

Prophetic preaching in a world of silence and taboo

-an interdisciplinary study between attachment theory and homiletics

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Abstract

This essay is about being able to preach on topics that are difficult and challenging and at the same time provide space for the listener. It can be topics that may never be touched on in the sermon but that people think about and wrestle with in their lives. To find out what themes were relevant in the context in which the essay is written, the question was asked to a group of people who are used to celebrating worship. They have had to think about what topics they lack that the sermon is about and which they would like to be touched on. The group has also been active in the preparation and of the sermon and they have give feedback on the sermon.

To find a form of preaching about the difficult, prophetic preaching is examined on the basis of four different homileticians, then two different ways of preaching are tried, preaching and testimony and preaching as a story.

To become more aware of the listener's experiences, attachment theory and metalization will also be used as tools.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Background

For a long time I have struggled with several questions that are about preaching, these are questions like What needs to be seen and said in preaching? Can I say that? May I say that? Do I dare? How can I do it? I have been challenged by them and I have been wrestled with them. In periods these questions have made it difficult for me to preach.

To find a way forward I started studying preaching and this journey started in Uppsala 2012 when I began the Swedish preaching program. I look back with great gratitude on that education.

My first project in Uppsala was about my struggle. I asked questions like: What was my voice in preaching?¹ Was I brave enough to stay in the church and preach? The parish I worked in was a bit conservative and I felt that there was an expectation of what was right and what was wrong to say. There was an expectation that the sermon would be apolitical and "kind". That requirement was below the surface, but it affected how I preached and what I dared to preach about. I wanted to break this when I worked with that in my first project in Uppsala.

The work with the project gave me a little more courage to continue working with preaching. In the second year in Uppsala came Professor Charles Campbell to teach us. I was deeply touched by his lectures and the way he talks about all evil in our world and all forces that want to silence that voice against the Power. He also talked about structures that gave legitimacy to the evil power without us noticing it. Professor Campbell challenged us to see these structures and direct the light towards these structures.

For me, this was a model that helped me to try to see and talk about difficult topics in the sermon, but I also felt that it was a challenge to preach hope in a sermon about difficult topics. For me, it was easy to be overwhelmed by the darkness and almost paralyzed by it. I was also afraid that my parish would feel the same way and only be burdened by burdens and, in the worst case, feel guilt and shame.

¹ Vilken prediköröst är min? [What a preacher's voice is mine?]

To move on and to be challenged in these issues, I chose to do my second project in Uppsala about preaching hope. The essay question was whether it is possible to preach hope in a broken world.² If so, I was asking, how can I do that? To find a way I learned more about prophetic preaching. In the project I sought courage to try to approach that way of preaching. I tried to preach more from that perspective than the congregation's underlying demands on me. It was a challenging but rewarding job.

In one book I read, *Predikan växer fram* [*Preaching is emerging*] by Maria Ottensten and Tina Johansson, they propose a model for prophetic preaching. They are thinking about the words observe, assess and act.³ These words come back to me. I think about what the words means in the context of preaching and what it can be like to preach with these words as a model. I think the words touch something I want, that the sermon talks true about difficult issues and not avoid the difficult perspectives of life.

The authors develop the words and makes a model for prophetic preaching. The word *observe* is described as opening eyes to the world we live in. That we must dare to see the reality many people live in. A world we sometimes do not want to see or denies its existence. The concept of observing is not about sweeping the gaze but seriously going into the shadow side of life, listening to voices that are not heard and taking these stories very seriously. The word *assess* is described as examining what we have seen when we seriously look into our world in the light of the gospel. Is what is happening in harmony with the will of God? How? Why? Why not? Where is God's grace? What is the gospel for the people in the world we see? The last word, *act*, is a question: -How should we act for God's will to be done? The insights we gained when we observed and assessed must be expressed in actions. The sermon is to liberate and empower the church to rise from the darkness of the grave and live in obedience to the risen Christ.⁴

I think these words captures something of what I want to deepen. So now I will take the next step on this journey. I want to open my eyes to see, my ears to hear and work for change⁵ as

² Går det att predika hopp i en trasig värld?

³ Ottensten Maria, Johansson Tina, *Predikan växer fram*, p 139, Verbum Stockholm 2010

⁴ Ottensten Maria, Johansson Tina, *Predikan växer fram*, p 139-140 Verbum Stockholm 2010

⁵ Ellison II Gregory C. *Fear+Less Dialogues A new movement for justice* p. 12-13, Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky 2017

it says in the book *Fear-less Dialogues A new movement for justice* by Gregory C. Ellison II. I am also stuck to the words “Once you see, you cannot not see”⁶ in the book. What can I see in my own life, in my parish, in my parishioners and in my community, if I really look? What has been silenced? What is ignored and what is taboo? How can I talk about that in the sermon? And in the long run, how can we in my parish find ways to make a change?

Focus of the thesis

The focus of this thesis is to investigate how I can preach on difficult topics and at the same time make room for the listener, two perspectives followed with me from my previous projects and which are becoming increasingly important to me as a priest and preacher. In conversations with parishioners, I sometimes hear that they do not want to come to church when it is the service because they feel that they are told that they are bad people. They feel guilty for something they do not understand, and the common confession arouses guilt and shame that it is difficult for these people to put into words. It can be expressed in words, I just feel lousy and everything is so heavy. Or I already know I'm a bad person, I do not have to come to church to find out. Some may also say that it may be nice in the church but that the service and the sermon do not affect them or their lives. The words of God's forgiveness, grace and love pass them by. These perspectives, to talk about the difficult parts of life but at the same time make room for the listener so that the person does not stop listening or feel lousy I now want to deepen in the context I am in right now.

Since 2019, I work as a pastor in Krokoms pastorate. Krokoms pastorate was formed in 2018 and consists of seven congregations that collaborate in different ways. It is a geographically vast place, and the parishes differ in some areas as the parishes were previously their own parishes that were characterized by their local traditions. Some of the local life remains while others have become common and still others are still seeking their form. A challenge that is common to the pastorate is the difficulty in achieving a regular worship life. There are 14 churches in the pastorate and 6 priests, the long distances mean that you as a priest only have time to celebrate two services on a Sunday. Thus, there cannot be services in all churches every Sunday, it makes it more difficult to create relationships

⁶ Ellison II Gregory C. *Fear+Less Dialogues A new movement for justice* p. ix, Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky 2017

with parishioners and it is difficult to build a living parish community. I think this is a challenge also for me as a preacher, how do we share the Word of God and the Holy Communion and how do we become together a living community that can work with, for example, social projects? I think it affects me in my role as a preacher both in how I write my sermon and what I address on topics. Maybe it makes me too careful sometimes because I do not know the church. I wrestle with the urge to talk about what is emotionally difficult and the fear of embarrassing or blaming the listener. I want to make room for the listener's own wrestling, give space to talk about the difficult and it would be completely overturned if I instead placed burdens on the listener. That challenge I experienced was touched on during the summer courses, in the literature and the lectures. It gave me a lot and I feel that this is where I want to continue my work. It also connects to the projects I did before when I sought my voice as a preacher and was challenged by preaching hope in a broken world. Now I also want to try to think of the listener, to talk about the difficult and at the same time give room for growth and hope. To find a balance here and challenge myself as a preacher, I want to continue working to seek that balance in this project.

The Thesis Question

My thesis question is

- As a preacher, how can I preach about what is emotionally difficult and at the same time give space for the listener's own life?

By that I mean how I as a preacher can tell the truth about life, name what is difficult, heavy, barren and hidden in silence within us. Issues that we deeply wrestle with but never talk about with others, events that we may be ashamed of even though we are not the one to be ashamed of. Subjects that may have become taboo in our lives, in our church, in our society and our world that rub against us. Topics and events that stand in stark contrast to the good life that is perhaps more often heard in sermons in my contexts. Sermons that paint the loving God but where struggle, doubt and vulnerability are avoided. By room for the listener's own life, I mean the sermon needs to speak in and touch on the listener's own life experiences.

To be able to answer the question, I will try different forms of sermon that can name what is difficult to talk about without blaming or disgracing the listener.

To seek answers to my questions, I will use some homileticians that have written about prophetic preaching because I feel that it is a form of preaching that takes the difficult questions seriously and at the same time holds a listener perspective. I also believe that there are psychological factors that are important to consider when it comes to how we listen and what we hear in sermons that talk about what is difficult. There are certainly many different such factors, but in this project I chose to write about attachment theory and mentalization. From that perspective, I would also like to briefly highlight the impact of shame. By shame I mean the destructive and threatening shame, the shame that is a violation of human integrity and dignity and that exceeds a human limit in an impermissible and life-threatening way. Shaming someone means that the person's perception of themselves and their reality is garbled and distorted. The shame can be experienced as if we are isolated and that we are thrown into a deserted landscape of exclusion, failure, and isolation.⁷

I believe that the form of the sermon is of great importance for how the message reaches and is received by the listener.

The project

The issue for this project is to try to talk about the emotional difficulty in the sermon and at the same time give the listener space for their own life. I believe that there is a need for silencing and taboo subjects to be visible in different ways, that words are needed. That the sermon tries to tell the truth about life. I believe that it is only when we dare to see and hear even what is difficult that we can start working for a change within us and around us, in the small and in the big context.

At first I thought of the books *How to Preach a Dangerous Sermon*⁸ by Frank A. Thomas and on the book *Fear + Less Dialogues A new movement for justice*⁹ by Ellison II Gregory C. Both books I perceive speak of social transformation and how we must capture, see and listen in depth for change to take place. In the books I read about prophetic preaching, they also

⁷ Larsson Göran, *Skamfilad-om skammens många ansikten och längtan efter liv*, s 17-18 Verbum Stockholm 2007

⁸ Thomas Frank A *How to Preach A Dangerous Sermon* Abingdon Press Nashville 2018

⁹ Gregory C Ellison II *Fear + Less Dialogues A new movement for justice* Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky 2017

emphasized that there is a need for action. We need to see, listen, and act. Those words have become important to me. However, I realize that I will not come to the concept of act in the context of the project. The focus is instead on trying to see, hear and put into words the difficult in a way that gives space to the listener.

The homileticians I choose for my project are Barbara Lundblad, Christine Smith, Charles L. Campbell and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. I choose these homileticians because when I read them, I think they hold both the preacher's and the listener's perspective. I experience that these homileticians do not defend the difficult but that they try to find ways to see what is in the hidden and hear what is silenced in different ways and dress it in words. I think the homileticians give courage to the preacher to dare to try, to dare to be a voice that cries even if it can lead to difficulties and conflicts. I want to take advantage of these voices and see if they can help me dare to talk about the difficult in a way that gives the listener power.

When it comes to increasing my understanding of the listener, I want to study attachment theory and mentalization. I want to read books by the psychologists and psychotherapists Anders Broberg, Pia Risholm Mothander, Pehr Granqvist and Tord Ivarsson. They explain the background and application of attachment theory. Attachment patterns become visible in our lives as adults and in order to see how the attachment affects us, I want to read about mentalization. To immerse myself in mentalization, I will read Göran Rydén and Per Wallroth. They are both psychotherapists and psychoanalysts. The pattern of attachment we have also affects how we experience guilt and shame and our ability to talk about and share what is difficult in life. To understand more about the concepts of guilt and shame, I will read Göran Larsson who is a priest and psychotherapist.

To learn more about the form of preaching, I want to read Anna Carter Florence because I want to investigate how the testimony can work when it comes to preaching on difficult topics. I also want to read Tina Johansson and Maria Ottensten who describe how the sermon can be written as a story. I choose these two methods because I believe that they can make it easier for the listener to listen and that these methods can open up for the listener's own life.

To delve deeper into prophetic preaching, I read Christine M. Smith's book *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance- Radical Response to Radical Evil*¹⁰. I appreciate the words Weeping, Confession and Resistance. I thought those concepts reflected what I want to try to access. The words reflect what I want to try to access and they also contain the listener's perspective. To get more perspectives on prophetic preaching, I read *Prophetic Preaching A Pastoral Approach*¹¹ by Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. The book contains both different definitions of prophetic preaching and different strategies around prophetic preaching as well as resistance that can exist in different ways in a congregation or in a preacher when it comes to prophetic preaching. I linked this to my project as opposition can prevent both the preacher from talking about what is emotionally difficult and the listener from being able to listen to what is challenging and what can be difficult.

To see, capture and talk about something that is silenced, I chose to read Charles Campbells book *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching*¹² where he writes that the Powers that be can make us feel completely overwhelmed by the darkness and thus become paralyzed by action.¹³ Here I also thought of Gertz Nolan's book *Nihilism*¹⁴, where the experience of emptiness and meaninglessness can make us passive and make us unable to care.

The experience of emptiness, passivity or an overwhelming of the darkness that exists around us also connects for me to the cognate field I have chosen, attachment theory and mentalization. I believe that there are many psychological aspects that affect our listening and our way of reacting and acting to the difficult things around us. Attachment theory is an aspect that I think affects us a lot throughout our lives. To immerse myself in attachment theory, I chose to study *Anknytningsteori Betydelsen av nära känslomässiga relationer* [Attachment theory The importance of close emotional relationships]¹⁵ and *Anknytningsteori*

¹⁰ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance- Radical Response to Radical Evil* Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

¹¹ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic Preaching A Pastoral Approach* Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky 2010

¹² Campbell, C. *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching* Westminster John Knox Press Minneapolis 2001

¹³ Campbell, C. *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching* s 36-37 Westminster John Knox Press Minneapolis 2001

¹⁴ Nolen Gertz *Nihilism*, the MIT Press Massachusetts 2019

¹⁵ Broberg Anders, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, Risholm Mothander Pia, *Anknytningsteori Betydelsen av nära känslomässiga relationer*, Natur och Kultur, Falkenberg 2006

*i praktiken Tillämpningar av anknytningsteorin [Attachment theory in practice Applications of attachment theory]*¹⁶

By reading these books, my understanding of what it does to us humans increased when we are not seen with a loving gaze or listened to. This is related to our ability to mentalize.

Mentalization is somewhat simplified about what I feel about what I think and what I think about what I feel. To immerse myself in mentalization, I read Göran Rydén's and Per Wallroth's book *Mentalisering Att leka med verkligheten [Mentalization Playing with reality]*¹⁷ and Per Wallroth's book *Mentaliseringsboken [The mentalization book]*.¹⁸ In mentalization theory, it is also about understanding that others think and feel in different ways than I do. I want to find out how it affects the sermon and see what defenses there is a risk that I as a sermon or listener take when the sermon's story touches the difficult in life.

Attachment and mentalization can also be linked to shame that in various ways makes us silent or wants us to avoid the difficult. I experience that there is a risk that people feel accused or ashamed when the sermon in different ways talks about the difficulties in an existence and life. If the experience is that the listener feels ashamed, I think that the sermon has missed its target. To see how shame and attachment theory are connected, I want to read *Skamfilad. Om skammens många ansikten och längtan efter liv. [Shameful. About the many faces of shame and the longing for life]*.¹⁹ If the listener feels ashamed in the sermon, I think it will be difficult to continue working with the act, which I think is an important part of talking about what is difficult. The purpose is for a change to take place.

