thinking about the background of most of those who were listening, this message was received with interest.

The reference group heard "a really good, touching sermon that was personal, self-revealing, clear and concrete about the path of love." Six members of eight wrote in many words about what it means to forge oneself. It is so tempting to try to be accepted by

everyone else and not dare to be a true self. They want to be favored in front of people and do not listen to God's voice; instead, they ignore God's will with their own will.

Half of the reference group clearly wrote that the sermon aroused much emotion and was touching. According to the answers, it seemed that everyone had their life stories to add to the stories of the Bible and of the preacher and that they were able to recognize themselves in the sermon.

This was the first time that my colleague in KFP had received a sermon in a foreign language. However, he noted that the gospel and grace are greater than spoken and written words: "Even in a foreign language, I catch the evangelical and graceful tone." About the very tempo of the sermon, he wrote that the sermon did not have an intensive tempo. Pauses were completed, not rushed, and he perceived an engaging tone. The colleague even thought it was really creative when my own life stories were woven together with the words of the Bible.

For the third sermon, the gospel text was from Mark. 9: 14-32. The theme was "The Fight against Evil." Following Carter Florence's method, I noticed this time that the dialogue between the father and Jesus stood out firmly in the text to me: "But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus replied, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes," and the father answered, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Why did this stand out? My son became sick at the age of ten. As a preacher, I moved the text in my mind back in time in the hospital twenty years ago, "What can I tell about God in this light?" I figured out that the sermon will be mostly of "core testimony" but also contains "countertestimony." I wondered, "Why is it important for listeners in the

church to hear this?” So that the listeners who sit on the pew would not lose their trust in the Lord when life and faith become challenging and confidence falters and, as the fight against evil grows bigger and bigger, and the mind as a battlefield is in chaos, can even turn into disbelief. Jesus is almighty, and he is love. Jesus fights the fight against evil with us and for us when we, in our own faith and unbelief, have no strength or cannot - turn your look to Jesus on the cross!

The story had a "happy end," like the situation in the gospel text. I felt my own experience reinforced Sunday's theme in parallel with the gospel. I had intense eye contact, and it felt good. Everyone was quiet and listened intently.

Everyone in the reference group heard that evil exists inside and outside us and that there is always a struggle between good and evil. The sermon was also about our sometimes faltering and weak faith. Faith in the victory of good, the belief that we can leave everything to Jesus, carries us in all moments of life.

For the advisor, the fact that she received two sermons with such strong testimonies from my life was a shattering experience. Hanna Brande now understood that the theology of the cross is so deeply rooted in me and in what I have experienced in life, and how it has also shaped my faith in God. Brande wrote: "I feel that has been the most important experience for me when it comes to preaching as testimony." She continued, "It is so honest and genuine. I will remember this."

Being encouraged by the positive feedback from the second Preaching Ministry Project, especially from my advisor, I became interested in widening my preaching as testimony. In the last meeting with Hanna Brande, I told her about the idea I had in my mind for the third project. She listened and encouraged me to "tell their story."

The Thesis Project

The insights I gained in the KFP-Sweden Program and in Summer Residency 2021 in the ACTS DMin in Preaching Program concerning the trajectory of different course study and practices, including my own development to Candidacy status, aimed towards my third project, the thesis project, and finally to the thesis. This thesis is the culminating document of the entire program and documents all the work completed in the three years of the program (for Swedish students, 3½ years), and, at the same time, looks for the future.¹⁰⁴

Because it was time to write the thesis, the third project had two sermons instead of three. After each sermon, I wrote the Reflection Paper.

Methodology

Even the sermons of this last project were video filmed with a tablet standing on a special tripod quite at the beginning of the church aisle. The website's links enable the sermons to be sent to the advisors and instructor.

To get a response to the sermons and know if the project's goals were reached, I gathered a reference group around me even during this project. However, the role of my reference group, called for now on the Parish Project Group, PPG, has partly changed from its role during the KFP-Sweden Program (2018-2020). Earlier, the members in the PPG sat on the pew as any other congregants who attended the worship. The purpose was to get as

¹⁰⁴ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching Program, *Program Manual*, 22.

genuine feedback on the sermon as possible. In the project thesis, the PPG had an active, supportive, and collaborative role in my learning process.

Previously I had nine and eight members in the PPG, now six of which two are the new ones. I made the changes because I preferred to have members connected to immigration in the 1960s and 70s'. Two of the members moved to Sweden at the beginning and the middle of the 1960s, two in the middle, and two at the end of the 1970s. I also had to find congregants I knew could give me objective and honest reflection in a relevant and wise way. Men were not easy to get involved with. Thus in the group, there was only one male member. Two of the members had a university degree when they moved to Sweden.

Before the project, I had an introduction meeting and two sermon formation meetings with the PPG. In addition, we had a meeting after each sermon.

Before the beginning of the service, members of the PPG distributed the questionnaires to the congregants at the doors. During the service, the PPG was present and observed the sermon to give feedback and evaluation. After the service, the members collected questionnaires back. Some of them took time to talk with congregants after the service over a cup of coffee to get some feedback on the sermon.

After the sermon on the same day, I had the sermon feedback meeting with the PPG. First, the group completed the Parish Project Group Sermon Response Form (see Appendix G and Appendix H) without my presence and input. The chair had a crucial role in leading the discussion, taking notes, and translating all into English. Next, the PPG answered the open-ended questionnaires. In the end, I had an open discussion of the sermon with them.

The research and evaluative methods and tools that I used in the sermons were: The Preaching Response Questionnaire with open-ended questions for the reference group, i.e., the Parish Preaching Group (PPG), and a Questionnaire with yes/no/don't know questions (first sermon) and multiple-choice questions (second sermon) for the congregants that attend worships, for surveying the reception of the sermon and helping in the process of research required for the project. These tools helped me determine whether the sermon met the goals and, thus, answer the thesis question.

I kept on writing a diary, as in the previous projects. Continuously, I wrote down reflections and how I would use these insights in the project - problematizations, motivations, conclusions.

After each sermon, I wrote the Reflection Paper. In addition to the evaluation and response of the PPG, the Reflection Paper included the homiletical learning from the summer residency course, the practice gained through preaching the sermon in the ministry context in light of the specific learning goals and plan written in the Learning Covenant (see Appendix F). It also explored and responded to the expectations of the sermon formation and the result of the preaching event. I sent it together with the Learning Covenant, the manuscript of the sermon, and the video film to my American advisor, Dr. Kimberly Wagner, the Swedish advisor, Dr. Niclas Blåder, and the second sermon, also to the instructor Dr. Paul Scott Wilson, and received feedback from them.

The First Sermon

The thesis project started in the congregation with the meeting of the PPG, where I orientated the PPG to their future task: information on Summer Residency and the

Preaching Ministry Program with overall preaching and evaluation plan. The PPG also signed the Learning Covenant. An English teacher who was also a vice chairman and secretary in the Church Council was elected to the chair of the PPG. The schedule for the sermon formation and feedback meetings were scheduled.

The process for the first sermon started when I had the sermon formation meeting with the PPG. I had given the biblical texts in Finnish and Swedish in the orientation meeting, and they had gone through them. Bible texts in the Church calendar were from Matthew 6: 31-34, Nehemiah 9: 19-21, Acts 20:32-36, and the theme was “Only one was needed.”

The group members discussed the biblical text intensively and gave me many insights that aligned with my thoughts for the most part. It touched me when they told me how God had taken care of them and guided them all these years. The importance of seeking the Kingdom of God and committing to the relationship with God also came up. If basic needs are fulfilled, there is no need to worry. They wondered, “Has material things become more and more important in peoples’ lives?” For them not. They can live for less. Most important is the relationship with God and that you feel good about yourself. To work is important, highly ranked among Finns, not just to wait that everything will come to you without effort. I wrote all the thoughts down and integrated the insights I received from the PPG into my sermon as appropriate. I presented the provisional sermon purpose statement in light of the goals stated in the Learning Covenant.

I started the detailed planning of the first sermon. In the third meeting in Summer Residency with my advisor, Kimberly Wagner, we discussed that my first sermon is more of a testimonial character and has less of a personal and interpersonal social transformative

focus. The second sermon will be another way around.

For the testimonial preaching, I applied Anna Carter Florence's method, "The Wide-awake Sermon," which she presented in her book *Preaching as Testimony*, chapter 7.¹⁰⁵ This method is also available in less detail on page 51 in connection with the second project. The method has three parts:

1. Attending to the biblical text. To go to the text, to live in it, is essential: to write it, memorize it, underline it, dislocate it - thinking of it, for example, in the metro.

When it comes to the verbs in a biblical text, I used Carter Florence's method of "Reading the Verbs" in her book *Rehearsing Scripture*, chapter 3.¹⁰⁶

Florence addresses ten different points or questions regarding the verbs in her book. These questions are:

- 1) Who gets the verbs?
- 2) What is the order of the verbs?
- 3) What does the tense and mood of the verb say to you?
- 4) What sets the verb in you or awakens in you?
- 5) Are the verbs connected with certain groups or people?
- 6) Where have I heard this verb before in the Bible – the biblical echo chamber of the verb?
- 7) If God is a character in verse, how does God's verb differ from the other verbs?
- 8) Any verb surprised you? – Why? – What were you waiting for?
- 9) Do you find the adjectives in verse in connection with the verbs, making the adjective "pop" up?

¹⁰⁵ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 131.

¹⁰⁶ Carter Florence, *Rehearsing Scriptures*, 34-50.

10) What about the nouns, giving the verbs super speed and topspin?

2. Describing what you have seen in your attendance.

3. Testifying, finally saying what you have seen and believed. Anna Carter Florence taught how to move from reading the text to speaking it with the following six questions guiding and being read in her Book *Rehearsing Scripture*, chapter 6¹⁰⁷:

1) “What is the place in the text that gets you?”

2) “Why does it get you?”

3) “What do you know about God from this moment that gets you?”

4) “Why is it important for my community to hear this?”

5) “What do you want to say in your sermon (Focus Statement),” and

6) “What do you hope these words will do (Function Statement)?”

I am also testing Charles L. Campbell’s and Walter Brueggeman’s thoughts as a model for adding a social perspective at a personal and interpersonal level to my testimonial preaching, guided by Anna Carter Florence’s method.

When reading the verbs in the Gospel of Matthew 6: 31-34, I noticed that two of them are in the imperative form, “Do not” and “Seek first.” These verbs have a strong echo chamber. The following words of Jesus in the gospel text stood up for me, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The testimonial preaching in this sermon thus concentrated on these Jesus’ words and answered questions like “Where is the kingdom of God?” “How is the kingdom of God?” “How to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?” Answers were drawn from the Bible.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 86 – 95.

Why is it important for the congregation to hear this? This process guided in the sermon a way to social transformation at a personal level in order to uplift the self-esteem of the listeners by helping them see the values of God's kingdom; for example, "God shows personal favoritism to no man (Gal. 2: 6)," working in their lives. This is in line with Gina Stewart's sermon, "Live your change now!" where she pointed out the starting point concerning social transformation: it begins with an individual, and the most important element is then his or her relationship with God and the belief of what God can do in life.

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In the first Core III, "Preaching as Social Transformation," lecture by Jan Rippentrop Schnell, I learned that social transformation exists on four different social levels: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and structural. The personal level was focused on in this sermon.

For the exegetical analysis, I needed three different translations of the New Testament: Finnish, Swedish, and English. My mother tongue is Finnish; I preached in Swedish and translated the sermon later into English. I also needed the New Testament in biblical Greek to especially check the text areas in the gospel that were translated slightly differently; at the beginning of the text, "do not worry," then the word "righteousness" in the middle, and "trouble" at the end. I found this very interesting but also challenging.

As a preacher, I discovered how amazingly God guided me to connect different levels of the sermon: the Gospel text with the theme for the Sunday in the Church Year, the goals of the project, and the thesis as a whole. The text of the Old Testament about the Israeli people's walk in the desert for 40 years and God's care I linked up with the

¹⁰⁸ Luke 13 Sermon by Gina Stewart "Live your change now!"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1H5uHb6BDaI>

immigration of Finns in the 1960s and 1970s. The seeking of the kingdom of God I combined with the seeking of the kingdom of Sweden and the kingdom of the world. All this with the focus of Jesus' words in the Sermon of the mountain, "Do not worry."

The central move in the sermon was the subject change to God, who God is, and what God can do. I got support for this idea in the text in Anna Carter Florence's book *Preaching as Testimony*, "Testimony insists that we change the subject of preaching from ourselves and our words to God's word as it moves through life and text."¹⁰⁹

In the sermon, I wanted to point out what Walter Bruggemann writes in his book *Virus as a summons to Faith*, chapter 5, about "the turn from the small, preoccupied self to the larger Self we find in God."¹¹⁰ To turn our look to God and live a God-centered or Christ-centered life instead of ego-centered life is crucial for seeking God's righteousness, God's way of being and doing right.

I considered it essential to bring up the point of view in the testimonial preaching that Miikka Ruokanen writes in his book *Ydinkohdat*. He writes that baptism is not an automat for saving. He underlines the importance of the personal faith, "To Christ, there are many ways but to God only one way – Jesus Christ."¹¹¹

When thinking about the values of the kingdom of God, editor Elisabeth Gerle in the introduction of the book *Luther som utmaning*, guides me with the writing that "from Evangelical Lutheran perspective external success has nothing to do with the divine election. We are all sinners and saved by grace."¹¹² This aligns with what is written in the

¹⁰⁹ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 131.

¹¹⁰ Brueggemann, *Virus as a Summons to Faith*, 46-56.

¹¹¹ Ruokanen, *Ydinkohdat*, 154.

¹¹² Gerle, ed., *Luther som utmaning*, s.11.

Bible, Gal. 2: 6, "God shows personal favoritism to no man."

Charles L. Campbell, in his book *The Word before the Powers*, writes that Preaching is "a significant act of moral obedience to the way of Jesus."¹¹³ I agree it is crucial to keep in mind to follow Jesus' footsteps in the sermon. When Jesus was preaching on Earth, the reign of God was near.

Testimonial preaching is good to preach without notes because there is no paper barrier between the preacher and the audience. I used Webb's method. Webb's method for a sermon without notes is divided into four parts. The first is the planning of the sermon. The second is creating the sermon's overview or sketch, the "working outline," which I accordingly wrote. The sermon's overview was simpler because I finished writing the whole sermon. I went through different sequences and checked if they held together and how transitions worked. I paid particular attention to the beginning and the end. The third part is memorizing the sermon's overview, and the fourth delivery of the sermon.¹¹⁴

Memorizing the sermon is crucial when it comes to sermons without manuscripts or notes. Exercises in the form of repetition of materials are then essential. They activate short-term memory. Maria Ottensten and Tina Johansson state in their book *Predikan växer fram*: "From having a written script to becoming a spoken word, a living word that at the moment will let the listeners know Christ, practice, practice, and practice is needed. Read the sermon aloud to yourself, read it aloud in the room, so that you are one with your script and know what it says."¹¹⁵ I really did all this. Finally, I saw the structure clearly in front of me and its contents.

¹¹³ Campbell, *The Word before the Powers*, 80.

¹¹⁴ Webb, *Preaching without notes*, 35-95.

¹¹⁵ Ottensten, Johansson, *Predikan växer fram*, 113.

As I mentioned earlier, according to the Church calendar, the theme for Sunday was “Only one is needed.” Bible texts were from Matthew 6: 31-34, Nehemiah 9: 19-21, Acts 20:32-36 (NKJV). According to the theme, the sermon is about to encourage listeners to the willingness of seeking and experiencing the values of the kingdom of God in their present-day life in order to live a life that will release them from all kinds of worrying. However, in light of the project, with seeking and experiencing the values of God's kingdom, the sermon's goal is to uplift self-esteem, especially among those listeners who moved to Sweden in the 60s’and 70s’.

The Sermon Purpose Statement:

To whom: For the listeners in the Finnish Church in the service on the Finland-Swedish Church Sunday. The focus was particularly on the Finns who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s and formed the majority of the listeners.

What: Only one is needed: to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then we get everything else as well. Hence, we do not have to worry about whether it is the question of struggling with practical everyday things or relationships or with the feeling of inferiority or a lack of language skills.

God takes care of us and loves us the way we are.

How: By telling about the worries Finns who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and the 1970s had back in those days in order to shift the perspective to the present and by doing so to encourage listeners to the willingness of seeking and

experiencing the kingdom of God and His righteousness in their present life to be able to feel safe and loved by God for living a carefree life.

The manuscript of the First Sermon 09-12-2021, see Appendix A.

As I pointed out earlier, sermon development was challenging. Because it was the second Sunday in September, an additional challenge was the preaching language, Swedish, against the fact that the focus group was immigrants who moved to Sweden 50 – 60 years ago and have Finnish as their mother tongue. I knew that those who attend worship regularly would come, but some would not. There were also Finland-Swedes present in the sermon who might have felt like outsiders at times.

In the sermon, I used brief flashbacks from the Creative Writing Group about worries during the immigration in the 60s' and 70s' that led to the reasoning of core and counter testimonial character. I followed the gospel text. However, instead of starting the sermon with Jesus' words, "Do not worry," I chose to talk about the Israelites' wandering in the desert for 40 years and God's providing; the text from the Old Testament, Neh. 9: 19-21. This idea came to me when one of the PPG members said in the sermon formation meeting: "I have lived in Sweden for 40 years, as long as Israelites wandered in the desert, and God has taken care of me." It was interesting to navigate from the people of Israel to the people of Finland, from the kingdom of Sweden to the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. The navigating was guided by the one necessary for life: to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness. All this against the background of worrying.

It was essential to talk about the nature of the realm of God and God's righteousness to help the congregants to realize God's way of thinking, drawn from the Gospel, and what

it has to do with not worrying, and on the other hand, with the equality of every man in front of God. I brought up God's grace, love, and providence. All this to lift up the self-esteem of the listeners.

In my opinion, the sermon was easy to follow. I got feedback from two of the members in the PPG that I had followed Luther's guidance: to preach like to a seven-year-old. I used Webb's book *Preaching without notes*, as I did in the second project, to be able to preach without papers in front of me as a barrier.¹¹⁶

After looking at the video, I felt I had good eye contact. I once used a perspective shift I had earlier learned in my first project, and it was clearly to be seen to me. My voice was soft – could have been louder – and had variation. My gestures and mimicry emerged from the word said. I lived the sermon inside out while speaking and looked away for a fleeting moment now and then to engage a thought.¹¹⁷

I received responses from two advisors. My Swedish advisor, Niclas Blåder, gave me feedback on my sermon "as a listener." He dealt with the response in two parts: the performance and the context of the sermon.

Blåder saw a pretty dynamic person who stood in the middle of the floor. He saw how I used pauses and gestures, hands and eyes as a preacher. He commented that he actually saw something quite unusual in Swedish preaching tradition, which is usually much more still and less expressive. However, he liked what he saw, "Here you have something to teach to many Swedish preachers who are usually too still, I think!"

¹¹⁶ Webb, *Preaching without notes*, 13.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 100–106.

He was also attracted to the fact that, as a preacher, I did not use a manuscript. He writes, “I think it does a lot about a preacher's ability to affect the listener if it is told freely, instead of reading from a script. I also think that the freedom of script allows you to have your hands free to move as they please, and your breaks end up naturally where they fit best. All this benefits a good whole.” This feedback shows that I had preached effectively. This is important for testimonial preaching, which centers on social transformation.

However, the first thing that actually struck Blåder was the length of my sermon (23 minutes). “It is long! Why is it so long? Maybe it is a Finnish tradition?” He continues, “Do you think it benefits your message and the quality of the sermon – or is it the other way around?” He thinks a sermon must not go over 10 minutes. “Ideally, it should be between 5 and 8 minutes – I think.” He recommended that I say what I am saying more compactly if possible.

I am aware of the recommendation of the length of the sermon in the Swedish Church. My preaching is too long from this perspective, and it looks like also from the perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, but not from the American preaching tradition’s perspective. My DMin in Preaching Program colleagues aim to get their sermons to 25 minutes. The length of my sermons is an exception in my congregation, too, but those who come to listen to me generally like what they hear. Hence, the length of the sermon is not a crucial thing but the message.

In terms of contents, Blåder wrote that I had an important and relevant message to give: “Your choice of the subject indicates that you know your congregation and the environment and life situations in which they are.” However, some questions and counter-questions came up for him while listening to the sermon, questions he thinks are connected

to the sermon. He added that maybe even others who listened to the sermon did so. He commented, “You want to show that if you only seek the kingdom of God and God's righteousness —that is, put everything in God's hands —then God will also somehow take care of you. That is why you do not have to worry. God knows best what is needed for the individual. That is what I think you are saying – about so.” He continues, “To put your life in God's hands may seem simple, so to speak. I think too many preachers are telling us that the church should do this. So, in this sermon, too.” He wondered how you put your life in God's hands and what it means. “Do you have any practical tips? Here I land in my mind – but I do not get any real answers.”

From the year 2009, my preaching started to have new perspectives; one of them has been how the biblical word works in practice. This perspective was included in the sermon for the practical part is important when we think about the thesis project as a whole. Section six in the sermon's manuscript, “About seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” was meant to give answers to the previous questions.

Blåder underlined that I also have to touch it in depth if I preach on the borderline of the theodiceé problem. He wrote, “I am also thinking about your claim that God knows what is best. Does God always know that? Moreover, at those times in life that can be absolutely terrible, does God still know what is best for me? When something terrible happens, why doesn't God take away evil?” He wondered if people have to thank God and say that God knows what is best when terrible things happen in life. He continued that this is undoubtedly the issue that most people are grappling with in terms of the image of God, and he stated that we have a responsibility to take these people seriously in their questions and thoughts. “One is not enough – God knows best.”

It is good to listen to the sermon “as a listener,” as Blåder said he did, and give feedback. As it is to be seen in the Learning Covenant, I had many levels to take into account to in my sermon: the context, the theme for the Sunday, the gospel text against the theme, and last but not at all least, the goals for the thesis project. In this sermon, I was preaching about the kingdom of God and thus, the image of God, from the frame of reference of not worrying, the theme to go in-depth, and affirming the self-image or self-esteem of those congregants who moved to Sweden during the massive wave of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s - the goal for this sermon of the two goals. I had to limit the perspective of this sermon inside the Learning Covenant. My Swedish advisor ended his feedback with an encouragement, “Thank you for an exciting and good sermon! Think of my comments just as musings from a listener.”

My advisor at LSTC (Lutheran Seminary of Theology at Chicago), the School I attended for the DMin in Preaching program, Kimberly Wagner, gave me feedback on both the sermon manuscript and the Reflection Paper. Wagner wanted to take the time to offer feedback that she hoped would encourage me to continue to think and grow.

In the feedback on the sermon manuscript, Wagner found out that the parts where I had taken into account my goal, and the context in which I was supposed to preach, were good ones. She considered that the questions in the first section related to the Finns’ moving to Sweden were also good ones. She stated, “you mirror back to the congregation all the questions that might have weighed on them when coming to Sweden.” Then she encouraged me to limit the questions in other places “in order for those questions to stand out and be more effective.”

She encouraged me as a preacher to connect big theological claims back to the biblical text, making them more powerful, for example, “to the idea of being reminded, like the Israelites in Nehemiah, of who we are and who God is.” Later on, my advisor encourages me “to apply these big theological claims even more to the lives of the congregation.” Dr. Wagner states, “You do such a wonderful job at the start naming their situation as immigrants. But, when you make this theological turn, you seem to leave that reality behind. What does it look like as an immigrant in Sweden to center God and seek God’s kingdom in the midst of the challenging reality?”

I agree. Furthermore, I started to wonder if this “leaving the reality behind” in the sermon affected how the goal of the first sermon was reached and, hence, the thesis question to be answered. On the other hand, this feedback was a relief because somehow, during this last year of the program, I strongly felt that I needed to keep all the theological reflection firmly on the dogmatic ground and have a more of a teaching style with all the questions. In the previous second preaching project, I especially linked my theological reflections to biblical text and context all the way, and my advisor was very impressed and touched by it. Now I feel encouraged and secure to follow this already learned pathway in my second sermon.

In the sermon, the part “where the Kingdom of God is” caused concern to the advisor after reading it. I had written in the manuscript, “In Jesus’ person, teaching, and deeds, the kingdom of God was present, and the kingdom of God will come in its fullness when Jesus returns.” Wagner stated that earlier I just said the kingdom of God was in us when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.” However, Jesus in Luk. 17: 21 says, “.....the

kingdom of God is in your midst (NIV)”, and this gospel text can also be translated as “the kingdom of God is within you (NIV).” In this light, I see there is no disagreement. However, I should have explained these two points of view to my congregation before getting to a deeper level. If I understood it right, this was what Wagner wished me to do. After all, it is essential that when it comes to the important concepts, such as the “Kingdom of God” is for this thesis, to make sure that listeners follow all the way. This has an impact on reaching the goal and answering the thesis question.

In the sentence at the end of the sermon, “You can choose to live in a sacred carefreeness, whether it is struggling with practical everyday things, relationships, feelings of inferiority, or lack of language skills,” Wagner especially lifted the term “sacred carefreeness” as a wonderful term and wished more describing of what this looks like. The comment of the whole sentence was: “Great, contextual work! I would encourage more of this!” I decided to keep this in mind, for this is the direction I wanted my second sermon to go more toward.

One member in my PPG pointed out the wish that I could have returned to the Finnish immigration part at the end of the sermon. Wagner found this interesting and continues, “I think this could have been effective as well.” I chose to go back to the wandering of Israelites by bringing God's guidance in the form of a “pillar of cloud” and “pillar of fire” to the individual level in present-day life.

From Wagner’s feedback, I indirectly noticed that because she hoped I could write even more text at some points, she did not consider my sermon too long.

Wagner appreciated my testimonial approach to biblical exegesis and sermon construction in the Reflection Paper. She also brought up that I had greatly applied Core III course learnings to my community. This has an impact on reaching the goal and answering the thesis question.

Wagner appreciated the whole section of critical analysis and reflection in the Reflection Paper, “This whole section is filled with wonderful feedback and analysis from your congregation and PPG. Excellent work!”

When thinking about the following sermon, the one in the PPG who could not see the sermon as a whole brought up that “the part of the evangelism did not belong to the gospel logically.” She said that it was not until after other members had told her in the PPG meeting about the logic they saw in this part that she understood. While listening to this, I realized that maybe among those who attended the worship were also people who thought the same way. For the next sermon, I decided to use other ways to bring out the importance of what Jesus did on the cross and especially to take into account Wagner’s advice herein,” I also would encourage you to tie some of your larger theological claims back to the particular text on which you are preaching.”

I even decided to reserve more time for the preparations before the service. To the tasks for the members of the PPG before the service, I decided to dedicate more time in advance. This gave me more time to focus on the sermon in front of God before the service started.

The Second Sermon

It was time to start the process for the second sermon. First, I had the sermon formation meeting with the PPG. I had given the biblical texts in the previous sermon formation meeting, and they had gone through them. Before processing the biblical texts, I talked about the feedback I had received from the first sermon from Blåder. I had not received Wagner's feedback by then, so I emailed the main points afterward to the members of the PPG. Together we were pleased about the comment that I have a wonderful PPG.

The group members started to discuss the biblical texts. Everyone gave their insights and wrote them down. The thoughts of the PPG members were around the fear of God, the fear of death, eternity, and the hope of eternal life, very much in line with the theme according to the church calendar, "Our Hope of Eternity." I decided to integrate the insights I received from the PPG into my sermon as appropriate. In the end, I presented the provisional sermon purpose statement in light of the Four Pages Preaching and the goals stated in the Learning Covenant. My perspective of who is determining your identity confused members. One understood the connection between who defines your identity and the consequences that follow in this life and to life beyond. I interpreted that others saw very little connection between the biblical texts and the goals of my preaching project. Like the chair said in the end: "I am really looking forward to hearing this sermon." I replied with a smile: "Me too."