I also think it is important how the sermon is delivered. What form can be used to talk about what is difficult without pressuring the listener? When I read about the sermon as a testimony, I thought it might be a form because it takes an inside perspective. To delve into how preaching works as a testimony, I chose the book *Preaching as Testimony*.²⁰ I have also read about the sermon as a story and I think it can be a method that works because it allows for the listener's imagination and creativity. Therefore, I want to read more about the

¹⁶ Broberg Anders, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, Risholm Mothander Pia, *Anknytningsteori i praktiken Tillämpningar av anknytningsteorin*, Natur och Kultur, Falkenberg 2013

¹⁷ Rydén Göran, Wallroth Per, *Mentalisering Att leka med verkligheten* Natur och Kultur Stockholm 2008

¹⁸ Wallroth Per *Mentaliseringsboken*, Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹⁹ Larsson Göran, *Skamfilad. Om skammens många ansikten och längtan efter liv* Verbum/Cordia Stockholm 2007

²⁰ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London, 2007

sermon as a story in the book *Predikan växer fram*.²¹ I have also wondered if it matters if the preacher uses scripts or preaches by heart. For that question, I want to read *Preaching Without Notes*.²²

Demarcation

When I first thought about preaching on difficult topics, my perspective was quite broad. I was thinking about topics that I see that are difficult to have a conversation about in my context. Topics that I know there are strong opinions on, but where the church in my context is often silent. In these subjects there are also strong opinions about what the church should say or be silent about from the different perspectives. Opinions that of course stand against each other. When I brought this up with my supervisor Dr. Niclas Blåder, I realized that it would be too difficult to capture in a project with only two sermons. When I, with Dr Blåder's help, thought further and my perspective narrowed, I decided that I wanted my PPG group to define topics that they perceived as silent and that they wanted the church to talk about. My PPG group is therefore very important in this project. The PPG will be my co-workers. The group consists of seven people, 3 men and 4 women who are all use to celebrate worship. I wanted them to be regular and experienced worshipers so that the members in the group could help me see the topics that are silenced in the church - what have the members of the group lacked and what would they like the sermon to highlight? I will describe my PPG group in more detail later.

Research methods

For my qualitative research methods for the sermons I will use the work of Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terru Dwain Robertson (M.A) *In quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*²³ and Tim Sensing *Qualitative Research: A multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*.²⁴

²¹ Ottensten Maria, Johansson Tina, *Predikan växer fram*, Verbum Stockholm 2010

²² Webb Joseph M, *Preaching Without Notes*, Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

²³ Vyhmeister Nancy Jean and Robertson Dwain Terryu, *Quality Research Papers: For Studens of Religion and Theology* Grand Padids MI: Zondervan 2020

²⁴ Sensing Tim, *Qualitative Research: A multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Wipf & Stock Eugene, Oregon 2011

My PPG is very important in this project. To prepare the group for the work, I send out an Open Questionnaire to the participants and asked about topics that they feel the Church does not talk about but that they wish to hear about in the sermon and wrestle with and together in the congregation.

After the sermon, in conversation with my PPG, I will use Group Interview with open-ended questions.²⁵ I will ask what they had heard in the sermon, what lingered in them and if they think that the sermon touches on the subject we together decided it would be about.

After the group interview, I will analyze the group's answers to see how they answer my question. I will do two sermons during this project. The biblical texts for sermon one will be Hez. 37:15-22, Ef. 4:1-6 and John. 17-9-11 and the texts for sermon two will be Jer. 29-4-7, Rom 13:7-10 and Math. 22:15-22 Since these are the texts in the Lectionary in the Church of Sweden from the Sundays when the sermons were hold.

Outline of the Thesis

In this thesis the context in which the research took place will be described. The process of working on the sermons and the work with PPG will also be described. At the end comes an evaluation and discussion of what happened during the project. The outline of this theses is as follows:

Chapter One is an introduction the project, here I describe the purpose of my project as well as the issue I have and the background to it.

In Chapter Two, the ministerial context will be sketched, from a broader view of the Church of Sweden, the context for these projects.

In Chapter Three some homileticians will be mentioned. Homileticians who wrote about prophetic preaching and who I think can lead me forward in this project

In Chapter Four some theory from my related subject, attachment theory and mentalization will be presented. It is included to increase the understanding of the listener's needs.

²⁵ Appendix 3

In Chapter Five, I will write about the method and procedure. Here are two different types of preaching and the work with the sermons and the work together with my PPG will be present. Here will also the feedback given from the participant and the advisor will be present.

In Chapter Six, the result and the Open ended Questionnaire and the group-interview will be examined and discussed.

In Chapter Seven, I want to highlight some concluding thoughts based on the other chapters in the essay and look ahead and try to see a continuation of the work that has begun in this project.

Chapter 2 The context

Introduction

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the context in which this project has been implemented. I will give a brief description of the Church of Sweden and Krokoms pastorate and highlight some of the major changes that have taken place in recent years. I am aware that this will be very roughly drawn and simplified, but I still hope that it is enough to put the project in context. At the time of writing, the world is also affected by a pandemic. I also mention something about Covid-19 when I describe the context.

The Church of Sweden

The Church of Sweden can be described as a national church. According to *Kyrkoordningen* [Church of Sweden Church Ordinance] the Church of Sweden must be nationwide. This means that Sweden is geographically divided into 13 different dioceses, 1329 parishes. Parishes can cooperate in pastorates. Each diocese is headed by a bishop. The Church of Sweden is according to the Church of Sweden Church Ordinance a democratic church and

there are elected church councils that lead the work of the congregations.²⁶ All members over the age of 16 have the right to vote in the Church of Sweden's election and members over the age of 18 can be vote in for various positions in the church council.²⁷

The church has played a dominant role in the religious life in Sweden. However, this has begun to change more and more. The change began when industrialization took off in the mid-19th century. Then the religious unity that existed began to loosen up. In 1860 it became possible to leave the church and join another congregation and in 1862 the church was named the Church of Sweden. During the same period, several major changes took place in society. Sweden began to be organized into municipalities and the municipalities took over several of the tasks that the church previously had. Here began a turning point between the church and the people and that turning point is the background to the breakthrough of the folkchurch or National Church idea.²⁸

The folkchurch idea became important in the Church and the theory was developed by Bishop Einar Billing (1876-1939). He became bishop of the diocese of Västerås in 1920. He wrote about the concept of the folk church which can also be described as a National Church, which he believed was the organizational form of the church that had the strongest support in the gospel.²⁹ The starting point in his theory is God's grace and that the church's task is to extend it to all people. God's grace is universal and is offered to all people unconditionally. The mission of the Church is to be a tool in offering people this grace. A man can not deserve grace, it is God himself who gives grace to man.³⁰ Jan Eckerdal writes like this in his book *Folkkyrkans kropp Einar Billings ecklesiologi i postsekulär belysning* [*The body of the folk church Einar Billing's ecclesiology in post-secular lighting*]: "The roles are clear: God is the active giver of grace, human is the passive recipient and the church is the instrument for the offer of this grace to be conveyed to every human being."³¹ (My translation)

²⁶ Kyrkoordningen, Andra avdelningen kap 1 <http://svenskakyrkan.se/kyrkoordningen>, hämtat 2022-02-07

²⁷ Kyrkoordningen, sjunde avdelningen §2-3 kap 33 <http://svenskakyrkan.se/kyrkoordningen>, hämtat 2022-02-07

²⁸ Thidevall Sven, *Mindre folk-mer kyrka? Möjligheter för Svenska kyrkan i en postkristen tid, Rapport 2 från SSKT:S projekt "Folkkyrka i minoritet"* s 8, Artos och Norma Bokförlag 2021

²⁹ Billing Einar, *Den svenska folkkyrkan* s 124 Sveriges kristliga studentrörelses förlag 1930

³⁰ Eckerdal Jan, *Folkkyrkans kropp Einar Billings ecklesiologi i postsekulär belysning*, s 71, Artos Skellefteå 2012

³¹ Eckerdal Jan, *Folkkyrkans kropp Einar Billings ecklesiologi i postsekulär belysning*, s 71, Artos Skellefteå 2012

The folkchurch idea was criticized, but at the same time it survived for a long time and affected the Church of Sweden in several ways, one being the view of membership. Up to and including 1996, you automatically became a member of the Church of Sweden when you were born in Sweden. In 1996, this was changed, now it is through baptism or by actively registering for membership that you become a member of the Church of Sweden. However, no special creed is required to become a member and the Church of Sweden cannot deprive anyone of their membership. Anyone who wants to leave the Church of Sweden needs to register their resignation.³² This background and view of membership in the Church of Sweden may be an explanation for the fact that many people (about 55% of Sweden's population) are still members of the Church of Sweden even if they do not profess to be Christians or if they regularly celebrate worship.³³ Sociologists of religion estimate, however, that the Church of Sweden will be a minority church in 2026.³⁴

In recent years, major changes have taken place within the Church of Sweden. In 2000, the church and the state separated and in recent years structural changes were implemented and many congregations were merged into larger units, but the Church of Sweden is still nationwide.

Krokom's pastorat

Krokom's pastorate belongs to the diocese of Härnösand, which is located in the central and northern part of Sweden. Krokom's pastorate was formed in 2018 and consists of seven different congregations that work together in different ways. The pastorate borders Norway and there is a cross-border collaboration with, for example, choir activities.

The pastorate is large in area (approx. 6800 km²) and sparsely populated with about 15,000 inhabitants (of which about 10,000 are members of the Church of Sweden). Most of the

³² Eriksson Anne-Louise *Att predika en tradition om tro och teologisk literacy*, s 15 Arcus förlag Lund 2012

³³ Sievert-Kloster Sohie, *Belonging Without Believing: 'Cultural Religion' In Secular Sweden* <https://www.taurillon.org/belonging-without-believing-cultural-religion-in-secular-sweden?lang=fr> hämtat den 25 jan 2022

³⁴ Thidevall Sven, *Mindre folk-mer kyrka? Möjligheter för Svenska kyrkan i en postkristen tid, Rapport 2 från SSKT:S projekt "Folkkyrka i minoritet"*s 11, Artos och Norma Bokförlag 2021

people who live in Krokoms pastorat live in the southern parishes. There are greater opportunities for getting a job.

The pastorat has 14 churches and chapels, and six priests work in the pastorat. The priests are responsible for one or two congregations. It is not a service in all churches every Sunday, it can mean that parishioners sometimes have a long way to go to the service. There are few people who regularly celebrate worship. About 1.9% of those who are members of the Church of Sweden in Krokoms pastorat regularly come to church. However, many people choose to baptize their children (about 60%), get married (about 40%) and to have a funeral in the Church of Sweden (80%).³⁵ This means that the priests still have a large contact area in their congregations and that many in some way still have a relationship with the church. There are several primary schools in Krokoms pastorat, but when the young people get older, they have to commute or move to Östersund, which is the nearest larger city. This means that there are not so many young people and young adults left in the northern parts of the pastorat.

There are also three Sami villages in the pastorat. They conduct reindeer husbandry and preserve the original Sami culture in many different ways. In the parishes where the Sami villages are located, some services are celebrated out in the mountains. The arrangement for services in the Church of Sweden³⁶ and the New Testament are also translated into Sami.

For many people, forestry, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and skiing are an integral part of everyday life.

Many people who live here live in small villages and many have a long way to go to their neighbors. Young people are moving, at least for a while, to finish school. Some move back and some take over the parents' farms. In the pastorat, loneliness is great, about 34% of households are single households.³⁷ There is also a culture of not talking about loneliness, emotions or existential issues. Few go to church, but for many, the forest, the mountains

³⁵ Pastoratsrapport Krokoms pastorat (Norra Jämtlands Kontrakt 2020) hämtat från [file:///C:/Users/HanPett2/Downloads/Pastoratsrapport%20%20Krokoms%20pastorat%20\(Norra%20J%C3%A4mtlands%20kontrakt\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/HanPett2/Downloads/Pastoratsrapport%20%20Krokoms%20pastorat%20(Norra%20J%C3%A4mtlands%20kontrakt).pdf) 2021-12-13

³⁶ Kyrkohandboken för Svenska kyrkan antagen 2017

³⁷ Församlingsinstruktionen för Krokoms pastorat

and fishing are an important place where you find peace and comfort. Many go out into nature, but there you are also quiet, feelings are not shared with other people.

A world of pandemics

It has been a different time since the pandemic broke out in the world. A time that has affected us all in different ways. Life has rocked and everyday life and security have been challenged in a way that has been new to many of us. The pandemic has affected people of all ages. Unemployment increased and this led to increased insecurity for many people, where children are also a vulnerable group. During the pandemic, unhealthy lifestyles such as alcohol and drug use, decreased physical activity, gambling and unhealthy food also increased, especially in groups with social and economic vulnerability. It is also possible that many older people were affected by anxiety and loneliness and that domestic violence increased and that more children and women became isolated in their homes.³⁸

Mental illness also increased in many workplaces. More people were on sick leave and the need for conversational support increased. There is a concern that persistent depression and anxiety will remain high in the future. Many have worked from home and become too isolated. For other occupational groups, for example in healthcare, the burden on the workplace has been too high for a long time.³⁹

The consequences of Covid-19 will continue for a long time to come, unemployment has risen and people who are far away from the labor market have difficulty returning. Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic risks increasing the inequalities that already exist in ill health and mortality due to unhealthy lifestyles based on social position in society. The gaps between groups based on socio-economic situation, gender, country of birth, education and where you live risk to increasing.⁴⁰

³⁸ Folkhälsomyndigheten, Covid-19-pandemins tänkbbara konsekvenser på folkhälsan p.2, publicerad 24 juni 2020

³⁹ Anja Haglund, Coronahösten: Psykisk ohälsa på jobbet ökar, Svenska Dagbladet, 14 augusti 2020

⁴⁰ Folkhälsomyndigheten, Covid-19-pandemins tänkbbara konsekvenser på folkhälsan p.18, publicerad 24 juni 2020

Everything that has affected us has also happened in a context of general concern for the future and what will happen and on top of that there will also be concern about the economy for many.⁴¹

Much of what affected us during the pandemic will continue to affect us, some of which are difficult to talk about, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, increased anxiety and mental illness. Perhaps it is more important than ever that there is a place where what we experience can be put into words and accommodated in a context. I wish the church and the congregations could be such a place.

The time of the pandemic has also raised the existential questions for many people. The grief has hit and come close, relatives and friends have been buried without us being able to attend. I believe that loneliness and the need to talk about the difficult and vulnerable in life has increased. We have been caught in a challenge that has challenged us in many ways, which has also given new perspectives both on the vulnerability of life but also on my role as a human being, fellow human being and part of creation. Over the years, perhaps other major events in the world have affected us with a different depth than before. When we do not fully trust our own security, it is as if we have become more receptive to the wounds that war and famine create. The anxiety and anxiety about an uncertain future also seems to have increased our tendency to look after our own and close our borders. Who should receive care and help first? How much outside our country can we care about when our own existence is threatened?