The second sermon was an Elective sermon based on the Elective course learnings. Hence, I used Paul Scott Wilson's method, preferably the grammar, Four Pages Preaching, in his book *The Four Pages of the Sermon*. I have introduced this method earlier in chapter

two on pages 23-25, but it is important to recall and take an even closer look at the method at this point.

According to Paul Scott Wilson, this grammar can be used in any form of a biblical sermon, also in this testimonial sermon with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus. As I have written earlier, this method is about developing grammatical tools to undergird sermons. They are called Pages: "Page One: trouble in the biblical text," "Page Two: trouble in the world," "Page Three: grace in the biblical text," and "Page Four: grace in the world."¹¹⁸ Trouble is "the consequence of turning from God's life-giving Word to go it on our own," Grace is "an empowering action of God,"¹¹⁹ These four pages serve as an outline, a stem, a guideline for the sermon.

Page One brings roots of exegesis into the sermon. Of these four Pages, Page Three is a theme sentence, "like a bus that has a sign where it is going."¹²⁰ It is important to start with Page Three and then determine Page Four by transposing it (= the theme sentence), moving it from Bible times now. Then Page Three is inverted to determine Page One, which is transposed to determine Page two.¹²¹

Words like "must, should, have to" belong to Page One and Two. On Page Two, it is good to use the word "seem" when taking up countertestimony in a sermon. When wounds have been opened, it is time to move to the healing on Page Three and Four. On Page Three, a movement of God turning to people is more important than people coming to God. Page Four is about where God is and what God can do in a particular situation -

¹¹⁸ Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, 25.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42-48.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 36-41.

God's action of grace in the world bringing hope¹²² - and can be ended to any of the gospel genres of proclamation.¹²³ I chose prayer.

Sermon unity was also essential to address while composing the sermon. Six words contribute to sermon unity: one text, one theme, one doctrine, one need, one image, and one mission. To be memorized this, the following nonsensical acronym is good to have: **TTDNIM: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine.**¹²⁴

The need arises from the present context, is in a question form, and the theme sentence must answer the question. It is addressed on Page Four.¹²⁵ The mission about what God is inviting the listener to do after experiencing God's power, and a renewal of faith and joy, is on Page Four.¹²⁶

As a preacher, I needed to decide what kind of trouble to use in the sermon. Trouble, vertical or horizontal, is a burden that makes us do something. Vertical trouble awakens a guilty conscience, judges with the Word. Horizontal trouble is of social sin and uses empathy to stand with people under the Word. Vertical trouble leads to horizontal grace and vice versa. Wilson stressed that grace focuses on God, the burden on God, who has excepted it in Christ. Grace is God's action! Gospel equals trouble plus grace. Movement from trouble to grace is a movement from lament to celebration.¹²⁷

Four Pages Preaching is a grammar that underlines the importance of visualizing that is making a movie or scene, creating the event instead of just telling or reporting. In

¹²² Ibid., xiii.

¹²³ Ibid., 225.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 50, 72.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 56.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 113–118.

the Elective class, I had an excellent opportunity to listen to a sermon of Wilson. His sermon "God gives life" had a significant impact on me. The sermon was from Ezekiel 37: 14, the Valley of the Dry Bones. It was not only because of the sermon's contents but also how Wilson made a scene and let senses be involved that made the sermon impressive. When it was time for the breath to come from the four winds and breathe, Wilson was making a sound of a gentle blowing which made a very vivid, strongly perceptible scene in front of my eyes. Afterward, it came into my mind that I would like to test this in my second sermon – and I did. This preaching journey has made me courageous enough to imitate the sound of sparrows singing!

I also had the joy to listen to the sermons of my colleagues and preach mine. Making scenes made sermons vivid, and using metonymy, a link with what came before, was necessary to hold each Page together in the sermons. It was also interesting to observe what happened when the transition from one Page to another did not go smoothly – a loop was born between these Pages, the situation I paid attention to avoiding in this sermon.

The following sermons gave me valuable insights for writing my sermon. In Core III, a 1 Peter 2: 9-10 sermon by rev. Michael Pfleger¹²⁸ was about listening to God who you are instead of listening to other people. It also brought up the importance of investing time to be with God, not only asking things but listening to what God has to tell you about yourself and your life. This sermon and another sermon in Core III, "Live your change now!" by Gina Stewart, are in line with Four Pages Preaching. Stewart pointed out the starting point concerning social transformation: it begins with an individual, and the most

¹²⁸ 1 Peter 2 sermon by Father Michael Pfleger
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbdLCIAnjTs>

crucial element is then his or her relationship with God and the belief of what God can do in life.¹²⁹

While writing, I followed Anna Carter Florence's guidance in her book *Preaching as Testimony*, "Testimony insists that we change the subject of preaching from ourselves and our words to God's word as it moves through life and text."¹³⁰ This is very much in line with Four Pages Preaching; the sermon's central move is the subject change to God, who God is, and what God can do.

I also applied Lenny Luchetti's insights of empathy and Alice McKenzie's ideas of making scenes in the sermon. Gregory Ellison II's method "The Long Loving Look at the Real" I used for encouraging congregants to find confident encounters between the minority and majority.

Alice M. McKenzie advises preachers to have scenic sermons, either single-scene or multi-scene, because scenes revitalize exegetical and theological teaching by placing it in the context of a scene. An idea of making a scene from Sunday's gospel text came to me.

Lenny Luchetti has opened new perspectives for me concerning preaching with empathy that I used in the testimonial part of the sermon on Page Four. In my ministry in preaching, empathy is an essential quality for a preacher. Most of the congregants attending the worship are immigrants who moved to Sweden 50 and 60 years ago and need to be encountered with empathy and love in the sermon. Thus, Luchetti's concept of homiletic

¹²⁹ Luke 13 Sermon by Gina Stewart "Live your change now!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1H5uHb6BDaI>

¹³⁰ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 131.

empathy came into the picture in my sermon. Luchetti explains what he means by homiletic empathy, "Homiletic empathy is the grace that enables preachers to imagine their way into the situational shoes of others, to understand the thoughts and feel the emotions of listeners. Only then can they preach in a manner most responsive to the listeners' deepest needs."¹³¹

Luchetti's concept of "an emphatic God" spoke to me, and I used it in the testimonial part on Page Four. According to him, to be created as *imago Dei* means that we humans have "the relationality of God in us." God is an emphatic God who, "after the Fall, chose love, grace, forgiveness, not apathy."¹³² The most significant sign of God's empathy is that God became one of human beings in Christ.

Among practices for infusing empathy in preaching, Luchetti presented a Concentric Contexts method that puts contextual flesh on the exegetical bones, which I needed in the sermon.¹³³ It starts from the point of how the Scripture confronts the preacher and then moves into the congregational, community, nation, and world level. It may happen that a preacher cannot work outward more than to the community level, which was my situation, but nevertheless, it is a movement. I used this way of consideration to plan the second sermon by widening the radius from the congregation to the community by creating confident encounters.

In my second sermon, I used one of Luther's thoughts to affirm the self-esteem of the listeners. According to Luther, no external orders, the authorities, and politics can threaten man's inner freedom and right to see himself with God's eyes as free and loved.

¹³¹ Luchetti, *Preaching with Empathy*, 11.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 74–75.

Hence, before God, even low-status professions get their dignity. You work not only for yourself but also for others. The perspective of people working for the common good could have promoted the meaning of work back in those days, 50 - 60 years ago.¹³⁴

Miikka Ruokanens writing about God's image in his book *Ydinkohdat* guided me in pointing out the value of a human being in God's eyes in the sermon. He underlines that every human being is unique and valuable because of being created by God and in God's image. Human value is based on this, according to Christianity. Achievements, such as social status, education, and wealth, do not increase nor decrease the value of a human being. God treats us equally, so as images of God, we should treat and respect each other equally.¹³⁵ As equal images of God.

Ruokanen states, "Love is the most personal attribute of a hidden God."¹³⁶ God is love. When God created man in God's image, God created man to be able to love. Thus, we are in a loving relationship with God. We all need love and need to be loved. The purpose of a human being is love. With the love God has given to us, we can love others created by the Lord. This is an important insight in thinking about confident encounters with the majority in this second sermon and thus my second goal in the thesis project.

Gregory C. Ellison II guided my sermon on how to move forward in life by creating confident encounters between familiar strangers of Finns and Swedes. All have prejudices towards persons of another nationality and background, especially those who belong to the

¹³⁴ Gerle, Elisabeth, ed. *Luther som utmaning: Om frihet och ansvar (Luther as a challenge: of freedom and responsibility, trans.)*, 39.

¹³⁵ Ruokanen, *Ydinkohdat (The Main Points, trans.)*, 31.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

minority. To focus attention on the real is essential. Ellison II has adopted a Jesuit priest, Walter J. Burghardt's contemplative practice called "The Long Loving Look at the Real," drawn from the wisdom of the Carmelite monk William McNamara.¹³⁷ The real, reality is living, pulsing people. "The Long Loving Look at the Real" is a start-up spiritual practice. According to the book, it "heightens awareness of reality and places individuals in communion with the Divine." I agree with Ellison II, "Once you begin to see a person as one who is made in the image of God.....once you see, you cannot not see."¹³⁸

This sermon was also good to preach without notes because there was no paper barrier between the preacher and the audience. Joseph M. Webb points out that preaching without notes does not exclude the fact that a script can be written in advance and that the planning of the sermon is meticulous.¹³⁹ I planned carefully, wrote the script in advance, and practiced it.

According to the church calendar, the theme for Sunday, November 7th, was "Our Hope of Eternity." The gospel was from the Gospel of Luke 12: 4-7, with quick references to Rev. 22: 1-5. The theme for the Sunday was to speak about the importance of the hope of eternal life in our faith. The first goal of this sermon was to uplift the self-esteem of especially those listeners who moved to Sweden in the 60s'and 70s'; the second goal was to help those listeners boldly meet people in the majority, with confidence, as equal images of God by encouraging them to find loving connections, confident encounters between the minority and majority.

¹³⁷ Ellison II, *Fearless Dialogues*, 95.

¹³⁸ Ibid., ix.

¹³⁹ Wedd, *Preaching without Notes*, 22–23.

When it comes to working with the biblical text and doing exegesis, I went through the questions from 1-35 in Wilson's book *The Four Pages of the Sermon* and answered them to get a clear focus on the sermon.¹⁴⁰ I also needed the New Testament in biblical Greek to check the text of the gospel in its original form. In addition, I used other commentaries, like *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: the Gospel according to St. Luke* and the New Testament commentaries of Aimo Nikolainen and Eduard Schweizer.

After doing exegesis, I noticed that this text could be seen from our identity in God, us as images of God, as God's children, precious to God - actually very much in the light of my learning and project goals. However, it was challenging to find connections between all these three: the Gospel, my project goals, and the theme for Sunday.

The Sermon Purpose Statement came out to be the following:

Who: For the listeners in the Finnish Church in the service on Sunday, November the 7th. The focus was mainly on the Finns who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s.

What: The commitment to God is crucial for two reasons: God's power extends beyond death, ordering man's eternal destiny: heaven or damnation, and it is God who defines a man's identity.

How: a) By underlining the importance of letting God define your identity, that is who you are in God's eyes. You are not supposed to let other people define your identity, for it may have fatal consequences not only in this life but beyond this life.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, 36-41.

b) By bringing up that at most profound your identity in God, your human value is based on the fact that God made man, only man, in the image of His likeness. As equal images of God, you can boldly meet other people, especially those of the majority.

The four pages of the sermon were:

Page 1 (trouble in the Bible): Jesus warns His disciples not to let other people define their identity.

Page 2 (trouble in the world): Jesus warns us not to let other people define our identity.

Page 3 (grace in the Bible): God defines the identity of the disciples = theme sentence.

Page 4 (grace in the world): God defines our identity.

One text: Luk. 12: 4-7, (Rev. 22: 1-5)

One theme: God defines the identity of the disciples

One doctrine: The nature of God

One need: Who am I?

One image: From the biblical text "sparrows."

One mission: to create loving connections, spaces for dialogue between the minority and majority with confidence as equal images of God.

The Manuscript of the Second Sermon 11-07-2021, see Appendix B.

When English is not my native language, it has never occurred to me that "preaching" as a word includes two words "reaching" and "aching." In the Elective course, Wilson brought this up and continued, "We are preaching about reaching towards and having pain every once and a while." I really lived through these stages while writing the second sermon. I used two weeks to write this sermon and rehearsed it over and over again at least eight times, as Wilson recommended.

As I stated earlier, sermon development was challenging. It was not easy to combine the theme of the church year with the goals of the project and thus of the sermon, but the gospel text guided my way. The sermon was Four Pages Preaching with testimony and social transformative focus on personal and interpersonal levels. I was not supposed to report or tell the biblical text or events but to create them, make a movie or scene. Learnings from previous projects were included in the sermon. Realizing all this, I quickly noticed that I could not preach all this in preferably less than ten minutes as recommended in the Swedish Church. The sermon turned out to be 28 minutes, but I was thankful and content with the result.

Before the service began, I briefly brought up my project to the congregants to avoid confusion that may arise when I am not in the sermon holy concentrating on the hope of eternity on the Day of All Souls. I did not mention that the sermon was long and was surprised by how well the congregation listened to it all the way. It felt like time had stopped. Like Webb wrote in his book *Preaching without Notes*, it felt like "people started to listen to not only words spoken but even behind and under the words."¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Webb, *Preaching without notes*, 25 – 27.

In my opinion, and according to the feedback of PPG, the sermon was easy to follow. After looking at the video, I felt I had good eye contact. I used a perspective shift by taking small steps in the sermon part where I was telling the story. My voice sounded soft – could have been louder even in this time – and had variation. My gestures and mimicry emerged from the word said and scenes played. I enjoyed trying new things like imitating the singing of sparrows. When the sermon was in Finnish, it was easier to live it inside out in my mother tongue while speaking. I looked away for a fleeting moment now and then to engage a thought.¹⁴² I was thankful to God and happy to preach this sermon.