Life's vulnerability has become visible and come close. At the same time, loneliness and anxiety have increased. In that event, I also believe that the silence has increased. The Archbishop of the Church of Sweden writes in her book *Otålig i hoppet: Teologiska frågor i pandemins skugga* [*Impatient in Hope, theological issues in the shadow of the pandemic*] "How do we provide good pastoral care? How do we alleviate loneliness? How do we change the diaconry? How do we relate to God in this situation?"⁴² I believe that these issues capture many of the challenges facing the Church of Sweden. Not least when it comes to preaching. How do I preach about difficult and challenging issues? How do I talk about what

⁴¹ Anja Haglund, Coronahösten: Psykisk ohälsa på jobbet ökar, Svenska Dagbladet, 14 augusti 2020

⁴² Antje Jackelén, *Otålig i hoppet: Teologiska frågor i pandemins skugga*, p 7 Verbum Stockholm 2020

challenges and touches people? Can the sermon capture both the anxiety and the commitment?

Chapter 3 Homiletical Theories

Introduction

To preach about what is difficult to talk about in different ways, I want to investigate more what prophetic preaching is. How does the preacher perceive what is hidden and destructive in his context and how can the preacher name it? How does prophetic preaching relate to grace and transformation?

What are the obstacles to prophetic preaching? Here I think rather that there may be a resistance in a term destructive structures and silenced subjects because it can lead to conflicts both in the congregation and between the preacher and the congregation.

In the homileticians I have studied, there are all these concepts but named in slightly different ways. Barbara Lundblad writes about grace and transformation. She also writes about the importance of attentive listening to see and hear what is hidden and shameful.

Lundblad also highlights the fear that can be an obstacle to prophetic preaching. I feel that these concepts are repeated by Christine Smith when she writes about weeping, confession, and resistance. Weeping can be seen as a form of attentive listening and the concepts that Smith interprets them contain both grace, transformation and fear, and the resistance can be found in prophetic preaching.

Charles Campbell highlights the powers strategies and I think the powers want to prevent us from seeing and listening and protecting the silence. Here is also the challenge of seeing and listening and daring. These themes are also found in Tisdale. It is about seeing, listening, and daring.

I therefore want to immerse myself in these homiletical books based on these themes to find a way to both see and name what is difficult to name in the sermon in my context.

Barbara K. Lundblad

Barbara K. Lundblad writes in the book *Transforming the Stone: Preaching Through Resistance to Change* about grace and transformation. When she describes transformation, she writes: "The word speaks change-change so deep that nothing will ever be the same."⁴³

She believes that change can take place both on the individual level and on a larger level where the transformation covers entire cities or countries.

Lundblad writes that transformation is a gift from God, it is not something that just happens. Lundblad refers to Martin Luther. Luther writes in the in *The Small Catechism* about the Lord's prayer. Luther writes: "what does Thy kingdom come mean? It means, to be sure, the kingdom of God comes of itself, without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us."⁴⁴ There will be a prayer that God's gift of transformation will come to us through the holy Spirit and change lives of individuals and the congregation.

Lundblad also highlights the fear that exists as part of prophetic preaching. To avoid conflicts, we as preachers avoid what is difficult to talk about and stick to the known and familiar. It can be extra strong when we are challenged by transformations in our own lives.

Fear exists like a streak, but God takes fear seriously. The words "Do not be afraid" are often found in the Bible. The angel Gabriel who comes to Mary begins with the words, "Do not be afraid Mary". Jesus says this to his disciples when they live together. The words "Do not be afraid" are also the first words the women hear when they come to the tomb, then the angel tells them that Jesus rose from the dead. God takes fear seriously and so does the preacher. If the preacher does not mention the fear, people will continue to be afraid of different things, afraid of change, afraid of those who are different. Fear that is not named does not disappear. That fear lingers instead and turns inward as depression and outward as aggression and violence. If the fear is denied and hidden, transformation cannot take place either. The preacher's mission therefore includes talking about the fear that exists within us

⁴³ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 11 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁴⁴ *Den svenska psalmboken med tillägg* p 1723 Verbum, Falkenberg 2003

and around us.⁴⁵ If fear is instead named, a change can take place, but where does the transformation begin? Lundblad takes a starting point in the Virgin Mary's encounter with God. God comes to Mary in all her simplicity and weakness. Mary's song of transformation is grounded in her assurance of God's grace.

It is a different voice that speaks in the meeting between Mary and God than the voice that wants to transform people by talking about fear or judging people as sinners. A transformation through fear and awareness of our sins can only take place by a person repenting, but Lundblad writes that Jesus' preaching begins in another place. It begins by saying that the kingdom of God is near. When the kingdom of God is near, repentance is possible because God's grace is near. Grace becomes the basis of transformation, not fear. With the premise that God's grace is near, the sermon can then name what is needed to change. When the starting point is that God's grace is near, change becomes possible and such a change is not based on fear.⁴⁶

Lundblad writes about attentive listening. Attentive listening must take place both in relation to the congregation and to the biblical text. Lundblad highlights several issues that affect areas of people's lives that are difficult to talk about. She asks questions such as: What are there for pronounced and what are there for unspoken stories that need to be brought into the worship community and preaching? For example, how do parishioners talk about their own and others' work? What in that conversation is open and what is hidden just below the surface? How can the sermon touch on different fears without becoming judgmental? What shame have people carried on for a very long time? How can shame be lifted without people losing their self-confidence? What stories are there that perhaps unspoken say that people are not good enough? Good enough in the family, at work, or in the congregation? How can the message of God's grace reach through the message of the time that we must deserve grace and acceptance? How can grace become as visible as the absence of grace? This is an important issue both for those in the ward community and for those who have felt left out.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 17-18 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁴⁶ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 28-30 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁴⁷ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 30-31 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

The sermon needs to speak into different life situations in the congregation. When the preacher listens attentively, the listening will reveal deep wounds and shame that have only been hidden and concealed in the congregation. Some of the wounds are found in the preacher's own life or in stories that the preacher has heard in conversations with people. However, the preacher must be careful never to reveal what has been said in confidence. It is also important that the preacher occasionally stops and examines whether the sermon concludes and touches on different themes or whether any topic has been missed and needs to be highlighted in the sermon. Lundblad also highlights some important questions here: Has grace touched those who experienced a traumatic childhood and never felt loved and accepted? Has grace touched those who are wondering whether they can live longer or not? Has grace knocked at the head of one who feels ashamed or condemned by the Word of God? Has grace come close to the young person who is bullied and extradited at school? Has grace touched the one who feels that the only human value depends on being able to do the job you have? Has grace reached the oppressed and vulnerable people? ⁴⁸

Lundblad highlights various Bible passages that show what grace is. Among other things, she writes about Isa. 43:1⁴⁹ Grace is hearing your name attached to God's name and she mentions Ps 139:7-10⁵⁰ to show that God has mercy is present in the midst of despair and emptiness.

In the sermon, the preacher needs to seek grace both for her/his own life and for the life of the congregation. A good question for the preacher to ask is "what have people seen and heard that can make grace real?"⁵¹

The preacher also needs to think about the people who sit in the church but who may not feel welcome or belonging within themselves and those who never enter through the church gate. Lundblad mentions, for example, people who have always heard judgmental words

⁴⁸ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 32-33 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁴⁹ Isa 43:1 1 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/isaiah/43.html>

⁵⁰ Ps 139:7-10 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/psalms/139.html>

⁵¹ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 35 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

from the church, such as homosexuals, people who are divorced and those who are in the margins of society in various ways. She also highlights people who feel that their lives do not fit into the church, those who are ashamed of who they are and of their life stories, it can be people who have been sexually exploited, addicts, people who are exposed to violence or people who suffer from mental illness. Another group are those who are minorities, how do those groups experience belonging or exclusion in the congregation? Those who are in the minority may not always be visible, it can be people who belong to a different class of society, those who are single or those who are unemployed, or it can be people whose ethnicity is different from the majority in the congregation. Are their cultural expressions included?⁵² What function can the sermon have to change the church and make it truly inclusive? Lundblad writes asks the question: "How Can Preaching Help People Moving Through Resistance to This New Community?"⁵³ This is a question that hooks into my question. Lundblad highlights the opposition that already exists in the Gospels. Jesus builds a new community, which transcends the surrounding structures. He touches people with leprosy, and he eats with sinners. It created a resistance against him, how can the sermon reach into the resistance that exists today and help people through it? It is a challenge to move from the known and familiar to the unknown. How can the preacher do it in a careful way? One way may be to start preaching in what is known and then move on to what is more foreign, and which may be perceived as threatening to some in the congregation. If the sermon begins in the known, there is still a safe starting point. The same flow can be to move from smaller resistance to larger, here language also fulfills an important function. Language can challenge people to see and hear things in a different way. Does the language in the service reflect the diversity that exists in the congregation? Are different ages and cultures reflected in, for example, hymns and prayers? Preaching can be an arena where language is challenged, and new aspects are integrated. There, images of God and concepts can be angled and given other perspectives.⁵⁴ The sermon also needs to pay attention to those who feel that they do not have a place in the parish community. Is there an appeal in

⁵² Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 51-53 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁵³ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 53 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁵⁴ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 53-56 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

both the old and the new? For old and young? For people living in the city and in the countryside? An appeal to the people who have lived long in the fellowship of the Church and to those who are new? It is a great challenge for the preacher to invite people who have never felt invited and who may never have even thought that there is a place for them.⁵⁵

Lundblad also writes about how Bible stories can be linked to our time. She writes that the preacher is invited to listen to what the Bible text wants to tell us today. In what way is the text a living word to people today? The sermon becomes a meeting place between Bible texts and the context of the church, both of these areas have their own voices and both areas need to be examined with attention and care so that God's lived word is heard.⁵⁶ The sermon is more than using an old text, the communication with the text goes in both directions, and the text can be given a new interpretation that is different from the historical and challenge us here and now.⁵⁷

Christine Smith

In working on my project, I was also challenged by the three worlds that Christine Smith writes about in her book *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*.⁵⁸

Smith writes that in preaching at least three worlds meet, the world of the biblical text, the world where preaching takes place and the world that is the social context in which we live our lives and our faith in.⁵⁹ Smith writes: "It is nothing less than the interpretation of our present world and an invitation to build a profoundly different new world"⁶⁰

What then is the sermon for her? The words weeping, confession and resistance become basic for her. These words should be felt in the sermon, what does that mean then?

⁵⁵ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 58 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁵⁶ Lundblad Barbara K, *Marking Time Preaching Biblical Stories in Present Tense*, p 28-29 Abingdon Press Nashville 2007

⁵⁷ Lundblad Barbara K *Marking Time Preaching Biblical Stories in Present Tense*, p 30-31 Abingdon Press Nashville 2007

⁵⁸ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

⁵⁹ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 1 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

⁶⁰ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 2 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

Smith thinks that we must name the evil we see around us, feel it, see it and from there resist it and show another world. She uses the terms weeping, confession, and resistance. These concepts reflect how preaching should feel and be in a world dominated by evil. Smith believes that when we cry, we are really alive, then we get in touch with our deepest feelings but crying is not enough. The radical truth is also needed, it emerges in the concept of confession. It's about telling the truth about life and about our world. The sermon must be a voice where the truth is highlighted and named in as honest a way as possible. It is only in this way that hope can be conveyed to people. It is not possible to make false promises, the sermon must reflect the true world we live in. There must also be the Resistance. Resistance is also not just about a reaction to what we see but what we do about it. It is not enough that we just defend ourselves against the evil around us, we must move against it and through it. We have to see it, talk about it and act on it. The Church's struggle must be sustained. The sermon must become a transforming act that carries and equips the church to fight against the evil around us. Resistance is becoming a reaction to evil and a way of resisting it. That resistance can take many forms. Speaking honestly about our individual lives and how it is for humanity is a powerful way in a world that denies the truth in different ways. Smith takes as an example that when we have started talking about incest, violence in close relationships, sexual exploitation, this has come to light. Then change can take place. Namely, oppressive structures become a first way of resisting. The sermon must therefore tell the truth about reality. In that way, the sermon also becomes an act of resistance.⁶¹

When we take seriously what we see and break with the evil structures, we literally place our lives in another place. The sermon is about seeing and telling the truth. In preaching, the gospel also needs to be heard so that we can resist. We not only need to hear the good news but also have the courage to do it in the world.⁶²

Smith writes that the concepts of weeping, confession and resistance are metaphors for a faithful life. She urges preachers to do a deep and thorough social analysis that will affect the whole way of preaching. She sees in the work that different forms of preaching can be woven together. She writes that the congregation's stories are captured and described in the

⁶¹ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 4-5 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

⁶² Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 5-6 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

sermon, the preacher should not only hear about what the congregation experiences but experience and feel the stories that exist. It should be affected by weeping. When it comes to confession, that confession must also be frighteningly honest in order to have a true bearing on preaching. S. Smith writes that the sermon should point out concrete expressions of resistance and action. In order to resist, we must put all our resources and ourselves in the places where suffering is.⁶³

By using the terms weeping, confession and resistance, I think it is possible to build a sermon that touches on what is difficult and challenging to talk about. The way we work can capture themes and give them a language and a hope so that we have the strength to listen, see and act. Smith writes on various topics in his book, Handicappism, Ageism, Heterosexism, White Racism and Classism. I have chosen not to dwell on any of the specific topics she writes as because my PPG did not choose any of these topics.

Charles L. Campbell

The third homileticians I turn to is Charles L. Campbell and his book *The Word Before the Powers An Ethic of Preaching*.⁶⁴

In the book, Campbell asks the question of which forces or powers are in control of our world and believes that forces and powers must be made visible and broken. The destructive forces are built into our systems, so it is important to both make them visible and to work against them. The ethical context of preaching is the context in which we stand here and now, we need to understand how the powers work. If we see it, preaching becomes an active non-violent resistance to the powers that be that can equip the church to resist.⁶⁵

Campbell also writes about the strategies of the powers. He mentions different types of strategies that the powers use to maintain their grip and influence. One strategy is for the authorities to isolate and divide people into different groups and categories. The powers isolate people from each other and want to get people to compete against each other.

⁶³ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 164 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

⁶⁴ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching*, Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

⁶⁵ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching*, p 3-4 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

Individualism becomes an important tool for the powers. Appointing a scapegoat is also a way of dividing people, a person or a marginalized group becomes a scapegoat and thus isolated and allowed to bear the group's sins instead of the underlying structures being made visible. In the scapegoat strategy, some groups and individuals feel better than others and will therefore not act in any way to break the prevailing patterns.⁶⁶

Campbell goes on to write about the strategies of the powers that be and he mentions demoralization. He writes that when we see the problems around us, they seem so overwhelming that we simply give up and remain desperate. Despair causes us to lose the power to resist. Here, TV and media are a tool for the powers that be. The news often reports on major problems in the world and many problems at once. It is also a problem that most people cannot do anything about. It underpins our experience of powerlessness and despair and causes us to turn our backs on the global problems to protect ourselves instead of taking in what is happening and trying to act towards a change.⁶⁷

Another strategy is that the powers divert our attention from what we are in the middle of. We humans are so busy all the time that we no longer have time to think about what we do or do not do, instead we are completely controlled by our daily routines. In this way, the powers bind us and we find it more difficult to see the structures that exist around us. Routines and what divert our attention can also include different types of monitoring. Our computers collect information about us in every way and thus control our consumption. The stores and the pages we visit on the web get to know us and guide us perhaps more than we dare to think. The footprints we leave then govern our choices as consumers in a way that may be unconscious to us. Here, too, the powers have leeway to control us. We lean back and have a comfortable lifestyle that allows the evil structures to continue.⁶⁸

Even language and imagination can be used by the powers that be. The powers deceive us and capture the thoughts and fantasies of the people. This can happen through, for example, rumors, irony, rhetoric, and propaganda. When many voices speak loudly and at the same

⁶⁶ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching*, p 35-36 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

⁶⁷ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching*, p 36-37 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

⁶⁸ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of preaching*, p 39 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

time they become a babble and in that babble the truth can be hidden and the lie highlighted. We are confused and captured by the powers that be. Here, media and computers have a large and central role. We think we will be free but that is not the case, for example the job is always present and we can distract ourselves with different kinds of games so as not to have to think and ponder. That way of life drains both the language and the religious symbols. By draining the Christian language and symbols, God and Christian faith are also pushed to the margins and become meaningless and empty of content. The cross will be one of many other accessories in the fashion industry.⁶⁹

Another way for the powers to bind people is by withholding knowledge and information. Secrets and silence keep us captive. Parishes need to work to see areas that are quiet around and actively focus in the light on these areas and issues. Likewise, preachers need to be vigilant for topics that are silenced in preaching contexts. When there is silence, it is forbidden to tell the truth and the powers retain their influence.⁷⁰

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale

The fourth homiletician is Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. I can recognize myself in the longing that Leonora Tubbs Tisdale expresses in the book *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*⁷¹ when she writes that she longed for the Church not only to speak of its own faith but also of what is happening in the world, in our country and in our vicinity.⁷² In her book, she wants to highlight prophetic preaching. In her book, there are several different definitions of prophetic preaching. She mentions Philip Wogaman who writes in his book *Speaking the Truth in Love* that prophetic preaching does not have to be an adversarial or a controversial voice, he says that the word refers to speaking on behalf of another. The Prophet therefore speaks for God. By that, Wogaman means that the people have a window to the reality of God. Through that window, the reality of God can affect the people through the prophet. To

⁶⁹ Campbell, C *The Word before the Powers an Etic of Preaching*, p 40-41 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

⁷⁰ Campbell, C *The Word before the Powers an Etic of Preaching*, p 42 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

⁷¹ Tisdale Tubbs L. *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach* Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁷² Tubbs Tisdale L. *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p x Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

speak for another is to grasp, first, the mind of the other. Prophetic preaching thus draws people into the reality of God so that life deepens.⁷³

Professor Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelms says that prophetic tradition not only stands in the traditions of the Old Testaments prophets, it is also the tradition of the prophet Jesus. Professor Ottoni-Wilhelm believes that prophetic preaching is both moral exhortation and predicting the future. She reminds us that prophetic preaching must stand with everything created against that which threatens God's intention for God's creation. Ottoni- Wilhelm names three elements in prophetic preaching:

1. Prophetic preaching voices God's passion for others
2. Prophetic preaching proclaims the promises of God
3. Prophetic preaching points the way to new possibilities

By using the imagination, language can invite us to think about what it will be like when the Kingdom of God is restored.

Walter Brueggemann emphasizes that prophetic preaching is not just about addressing social and political injustice. Prophetic sermon is about a fundamental call to us as God's people to orient about the way we see the world so that we look at it from the same perspective as God sees it. If we do, our hearts will also burst over the same events that God's heart breaks over.⁷⁴

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale highlights some aspects of opposition to prophetic preaching. She slices that it exists an inherited model of Biblical Interpretation that marginalizes the prophetic voices in the Scripture. She believes that there is a legacy of the church not being political and that we need to deal with that legacy in various ways. The gospel comes with Good news for the poor and the oppressed and not as bad news for the rich and the powerful people.

Tisdale also writes that there may be an avoidance of prophetic preaching due to pastoral concerns for parishioners. By that she means that we know our congregation and we care about the people sitting there, therefore we as preachers do not want them to have to hear

⁷³ Tubbs Tisdale L. *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 4 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁷⁴ Leonora Tubbs Tisdale *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 5-7 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

bad news. Prophetic preaching often comes with bad news before the good news comes and it feels difficult to preach about the painful things to the church.⁷⁵

Walter Brueggemann also writes about this, he writes that the challenging, criticism, begins with us having to mourn what is not right. The grief over what is wrong begins with a criticism that things and conditions are not as they should be, the criticism becomes a cry over what is wrong and helps us to turn around and turn to the one who can help us.⁷⁶

Tisdale writes that the preacher can avoid prophetic preaching in fear of a conflict. There may already be conflicts in the congregation that you as a preacher do not want to dilute or choose sides in. Conflicts are difficult for many and we want to avoid them. Conflicts can also be a threat to the preacher. Both the conflict itself but also the mental illness that a conflict can bring with it with an increased workload and to be drawn in different directions. There may also be a fear that prophetic preaching may divide the church. People want to feel that they are coming to a place where they belong, a place that should not be as divided as society in general. Prophetic preaching can divide people and in that division conflicts can also arise.⁷⁷

Additional fears may be about fear of being disliked, rejected or made to pay a price for prophetic witness. That fear can have many roots, it can be about fear of getting rid of the work, being excluded from a community, fear that those who think in other ways will attack us and worries about what will happen to the congregation. Here the preacher needs to be brave to dare to do and say what needs to be said in the context.

The preacher may also feel inadequate and doubt himself or herself when it comes to tackling prophetic challenges. Those who sit in the pews and are in the parish have a lot of knowledge with them and it can be difficult to talk about, for example, finances if there is a well-educated economist in the parish. Thus, a lot of knowledge is needed to address difficult topics in preaching because as a preacher you need to know what it is you as a preacher mean and talk about. The preacher needs a lot of knowledge about different subjects and the preacher must get his or her nourishment in theology. People who sit in the

⁷⁵ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 12-13 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁷⁶ Brueggemann Walter *The prophetic Imagination*, p 9-14 Fortress Press Minneapolis 2001

⁷⁷ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 15-17 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

church need help to think differently and to think about what the Christian faith means and has consequences in life.⁷⁸

The last hurdle that Tisdale mentions is the discouragement that our own prophetic witness is not making a difference. Maybe the preacher does not trust that the sermon makes a difference, instead maybe the preacher only experiences resistance. Then we must remember that preaching can be a seed that is planned and not given up.⁷⁹

Tisdale also highlights strategies for prophetic preaching. She writes “Speaking Truth in Love.”⁸⁰ If the prophetic message is said with love, hearts will open and that is where prophetic preaching must begin. Tisdale also relates to what Lundblad talks about when Lundblad writes about starting in the familiar and going towards the foreign, it is easier for the listener to follow and to meet the resistance that can arise if the listener has a safe starting point.⁸¹

Tisdale also says that the preacher may need to invite the listener to change perspectives, to see the world from a different angle and to deeply understand the conditions of others. Here, the language and images are very important to open the perspective of the listener. Here it is also important that the preacher stands with the congregation and not in opposition to the listeners. Tisdale refers to Brueggemann who says that the preacher needs to stand with the congregation and together be challenged by the radical in the Bible text.⁸² It is also good to use the church's history and current mission as a bridge to a prophetic vision into the future.⁸³

Another way that Tisdale writes about is that the congregation can invite someone if they are involved in what the sermon is about. That person can give an inside perspective on the

⁷⁸ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 18-19 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁷⁹ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 19-20 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁸⁰ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 42 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁸¹ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 44 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁸² Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 46-51 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁸³ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 51-53 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

subject and how it affects life.⁸⁴ To avoid conflicts that are about misunderstandings and that can lead to people just starting to defend their position, Tisdale writes that it is important that opponents' position is stated correctly and with respect. Only when you have really understood what the other person means and got it confirmed by that person is it possible to move on in the conversation. Tisdale also mentions Campbell. Campbell believes that prophetic preaching goes against the power that opposes God's way. The powers then need to meet with non-violence resistance, it happens where the evil structures are lifted into the light and illuminated. One way to do that might be to use humorous language. One last strategy that is mentioned is a prophetic preaching needs to take place as a long-term work. Change takes time, both in our own lives, in the lives of others and in society.⁸⁵

Summary and reflections

After reading these homileticians and what those who have written about prophetic preaching, I think there is a lot that connects these homileticians. I experience that there are connections both when it comes to seeing and listening to the surroundings as well as in naming what is hidden. Everyone also raises the fear that can challenge the preacher, fear of creating conflicts in the congregation but also fear of being uncomfortable. At the same time, the homileticians give courage and inspiration to try and to dare. The sermon becomes extremely relevant and in the deepest seriousness - on life and death.

What I read reflects a lot of how I want to work with preaching and what I experience is the function of preaching. Based on these homileticians, it takes courage to see, listen and name what is difficult in a context. At the same time, great care is also required with the language and with the perspective. It is important to understand the power, position, and arguments of resistance in order to be able to find the evil structures that, for example, Campbell writes about. In the same way, a sensitivity is required to see both the way that Smith describes as weeping and that Lundblad describes as attentive listening. The work of preaching requires both the ability to listen and to speak in order to direct the light towards what needs to be illuminated both in my own life, in the life of the congregation, in the local community and in

⁸⁴ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 55 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

⁸⁵ Tisdale Tubbs Leonora *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 58-61 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

the outside world. In that, courage is needed in the preacher, but also trust that God's grace carries and that change is possible. I believe that both the structure of and the performance of the sermon play a major role in how the listener experiences the sermon. The listener can also feel resistance to what rubs in life being exposed and made visible. How is the listener then given the opportunity to follow the sermon and have the strength to listen to it? I return to this under Chapter 5 Method.

Chapter 4 Attachment theory and mentalization

Introduction

I have chosen attachment theory and mentalization as my cognate field. Today, attachment theory is considered one of the most important psychological theories about how people relate to closeness, protection and care on the one hand and independence, joy of discovery and emphasis on their own strength and ability on the other hand.⁸⁶

I chose attachment theory because I believe that the security we experience around us and carry within us is of crucial importance for how we can talk about difficult topics and how we can listen to what is difficult and challenges us. I also believe that attachment can reflect our relationship to God. Is God one who sees us with a loving gaze or has God erratic behavior and looks at us with a harsh judgmental gaze?

For me as a preacher, it is important that a person does not feel accused and ashamed when the person listen to the sermon. If a person feels ashamed or accused, I think it locks the person in a negative way. Instead, I want the listener to be challenged by what is difficult and dare to take another step to change negative patterns and structures both in their own lives but also in the church, in our society and in the world. For me, it is therefore important to understand and gain insight into the fact that we all function differently in our way of

⁸⁶ Broberg Anders, Motander Risholm Pia, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar i anknytningsteorin*, s 11 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

listening. We carry with us different experiences from our upbringing that affect us throughout our lives. To approach this, I will first write about attachment theory and the different types of attachment that exist. Then I will briefly touch on mentalization theory. I want to do this because the mentalization theory makes the connection visible in how our connection patterns affect us when we hear and experience different things in life. The mentalization theory also shows different defense mechanisms we can use when our attachment system is activated, and we feel insecure and afraid. These defense mechanisms affect the way we listen, both what we hear and what emotions and reactions it evokes in us. Finally, I highlight very briefly in Winnicott and what he writes about culture and play area. I think that the play area can also be a picture of what happens between listener and preacher in the preaching context.

For me, attachment theory is also connected with the Christian faith. Attachment is about being seen with the good loving gaze, we need it to develop into safe people. That bottom I think is reflected in the Christian faith - to be seen with God's loving gaze and grow as a believer. Not least, it becomes visible in the words of blessing. I think that the knowledge of that gaze also makes it possible to face our own sin and shame and gives us courage to see with the gaze that Smith calls weeping⁸⁷ and what Lundblad describes as attentive listening.⁸⁸

Attachment theory

Attachment theory is a theory that deals with close and emotional relationships and the significance of these relationships in a person's development. The Englishman John Bowlby is considered the originator of attachment theory. He was a child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. The study originated in what could be done for homeless children after World War II. How could their situation be improved?⁸⁹ Bowlby meant that all people have basic needs at birth. Needs that we as children cannot satisfy ourselves. All children

⁸⁷ Smith Christine, M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 4-5 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

⁸⁸ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 30-31 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

⁸⁹ Broberg Anders, Motander Risholm Pia, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar i anknytningsteorin*, s 16 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

therefore need relationship people to survive. Through evolution, human therefore brings with him or her various innate behavioral systems that aim to give the child the care it needs to survive. Examples of congenital behaviors are, that babies scream, and that slightly older children (about 3 months) can keep adults through their body language or smile. Bowlby also believes that humans have an innate readiness to adapt to different types of care because humans must be cared for to survive. One thing the child does to ensure his or her survival is to connect with one or more people in his or her environment who more or less regularly meet the child's needs. When the baby is about 6-7 months old, the baby has matured both emotionally and cognitively. The child can then store their experiences of nursing in memory and begin to organize these memories. The way a caregiver takes care of a child gives the child experiences of life and is important for how the brain develops. In the child's interior, mental experience-based models are formed of what it is like to be with other people and how social relationships work. The child's behavior and attitudes towards the outside world will be influenced by these inner models that the child carries with him.⁹⁰

The behavioral system that the child creates aims to provide closeness and security if the child in any way feels threatened. The attachment system is instead a cognitive organization⁹¹ as the child does of a certain type of relationship. The cognitive organization is affected by how the child is cared for by the close relatives during their first years of life.⁹²

The attachment system is activated when a child becomes stressed or anxious. Then the child receives the security the caregiver can offer. When the child is calm and safe, the explorer system is activated instead. The child needs to be in an environment where there is a balance between these systems to develop into a safe individual.⁹³

⁶⁴Aroseus Fredrik *Bowlbys anknytningsteori* Hämtad från <https://lattattlara.com/utvecklingspsykologi/bolwbys-anknytningsteori/> 2021-12-03

⁹¹ Cognitive schedules are basic assumptions about how the world works. They are based on our categorisations and their basis is thus our previous experiences. These often very largely unconscious assumptions regulate how we perceive situations and people, give sensory impressions a meaning and arouse emotions in us. They are cognitive structures in our psyche and the core of all our thinking. A person's cognitive schemas are closely linked to her identity, which makes them difficult to change.