After the second sermon, in the end, we had an open discussion around the table, as always in the meetings of the PPG. One member mentioned that the practice example "The Long Loving Look at the Real" was unnecessary. Wagner agrees with this thought, "I wonder if this concept belongs in another sermon that is focused around seeing God in one another (as opposed to in ourselves)." Yes, as a preacher, I could have left it out, but I was very impressed with this meditation practice when I read about it. After all, the eyes are a mirror, a gateway to the soul. I felt it was good to give listeners something concrete to think about, especially when this contemplative practice is easy to actualize in the congregation.

Another member pointed out that the sermon had a concrete talk about the immigrants, but then the preacher, after leaving this part, did not talk about the immigrants particularly. Instead, it was general talk about people. As a preacher, I did not leave the immigrants on Page 2. In the Elective course, I was encouraged to use the word "you" when I personalize. I personalized the message on Page Four by using "you" instead of

¹⁴² Ibid., 100–106.

"immigrants," for I answered the very questions and themes I had on Page 2. At this point, I also wanted everybody to feel included in the sermon.

I also received responses from my Swedish advisor, Niclas Blåder, and my instructor in the Elective course, Paul Scott Wilson. Blåder gave feedback on the sermon "as a listener." He dealt his response into two parts: the performance and the context of the sermon. He stated about my performance, "This is your preaching style. I am deeply impressed! Based on Swedish conditions, you have a very unusual preaching style. I dare not say that it is more American or more Finnish – but it is not Swedish. And that is a compliment!" He was impressed that I am entirely script-free, which again helped me move freely, "You use the body, with gestures and movements completely natural. You look at people with your eyes and glance."

The sermon was again all too long, "About 10 minutes, but no more. I would also say that this is what is taught in Sweden. You have a very good preaching style – but it would have won big if your sermons became much shorter." In general, yes, but taking into account the nature of the Four Pages Preaching, the goals for the thesis project, the theme for the Sunday, and all the previous learnings, this preaching took time.

Blåder discovered during the sermon that I am, as a preacher, quite Bible-centered and will return to the text and connect people's lives today with the text and the biblical figures. "You move quite freely between the text/Bible and the everyday life of your listeners. And you are doing it nicely!" As a preacher, I interweaved biblical text and everyday life already in the second project but received more specific tools for doing so in the Elective Course. Blåder also liked how the issue "we should not allow others to define us" was highlighted.

Blåder liked my structure and method in the sermon. This feedback shows I have managed as a preacher to follow the learning covenant for reaching the goals and answering the thesis question. I weaved into the sermon the experiences of those congregants who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and 70s’.

Blåder liked the sermon's content in general, but he would have liked to challenge me as a preacher to reflect on theology, “What does a listener hear when you say to fear God? Or fear not the one who can kill the body, but no more. All of this can and should be problematized, I think, so that not to risk being received wrongly.” I agree, and I would like to claim that I did so on Page One, Two, and Three. On Page Four, I concentrated on bringing up that God is merciful and loves us, what Blåder wished me to do in his response. However, it was challenging to reconcile the theme of that Sunday and the goals of my thesis project. In the light of the context, I saw it was necessary to reflect more on the theology related to the project's goals.

I received the Reflection Paper Rubrics and Sermon/Preaching Rubrics from Paul Scott Wilson and Kimberly Wagner and the Student Evaluation Form from Wilson.

In the Student Evaluation Form in all five assessment areas, I received the grade of five, the highest evaluation. In the Sermon/Preaching Rubrics as well as in Reflection Paper Rubrics, I received “Strong Ability/Exceeds Expectations” in every area of assessment, orally and/or written. This shows that I have followed the learnings while aiming to reach the goals and answer the thesis question.

Wilson made the following comments to strengthen my learning experience more profitably. Wilson stated, “Rather than “God defines the identity of the disciples” —which is somewhat abstract—it could be “God bestows on the disciples their identity.” I do agree

with Wilson that the verb for the theme sentence could have been another one than I chose, stronger or more visual. The verb “bestow” sounds more visual. On the other hand, to me when God bestows on the disciples their identity, God has defined it. I also agree with Wilson’s suggestion that “the four sentences could be used earlier on their appropriate Pages, to help guide listeners.” I think maybe this was a price for making scenes. On Page One, Two, and Three, I made a scene that caused a delay.

Wilson wrote, “On the issue of identity, somewhat more could have been made of baptism, since that is the mark of our identity. (“God immerses/washes us in our identity”?).” Very true, in baptism, God washes us in our identity. To mention this would have deepened the issue of identity.

Wilson brought up, “Leila intentionally brought into her sermon nearly all of the key teachings.” This is very true – even a bird singing of sparrows. I would have never earlier had the courage to do so. I discovered how the biblical text came alive uniquely in making scenes.

Wilson stated that the entire sermon was well focused. He continues, “It is no wonder that she felt her people were right with her throughout, even though it was three times longer than what might have been expected. At times Leila’s brilliance (seen throughout) shone particularly brightly.”

This sermon was a culmination of the learnings of all three projects in this journey of preaching towards the goals of the thesis and answering the thesis question.

Chapter Five: Results and Evaluation

The First and Second Preaching Ministry Projects

The First Preaching Ministry Project reinforced the notion that I was in my comfort zone when I spoke freely in front of listeners. My solid eye contact while preaching and vivid, expressive gestures made it easier to follow the preaching.

To summarize the responses of the reference group, sermons had my particular theatrical style as a preacher. I had the ability to go into the text with all my heart and make it alive. The theatrical style found its way being just right after having a little bit too much drama at the beginning of the project. I succeeded in changing tone and had shorter breaks to become firmer and gain more power in my message.

The perspective shift dealt with opinions. Although I tried to make the step to the right or left as clear as possible to clarify the change of events, not everyone could keep up. They wondered what was going on or simply could not see in the pew what was happening and lost track. After the feedback, I polished the narrative and the narrator.

I was interested in finding an answer to my question in the first project: "Does the narrative expression help congregation members link the message of the Bible texts to their everyday life?" Five out of nine thought after the first sermon that the whole - the warm atmosphere, thoroughly thought deliberating message, and the lively performance - linked the biblical text to everyday life. According to the overall feedback I received, the stories told in the first preaching project helped enter the sermon and helped congregants interpret their experiences of God and everyday life. Especially in the second sermon, when as a preacher, I had for the first time a story baked through the sermon, and I was solely a

narrator while telling the story, six members out of eight answered “yes.” I found this very motivating – a new world opened for me. This feedback had a crucial impact on the thesis project.

According to the advisor Hanna Brande, I had found my way of using stories and storytelling when I was preaching. I had learned how to draw listeners into a scene and the dynamic of making a scene: to go out of my comfort zone by using space and my body in a new way: to take steps aside, causing perspective shifts in different roles as a narrator.

In this light, the conclusion can be drawn that I have deepened and developed my narrative expression. All learnings were of great benefit for the thesis project.

In the second Preaching Ministry Project, through the sermons, the image of God became more evident and more substantial, vital, and moving for the members of the reference group. They received hope and comfort. The overall feedback and especially the reference group's answer to the question, "What image of God or images of God was there in the sermon according to you?" testified to this. In all three sermons in the second project, the reference group and the advisor, and my colleagues in the program discovered the same images of God that I portrayed in my sermons with "core testimony" and "countertestimony." As the feedback turned out to be, I precisely talked in the sermons about God being great, almighty, and that God loves us even when we choose wrong — this is grace —but that God can be absent and silent when we do not choose right, according to God's will.

According to the feedback, I had dared to be honest, real, brave, and vulnerable when I preached without fear of what might have happened and was aware of risks. The intense wrestling with God led to the "core testimony" and "countertestimony" and me and

the audience into deep feelings. My words in sermons were shaped through my body. Furthermore, my body language was lively and, along with the tone, confirmed the message. The audience began to listen intensively and could hardly wait to see what happened next.

It was also good that all my sermons were without the script in hand. The script disturbs the atmosphere, and the listener's intensity level drops. The fact that this time it was possible for me to preach in my native language, which is the language of my faith and heart, helped the message to be preached and received

My advisor wrote in her response: "Preaching as testimony is your thing, but above all, it is by tying your life stories together with the theology of the cross, which is so deeply rooted in you, and then the talk of the cross for those of us who listen also becomes understandable." I had experienced precisely the same way.

The experience of the two previous projects and acknowledging the feedback helped me greatly with both sermons in the thesis project.

The Thesis Project

It was challenging to find the right questions for the questionnaires to measure if the testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus helps affirm the self-esteem of those congregants who immigrated to Sweden from Finland in the 1960s and 1970s to create confident encounters between the minority and the majority. The sermons aimed to affirm self-esteem by helping the congregants see themselves as the images of God and the values of the realm of God in their present-day lives and boldly meet people in the majority as equal images of God. It was also essential

to talk about God's grace, love, and forgiveness in the sermons. Hence, sermons guided the way.

The First Sermon

After the first sermon, the following question arose: "Have I reached the goal of affirming the self-esteem of the people in my congregation who moved to Sweden 50-60 years ago?"

With guiding of Tim Sensing's book *Qualitative Research*¹⁴³, the research and evaluative methods and tools that I used in the first sermon were: The Questionnaire with open-ended questions for the Parish Preaching Group (see Appendix C) and the Questionnaire with yes/no/don't know questions in Finnish and Swedish (see Appendix D) for those who attended worship for surveying the reception of the sermon and helping in the process of research required for the project. These tools helped me to determine whether the sermon meets the goal.

The questions for the congregants were: 1) "Did you find any image of God in the sermon?" 2) "Could you recognize yourself in the sermon?" and 3) "Was there any hope in the sermon?"

The results were the following:

¹⁴³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 113-114.

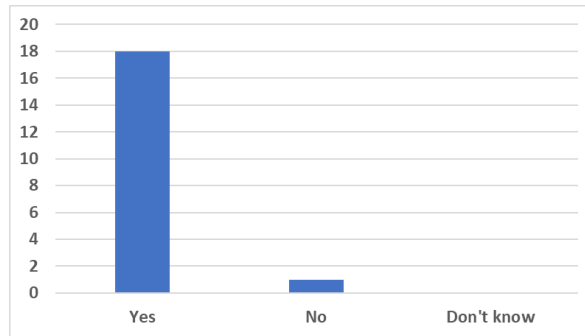


Fig. 1. Results for the first question, “Did you find any image of God in the sermon?”

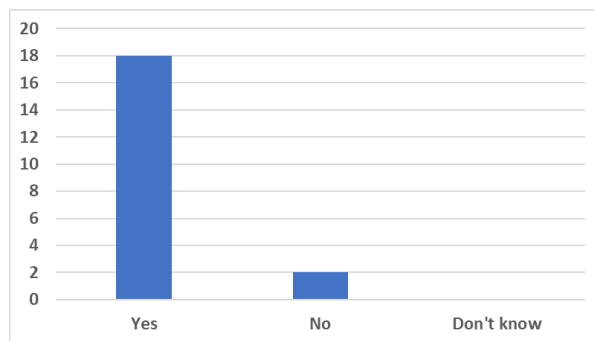


Fig. 2. Results for the second question, “Could you recognize yourself in the sermon?”

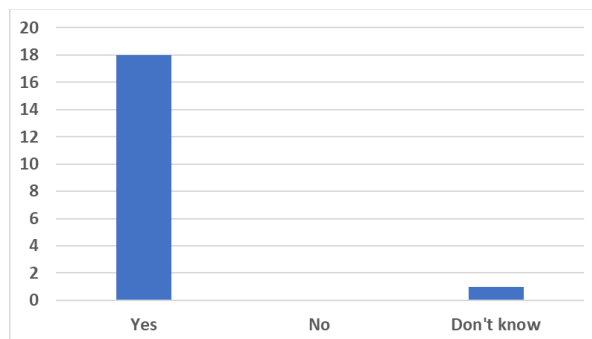


Fig. 3. Results for the third question, “Was there any hope in the sermon?”

Unfortunately, the first sermon was on the Finland-Swedish Church Sunday when the preaching language was Swedish, and the mother tongue of my research group was Finnish. Among the congregants were Finland-Swedes, who did not find themselves

among people who had, for example, language problems and thus felt themselves outstanding. These factors affected the results.

There were present at church 35 persons, of which ten belonged to the personal and the PPG. A total of 19 people filled out the Questionnaire.

All except one answered “yes” to the three questions. One responded “no” to the first and second questions and “do not know” to the third. One belonged to the second generation and thus replied “yes” and “no” to the second question.

“Yes,” answers were a clear majority which refers to the result that the people in the church received an image of God, recognized themselves, and found hope in the sermon. From this, the conclusion can be drawn that the goal “to uplift self-esteem, especially among those listeners who moved to Sweden in the 60s’ and 70s’,” was reached for this sermon. However, as I have mentioned earlier, Ottensten and Johansson write in their book *Predikan växer fram* that the preacher cannot have control over what happens in the audience during the sermon.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, the following questions remain, “Did the congregants receive the same image of God as in the sermon?”, “In which way or ways, they recognized themselves in the sermon – as immigrants or?”, “Was the hope about learning how to be without worrying or hope that rises from the feeling of a better self-esteem or both?” When thinking of this one person who did not find any image of God and did not find his-/herself in the sermon and was unsure if there was any hope in the sermon, the questions arise: “Why?” and “What needs to be done differently next time?”

¹⁴⁴ Ottensten, Johansson, *Predikan växer fram*, 128.

One listener gave me written feedback about the questionnaire, “You should ask next time in another form than yes/no/don’t know questions. You will get more specific answers.” I was aware of this risk when I was planning the questionnaire. It is hard to find questions that give exact data in this type of questionnaire, especially when questions cannot be the leading ones. I either have to keep on trying or find another questionnaire form. T. Sensing’s book *Qualitative Research* and S. Drummond’s book *The Holy Clarity* may guide me.