⁹² Aroseus Fredrik *Bowlbys anknytningsteori* Hämtad från <https://lattattlara.com/utvecklingspsykologi/bolwbys-anknytningsteori/> 2021-12-02

⁹³ Aroseus Fredrik *Bowlbys anknytningsteori* Hämtad från <https://lattattlara.com/utvecklingspsykologi/bolwbys-anknytningsteori/> 2021-12-02

The development of attachment in a human being

Already during pregnancy, the fetus learns to recognize the mother's voice and other voices that are outside the womb, but the newborn baby has very limited opportunities to communicate with his surroundings. The scream is almost the only opportunity the very newborn baby must get attention and most adults react strongly to baby screams. Most people want to comfort the child in different ways. Then comes the smile that the child can also communicate with. When the child is about four months old, the child smiles more often at the connected person than at strangers. The child also begins to prefer to be cared for and comforted by a few people who are close to the child. It evokes a sense of selectness in the caregiver that is very important. This feeling can carry when the stress becomes great, if for example the child becomes ill and is awake a lot at night. During the first period, it is the parents' task to physically take care of the child but also to assist the child emotionally. Infants tolerate only brief moments of strong negative emotions and their own ability to regulate these emotions is very limited. The child needs the parents' help and support to recognize, regulate and harbor emotions. When the baby is about seven months old, the attachment behavior changes. Then the child can start screaming as soon as the parents leave the room and they do not want to be comforted by any other person. When the child then gets a little older and learns to crawl, the child can begin to regulate the distance to the parents. That distance can show whether the connection system is switched on or not. When the child feels safe, the distance can grow, but if something threatens the child, the attachment system is brought to life and the child becomes stressed. Here the attachment is reflexive different attachment patterns can become visible. As the child grows, memory and language also develop, which means that the attachment system is not activated as easily as before.⁹⁴ If the connected persons have been sufficiently secure and present, these aspects have developed in the child.

- The feeling that close relationships are important and the child can enter into close relationships without fear of being abandoned.
- An ability to regulate strong emotions without being overwhelmed by them.

⁹⁴ Broberg Anders, Motander Risholm Pia, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar i anknytningsteorin*, s 18-21 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

- An ability to see other people as individuals with their own feelings and intentions that you value and must take into account.⁹⁵

The child then begins to create notions about himself and his relationships with other people, these notions are called internal work models. Through the internal work models, the child learns to assume what will happen if the child acts in a certain way. These internal working models are important for our social interaction and the social interaction is very important for our survival.

For the internal working models to work, they need to correspond well with reality. As long as the caregivers work, it often goes well, but when the child lives in an unsafe environment, it becomes difficult to make these models work. The child then learns instead to adapt to his surroundings. The child must read to the parent to see what it takes to be accepted. This in the granting leads to the child having difficulty in the social interaction. The models the child learned that worked then, do not work in other contexts.⁹⁶

The attachment theory was further developed by Mary D. Salter Ainsworth. She distinguishes between three different attachment patterns safe, insecure, or avoidant and ambivalent attachment. Later, the concept of disoriented connection also came into being.⁹⁷

Secure attachment is described as a condition in the child where the child feels confident that the attachment person is present if danger or threat arises. Children with a secure connection seek out the connected person if the child feels insecure.

Children with an insecure or avoidant connection have experience that the caregiver is not really ready or willing to meet the child's need for closeness and security. The child therefore pushes away these needs if he or she feels threatened or stressed and does not seek out the connected person but, for example, continues to play. They look calm with the stress level is nevertheless high and their need for security is not met.

⁹⁵ Broberg Anders, Motander Risholm Pia, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar i anknytningsteorin*, s 22 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

⁹⁶ Broberg Anders, Motander Risholm Pia, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar i anknytningsteorin*, s 23-24 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

⁹⁷ Broberg Anders, Motander Risholm Pia, Granqvist Per, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar i anknytningsteorin*, s 26 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

Children with an ambivalent connection have experience that the connected persons are there but not to a sufficient degree or that the connected person behaves unpredictably. The child therefore does not know how the person will react if the child seeks security and closeness, they instead become clingy and demanding because they struggle to get their needs met.

Children with disorganized attachments lack cohesive strategies for dealing with insecurity and anxiety. Disorganized attachment can occur if the caregiver, for example, suffers from substance abuse or mental illness.⁹⁸

Religion and attachment theory

During life, most people have built up one or more attachment relationships that provide security and that enrich life. At the same time, human live with an awareness that security can be threatened by events from which no other human being can protect us, such as diseases and natural disasters. Belief in God can then be used as a connecting relationship, but even here questions arise. Evil things happen to people - where is God then? There are different religious answers to that question and those answers are also affected by a person's attachment pattern.⁹⁹ The psychiatrist Ana-Maria Rizzuto believes that man has a representation of God within him or her and that that representation is formed in early childhood and has features of the parents and other important people in the child's life. She believes that man can shape his or her representations in the same way as or in opposition to his or her parents and that the image can be colored by desires and needs but also by fear. God can be the one to compensate for everything that the child lacks and that the child sees as a God who loves the child. The child can also develop a belief in a God that the child experiences that the child is not accepted by. These images live on within us whether we have a living faith or not. Rizzuto distinguishes between God's representation and God's concept. She believes that the concept of God is created in our thoughts and influenced by culture, theology and philosophy. The concept of God has more to do with human reason, but she also says that what we experience in our lives and what we experience with our

⁹⁸ Aroseus F Bowlbys anknytningsteori, hämtad från <https://lattattlara.com/utvecklingspsykologi/bolwbys-anknytningsteori/> 2021-12-02

⁹⁹ Broberg Anders, Mothander Pia Risholm, Granqvist Pehr, Ivarsson Tord, *Anknytning i praktiken tillämpningar av anknytningsteorin*, p. 324-325 Natur och Kultur Falkenberg 2013

reason are rarely the same. The representation of God belongs to an unconscious part of human and this means that we can experience God differently from what we say, it can mean that we simultaneously feel a feeling of emptiness or fear within us but that we try to cover it with what we consciously think about God. When Bible stories meet human life, the inner experience of God can be affected, processed, and changed.¹⁰⁰

Mentalization

The English psychoanalyst Peter Fonagy is a central figure in mentalization theory. He defines mentalization as holding mind in mind. This process contains more aspects and it is possible to describe mentalization as the process that makes what we do, think and feel real for us and gives us a feeling of being in the world.¹⁰¹

The mentalization theory is based on the fact that all people experience life and reality in different ways because all people have different experiences, knowledge and interests with them in life. For example, the experience of a football match will be different for two people (A and B) cheering on different teams. Person A, who cheers on the team that wins will be happy and thinks it was the good match, person B who hopes for the other team may be angry and disappointed. Maybe person B thinks the referee was unfair or that there were other circumstances that affected the match. When person A and B tell a third person C about the match they have seen, it can be difficult for person C to understand that person A and B have seen the same match. The experiences and stories are so different. When person B comes to work the next day, the person is angry. Person D who meets B at work wonders if he has done something wrong because B was so angry and starts to think about how it is at work. Person D does not know that person B has been to football. This can lead to conflicts. To understand, person D must ask person B what is wrong in order to understand why person B is angry. When person D tries to get into person B's thoughts and feelings, mentalization takes place.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Okkenhaug Berit, *Själavård en grundbok*, s 168-169 Libris Örebro 2011

¹⁰¹ Rydén Göran, Wallroth Peter, *Mentalisering, Att leka med verkligheten*, p 89-90, Natur och kultur Stockholm 2008

¹⁰² Rydén Göran, Wallroth Peter, *Mentalisering, Att leka med verkligheten*, p 89-95, Natur och kultur Stockholm 2008

Mentalization can be described as seeing oneself from the outside and other people from the inside. To understand another person, a person must step out of him- or herself and his or her own experiences because another person carries different experiences, knowledge and experiences than what the person him- or herself does. It is these experiences and knowledge that make that person see and experience things in a different way. In mentalization, the person's own experiences and knowledge are also used to try to understand what the other person is saying and having been through. One person must therefore step out of him- or herself, but at the same time maintain contact with him- or herself to understand the other.¹⁰³

Different parts in mentalization

Mentalization includes many parts, thoughts, feelings, fantasies, desires, dreams, impulses and the like. It can be summarized as thinking about feelings and feeling about thoughts. The first step is to pay attention to something, judge it as important and become more vigilant. The second step is to then decide if what you have observed is good or bad. Should we approach or withdraw? In the third step, we experience a feeling, perhaps joy, fear, worry or anger. With that feeling also comes an impulse to act. If we feel joy, maybe we want to get closer if we get scared, we want to escape. Emotions help us to focus on what is important, to give meaning to what is happening and to be ready to act. Without the emotions, life would be difficult to interpret and understand. But we must also be able to rank the emotions, if a car comes towards us at high speed we must listen to the fear and throw ourselves away. If someone pushes themselves ahead of the queue, we may get angry, but we need to be able to put on a leash so that we do not hit the person, for example. The ability to mentalize helps us to take into account the consequences our emotions have for both others and ourselves.¹⁰⁴

Explicit and implicit mentalization

Mentalization can see both consciously, explicitly, and unconsciously, implicitly. The explicit mentalization is often about thoughts and feelings that you discuss with others or quietly

¹⁰³ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken*, s 11-14 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹⁰⁴ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* p. 19-21 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

with yourself. The explicit mentalization can be expressed in small stories and stories that we construct. The implicit mentalization takes place automatically or intuitively, we register, interpret and react to people we meet without us thinking about it. We are constantly moving between implicit and explicit mentalization.¹⁰⁵

Mentalization and attachment theory

Mentalization is related to attachment because the child's ability to mentalize is related to how the people around the child have been. Have they been able to create security and has the connected person been able to mentalize around the child? If the child has grown up in a safe environment, the child develops a better ability to mentalize.¹⁰⁶ Language and the ability to mentalize are also related, if the child has acquired a large vocabulary, it is easier to find words and express feelings and thoughts.¹⁰⁷

When a person's attachment system is activated, it dominates over other behavioral systems that person has. This reduces the ability to mentalize in insecure and stressful situations.

When the ability to mentalize decreases, three different conditions can occur. A person can end up in teleological thinking, psychic equivalence or pretend mode. In the teleological situation, the person forgets that it is thoughts and feelings that make the person act, and the person only sees the surface of what is happening. In addition, the person probably wants to do something to get out of the situation. In this situation, the ability to test reality is lost, the inner and outer reality are mixed together. Then misinterpretations are easily made, and it can make a person react strongly emotionally because what the person sees or hears is strongly influenced by the person's own thoughts and feelings. If a person has an ambivalent attachment pattern, it is easy for that person to end up in mental equivalence.¹⁰⁸

In the pretend mode, the inner psychic world and the outer world are disconnected. In a game, the people are aware that they are playing, but in the pretend mode they get caught up in unrealistic fantasies and thought constructions. It could be, for example, that a person begins to intellectualize what is happening to avoid feeling and experiencing. A sharper

¹⁰⁵ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* p. 28-32 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹⁰⁵ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* p. 43 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹⁰⁶ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* p.44 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹⁰⁷ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* p. 77-79 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹⁰⁸ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* p. 86-96 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

mode of pretend mode is shielding. Then the experience is narrowed so hard that the person loses contact with what is happening around them. The pretend mode puts a lid on the emotions and if it happens too often, life can be experienced as empty and meaningless. People with an avoidant attachment end up in a pretend situation more easily because it protects the person from emotions that are too strong.¹⁰⁹

Summary and reflections

When I have read about attachment and mentalization, I think that these theories illuminate the listener's perspective in different ways. The theories provide an understanding of how what we carry with us affects us as human beings and the processes that can take place within us that we do not have control over but that affect us in different ways.

I also see connections between these theories and the homiletics I have previously written about. I think of what Lundblad describes as attentive listening when it comes to both being present and seeing. The traits are also found in Smith when she writes about writing weeping, confession and resistance in those concepts there is a connection to the importance of presence and understanding.

When I read about attachment, mentalization, shame and prophetic preaching, I think of Winnicott's theory of a play space. Winnicott was a pediatrician and psychoanalyst and he writes about the importance of play in human life. He writes that psychotherapy takes place in two play areas that partly coincide, the patient's play area and the therapist's play area. Psychotherapy is about two people playing together and when the patient loses their ability to play, the therapist must return the patient to an area where the person can play again.¹¹⁰

Winnicott also writes about play and cultural experiences, that culture is something we value and that culture has the ability to connect the past, the present and the future. When such an experience carries us, we direct our active and conscious attention into what is happening without feeling that we are making an effort. In the small child, the mother meets the child's needs, when the child grows, the child can also use symbols that eventually develop into a

¹⁰⁹ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* s 97-100, Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

¹¹⁰ Winnicott, DW, *Lek och verklighet* s. 70 Natur och Kultur Stockholm 2003

cultural life.¹¹¹ The child needs security to develop and the child needs to be introduced to the cultural heritage according to the child's ability, development and age. Winnicott thus thinks that there is a third area for human life, that area is the common reality. It is not in the individual or outside the world. It is described as an intermediate area for human life. This intermediate area is a potential space that is carried by the child's trust in the mother experienced for a sufficiently long time at the stage when an independent self begins to be established in the child.

When I read about prophetic preaching and attachment theory, I wondered if this could also be an approach to preaching. The worlds of the preacher and the listener meet. The preacher has wrestled with the context in which the preacher finds himself in the biblical text and presents an interpretation, where the world of the listener and the preacher meet and in that meeting, there is a play area. An area where we as humans can use our imagination and creativity to understand the Bible story and try to translate it into our lives.

If the worlds do not meet, the sermon falls and no meeting takes place. The listener loses focus.

I wonder if the sermon can touch on this third area, our common reality, in a way that opens us up and challenges us? Here, I think, the form and design of the sermon also becomes important. As a preacher, how can I also convey the shadowy sides of our common reality without losing security? If security is lost, I believe that there is a risk that the room will be closed and that we will no longer dare to see.

Chapter 5 The Empirical Method and the Procedure

Introduction

My question in this project is How to preach about difficult topics and at the same time provide space for the listener? To seek an answer to the question, I have started from the

¹¹¹ Winnicott, DW, *Lek och verklighet* s. 170 Natur och Kultur Stockholm 2003

context in which I find myself and in which I have sketched earlier. After that, I studied prophetic preaching based on the homiletics I chose to use in my project. To increase my understanding of the listener, I, as my cognate field, have chosen to write about attachment theory and mentalization. I also have the concept of shame because I think it has to do with our attachment and our ability to listen. If I am ashamed, I can no longer listen and develop as a human being. If the sermon causes the listener to be ashamed, I think that an important part of the prophetic sermon falls, the one that is about transference and act. If shame strikes, we become paralyzed.

In this chapter I will write about the method and procedure for the implementation of the project. I have had a Parish Project Group and I have done two sermons with the group. I have recorded these sermons and sent them to my advisor Dr. Niclas Blåder. In this chapter I will present two methods for preaching, preaching as a testimony and preaching as a story, and how it affects whether the preacher is script-free or not. I will also describe the role that PPG had in the project as well as the process around the sermon and feedback from PPG and my advisor Dr. Blåder and a short reflection.

The Parish Project Group

My Parish Project Group consists of seven people, three men and four women. Everyone is middle-aged or slightly older. One in the group is retired, the others are still working. The members of the group belong to the middle class. All are well educated, they include teachers, musicians, and nurses. Five of the members of the group live in sparsely populated areas, one participant lives in a small community and one of the people lives in a city. Everyone has access to a car, which makes life easier in sparsely populated areas where distances are great and public transport is not available in all places.

Everyone in the group is used to celebrating worship in the order of the Church of Sweden. Someone has roots in another community, but that community is quite close to the Church of Sweden. Although the members of the group sometimes celebrate worship in different churches in the congregation, the services follow the same order and structure. All members are involved in the life of the congregation in different ways. Several of the group members

sing in the church choir, one of the participants reads theology and trains as a priest. One of the participants works as a musician in two of the parishes in Krokoms pastorat.

One of the members of the group has its roots in the United States and one in Australia and the United States. The others in the group grew up in Sweden, a couple grew up in the parish and have their history there while some others have moved to the parish from other parts of Sweden.

The group is in many ways a homogeneous group, at the same time it reflects the area where the parishes are located. I wondered for a while if the group was too homogeneous and that it could contribute to us in the group not being able to talk about what is emotionally difficult or silenced in our context because we all share roughly the same conditions. However, I chose to try with this group because I thought it was important that those who were in the group were used to celebrating worship and listening to sermons so that they could say what they were missing and do not usually hear the sermon about. I think it would have been difficult for someone who is not used to celebrating worship. In my context, there are not so many people who celebrate worship so there are not many to ask. I asked the people in the group during the summer of 2021 if they wanted to join my parish project group and we met for the first time on 26 August.

Methodology

To test how I can preach on difficult topics and at the same time make room for the listener, I have chosen to start from prophetic preaching and attachment theory. To then write the sermons, I have chosen two different methods of writing, sermon as story and sermon as testimony. I will describe these models below. I chose them because I wanted to test whether those methods could carry a difficult topic and at the same time make room for the listener. Here I will also very briefly mention something about preaching without notes.

In this section I will also describe the methods I used in working with my PPG. The methods I have used in the research are theoretically based on the book *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology* by Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson and the book *Qualitative Research: A Multi- Methods Approach to Projects for Doctors of*

Ministry Theses by Tim Sensing. The methods I have used are the Questionnaire and the Group Interview.

Sermon as a story

There are many different forms of stories. Stories can be heard, seen or read, painted or written. Listening to something is also something other than just hearing, it requires presence with all the senses. It requires an interest in the story, a commitment and a presence.¹¹²

When the sermon is a story, the Bible story is retold in a contemporary variation. The whole sermon becomes a story to deepen the word and the story becomes the way to proclaim the word of God. An advantage of the story is that it is easy to remember and that it opens up the listener's imagination and the story can live on in the listener after the end of the sermon.¹¹³

For it to be easy to listen and follow a story, it needs to be supported by a structure. The story needs a subject, a person. In that person we can recognize ourselves, reflect our lives and experiences and learn new things. The story also needs a place where the event takes place. The place must be clear to the narrator so that the listeners can step in, follow and be in the same place as the narrator. The third story needs are a real dilemma. A dilemma should be something that rubs, a problem that should be addressed in the story. The dilemma needs to be on life and death and deal with the question of what it means to be human. The dilemma needs to be hinted at the beginning of the story, in order to then deepen, reach a climax and finally be resolved. The solution may be surprising or unexpected. How can we find the turning point, the unexpected, in known Bible stories to make grace visible again?

In the story, the beginning and the end are also extremely important. If the sermon is a story, the beginning of the story needs to help the listener understand the dilemma that is the main question of the sermon. The introduction gives everyone a common platform to

¹¹²Skott Carola (red) *Berättelsens praktik och teori-narrativ forskning i ett hermeneutiskt perspektiv*, p 73 Studentlitteratur Lund 2004

¹¹³Ottensten Maria, Johansson Tina *Predikan växer fram*, Verbum, Stockholm 2010

start from. The preacher wants the listener to continue listening then introduction is important.

The end of the story is also important, the story does not have to end happily but it must land. The end must be a place where the dilemma is solved and where the story is linked.¹¹⁴

The story can take the same form as a screenplay. The plot begins with a poster or introduction that provides information about what is to come, what is the main conflict about? The introduction should make the listener curious and arouse interest. In the introduction, the listener also guesses who the main characters are. Then comes the presentation, where the listener gets to know more about the story's characters and environments, that part must not be too long. The presentation is followed by an immersion, where a feeling is created for the people and after the immersion, an escalation follows. The escalation is usually structured in three parts, here the dilemma of the story is first problematized, then the villain in the story is also shown as an "ordinary" person and the listener can feel sympathy for the person. In the third part of the escalation, the story thickens, and the tension rises. This leads to the last part, the conflict is resolved. In that part we get to know how it goes or does not go, it is followed by a tone where the listener can recover and calm his feelings. This is a method of enabling the listener to follow the story.¹¹⁵

Preaching as testimony

Anna Carter Florence writes in her book *Preaching as Testimony*¹¹⁶ that the testimony is a story of an event but also a way of expressing faith.¹¹⁷

The testimony tells what someone has seen and heard and what the person believes based on that experience. In the sermon the preacher expresses what the preacher has seen and heard in a bible text and in life then what the preacher thinks about it is expressed. There is no evidence whether it is right or wrong, but there is a bearing.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ottensten Maria, Johansson Tina, *Predikan växer fram*, s 121–126 Verbum, Stockholm, 2010

¹¹⁵ Ottensten Maria, Johansson Tina, *Predikan växer fram*, s 126-127 Verbum, Stockholm, 2010

¹¹⁶ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

¹¹⁷ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p. xiii Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

¹¹⁸ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p. xiii Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

Testimony is an old form of homiletics. It is found in Jesus' own words, in the women's testimony after they met Jesus at the empty tomb and in Paul's letter and the testimony has lived on in various ways throughout the history of the church.¹¹⁹

What then is a testimony? A testimony is a way of preaching and a way of living the sermon that the church needs to survive and to preserve its own identity. The testimony can challenge us, upset our habitual patterns, and make us see new things.¹²⁰

Florence refers to Ricoeur when she talks about the testimony. Ricoeur points out that Christian interpretation is not primarily based on facts but on testimony. Ricoeur defines the testimony as an act of testifying to an event and telling what one sees and understands. The testimony is the actual report that the person who experienced something tells. The testimony has two important components, the one who testifies and the one who listens. Only in the story can the listener judge whether the testimony is true or false.

Anna Carter Florence also writes that postmodern times challenge preaching as a phenomenon, what homiletical rules are there now? How does the postmodern view of society, the individual and authorities challenge preaching? Is it still permissible to stand in the pulpit and interpret the scripture?¹²¹ When preaching as a phenomenon is challenged, can the testimony then play a different role?

Anna Carter Florence emphasizes that the testimony is an early Christian form. The women at the tomb told what they heard and saw, and the Word spread.¹²² The testimony is an ancient form that carries its own authority, the preacher says what he or she has heard in the biblical text what the person thinks about it. The sermon becomes a wrestling with the text and the life that gives it credibility. The preacher is challenged and like Anna Carter Florence the preacher is also challenged. She writes, the preacher is prepared to "go to hell and back to stand with their people in this text."¹²³

¹¹⁹ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p. xx-xxi Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

¹²⁰ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p. xxi Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

¹²¹ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p. xvi-xvii Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

¹²² Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p.xvii Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

¹²³ Florence Anna Carter, *Preaching as Testimony*, p. xviii Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville London, 2007

Preaching without notes

Preaching without notes is a way of preaching, it means that the preacher has no notes in his hands and that the person who preaches stands free in the room. There are several reasons to preach without notes, one is that the relationship between preacher and audience becomes closer. Emotions are conveyed more easily and the preacher becomes more engaged. This also makes the congregation more involved in preaching. When the preacher preaches without notes, the language is also affected, it becomes more celebrated and easier to listen to. A sermon without notes invites the listener to participate in the sermon in a different way than a sermon with notes. Preaching without notes also makes the sermon and the preacher more credible and it can touch the listener on that deeper level, it becomes like speaking from heart to heart.¹²⁴

Questionnaire and Group interview

In the work with my PPG I have used Questionnaire and Group interview. I chose these methods because I thought it would help me to try my question. The Questionnaire had open ended questions and it was sent to the members of the group before our first meeting. I used open-ended questions because it invites the respondent to write freely.¹²⁵ I did not want to control the members' thoughts by presenting different answer options. The purpose of the Questionnaire was to prepare the group for the work we would do together. I asked them to list topics that they feel that it is quiet about but that they want to talk about. I also asked them what they need to feel safe to speak.

The conversation we had together before the sermon were designed as a Group interview. In the group interview, there is an interaction in the group's conversations that can provide a richer data than if everyone is interviewed individually.¹²⁶ I therefore chose group interviews so that I could see the group process. I thought that group interviews were a way to challenge the silence and that which is difficult to talk about. The group needs to explain to each other and put their thoughts into words. Sensing highlights various aspects that can affect the participants' answers, it is about gender, age, education, and what resources the

¹²⁴ Webb, Joseph M, *Preaching Without notes*, p.25-30 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

¹²⁵ Sensing Tom, *Qualitative Research, A Multi- Methods Approach to Projects for Doctors of Ministry Theses* p.133 Wipf & Stock Eugene Oregon 2011

¹²⁶ Sensing Tim, *Qualitative Research: A Multi- Methods Approach to Projects for Doctors of Ministry Theses* p.120 Wipf & Stock Eugene Oregon 2011

participants have. At the same time, information can also be lost as some participants do not want or are given space to express themselves in the group.¹²⁷ If I had had single interviews instead, I was afraid that I would miss important aspects of what is perceived as silent. To lead the conversation in the group interview, I asked open-ended questions and took notes. I also tried to observe and distribute the word. We started the questions by going for a round where everyone got to speak to the point. I chose to take notes myself because I wanted a passive role in the group so that their thoughts about what when silent or difficult to talk about would have space and not my own ideas. To prepare myself, I had read about different roles that can easily be found in a group and tried to think through how I would tackle the different situations. I supported Tim Sensing's book. There he describes different roles in a group such as the one who talks too much, the one who interrupts, the one who is shy and what can happen if one of the members of the group gets angry or starts to cry.¹²⁸ It was important for me to be prepared for that because the conversation would be about difficult topics and that conversation can affect us in different ways.

I think that the group interview is also affected that there are few people living in my congregation and that most people know each other in different ways. I think it can both make the members of the group safe and vulnerable. It will be a challenge to capture what the group is saying without anyone feeling exposed.

I also have to keep that in mind when I am writing my essay. It is difficult to maintain anonymity with so few people who are engaged in the congregation.

When I spoke to the group after the sermon, I also used group in interview as a method, I thought in a similar way here as in the preparations for the sermon.

Procedure

During the summer, I met some parishioners in connection with us celebrating worship together if they wanted to be part of my parish project group. I briefly described that I attended a sermon training course and that I needed their help in that work. After a while I

¹²⁷ Sensing Tim, *Qualitative Research: A Multi- Methods Approach to Projects for Doctors of Ministry Theses* p.120 Wipf & Stock Eugene Oregon 2011.

¹²⁸ Sensing Tim, *Qualitative Research: A Multi- Methods Approach to Projects for Doctors of Ministry Theses* p.121-122 Wipf & Stock Eugene Oregon 2011.

asked the people again and when they said yes they became more formally invited to participate in the study by a Letter of Invitation sent by e-mail.¹²⁹ With that e-mail, I also sent one open-ended Questionnaire.¹³⁰

The group first met on August 26th. At the first meeting, I told a little more about what the project was about and the participants sign the Consent Form.¹³¹ At that meeting, we also prepared together the first sermon that would be on September 5th.

Preparations for sermon one

When I met my PPG to prepare the first sermon, we first spoke about sermon in general. I asked the group what the sermon means to them and what they think the sermon is.

We also talked about the topics that the group wrote in their Questionnaire. After that, we started the conversation about the texts for the Sunday sermon to be held. The first sermon was preached on the Fourteenth Sunday after Holy Trinity Day. The theme for the day is the Unity of Christ.

We began that conversation with a Bible study of the texts for 14 Sunday after Holy Trinity Day. Texts contained in Lectionary in the Church of Sweden for that Sunday is Ezekiel 37:15–22, Ephesians 4:1-6 and John. 17:9-11. The group talked mostly about the texts from Ephesians and John 17: 9-11.

In the sermon preparations, I included the discussions the group had about belonging and what it means to belong / not belong and whether I get a place with my life in the church community. To connect the bible text with life now and with the theme chosen by the group, I thought about what theology would be possible. I chose to highlight the theology around the sacrament and the words that are in the liturgy, so we are many because we all get part of one and the same bread. I thought that the bread that breaks expresses a unity we are locked into and that carries through death to life.

I also wanted to connect my sermon with the literature from the summer residency course.

¹²⁹ Appendix 1

¹³⁰ Appendix 3

¹³¹ Appendix 2

I saw a connection to life as complete and broken. In the book *Nihilism* by Nolen Gertz, Gertz talks about different ways to avoid thinking about life and life's difficulties are self-hypnosis. You put yourself to sleep in different ways for example by drinking or watching YouTube.¹³² Perhaps from that point of view, there may be a temptation for the church's community to become superficial and pleasant. We are tempted to turn off life and thus also become silent about what is rubbing and hurting. In the end, we may also become blind and deny a part of our lives and our existence.

I also thought of grace and disgrace-to belong and to be excluded, to end up in disgrace. In the literature I read about prophetic preaching, I therefore wanted to connect to the grace that is described in different ways. How does grace really relate to the question of belonging or not? And how is my own image challenged in what it is to belong to and not. What does it mean in depth that we are one in Christ? Does that mean we have to be equal or meet a certain template to fit in? Here I could sense the fear that Lundblad writes about, instead of challenging, we want to stick to the known and familiar and not threaten what makes us on the surface feel safe. Lundblad writes that if the preacher, instead of refraining from talking about the difficult, names it and at the same time highlights grace, change can be possible.¹³³ In my preparations, I wanted to look in that direction. It also felt important to think about Lundblad's question about what there are unspoken stories that need to be brought into the worship community. That question had also become relevant in my PPG when one of the participants expressed: "...Here I come to church with my life as it is, but I always wonder if I fit in with all of me and all that I am"¹³⁴ (My translation)

In that expression, I also thought that there was a connection to Christine Smith's words weeping, confession and resistance. As a preacher, do I really see my parishioners and their context? Am I crying with them? How do I tell the truth about life? Can I call the painful life as it is? How can I show hope in that? Smith writes that when the truth is highlighted, hope can also become visible,¹³⁵ how do I highlight the truth here?

¹³² Nolen Gertz, *Nihilism* 52, the MIT Press Massachusetts 2019

¹³³ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming The Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 28-30 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

¹³⁴ Informant 3

¹³⁵ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 4-6 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

Campbell talks about the different strategies of the Powers¹³⁶ and just thought of the concept of unity, against it stands the concepts of division and loneliness. People are isolated in different situations in life, how could I name it?