The summary of the answers of the Parish Project Group to my five questions was the following:

1) What did you see and hear?

All the members in the PPG saw a vivid, engaged preacher who spoke with enthusiasm to everybody at church about seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness. One wrote that she had seen the perspective shift. Following points of view came up: “God’s kingdom is a kingdom of forgiveness,” “God is taking care of us in life,” “our own responsibility and understanding,” and “obedience to God’s will.” Preaching without notes was appreciated.

2) How did you experience the sermon?

The PPG experienced that the sermon was well prepared, easy to follow, and clear with the message. The following discussing areas of the biblical texts in the sermon formation meeting were found in the sermon: to seek the kingdom of God as the necessary one, and then you do not have to worry about anything else, not even during challenging times in life, God loves and blesses. Also, the importance of salvation was to be seen in

three papers. The sermon had tools for living a full life in faith. Five out of six experienced the sermon as a whole; one experienced it in parts but added that the main message came up clearly.

3) What image of God or images of God is there in the sermon, in your opinion?

In all except one paper, God is a God of love and loves everybody the way they are. In addition, God is a protective and righteous God who wants to give everybody the possibility to become God's child through Jesus and live on earth without fear. God's grace is love; grace and truth wander side by side. God lives inside us, in our hearts or souls.

4) Could you recognize yourself in the sermon? How?

Members recognized themselves in the sermon in several ways. The questions in the sermon awakened a thinking process among some of them. They recalled that moving to Sweden with questions and problems was a period of life when they did not have time to seek God. It came afterward. One member brought up that many of the people who moved to Sweden did not understand to seek God's presence, but each other's support was important. The Finnish congregation did not understand or was not totally aware of the difficulties the immigrants had.

All except one in the PPG brought up experiencing God's guidance and taking care which was brought up in the sermon. This confluence also came up after listening to the preaching that praying and seeking God's realm is essential, and then God's blessings are expected in life.

5) Where is hope, or is there any hope in the sermon?

Everybody wrote that there was hope in the sermon: “Seek first the kingdom of God,” “One is necessary,” “Do not worry,” brought a firm hope, all the way to the hope of eternity. Life is blessed and overwhelming. God’s power is stronger than Devil’s power. Half of the papers included a hope that arises from the equal position of human beings in front of God. One added that the appreciation of an individual and the faith in humanity is beautiful and should be a goal between people and everybody’s personal responsibility.

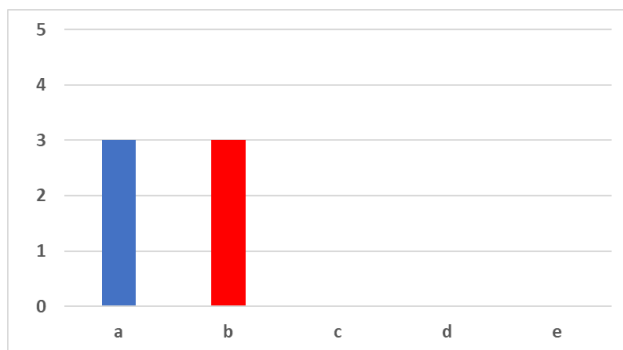
As it is to be seen, three of the questions were the same as for the congregation but in open-ended form. This form gave a chance for more specific answers. From the answers can be seen that “Do not worry,” no matter what happens in life, was received clearly. They also received the image of God, and it was the same as in the sermon. Everybody found themselves in the sermon either as immigrants or in God’s guidance. In the question concerning hope in the sermon, the equality of every man in front of God came up in three answers. Three others wrote about the seeking of the kingdom of God, which included the equality perspective as a part. From this, the conclusion can be drawn that the goal was reached, that the first sermon also had an uplifting effect on the self-esteem of the PPG members.

The Second Sermon

After the second sermon, the following question arose: "Have I reached in the second sermon the goals of affirming the self-esteem of the people in my congregation who moved to Sweden 50-60 years ago and of helping them boldly meet people in the majority as equal images of God?"

With guiding of Tim Sensing's book *Qualitative Research*, I had two different questionnaires: one for the PPG with open-ended questions (see Appendix C) and multiple-choice questions for the listeners at church (see Appendix E). Because I had planned to use questionnaires with multiple-choice questions for the congregation to survey the reception of the preached word, I presented my suggestions to the PPG in the sermon formation meeting. The PPG went through them and suggested a few changes, to which I agreed.

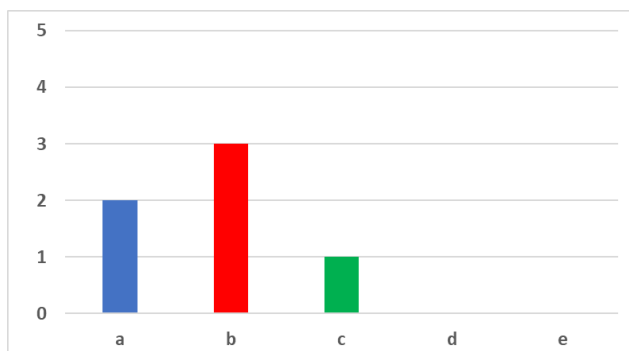
The questions and the results for the congregants were the following:



1. Was there any hope in the sermon?

- a) strongly
- b) satisfactorily
- c) slightly
- d) non-existent
- e) undecided

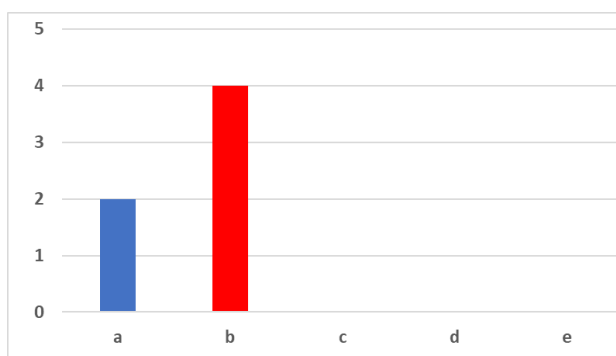
Fig. 1. Results for the first question, "Was there any hope in the sermon?"



2. How would you rank this sermon in value to you?

- a) important
- b) quite important
- c) of minor importance
- d) unimportant

Fig. 2. Results for the second question, "How would you rank this sermon in value to you?"



3. The sermon had such a central idea which I could sense?

- a) strongly agree
- b) agree
- c) undecided
- d) disagree

Fig. 3. Results for the third question, "The sermon had such a central idea which I could sense?"

According to the church calendar, the preaching Sunday was Sunday after All Saints' Day, also named A Day for All Souls. A day before, we had a popular memorial service with candle lighting, and on the preaching Sunday, two worships, another one in the suburb area. In addition, the service advertisement was not correctly done, including the wrong name of the preacher. On top of all this, the weather was rainy and windy. Thus, sad to say, but there were not many present in the worship, altogether 23 persons. Many of the regular listeners were absent. Of those present, 11 belonged to the staff and the reference group, three were Swedish, and three did not belong to the target group. Altogether only six questionnaires were returned. This low attendance has an impact on the liability of the results.

To the first question, half of those who answered circled the first choice and another half the second choice. To the second question, only one circled the third choice, two the first, and three the second one. When it comes to the third question, two circled the first choice and four the second choice. Thus, all those who answered found hope in the sermon either strongly or satisfactorily. All but one found the sermon important or quite important. All agreed or strongly agreed that they had sensed a central idea in the sermon.

Seeing oneself in the eyes of God, not by other people, as an equal image of God, loved, forgiven, precious, and thus from this perspective, able to create confident encounters with other people was a central idea of the sermon and brought hope in this life and life beyond by renewing faith and bringing the gladness of affirmed self-esteem. In this light, from the results, the conclusion can be drawn that the goals of affirming the self-esteem and helping congregants boldly meet people in the majority as equal images of God were reached among those in the service who filled in the questionnaire.

Interestingly, the one who ranked the sermon of minor importance in value found hope at the satisfactory level and sensed a central idea in the sermon. The person may be among those who did not have any language problems or feeling of inferiority after moving to Sweden 50 – 60 years ago. There were many of those, especially among immigrants, who had an education and moved to Sweden in the middle or late 70s'.¹⁴⁵

Over a cup of coffee, three Swedish visitors who had participated in the service gave feedback on the sermon to one member of PPG and later to me. They were fascinated by my performance, especially my use of voice, mimic, and body language. Also, a few other people came to thank me for the sermon. One older woman said the following words to me: "I start to take care of myself since I have now heard how valuable I am." I understood that the woman had a personal relationship with God, but she had not loved herself so far. However, to love God and oneself is crucial to be able to love others. I was

¹⁴⁵ Häggström, Borgegård, Rosengren, *När finländerna kom: Migrationen Finland-Sverige efter andra världskriget*, 59-60.

happy and thankful to God for this new stage in the woman's life. Her words were a wonderful witness to the power of preaching.

The summary of the answers of the Parish Project Group to my six questions was the following:

1) What did you see and hear?

The feedback showed that the sermon was beautiful, logical, and easy to follow with a confident pedagogical touch. The preacher was vivid and empathetic. Basic sound usage carried the sermon forward. Description of details was one scale higher. The sermon was choreographed, well designed, and executed.

In terms of contents, the message was about God's love and care and the hope of eternity through Jesus' redemption. It was about not fearing worldly authorities, only God. What faith in God is all about and how valuable we are in Christ, more valuable than sparrows, were well described. To be freed from people and their attitudes came up; also immigration and its price, still a stamp on a forehead but not with words, encounters instead. The transitions from the biblical text to the world and back to the biblical text and the world were heard.

2) How did you experience the sermon?

The sermon connected the gospel text and living in the minority well, and the theme for the day, according to the Church calendar, was there all the way. In addition, the following points of view came up: "a truthful description of migration," "the target group was we Finns, disciples completed the message," "Identity in Jesus is important – you do

not have to feel inferiority," "it is a consolation to people that every man is equally valuable in front of God."

3) What image of God or images of God was there in the sermon, in your opinion?

In all except one paper, God is a God of love and takes care of us. Three members wrote that all people are equal in front of God despite their social status. In addition, it came up in two papers that God has the power to determine a man's eternal destiny: heaven or damnation. Also, in two papers, God is to be feared with reverence. One wrote how God lightens our hearts with the Holy Spirit.

4) Could you recognize yourself in the sermon?

One wrote: "Yes. As a sparrow...I feel strongly that the majority still keep approaching me as an immigrant, which is not a problem for me. In front of God, we are equal. The truth and forgiveness of sins are duty/right." Also, three others recognized themselves as immigrants, as those who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and 70s'. They sensed the adventure but also difficulties, especially when you could not speak the language, and the sense of inferiority and externality. They also recognized themselves as a child of God who loves and takes good care of them, and they are equal in value in front of God. One wrote that he did not personally recognize himself among immigrants in the sermon.

5) Where was hope, or was there any hope in the sermon?

The hope in the sermon was in God's love, in the fact that nothing external can separate us from God's love, that there is no favoritism in front of God, who loves each one of us as much, and during times of trouble, God takes care. The hope was in perspective

that the way God sees us is more important than how the earthly surroundings see us, affecting encounters with people. In addition, three people also brought up in their writing that resurrection, the hope of eternal life, gave hope. After all, earthly life is short compared to life waiting for believers.

6) After hearing these sermons, what are your thoughts about your faith (has your faith grown, changed, et cetera)?

The following points of view came up: "trust in God and God's taking care has grown," "the sermons confirmed the promises of God's word and the identity in front of God," "the sermon liberates, equality in front of God has strengthened the same way through Christ," "My faith confirmed once again that it is worth believing in good and loving God, and not to look at other people and do not allow fear of people to affect."

As it is to be seen, one question was the same as for the congregation, the question of hope. PPG had a chance for a more specific answer, however. In the congregation, all of those who answered found hope in the sermon either strongly or satisfactorily. For PPG, the hope arose from seeing a loving God who cares for people and sees all people as equal and from the hope of eternity. The hope was in perspective that the way God sees people is more important than how earthly surroundings see them, affecting encounters with people.

I was impressed how discovering everybody's equal value in front of God despite their social status was so evident in the answers to every question. It also came up frequently that feeling of inferiority is unnecessary and that God's given identity is what matters. The responses showed a clear line towards the conclusion that the second sermon

had an apparent uplifting effect on the self-esteem of the PPG members, and thus the first goal was met there.

Reaching the other goal, encouraging people towards confident encounters, was not so clear as the first goal, but, directly and indirectly, in the responses was to be seen that from the premise of how God sees a human being, the readiness to meet others, to have confident encounters, increases. However, as Kimberly Wagner stated, “This sermon was more powerfully about self-esteem and less about connection with others.”

Summary

The results refer to reaching the goals in the thesis project. Therefore, on the whole, the conclusion can be drawn, and thus the answer to my research question is that in the light of this research, testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus help affirm the self-esteem of the people in the Finnish congregation who moved to Sweden during the massive immigration in the 1960s and 70s’ to create confident encounters between the minority and the majority. However, certain factors of uncertainty discussed in connection with the results in both sermons should be considered.

Future plans

Preaching to create confident encounters is a vital channel. However, it is also vital that this message continues to live in everyday life, make a change, and help congregants live their faith in practice - to find their own ways for confident encounters with the majority. The congregation can promote this. The neighbor congregations are an excellent way to start with. The Finnish congregation already worships twice a year (the New year

and the Ascension Day) with the following congregations in the Old City: the German congregation and the Cathedral congregation. More collaboration can even be arranged. We are on our way in this process. Of course, as a congregant, you can visit a congregation, but to invite people from other congregations to join the activities in your own congregation could be a welcome gesture. The Finnish congregation can also increase advertising of happenings in the neighbor congregations and in groups to join them. To have an event where “The Long Loving Look at the Real” contemplative practice between the minority and the majority can be a part of the program, a prayer walk together, retreats in our congregation, or a spiritual meditation hour in the tower of the Cathedral as a group with Swedes can be something to consider, to mention a few. It all starts in small steps.