Tisdale writes about changing perspectives, the listener needs to be invited and change perspectives to see other people's images. Here she emphasizes the importance of language and images. What could I use for pictures in my sermon to accommodate both unity-division and loneliness-community. What are the supporting images and words about grace? ¹³⁷

In connection with my cognate field, I thought about attachment, shame and the roots of shame.

A child needs to be seen and reflected in adults in order to grow and develop. In the mirror, the child does not primarily see anyone else but himself or herself. The child needs to be able to reflect him- or herself in the parents and there also be allowed to be in accepting love and confirmation. That reflection, together with the fact that the basic needs are met, makes the child grow and feel a sense of belonging. The child then develops into a safe individual. If the security of the child in various ways is deficient, different feelings of shame are aroused. Shame can create a feeling that I am not allowed to belong, that I am not good enough, that I am not worthy of being loved and it can be hidden in silence.¹³⁸ That feeling, I think, also affects how I can listen and what defenses are at risk of being activated in me if I feel insecure. According to the mentalization theory, thoughts can also go further in what I think others think of me. I can lose my ability to test reality so that the inner and outer reality mix together and then easily make misinterpretations of what I hear and what I feel and think.¹³⁹

After wrestling with this, I want in my sermon try to name life when it is very difficult, connect to the fact that God is present, that grace carries us and that God endures life and

¹³⁶ Campbell Charles *The Word before the Powers an Eitic of preaching*, p 35-36 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

¹³⁷ Tubbs Tisdale L. *Prophetic preaching A Pastoral Approach*, p 51-53 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 2010

¹³⁸ Göran Larsson, *Skamfilad-om skammens många ansikten och längtan efter liv* 35-40, Verbum Stockholm 2007

¹³⁹ Wallroth Per, *Mentaliseringsboken* s 86-96 Karneval förlag Stockholm 2016

looks at us with a loving and accepting gaze. We are not excluded from God's fellowship when our lives are broken, and we are not ashamed of God.

The form of the sermon

In the sermon, I wanted to reflect what we talked about in the group, but at the same time I wanted to be careful with the group. It was important for me not to let anyone out because the congregation have few members, and everyone knows a lot about each other in the countryside.

I thought about how I could preach about belonging so that the sermon would not exclude anyone or present a template for how to be or believe to be included. I chose to use the testimony because I thought it carries a certainty of belonging to something, that the story is owned by the narrator. I also thought that if I started from my own story, I could weave in and at the same time protect the group's story.

I therefore took my starting point in a meeting I had with a person who was just then suffering from the pain of life. In that way, I wanted to open up a place for vulnerability and brokenness to take place and for it to be named. I think that brokenness is something we all experience in life and that it is something we try to hide and something that can make us alone, either that we are excluded from a community or that we exclude ourselves.

This time I chose not to invite questions or testimony to the congregation because I did not want to change the "usual" form of the sermon, that is, the priest stands and speaks and talks about a theme. I wanted to investigate whether the personal story could touch and open up for people to dare to feel that they get a place as it is and that they are part of a larger context.

Sermon Purpose Statement

A sermon purpose statement was worded as follows:

Situation: I have taken as my starting point the conversation we had in my PPG. They often felt that the sermon did not touch them, that what was said did not deepen and that it

would mostly be nice. Someone felt that life did not fit and the form of the sermon was challenged.

Goal: I want those who listen to the sermon to feel that their whole life has a place in church. That God's grace carries in everything, to tell the truth about life is grace. That life does not have to be beautified to fit in.

Sentence: I want to take life when it is most difficult as a starting point and show through the story of Gethsemane and the Lord's Supper that God is there and shares life with us.

Feedback and reflection

Feedback from PPG

In the evaluation of the sermon I first asked the group what they had heard. In order for everyone in the group to speak, we did a round. I also asked if the group thought the sermon touched on something that was silent about.

All members were involved in the conversation, we went round, and I actively tried to give the floor to the one who was a little quieter and to feedback what the person said to other stories to raise everyone's voices. The group's different thoughts and experience of celebrating Mass differed and influenced how they had understood the connection between the unit and the bread.

The members of the group generally felt that they had been affected by the sermon and that they had felt that the brokenness and the pain of life took place. They had reflected on their own lives and felt that they had a place in the sermon. Several members of the group could refer to difficult events they had been through, but also to being the person standing next to. They could feel that feeling of powerlessness and not being able to do anything to comfort and that it is difficult to be there.

They felt that there was a theological connection to the vulnerability of life and to the vulnerability of Jesus in Gethsemane. The connection to fellowship and exclusion existed, but it connected it more to our conversation before the sermon and the headline do Sunday than to the biblical text from the Gospel of John.

The form of the sermon

The group said they were affected by the sermon. The group wanted more and longer breaks, for example, stop and give time according to the sentence: "the man had his hood up..." The picture had aroused thoughts and fantasies about what happened and who the man was. The story of the meeting aroused interest and curiosity and made the sermon touching. In the man and in being the one next to him, his own life could also be accommodated. No one in the group said they experienced shame or guilt in the sermon, it was more of a challenge to dare to be close to the person who suffers from difficult events in life. It was perceived as comforting that it was enough to be present. That thought could give courage to dare to be there.

Feedback from my advisor Dr. Niclas Blåder

I had filmed my sermon and sent the film to my advisor Dr. Niclas Blåder. He felt that he felt safe as a listener but wondered if calm could be an expression of intellectualization. That the calm means that the message that God is really in the difficult does not really reach the listener. The body and the intensity do not show how important I as a preacher think the message is. Here, the script can also be in between the preacher and the listener. It creates a distance to the message. As for the content of the sermon, my supervisor perceives that I want to point out God's role in loneliness. That God is with us even if we do not believe it and that it is important that another human being is there even if we can only share the silence. He reflects on whether the image of Gethsemane holds, Jesus did not want the disciples to protect him, Jesus went into the suffering that awaited him. For most people it's different, we do not want to go into suffering and Dr. Niclas Blåder highlights the Theodicy problem here, why does God not do anything? If God has all the power, just say I'm with you in grief and do nothing about the grief in depth - what does it give for the image of God? Had it needed to be addressed in the sermon?

Dr. Niclas Blåder sends with a several thoughts that I want to reflect on and work with. How to present something so that it feels important to the listener and how to theologically in a sermon form can process questions that have no answer but can still take the listener further in the listener's own reflection.

My own reflection

From what PPG experienced that they heard and reflected on in the sermon, I take with me that some pictures carry, for example the man with the hood but that others are more difficult to connect such as the Lord's Supper. I take with me that the group generally felt that the sermon was relevant and that there was a connection to life and that they felt that the sermon touched different parts of their lives. I want to work further with how the sermon is carried out in terms of tempo, emphases, and breaks.

I also take with me what my supervisor challenged me in both in terms of form and content. I want the struggle in life and the struggle with God to be visible and to take place in a clearer way than it did in this sermon. I want to try not to bother with answers but to stay in the wrestling and the questions. I want the wrestling with evil and why God does not seem to do anything in any way to be visible and allowed to take place.

When I thought about my sermon in relation to my cognate field, I wondered if the distance can have to do with my own mentalizing ability. Maybe my own defense started when I thought about what it was like when I met that man with whom the sermon begins. Maybe I ended up in the pretend situation - the problem became too difficult and I defended by making an intellectualization of the answer. An intellectualization that created a distance to let the difficult take place both in words, in the body and to the emotions that could affect the listener.

Before sermon two, I want to be challenged by this. I want to make it script-free to see how it affects both me as a preacher and the listener.

Sermon two

I had my second sermon on Sunday, October 24th, the 21st Sunday after the Trinity. The theme for the day was social responsibility and the text in the lectionary come from Jeremiah 29:4-7, Romans 13:7-10 and Matthew 22:15-22.

The sermon was also the sermon for the Elective course "Preaching and the Problem of Evil".

Preparations for sermon two

I met my PPG on October 13 in the parish home. The group was happy to see each other again and I felt that there is now a sense of security in the group. I reminded the group that together we were looking for a topic that they found difficult to talk about in church but that they wanted the church to talk about. The participants remembered it from the last meeting and they expressed that they were looking forward to the evening and we quickly started talking about the texts for Sunday 24 October. Then it's 21 Sunday after the Trinity and the theme is social responsibility. The texts are taken from: Jeremiah 29:4-7, Romans 13:7-10 and Matthew 22:15-22.

The group talked a lot about Loving your neighbor - loving yourself. The group experienced that the sermon was often about loving one's neighbor - but that there was no room to think about what it means to love oneself. It is almost considered something ugly and shameful, as if one is selfish and narcissistic, but is it really the same thing? The group talked a lot about how and if it was possible to love one's neighbor if one did not in any way love oneself and what it brings to us when we cannot love ourselves but drown in self-contempt. The group also considered how loving oneself goes hand in hand with the Christian faith where the needs of the neighbor are at the center. It became apparent in the conversation that life is often a wrestling match and that we can often think about our own value as human beings. During the conversation with PPG came to mind Jacob in Gen. 32 Jacob is filled with emotion that night, he has sent his relatives away. He is afraid, he has anguish, guilt maybe also shames and self-loathing. Then he wrestles with God. He does not flee He wrestles, and he refuses to let go of God without first being blessed. What courage! Can that story also reflect the struggle I heard in my PPG?

I wanted to connect my sermon with the literature from the summer residency course. I thought of Thomas G. Long's book *What Shall We Say? Evil, Suffering and the Crisis of Faith*. There is a chapter in the book called "Fellow Pilgrims"¹⁴⁰. There he writes about different people's attempts to interpret and the evil that happens in life and why people have to suffer. There are different wrestling and angles described but no simple answers.¹⁴¹ I

¹⁴⁰ Long Thomas G. *What Shall We Say? Evil, suffering and the crisis of faith*, p 57-92 2011 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan

¹⁴¹ Long, Thomas G, *What Shall We Say Evil Suffering and The Crisis of Faith*, p.57-92 2011 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan

thought many are struggling with the same question, why has all this happened and why is God so silent?

In the book *Preaching the Headlines: Possibilities and Pitfalls* writes Lisa Thompson "*Preaching is a practice of faith*".¹⁴² I think that sentence captures some of what I want with my sermon. That the sermon should both tell the truth about life and the world but also that it should give courage for change. That in the sermon there should be a bridge between faith and life. I had also heard that wish in my PPG. Thompson writes that sermon goes awry if the sermon does not name what is happening right now in human surroundings. Which is the ethical responsibility of what is happening around us?¹⁴³ There are no boundaries between pastoral care and the struggle for justice when we see how the world is compared to how it could be. The preacher has no answers on how all problems should be solved, but the preacher can invite a different way of thinking and acting so that we become more committed people no matter how great the difficulties are in the problem that exists around us. That approach helps ward members become agents to think critically about the context in which they find themselves so that the ward can fight for social transformations.¹⁴⁴

I think it's about being seen and taken advantage of, but also about the congregation practicing together to see what is rubbing that we might rather close our eyes to. To close one's eyes and ignore are strong power factors or for how people beneath the surface feel.

Gregory C. Ellison II writes about the importance of being seen. He refers to the psychologist William James who highlights the destructive feelings that arise in a person when people remain unseen. James calls it to be cut dead. If no one sees us when we come or notices that we are there, we become like the dead, to be treated is like torture. Human is a social being who needs to be seen and be part of a community.¹⁴⁵ Belonging to a community is a basic human need. It means being with other people in a sufficiently stable environment for us to care for each other.

Maybe one of the methods in the book *Fear+Less Dialogues A New Movement For Justice* also used for the congregation to look at the community and the people around them. I'm

¹⁴² Thompson Lisa L. *Preaching the Headlines Possibilities and Pitfalls* p. 11 2021 Fortress Press Minneapolis

¹⁴³ Thompson Lisa L. *Preaching the Headlines Possibilities and Pitfalls* p. 12 2021 Fortress Press Minneapolis

¹⁴⁴ Thompson Lisa L. *Preaching the Headlines Possibilities and Pitfalls* p. 15-16 2021 Fortress Press Minneapolis

¹⁴⁵ Ellison Gregory C. *Fear+Less Dialogues A new Movement for Justice* p. 72-73 2017 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky

thinking of “The Long loving look at the real”.¹⁴⁶ The book describes the method as two people looking at each other or at a picture of another human being. It's about real seeing the other as human. The gaze is then followed by three questions: Who did you see? Who didn't you hear? Where is hope?¹⁴⁷ I wonder if it could also be a method that the parishioners could use to see the context the church is in. What is there that needs to be listened to? What does the church need to see? What / who needs to be included in a community in order not to be cut dead?

Where is the hope? How can it grow? Here I also think of Thomson's book when she writes about what is behind the headlines. If the headline is about abuse in a family, if we look deeper, there are also many other stories in that headline. There is a history of domestic violence, of violence against children, of the lack of protection for women and children, of the equal value and right of all human beings.¹⁴⁸ Could it also be a way to let those we do not otherwise talk about be heard? To stop at the headlines and see what they hold for more dimensions and what the headlines do not talk about?

Based on the homileticians and their books that I have chosen to include in this project, I was thinking about what Lundblad writes about transformation. She believes that change can take place both on the individual level and on a larger level.¹⁴⁹ I also wanted to use what Lundblad describes as attentive listening¹⁵⁰, what could I hear my PPG talk about between the lines and what could I hear between the lines in the bible text? How can the sermon touch on different fears without becoming judgmental? What shame have people carried during their lives? What wounds are within us? Has grace had a chance to touch them? Has it touched on the difficult experiences that we hide deep within us?¹⁵¹

Smith also writes about how we speak honestly both about the world and about individual lives. She believes that we must dare to speak the truth about the hardships that take place

¹⁴⁶ ¹⁴⁶ Ellison Gregory C. *Fear+Less Dialogues A new Movement for Justice*, p. 95 2017 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky

¹⁴⁷ Ellison Gregory C. *Fear+Less Dialogues A new Movement for Justice* p. 96-97 2017 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky

¹⁴⁸ Thompson Lisa L *Preaching the Headlines Possibilities and pitfalls*, p. 31 2021 Fortress Press Minneapolis

¹⁴⁹ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming The Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p. 11 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

¹⁵⁰ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming The Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p. 30-31 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

¹⁵¹ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming The Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 30-31 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

within the walls of the home, such as violence in close relationships and sexual exploitation. When this is brought to light, a change can take place. Namely calling reality is a way of resisting. When the sermon speaks the truth, it also becomes an act of resistance.¹⁵² Smith also writes about the importance of doing a social analysis that influences preaching. She believes that in that work, different forms of sermon can be woven together, and she emphasizes that the congregation's stories need to be highlighted in the sermon.¹⁵³ What stories had I heard in my PPG that I could highlight and name as true as possible in my sermon?