Chapter Six: Homiletical Significance

This thesis project deals with an important part of recent history in the nearly 500-year history of our parish. It is a process to be continued in the Finnish congregation and is important for those who moved to Sweden during the vast immigration wave in the 1960s and 1970s. The project especially concerns those congregants who had hardly any education, could not speak the language and worked in working-class areas with a lower status. Among these immigrants were also, in a lesser amount, those who had studied Swedish at school for four to five years and had hardly any language problems. They started to study to get better, more appreciated working places. Marriages with Swedes helped with finding a way into the new culture. These immigrants did not have or had less feelings of inferiority.

The Impact of the Project on the Preacher

This thesis is of blessing significance to me both from a personal and professional perspective for several reasons.

The whole process actually started quite precisely 20 years ago when I inside me heard God saying that I should write about these people. After attending this further education with a passion for doing this to God's honor and glory, I remembered those words, and I thought that if it were God's will that I make it to Chicago, this would be the subject of my thesis project. I have fulfilled God's request. However, I would have never been able to dream back then that it came out in this form – amazing is God's leading!

Preaching these congregants who moved to Sweden 50-60 years ago has meant a lot to me. I have noticed that self-confidence built on God-confidence creates a movement towards a better, not bitter future – including creating and finding confident encounters of dialogue between the minority and majority – and it is never too late.

Practicing testimonial preaching and widening it towards social transformation has had a crucial impact on my preaching, not to mention how making scenes, practicing empathy, preaching ethics, learning about strangers, and encounters between different kinds of strangers have enriched my preaching!

The Impact of the Project on the Ministry Context and beyond

According to the feedback from the congregants and the PPG especially, using a testimonial style that centers social transformation, and therefore preaching about God's grace, love, forgiveness, and preaching about who God is and who we are in front of God, was greeted with gladness. Who we are as images of God has transformative power at the personal level. It contributes to and promotes a positive self-image and helps eliminate feelings of inferiority, exclusion, and difference. A more positive self-image with stronger self-esteem encourages confident encounters with the majority as equal images of God.

To go forward with the implication of this project in the Finnish congregation means to promote this encouragement further in the preaching. If possible, a preacher can choose from Sunday's biblical texts those that concern questions in the minority theology, such as identity, experiences of inferiority or exclusion, and contribute to a feeling of

belonging.¹⁴⁶ In the sermons, encouraging encounters with the majority is important to bring up either from the preacher's own or others' experiences.

When - according to the results - testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus can affirm the self-esteem of those congregants who moved to Sweden during the vast immigration wave in the 1960s and 1970s in order to create confident encounters between the minority and majority, the implementation of this preaching form can be taken on a broader picture to help congregants in the Finnish congregation, people in the minority, to find confident encounters with the majority. As it is to be seen, this does not concern only those who moved to Sweden during the massive immigration wave but the whole congregation. We have two minority groups: immigrants who originally have belonged to Finland-Finns and speak Finnish, and immigrants who originally have belonged to Finland-Swedes, speak Swedish and form a minority in Finland and our congregation. It is easier for the latter group of congregants to meet people in the majority because of the common language but more challenging in general for those congregants who have Finnish as a mother tongue and have not learned proper Swedish. This preaching form can encourage these people to move forward in life by being more confident and encouraged to meet people in the majority without feeling inferior or less valued.

To describe minorities' meeting and living with the majority in society and the Sweden-Finnish congregational working field, integration¹⁴⁷ is often used as a word and

¹⁴⁶ Hafthorsson, ed., *En kyrka – många språk: Inspiration och stöd för flerspråkigt församlingssliv* (*One Church – many languages: Inspiration and support for multilingual parish life*, trans. from Swedish to English, L. Mänttari), 79–81.

¹⁴⁷ Wiklund, *Möte som skapar – Luova kohtaaminen*, 6.

concept. Still, inclusion, a term that came broader into the picture around 2010, is even a better descriptive word for meeting between the minority and majority.¹⁴⁸

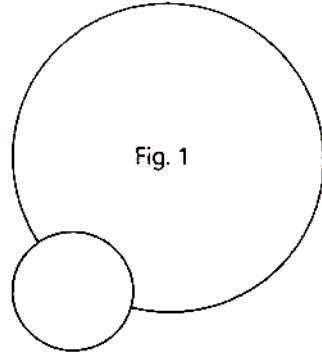


Fig. 1 Integration
Risk of opposition between the minority and majority and risk of outside identity of minority.¹⁴⁹

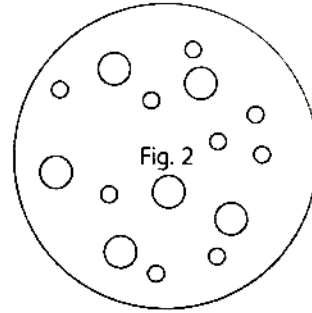


Fig. 2 Inclusion
No opposition between the minority and majority, inside identity among minority.¹⁵⁰

Moving from integration towards inclusion is moving from a distinctive perspective to a common perspective and thus to shared responsibility. In integration, a clear distinction between majority and minority (Fig. 1) takes a risk to strengthen "us and them" thinking. Then the minority quickly takes on the role of guardian of the interests of its own group.¹⁵¹ This was to be seen among the Finnish minority after the massive immigration wave in the 1960s and 70s' as well as in the Sweden-Finnish congregational working area. For the minority to perceive an inside identity, as the situation is in inclusion, shared responsibility is needed. In the introduction of this thesis, Prime minister Olof Palme pointed out in his interview already in 1970, "We try to make Swedish society such that they can feel at home

¹⁴⁸ Ewalds, *En flerspråkig kyrka*, 29.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 29–30.

here. We will not succeed in this without the immigrants' own efforts.” For this to be possible, confident encounters play a crucial role.

Hence, taking even broader, testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus applied to different circumstances can help inclusion between the minority and majority in bicultural and multicultural congregations and thus in society. The effectiveness of inclusion is essentially about identity – a picture of yourself. Identity, also Sweden-Finnish identity, is more than a language. Hence, the vital question is, "What is our identity in front of God, and where does it lead to?" Strong awareness of each other's identity as an equal image of God is needed. This is where testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus comes into the picture among the majority and minority or minorities and can provide a way for minorities to be seen and respected, especially when preaching for minorities happens in the minority's language. This, in turn, opens up opportunities for confident encounters. Last but not least, it is essential for the preaching to underline that when people are equal images of God, and from love to your neighbor, all groups are as important in the congregation. Then everybody gets to enjoy the encounter with the Holy together as an important part of the body of Christ.

In conclusion, being ready to meet each other with confidence by respecting one another's uniqueness and differences as God's creations and then growing together with shared responsibility - in the church and society – is the way to be followed. As equal images of God.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The manuscript of the First Sermon of the thesis project 09-12-2021:

1. The Israeli people's walk in the desert for 40 years and God's care

The Israelites needed a reminder. The Levites reminded those who had returned from Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem and Judah of how the Lord had taken care of their forefathers for 40 years on their way to Canaan. God did not abandon the people in the desert during the wanderings. For 40 years, God led his people as the pillar of cloud by day on their way. As the pillar of fire, He shone for them during the night in the way they would go. Did they miss anything during this journey? No. God cared for his people.

2. Immigration of the Finnish people 40 – 60 years ago and worries

What about you sitting here in the pew today – who has wandered here to Sweden, to the other side of the Gulf of Bothnia? I can think of that there are among us those who moved here 40, 50, 60 years ago, during the vast immigration of the Finnish people. What kind of a pillar of cloud was the Lord to you on the journey here — or a pillar of fire? Do you feel that the Lord led you? Or did you ever long for God and God's direction? Did daily worries fill your life so that God felt distant - worries like “how does it feel to be alone in the new country” or “how do the brothers and sisters who stayed in Finland without a job cope,” or “how do sick parents cope up?” If you moved here with your family, the questions like “how do my family cope up and how do I cope up” were

in the air. “What about the language? Am I able to handle the job that’s waiting for me?” You may have sighed to God, “If You, God, exist, help me!” God is almighty, but right then, God may have felt distant. Maybe it looked like God was not answering. Or perhaps you did not have time for God, time to listen to God amid all troubles, amid everything in life?

3. Only one is needed

During these decades you have lived here, I sense that you have had more or less troubles, uphill, downhill, and wanderings in the desert and the oasis. That is what we have in life. There is so much that we consider essential in our life walk: our loved ones, our economy, our health, our social status, our education, our property.

What is the situation now in your life after many years here in Sweden? Do you feel like you are home? What about worries? Have they disappeared? “Of course not,” you might reply, “worrying is a part of human nature.” Yes, that is right. “How are the children? Are the traces immigration left still visible in their lives?” “What about grandchildren or great-grandchildren?” “What about myself – my health, financial situation, my strength?” Jesus encourages us, or rather Jesus almost commands: “Therefore, do not worry!” In order to make this possible only one is needed in life, according to today’s gospel. What could it be? (Take a step sideways.) “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Take a step back.) Now you might be thinking, “But how could I then, when I moved here, seek the kingdom of God when there was enough to do with finding the kingdom of Sweden!”

4. Where is the kingdom of God?

The verb “search” in the original language, in Biblical Greek, is “dzeeteite” and means “search first or search intensively or go after with all might. “ So, there are two things Jesus encourages us to search intensively first? What is the first one? Yes, the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven are synonyms. Now you might think, “But I cannot go up to heaven and find out what life looks like there and then come back...” This is true - and Jesus did not mean this either.

Jesus emphasized that no one can, about the kingdom of God, say, “See here!” or “See there!” No. The kingdom of God has no visible earthly boundaries. “For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you,” said Jesus. What does Jesus mean by this? That the boundaries of the kingdom of God go from heart to heart among those who believe in Jesus. We enter the kingdom of God by receiving Jesus as our Redeemer and Savior. Therefore, Jesus encourages us to seek the kingdom of God because the salvation of all people is incredibly important to God, that we live not only in this world but also forever, that God can have an eternal relationship with us, love us forever. Therefore Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins and then arose. Look, the cross here in the church is empty! In the kingdom of God, all are saved by grace, by God’s undeserved love for us in Jesus. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of forgiveness and grace.

5. How is the kingdom of God?

In Jesus’ person, teaching, and deeds, the kingdom of God was present, and the kingdom of God will come in its fullness when Jesus returns. That is why it is so good to read the Bible when we seek the kingdom of God. When we then let Jesus lead the way,

we realize that values considered important in the kingdom of the world, such as power, social status, property, and education, are not at all important in the kingdom of God. God shows personal favoritism to no man. We are all sinners and in need of God's grace. So everyone is called: rich and poor, educated as well as uneducated, homeless and homes galore, overworked as well as unemployed! In the kingdom of God, all are God's children, sisters, and brothers through Jesus. The Bible tells us that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In the kingdom of God, there is love, forgiveness, purity of heart, care, restoration, healing, peace, and joy between those who belong to the kingdom of God to flow out and become other people's blessing. In the kingdom of God, a little is great, and serving Jesus as a role model is encouraged. What else in the Bible is about the kingdom of God – read and discover!

6. About seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

What is the second thing Jesus encourages us to seek intensively first? God's righteousness. So, the kingdom of God and God's righteousness. And Jesus promises, "...and all these things shall be added to you." Interesting, isn't it? What does this mean in practice? God becomes number one in our lives, and we commit to seeking God's ways of being and doing right. What does this require? That we turn from ourselves to God. We turn our look to God and live a God-centered or Christ-centered life instead of egocentric life: me, for me, to me, with me. If the self is at the center of life, there is no room for God or just a tiny corner. For God to be at the center of our life, it is crucial to spend time with God, be and live in the presence of the Lord – to stop, to meet God in prayer, in God's word, in nature. Speak to God, listen to God, and leave everything in

God's hands thinking that His will be done—even if it means changes in our mindset, in our emotions, in our motives, in our behavior.

We also leave our worries in God's hands. Instead of thinking about what I can do in this situation or how I handle this problem, or how I cope with all this, we can choose to seek God's help and guidance. God is the Almighty. Nothing is impossible for God. But we cannot dictate God to do what we want, solve our problems as we want, open the doors we want, or give us the things we want to. God is not a wishing machine that meets all our wishes and needs. Jesus did not mean this either. If we think like this, we need to control our motives— are we looking for God for who God is? Are we looking for God's presence, or just God's "presents"? God indeed knows what is best for you and me.

The Heavenly Father knows everything you need and cares for you. God will lead you with a merciful glance. And then God does not want to give you everything you want because you can, for example, ask for something that hurts you. Then God says "no." Trust in God when He says "no," and when He says "yes." God will give you things that are right for you. God wants you to be blessed in life.

7. A carefree life

Then why bother to worry? Don't we trust God? Do we fear the future and forget Jesus' assurance that He is with us? Jesus does not deny conscientiousness, planning, and taking care. If we think we do not have to do anything, that God does everything for us, we are on the wrong track. God expects us to do our part, to take responsibility for our lives.

Here and now, we need God's guidance, wisdom, and power. God encourages you and me to live in the present – carpe diem – catch the day. It may not be easy to let go of everything else and focus only on the present. But as Jesus says in today's gospel, we do not have to worry; worry about tomorrow. For this day, we do not have to borrow tomorrow's worries! It is just a waste of time and takes energy! Let us trust in God - we are in good hands.

“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me,” Jesus says, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” You can feel safe. You can choose to live in a sacred carefreeness, whether it is struggling with practical everyday things, relationships, feelings of inferiority, or lack of language skills. The Lord loves you. The Lord will provide you. The Lord leads you as a “pillar of cloud” and a “pillar of fire”- but remember this: one day at a time.

Appendix B

The Manuscript of the Second Sermon of the Thesis Project 11-07-2021:

Page one (trouble in the Bible): Jesus warns His disciples not to let other people define their identity

Jesus has something important to say to His disciples, vitally important. They are closely grouped around Jesus to hear every word, for a crowd of many thousands surrounds them. People are already trampling on one another. Everyone is trying to get close to Jesus, at least get a glimpse of Him, hear the word from Him. Some have come out of curiosity; some Pharisees and Lawyers are involved in arguing about learning questions. Some people try to touch even the edge of Jesus' cloak, and the hungry for the word expects to be nourished, the poor to receive real food.

Jesus lets people come to him — out of pity? Perhaps, but at this moment, Jesus has focused entirely primarily on his disciples. Now Jesus looks at them seriously straight in the eye: "I tell you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more."

The disciples are confused. They look at Jesus and each other. Why these words from Jesus' mouth? Yes, Jesus has a little bit earlier urged his disciples to watch out for the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They are actors who cover their true selves, their true identity, and replace them with something completely different. Instead, what is inside the disciples should be revealed. They need to be freed from people, from any kind of fear-based bond with people and their wrong values and attitudes, with people who can

distort their identity into something other than what they are but then end up being. It is God who defines their identity. So it is the commitment to God that is crucial. Especially in the face of fear of death, as disciples still have much to fear. As followers of Jesus, they belong to the minority among the Jews. Israel was conquered by the Roman empire. And Rome is everywhere. Jesus knows the consequences. The disciples will know. They will be mocked, wounded - both soul and body - persecuted, even killed when they dare tell of Jesus. Jesus strongly encourages his disciples: "Do not be afraid of those..." Their power does not extend beyond that. They can at most end worldly human life. That is it, that is all.

"Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw into hell...". God should therefore be feared by the disciples, for death is not the limit to God's action. God's power extends beyond death, ordering man's eternal destiny: heaven or damnation. Jesus speaks not of a negative, overwhelming fear that paralyzes the relationship with God but of reverent fear of God as the Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Savior, the King of kings, and the Ruler before whom every knee will bow! Disciples must fear God in this way with respect. It is like an essential ingredient for living right. If the attachment to people misleads the disciples away from God and His word, they can also say goodbye to the eternal being with God. And life, no matter how long it is, is vanishingly short compared to eternity.

Page 2 (trouble in the world): Jesus warns us not to let other people define our identity.

"Do not be afraid of those ..." and "Fear Him ..." these words of Jesus have a strong, deterrent effect on us here in the church – on you and me, don't they? Jesus also urges us to look closely at whom we fear and free ourselves from people, from false

bonds with them. The bond with God as the definer of a man's worldly and eternal destiny is enough. Jesus warns against letting other people define our identity. As immigrants, as members of the minority, we know that this danger exists. Who we are afraid of defines, more or less, how we live, how we operate, and what choices we make. It can ultimately affect whom we belong to and define our identity. This all is not going to happen overnight. It is a process, a journey that takes place consciously or unconsciously, over the years, even decades. Here is the beginning of one (perspective shift, a few steps sideways):

“In a darkened November evening in the late 60s, M/S Birger Jarl glides towards dimly lit Stockholm, unloads passengers and cargo. Think, here I stand, sensing with my hand damp, miraculously warm air, in which at the same time gentleness – and a strange threat.”

This is how the one who moved from Finland to Sweden during the vast migration wave draws the feelings that arouse with the pen into words. Clad in the darkness of the Old City, a row of houses on the other side of the road with high-end facades reaching out to the sky challenges to continue, “All strangers to me, no map, no compass, roads unknown. Oh, if I had someone with me. I try to hide my harrowing fear; I am crying, galling, “ Is this how you, the Great Mighty, meet the lonely traveler in the port you are overseeing? And do not think I am going to stay here... But look what happened. Job offer on good terms, own apartment...”

So this immigrant stayed in Sweden together with many others who moved in the 60s' and 70s' – and with those who moved before and after this period. Sweden brought back then adventure to life for many, independence, provided much-needed work

- especially for uneducated people who moved from poor areas - and good earnings.

Sweden got from Finns the labor force it needed, hardworking workers, but also people.

People who, as members of the minority, longed to be seen, appreciated. People whose

Finnish identity was looking for a place and form amid Swedish identity.

Questions arose: Did I do the right thing by moving away and looking for a job after all? I was looking for a “paradise” – was I wrecked here? How is my mom doing with the younger siblings now that I am away and cannot help her? What about my sick parents...? The answers seemed to linger. God seemed distant, too. Why was He silent? On the other hand, there was no time to stop, not even in front of the Holy. You had to get a car, preferably a Volvo, branded clothes, an own apartment, even a summer house. Just like the Swedes.

However, life cannot be built on the property, as Jesus teaches the crowd a little bit later. Not everyone adjusted. The tabloids started writing about us Finns badly. The most negative in the negative was seen. It is understandable that preconceptions and prejudices are part of human nature - not least between majority and minority - even with 700 years of shared history. So, we Finns were put a stamp on the forehead at that time, and they started to call us annoying, unpleasant words. All this could not fail to hurt, wound, increase the sense of outsidersness and inferiority. More and more profound questions then crept into the innermost being, questions that not even today belong to history: Who am I? Where am I going in my life? Who or what exactly defines my identity – who do I really belong to?

Page 3 (grace in the Bible): God defines the identity of the disciples

Disciples belong to God. As friends of Jesus, they should have nothing to fear. They have the hope of eternal life! However, when Jesus speaks before him, he sees his disciples' astonished, perhaps frightened faces. He knew the thoughts of his disciples – even now. It is time to reassure these confused friends and remind them what kind of God they really have and who they are in God's eyes.

Just then, did a flock fly by small, unpretentious, gray birds – sparrows - that landed on the branches of a nearby palm tree? "Tsiip-tsirp... tsiip-tsirp... tsiip..." "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?" stated Jesus. The question is mainly rhetorical, for the disciples know as well as Jesus that this is the case. Poor people buy them at the market because they are not the tastiest but the cheapest meat food. Sparrows could be bought two with one coin or a bunch of five with two coins, which allowed to get one for sale. With this, Jesus emphasizes to his disciples that sparrows have little value in the eyes of men, but in God's eyes, yes, every one of them is valuable! Furthermore, Jesus underlines that God will never forget any of them. Not even the fifth one. He sees the smallest and weakest of the sparrows, even the leftover sparrow. The disciples, as God's own, have no reason to fear, "You are of more value than many sparrows." Valuable and dear in God's eyes, even when they are not in the eyes of men.

In his love, God takes care of them, even in the slightest detail, after all, He has bothered to number the very hairs of their head! Nothing happens to the disciples without God allowing it. As God gives the birds of heaven everything they need, He equips the disciples with all necessary. So as Jesus' friends, they have nothing to worry about. They can trust a faithful God.

Page 4 (grace in the world): God defines our identity.

So, God's care extends to the life considered the least. When God values, cares, and loves the smallest and most insignificant, how much greater is His affection for you - you are worth more than all sparrows! You are valuable to God even when you are not valuable in other people's eyes. So your value and the meaning of your life is not in how other people see you but in how God, who makes no distinction between men, sees you - what kind of identity you have in God. Nothing external can limit your inner freedom and right to see yourself free and loved through God's eyes. It does not matter what kind of social status you have. It does not matter what kind of professional status you have; after all, you are God's associate in serving your fellow human beings in your own place for the common good of all. Then every job is important.

As God has created sparrows, He has created everything, man last. However, God made man, only and only man, in the image of His likeness. My dear friends, human value is based on this. When God created man in his own image, He created man in a loving relationship with himself and capable of loving. Thus, the need to love and be loved is central to God's identity to man.

However, this image of God in man was corrupted in the Fall, and the connection with God was shattered, but no worries, God is an empathetic God. He chose love, mercy, forgiveness for us. He wanted to rebuild the broken connection bridge to the people. He became human, one of us, in His Son Jesus. The connection bridge became cross-shaped. I was there, and you were, there, on the cross, in the heart of Jesus, when He atoned all the sins committed by all men at all times. Of grace. And look, the cross is empty. Jesus did not stay in the grave; He was risen! The way to eternal life is open! We

have the hope of eternity! My dear friends, what an incomprehensible great love of God we are partakers of!

When Jesus lives in your heart, this love is in you. God's eternal, unchanging, unconditional love is in you, deep down in you, through the Holy Spirit, and defines your identity as a child of God. God wants to show you, in the light of His love, how dear and unique you are to Him. The Lord calls you to this light of His love, to His presence. He urges you to give space in your life to everything that gives space to Him so that He can lovingly take care of you and strengthen you. And so one day, you may experience that this love in you, God's bestowed love to you, will pass through you, flowing through you to another, even a foreign person, to whom you will begin to open up your life in small steps. A confident encounter arises – as equal images of God.

Perhaps one day, there could be an event in our church where, as part of the program, you could quietly - according to the contemplative practice called "The Long Loving Look at the Real" drawn from the wisdom of the Carmelite monk William McNamara by Jesuit priest Walter J. Burghardt - look at an unlikely partner belonging to the majority and sitting on the opposite side straight in the eyes for 90 seconds, with the loving look of a fellow man – what would you see? Once you begin to see a person on the opposite side as an equal image of God...Once you see, you cannot not see, right? Seeing another and being seen by another gives birth to the seeds of hope in life.

(To be continued with the following prayer:) Thank you, God, that here and now we can come directly to You, before you — Jesus, You have opened the way for us! Lord, thank you for your love that creates life, goodness, beauty. Let us experience this heavenly love that changes our hearts and makes us meet and love others, You as a role model. Not

perfectly, but as a reflection of your love – as your images. In a trust built on your love. Lord, as your images, you have made us more similar than different — whether we belong to a minority or a majority. Show us our true selves; nobody else can do it. God, give us the enthusiasm to spend more time in your presence to get to know more about who You are and who we are. We need to see You so that we can see and face ourselves and others in your light - with confidence.

We need your presence, Lord. We need to hear from You how we are fearfully and lovely made, how You give us help and protection, how your love is boundless, your grace eternal. Yes, God, we live in awe and reverence of You. You are the Almighty Creator; we are created. You are faithful; we get to trust you. We are not to worry. You are a loving God for all people, day by day by day, throughout earthly life right into eternity. You are our light here, and we live in the hope that you will once be our eternal light, that through all eternity we can be grateful to you, God, for your love and praise your name together, and see Your face - and Your name will be on our foreheads! Amen.

Appendix C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PPG AFTER THE SERMONS¹⁵²

Instructions: Please read the questions carefully and be completely open and honest in your responses to make the information useful for the preacher's research.

Name of the Preacher:

Date:

Name of the Listener:

Sermon Title:

Sermon Text:

My questionnaire includes the following open-ended questions for the PPG:

- 1) What did you see and hear?
- 2) How did you experience the sermon?
- 3) What image of God or images of God is there in the sermon, in your opinion?
- 4) Could you recognize yourself in the sermon?
- 5) Where is hope, or is there any hope in the sermon?

The following question is only after the second sermon 11-07-2021:

- 6) After hearing these sermons, what are your thoughts about your faith (has your faith grown, changed, etc.)?

¹⁵² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, Appendix 3, 239.

Appendix D

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE FIRST SERMON 09-12-2021

DMin in Preaching Program Leila Mänttari

1. Did you find any image of God in the sermon?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know

2. Could you recognize yourself in the sermon?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know

3. Was there any hope for the sermon?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Don't know

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SECOND SERMON 11-07-2021

DMin in Preaching Program Leila Mänttari

Please circle your choice:

1) Was there any hope in the sermon?

- a) strongly
- b) satisfactory
- c) slightly
- d) non-existent
- e) undecided

2) How would you rank this sermon in value to you?

- a) important
- b) quite important
- c) of minor importance
- d) unimportant
- e) undecided

3) The sermon had such a central idea which I could sense.

- a) Strongly agree
- b) agree
- c) undecided
- d) disagree
- e) strongly disagree

ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching Program

**Learning Covenant for the Preaching Ministry Project
2021-2022**

NAME: Leila Manttari_____ **SEMINARY:** LSTC_____

ADVISOR: Dr. Kimberly Wagner and Dr. Niclas Blåder_____

GRADUATION YEAR: 2022_____

CORE COURSE: Preaching as social transformation_____

ELECTIVE COURSE: Four pages and preaching_____

() Year One () Year Two (x) Year Three

1. TITLE:

Preaching to affirm people in the Finnish congregation in order to create loving connections, spaces for dialogue between the minority and majority._____

2. STATE YOUR LEARNING GOALS FOR THIS PROJECT YEAR. (2-4 Specific goals related to the general issue or concern of ministry that will be addressed in your preaching.)

- to uplift the self-esteem of those congregants who immigrated to Sweden from Finland in the 1960s and 1970s by helping them to see themselves as the images of God and the values of the Realm of God in their present-day life
- to help them boldly meet people in the majority, with confidence, as equal images of God by encouraging them to find loving connections, spaces for dialogue between the minority and majority

3. STATE THE THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE PREACHING TASK THAT ESTABLISHES THE FOUNDATION FOR THIS PROJECT. (A 2-3 sentence summary of your homiletical theology or belief about preaching and ministry that motives you to explore the stated issue connected with your ministry.)

I retell the stories of the immigrants who moved to Sweden in the 60s and 70s in the light of God's grace, love and promises. I use Bible texts to reflect the congregants back to

themselves anew, as people in relationship to a living God, and encourage them to live into the identity as a child of God.¹⁵³

Jesus resisted the principalities and powers and offered an alternative to them, the values of the Realm of God, and in His life, death, and resurrection, He has engaged and overcome the powers. By preaching that there is another way of seeing things, by preaching the values and principles that are characteristics of the Kingdom of God, I believe my preaching can offer a transformative word for the assembly, that is, can make a difference, a social transformation, at a personal and interpersonal level, and bring hope for the present-day life and for the life to come.¹⁵⁴

4. DESCRIBE THE PREACHING CONTEXT AND EXPLAIN WHY THE PROJECT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOUR CONTEXT. *(2-4 Sentences that summarize the current contextual realities that have originated or influence the requirements of your project.)*

Over 200 000 Finns who moved to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s during the vast wave of Finns' immigration were people who moved because the unemployment rate was high in Finland, especially in the north and upper western part of the coastline. They were hard workers who worked in working areas that were – and still are - underrated, mainly in factories and hospitals, and hotels.

Sweden got not only labor but also human beings who had a need to be accepted and appreciated, although they were lower-class people belonging to the minority. While they were integrating, they were letting the majority define their identity. Even nowadays, this still has an impact on their lives, their self-image, and their self-esteem.

5. DESCRIBE HOW YOU AND THE PARISH PROJECT GROUP WILL WORK TOGETHER IN ACCOMPLISHING THE GOALS LISTED IN THE PLAN? *(How you and the PPG will interact in the implementation of your research to accomplish your project goals and your expectation of the group's contribution beyond the stated requirements of the program.)*

During the KFP-Sweden Program, January 2018-November 2020, the role of my PPG differed from the role it will have now. Earlier, the members in the PPG sat in the pew as any other congregants who attended the worship. The purpose was to get as genuine feedback on the sermon as possible. From now on, the role changes. The PPG is to be an active, supportive, and collaborative partner in my learning process.

At the end of August, we will have a meeting where the PPG will be orientated to the future task they will have, that is, information on Summer Residency and the Preaching

¹⁵³ Wilson, Paul Scott, et eds. *The New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching*, 492.

¹⁵⁴ Campbell, *The World before the Powers*, 43.

Ministry Program with an overall preaching and evaluating plan. The PPG also signs the Learning Covenant. The chair of the PPG will be elected. I will propose an English teacher who is also a member (secretary) of the Church Council. We will plan the schedule for the sermon formation and feedback meetings and establish a theological reflection method to be used.

By the end of August and October, we will have the sermon formation meetings where the group provides me with the support for the sermon development. With the group members, I will discuss the biblical text and the provisional sermon purpose statement in the light of the Preaching Ministry Project and the goals stated in the Learning Covenant. Before the discussion, I will divide the members into two groups of three to study the sermon's biblical text. I will integrate the insights received from the PPG into my sermon as appropriate. Advisor's and Instructors' comments on the previous sermon I will share with the group. I plan to use questionnaires with yes/no/don't know questions after sermons for those who attend worship to survey the reception of the preached word. These questions I am planning to do with my PPG in the sermon formation meetings.

During the sermon delivery, the PPG will be present in the service and observe the sermon to be able to give feedback and evaluation. The members will distribute the questionnaires to the congregants before the service starts and will collect them back.

After the sermon on the same day, I will have the sermon feedback meeting with the PPG. First, I will give them an open-ended questionnaire to be answered. While the group is answering, I will visit the congregants over a cup of tea to get verbal feedback from the broader perspective. Then I will return to my group to have an open discussion of the sermon. After this, the group will complete the Group Response Form without my presence and input. The chair has a key role in this process by leading the discussion, taking notes, and afterward translating all into English. The Final Group Report will not be completed during the third year by the PPG.

6. OUTLINE THE CONTENTS OF THE SERMONS (THREE IN YEARS 1 & 2, TWO IN YEAR 3) THAT WILL INCLUDE LEARNING GAINED IN CORE AND ELECTIVE COURSES AND FACILITATE THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF YOUR LEARNING GOALS (*Describe the outline of the sermons to be preached that includes the learning from coursework and the learning goals stated and praxis within the ministry context that will relate directly to meeting the stated goals.*)

a. Sermon 1:

Swedish students don't preach a Core sermon but a sermon towards the thesis project.

In the 1st Sermon, September 12th, 2021, I am using narrative (brief stories including worries during the immigration in the 60s and 70s) and also a perspective shift I learned in my project 1. On my way to a testimonial preaching with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus, I am using Anna Carter Florence's method, which she

presents in her book *Preaching as Testimony*, chapter 7 “The wide-awake sermon” I learned in my project 2.¹⁵⁵ It has three parts:

- 1 Attending to the biblical text. When it comes to verbs in a biblical text, I use Carter Florence's method of Reading the Verbs in her book *Rehearsing Scripture*, chapter 3.¹⁵⁶
- 2 Describing what you have seen in your attending.
- 3 Testifying, finally saying what you have seen and believed.

According to the Church Year, the theme for Sunday is “Only one is needed.” The Gospel comes from the Gospel of Matthew 6: 31-34.

The focus statement, that is, what I want to say in the sermon, is:
Only one is needed: to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (verse 33).
By doing so, God will add other things in life (verse 33). So, people do not need to worry about anything (verse 31).

The function statement, that is, what I hope my sermon will do:
To encourage the listeners to the willingness of seeking and experiencing the values of the kingdom of God, drawn from the word of God, in their present-day life in order to live a life that will release them from all kinds of worrying, whether it is a question of struggling with practical everyday things, or with a feeling of inferiority or with lacking language skill.

b. Sermon 2 (Elective):

In the 2nd Sermon, November 7th, 2021, I am using The Four Pages of the Sermon method, or preferably grammar, by Paul Scott Wilson in his book *The Four Pages of the Sermon*.

According to Paul Scott Wilson, this method can be used in any form of a biblical sermon, also in my testimonial sermon with a personal and interpersonal social transformative focus. This method is about developing a grammar of preaching, grammatical tools: four grammatical principles, components, elements, or quarters to undergird sermons, and they are called Pages:

"Page One: trouble in the biblical text."

"Page Two: trouble in the world."

"Page Three: grace in the biblical text."

"Page Four: grace in the world."

¹⁵⁵ Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 61-63, 68-69.

¹⁵⁶ Carter Florence, *Rehearsing Scripture*, 32 – 50.

Trouble is "the consequence of turning from God's life-giving Word to go it on our own," Grace is "an empowering action of God."¹⁵⁷ Sermon challenges and provides hope.¹⁵⁸ These four pages serve as an outline, a stem, a guideline for the sermon.

While composing a sermon, it is important to keep in mind elements that contribute to sermon unity in the Four Pages of the Sermon method: one text, one theme, one doctrine, one need, one image, and one mission. The nonsensical acronym may help memorize: TTDNIM: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine.¹⁵⁹

According to the Church Year, the theme for Sunday, November 7th, is "Our hope for eternity." The biblical text comes from the Gospel of Luke 12: 4-7

In the light of my learning and project goals, this text is about our identity in God, about us as images of God, as God's children, precious to God.

The four pages of the sermon are:

Page 1 (trouble in the Bible): Jesus warns His disciples not to let other people define their identity.

Page 2 (trouble in the world): Jesus warns us not to let other people define our identity.

Page 3 (grace in the Bible): God defines the identity of the disciples = theme sentence.

Page 4 (grace in the world): God defines our identity.

One text: Luk. 12: 4-7

One theme: God defines the identity of the disciples

One doctrine: The nature of God

One need: Who am I?

One image: From the biblical text "sparrows."

One mission: to create loving connections, spaces for dialogue between the minority and majority with confidence as equal images of God.

c. Sermon 3: -----

7. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES THAT WILL BE USED FOR DATA GATHERING AND THESIS DEVELOPMENT. (*Identify the two or*

¹⁵⁷ Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching*, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. Xiii.

¹⁵⁹ Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching*, 41.

three research tools that will be used to gather and interpret the data connected with the project plan and goals.)

The qualitative research tools:

Tim Sensing's book *Qualitative Research* offers excellent qualitative tools to produce reliable data. Of the three overarching data collection methods, I have chosen "Written documents," and I will focus on Personal Diary and the Questionnaires with the open-ended and yes/no/don't know questions.¹⁶⁰

I have written a personal diary all these years I have studied in the KFP-Sweden program. It was highly recommended and helped me with analyzing and brainstorming. I am going to keep a diary during this final year, too.

The Preaching Response Questionnaire with the open-ended questions is for my Parish Preaching Group (PPG) for surveying the reception of the sermon and helping in the process of research required for my project 3.

I plan to use questionnaires with yes/no/don't know questions after the first sermon and multiple-choice questions after the second sermon for those who attend worship to survey the reception of the preaching. These questions I am planning to do together with my PPG.

8. DESCRIBE HOW YOU WILL EVALUATE ACHIEVEMENT OF YOUR LEARNING GOALS. *(Provide specific descriptions of the evaluative instruments that you plan to use in order to verify your research method and determine the results of your learning and project goals.)*

The critical role is the feedback and evaluation I receive from my PPG through answering my open-ended questionnaire and completing the Group Response Form. This group is an active, supportive, and collaborative partner to my learning process and achievement of my learning goals. My questionnaire includes the following open-ended questions:

- 7) What did you see and hear?
- 8) How did you experience the sermon?
- 9) What image of God or images of God is there in the sermon, in your opinion?
- 10) Could you recognize yourself in the sermon? How?
- 11) Where is hope, or is there any hope in the sermon?

The following question is only after the second sermon:

- 12) What are your thoughts about your faith after hearing these sermons (has your faith grown, changed, etc.)?

¹⁶⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 80, 114.

An important role also includes the feedback I receive from the congregants listening to my sermons and filling up the questionnaires with yes/no/don't know questions. Last but not least is the feedback I receive from my advisor and instructors during the process.

9. AUTHORIZATION OF THE LEARNING COVENANT FOR THE PREACHING MINISTRY PROJECT

Advisor Signature

Date

Colloquy Professor Signature

Date

Student Signature

Date

Parish Project Group Signature

Date

ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching Program

PARISH PROJECT GROUP SERMON RESPONSE FORM

Preacher's Name __Leila Mänttari__ **Program Year #** _2021_ **Sermon #** _1_

1. Explain how the preacher and the Parish Project Group worked together to form this sermon.

The Chair led the discussion. We read the Bible texts very carefully and each group member gave their own insights of the texts. We listened to each other respectfully. We found it easy to reach a consensus on the main message of the texts.

However, when interpreting the Bible text, there were several points when we ended up discussing the various translations that our Finnish, Swedish and English texts offered. In some cases, we had to resort to the English translation closest to the original that we could read at <https://www.biblegateway.com/> to determine which translation was closest.

Leila was listening and wrote down notes for herself about the discussion. When all our thoughts were exhausted, it was Leila's turn to tell us about her preliminary ideas for the sermon and what she had planned to focus on.

2. Discuss insights on developing and preaching a sermon the group members gained as a result of working with the preacher on this sermon.

Developing a sermon in a group gives a richness that you cannot achieve alone. The other persons' thoughts give insights to new ways of interpreting the text. Although there are models and research made on how to preach, every preacher makes their own interpretation, and gives the sermon their own personality and focus. It is a hard job.

3. Discuss the extent to which the group felt the sermon achieved the purpose and met the goals expressed by the preacher and described in the Learning Covenant for this sermon.

Focus. The whole sermon focussed on the purpose: First Search God’s Kingdom and His Righteousness. It is inside all each of us. When you leave your troubles to God, he will take care of them.

Function. Leila drew examples from the focus group, the Finns who have immigrated to Sweden, who also were the absolute majority of the congregation. Just like the Israelites got all they needed during their exodus, God was there for us, too, even if we may have been absorbed by our problems at the time. Leila pointed out to us how we all had the same value in front of God, regardless of our nationality or lack of Swedish language skills. We all have the same way to find God’s kingdom, through Jesus Christ. All the points in the Learning Covenant were covered by the sermon.

- 4. *For Sermon #1:* What was of special significance in the preaching event either with the preacher’s performance in the delivery of the sermon or how the congregation responded to the sermon.

Leila speaks a lot with her hands and her facial expressions. This makes her sermon interesting and easy to follow. At one point she stepped aside in accordance with a method she had planned to be using, but the point with this sidestep evaded most of us in the reference group.

Leila talked directly to the congregation and occasionally included herself in the examples by saying “we”.

In Sweden, the Evangelical Lutheran congregation does not react in any way to any sermon, although some of us did smile at one of Leila’s clever word choices.

- 6. Summarize the group's overall experience of collaborating with the preacher on the sermon.
The group collaborated very well, the members and Leila were easy to work with, and everybody could say exactly what they wanted.

Sept 12th 2021

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Date of Meeting	Chair of the Parish Project Group
 Signatures of the PPG Members	<hr/>
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ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching Program

PARISH PROJECT GROUP SERMON RESPONSE FORM

Preacher's Name __Leila Mänttari____ **Program Year #** _2021_ **Sermon**
_2_

1. Explain how the preacher and the Parish Project Group worked together on the formation of this sermon.

Leila led the discussion. We read the texts and discussed each text. Each member told their thoughts about the texts. There was a lot of discussion about the suitability of the Bible texts to the key topics of Leila's research. There seemed to be very little connection. We saw it to be a challenge for her to combine these two.

2. Discuss insights on developing and preaching a sermon the group members gained as a result of working with the preacher on this sermon.

When working together in a team, the result is always better than any individual could have reached on their own. When discussing together, the message of the text opens up, deepens and broadens in our minds.

3. Discuss the extent to which the group felt the sermon achieved the purpose and met the goals expressed by the preacher and described in the Learning Covenant for this sermon.

We were amazed how the preacher had been able to find the connection between the Bible text and the goals of the Preaching Program. There was no discrepancy. The preacher prepared the congregation for the sermon, warning that she had set goals from the Program, in case the sermon would not follow today's texts, but this was totally unnecessary. It was made clear that we are all equal in front of the Lord, whatever our background and we should meet majority individuals bravely.

4. *For Sermon #2:* Note any specific, significant changes observed in the preacher's preaching from the previous sermon preached for the Preaching Ministry Project.

This time, the preacher clarified the situation with the Project Goals to the congregation before the actual sermon. This time, the sermon also finished with a prayer. The preacher appeared more secure and comfortable with the situation. We expect this to follow the fact that she was able to speak Finnish, her native tongue.

Last time, the sermon had to be in Swedish.

5. Summarize the group's overall experience of collaborating with the preacher on the sermon.

We are pleased to have had the chance to partake in this project. Our collaboration has been flexible, and we have experienced wonderful reciprocity within our group and the preacher.

We are impressed by the preacher's direct and spontaneous way of reaching out to people. Her lively presentations with vivid imagery and interesting content make the sermon easily approachable and keep the listener alert.

__2021-07-11__
Date of Meeting

Chair of the Parish Project Group

Signatures of the PPG Members

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____