When I thought about the stories I heard, I thought about what Campbell writes about power. That we appoint a scapegoat and blame it instead of seeing the structures behind it¹⁵⁴- could it be reflected here? I also thought about what he writes that the powers can in different ways divert our attention so that we do not think so much about, or so carefully look at what is happening around us.¹⁵⁵ A lot can happen in relationships between other people that we simply do not see because we are busy with other things or just trust our routines or our own ideas about how it is.

In connection with my cognate field, I thought about what it is all about loving oneself and how the attitude towards ourselves affects how we look at others. I thought of the loneliness that the group expressed that they feel. What does my need to fit into a community look like? What do I dare to talk about and what do I disclose? Here I think that the attachment pattern affects us in different ways. We do it the way it worked when we were little, it happens without us thinking about it. Maybe that way works even now, but it can also be a behavior that is not the best behavior when we grow up. How can I see it in the sermon and express myself so that people do not feel threatened by the difficult but can remain present?

¹⁵² Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 4-5 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

¹⁵³ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, p 5-6 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

¹⁵⁴ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of Preaching* 35-36 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

¹⁵⁵ Campbell, Charles *The Word before the Powers an Etic of Preaching*, p 39 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

When I tried to put these thoughts together, I thought of Jacob in Gen. 32. He goes into close combat and wrestles both with himself and with God. I thought it's something we humans may need to do. To wrestle with our past to be reconciled with it and to also wrestle with God. With doubt, faith and the question of why things happen. Things that are evil in our lives and in our environment. Why does life sometimes get so difficult? When I thought of the people in captivity that Jeremiah writes about, I also thought of all the wrestling they must have had about why it was the way it was. Their captive situation, God's demand that they make the country prosper, that they should marry off their children into the unknown. It's a tough time. A wrestling with many reasons and with many sorrows. I wanted to highlight that in the story but also give the power and space that it is ok to wrestle with God, doubt and why-questions in life. In my story, I let Jacob take that role. His role is small but also the turning point that legitimizes the struggle of life.

In Jacob, I also think that the connection to my cognate field exists. Jacob becomes the one who sees and confirms the struggle, but also the one who is prepared to harbor the other person's story so that the struggle can be possible, it becomes something that Winnicott describes as play area.

The form of the sermon

What I heard in the group during our conversation was a deep wrestling with what it is to truly love one's neighbor and oneself. We had a conversation that contained both vulnerability and enormous strength. In my sermon, I wanted to try to capture just that. I therefore chose to try to use the story as a method in this sermon. I thought that the story can touch on the difficult things in life in a way that can open our imagination and our creativity. My ambition is to reflect the text of Jeremiah in a story. At the same time, I think that caution is required in this sermon. It is an area that can easily bring shame and that people judge themselves. I think there is a great challenge to talk about the love for ourselves in our culture that is characterized by the Jantelagen [The law of Jante]¹⁵⁶ and

¹⁵⁶ Jantelagen [The law of Jante] in Sweden, is a foundational pillar of Scandinavian society. Simply put, the law embodies the belief that no one is better than anyone else. The spirit and premise of the law of Jante has existed in Scandinavian society for centuries. It was the Norwegian-Danish author Aksel Sandemose that formalized the law in his satirical novel 'A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks' written in 1933. The book describes a

where it is almost taboo to talk about loving oneself. In the ears of many, I think it is interpreted as egoism and being egocentric. The love for himself that PPG sought is a completely different love. It, I understood, was more about an acceptance or a reconciliation with oneself and who one is to be able to pass on.

The purpose of the sermon

Situation: I have taken as my starting point the conversation we had in my PPG. We talked mostly about what it means to love one's neighbor and how this is connected to loving oneself. We found that it is difficult to love ourselves and that we all carry with us our upbringing and our experiences that can make it even harder to love ourselves and others. PPG wanted the sermon to be about love one's neighbor and to love oneself and how difficult it can be. PPG felt that it was not preached about what it means to love oneself in the church. And if you can't love yourself it could make it even harder to love one's neighbor.

Goal: I want those who listen to the sermon to be able to reflect some of their lives in it. That the wrestling with God and the love for oneself can take place, but also that our lives contain a lot that affects how we look at others and ourselves. I want those who listen to feel that they get a place but also that they have an opportunity to see and care for each other and that it can affect more than we think.

fictional hometown of Jante, where everyone must conform: The Ten rules of Jante according to Aksel Sandemose:

- 1.You're not to think you are anything special.
 - 2.You're not to think you are as good as we are.
 - 3.You're not to think you are smarter than we are.
 - 4.You're not to imagine yourself better than we are.
 - 5.You're not to think you know more than we do.
 - 6.You're not to think you are more important than we are.
 - 7.You're not to think you are good at anything.
 - 8.You're not to laugh at us.
 - 9.You're not to think anyone cares about you.
 - 10.You're not to think you can teach us anything.
- <https://swedesinthestates.com/jantelagen-the-law-of-jante-explained/>

Sentence: I want to use the story as a starting point. I want to do it because I believe that the story in this case can open up our thoughts and our creativity and that it can make room for the wrestling we can experience in different ways in our lives.

Feedback and reflection

Feedback from PPG

We did the same after sermon two as after sermon one. The group gathered and I asked the same questions as after sermon one, what they felt when listening and what was left in them. I asked if they had heard the topics we decided the sermon would touch on. First, we did a round where everyone got to speak, then the conversation ran more freely. Several in the group emphasized that they had been affected by the sermon and that they could relate to the person the sermon was about. The sermon also raised thoughts about how and what we can do to break the silence and how we can dare to ask another person how it is and listen to the answer.

The group thought about Jacob's role, and several emphasized how important his role was, even if it was small. The group felt that the sermon reflected what we talked about and Sunday's theme which was social responsibility. From that conversation also came a desire to act in the group, the question of how we can show that the church exists for people came up. How can we offer conversational support and how should we convey it?

I also asked if they could listen to the whole sermon and they felt that they could follow. They thought it worked with the story as a form, some thought it was challenging that all questions in the sermon did not get answers, someone else appreciated that there were openings that could be thought of further on their own. In general, the group appreciated that the sermon was script-free.

Feedback from my advisor Dr. Niclas Blåder

This time too I had filmed my sermon and sent it to my supervisor Dr. Niclas Blåder. In his response, he writes that this time too he felt safe as a listener, but he wonders if I could have used my voice and my body more. If it had given more life to the story and invited the

listener more happening. At the same time, my trader experiences that the story carries, that the action is plausible and that it is positive that I am in the story all the time and do not return to the Bible text that was read before the sermon. Dr. Blåder thinks about what happens if the listener does not know Jacob, who despite his small role fulfills an important function in the text. He also includes the aspect of what happens after the sermon, if it hits someone very strongly what do I have then get responsibility as a preacher?

I take with me these views, to continue working with script-free preaching and to dare to take out the movement in the room and to use emphasis and pauses more to provide additional space for the listener.

My own reflection

In the conversation with PPG after the sermon, I was surprised and happy that they had linked the sermon to social responsibility, even though I felt that I had chosen that perspective. The group also had several thoughts on how we as a congregation could catch up and care about people after the service. People who may need support or conversation in their lives. Several concrete proposals emerged. There was also a woman in the church who had just become a widow and more au PPG stopped to talk to her after the service. They felt as if the sermon had reminded them of their responsibility to see each other.

My supervisor Dr. Blåder highlighted that I had Jacob as an important person in my story and wondered how it affected if you as a listener did not know the story about Jacob.

I had thought about it quite a lot. I landed in that I do not think it matters that much. Jacob still conveys the turning point and I thought that for those who know it can be a dimension and for those who do not know it simply does not matter.

After the sermon, I felt happy that I dared to try the form of the story and that I was script-free. I had struggled a lot with it and I feel that I want to continue to preach script-free and continue working with both body and voice.

Summary and Reflections

It has been very rewarding to have conversations about themes and sermons together with my PPG. The group has broadened my views and challenged me as a preacher, both in finding topics and talking about what is difficult. I have tried two different forms, testimony and story, as well as preaching with and without a script. I like both forms because I experience in the conversation with PPG after the sermon that they had made room for them as listeners and both forms had evoked associations in them. Preaching without a script reinforced that experience. I would like to continue to develop that.

I also feel that the group has been involved in the work and appreciated the conversations we had and that their approach to preaching has changed. I also reflected that the group wanted to do something practical after sermon two. I thought of the literature that connects prophetic preaching with act and for me it became an important part that the group members wanted to do something for their fellow human beings and that they had easy to find concrete solutions for how we in the church could do it. There was also a willingness to get involved and to be used. Something happened already after the service, I think when several members showed up to talk to the woman who had become a widow. We are in a small village and they knew who she was, but they still expressed that the sermon influences them to stay and give the woman time to talk and tell about her situation.

Chapter 6 Analysis and results

Introduction

The previous chapter described the method and process for this research. In this chapter the results from the Questionnaire and the group-interview will be present. I will also make an analysis of what the group said and how it relates to my question and present a result.

Results from the Opening Questionnaires

Before I met the group for the first time, I had sent out a Questionnaire with open-ended questions to my PPG. The members of the group had their Questionnaires write suggestions on various topics that they felt they were not talking about the church in our context.

Several different topics came up but also expressions of other aspects that they lacked in the church, for example there was a desire for people to meet across generational boundaries in the church community and a desire to be part of a community where you can share life, faith and doubt together. That longing was present in several of the members and it was expressed in much the same way in the men as in the women. The topics that the members wrote in their questionnaires were then not relevant to have as a focus in the two sermons in the project because Sunday's texts raised other topics and the group chose together that we would continue working with the topics that came then. What remained, however, from what the members wrote in Questionnaire was the longing for a congregational community. It was repeatedly raised in the conversation but was not raised in the sermons.

In the questionnaire I sent to the group, there was also a question about what the members of the group needed to feel safe. The answers were mainly about that there would be trust between the members and that what was said in the group would not be shared with people outside the group. It felt extra important for me both to emphasize it in the group and to take it into account in my project because we are all in a small context, most people know each other in different ways.

Results from the Group Interview before the sermon

The first meeting we had was 10 days before the first sermon. To create security in the group, we first talked about what framework we wanted in the group.¹⁵⁷ We decided together that it is important that what is said in the group stays in the group and that we listen and respect each other's opinions and thoughts. That it was important to have trust in the group had already emerged in Questionnaire, which the group answered before getting

¹⁵⁷ Sensing Tim, *Qualitative Research: A Multi- Methods Approach to Projects for Doctors of Ministry Theses* p.123 Wipf & Stock Eugene Oregon 2011.

the first hit. Talking about the framework was a way to create and safeguard the security that the group expressed that they needed.

We also decided that it was important that we in the group did not speak into each other's mouths and that everyone was allowed to speak. To support it, we sometimes went rounds where everyone could say something and sometimes the word was free.

PPG and the sermon

I asked the group what the sermon is and means to them. It turned out that the group was generally critical of sermons, both of sermons they heard and of sermons as a phenomenon. They often felt that the sermons they heard lacked a theological basis and that they lacked the connection between the biblical text, their own lives and the present. Someone said that they often felt that the preacher gave in to the difficulty and just wanted to keep a nice tone and that anyone could say what the pastor said.¹⁵⁸ Someone else felt that the priest was not interested in what the parishioners- were thinking about and struggling with.¹⁵⁹ The group wondered if there was a superficiality in the sermon because the priest did not want to bump into anyone. One expressed it as if it would just be nice.¹⁶⁰ In general, members of the group rarely felt affected by the sermon.

The group also thought about preaching as a function and were quite critical of a person (the priest) being allowed to stand and speak unchallenged for as long as maybe 15 minutes and that you as an audience cannot even ask if you do not understand.¹⁶¹

From that perspective, we talked further about what they would like the sermon to be. The group asked for an in-depth theology in the sermon, they wanted to find connections between biblical text theology and life as well as connections between the biblical time and the present. They longed to be touched and challenged by the sermon, that the priest would say something that you could not think of yourself. What recurred several times was that the members wanted to be touched and to feel a connection to how God can work in the world

¹⁵⁸ Informant 2

¹⁵⁹ Informant 5

¹⁶⁰ Informant 1

¹⁶¹ Informant 3

and in me. Someone said... "God's word, it's big and important to me, I want to be challenged and feel I can handle it. That God needs me in His service".¹⁶² (My translation)

PPG and the Bible text sermon one

When we talked about what the sermon was and what it meant to them, we read about the Bible texts that were relevant for Sunday.

I asked the group if, based on these texts, there were topics that they had missed that the Church touched and lifted up. Questions that came up were very much about belonging - belonging to what? Someone said: "Everything should be so inclusive today, but what is it really? What is it like to be judgmental then?"¹⁶³ From that came the question, Do I want to belong? How can I belong? We also talked about the opposite-being excluded. What does it mean and how does it feel? We talked about the longing for a church community where everyone can share faith and life with each other and feel that they have a place where we belong.

Someone pointed out that there are many different orientations of churches, how is it related to unity?¹⁶⁴

Someone else compared it to a sailboat, "we need different roles on board the boat, a perfectionist, a joker, etc., how can all these roles coexist?"¹⁶⁵

I asked the group if the lyrics raised any topic as they feel there is a silence around and the group landed a lot on the issue of being in one unit, what is it? To belong or not to belong? What do I belong to? We talked about community and exclusion and about what a community can tolerate. Is there a place for me the way I am or do I have to be a certain way? Someone asked.... "To be one-.What is the narrative of religion? Life-death and after death..."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Informant 3

¹⁶³ Informant 4

¹⁶⁴ Informant 1

¹⁶⁵ Informant 6

¹⁶⁶ Informant 7

PPG and the Bible text Sermon two

When we met before the second sermon, we started by reading the Bible texts that were for Sunday when the sermon was to be performed. The first text we read together was the text from the Old Testament, Jeremiah 29: 4-7. The text aroused a lot in the group. The sentences the group stopped at were the last sentences, Make the city I deported you to flourish and pray to the Lord for it. For its prosperity is your prosperity.¹⁶⁷ The group talked about giving their resources for someone else's development and how difficult it can be. The conversation was also about the relationship between the individual-collective and that the people in captivity are given the task of building the collective.

PPG's thoughts also went to the people of Afghanistan and those who fled and came to our country. Someone said, "I think to be there and escape, everyone wanted to go to the airport, but at the same time it was the most horrible place. What to do..."¹⁶⁸

We talked about perspective-what can we understand / not understand about living in war-escape from war that you bring your history and your conflicts. The group stated that it is a difficult task for the people in the text. God is portrayed as a strict God who punishes the people, yet God promises to be with the people. One person said "... God is portrayed as a strict patriarch — or a strict father who punishes the people, but says I am with anyway, it is a difficult image of God I think..."¹⁶⁹ Someone else said... "yes, when God is angry in the Old Testament then things happen, 70 years in captivity, God kills but God is still with. There is almost something human about God's wrath, Grace and punishment, planting and eating..."¹⁷⁰

The members of the group also reflected on how society works - what is it to be assimilated or to be frozen out, how can it change? Who can join and who cannot? Can it also change, from being a part of society to becoming strangers again?

An important question became: How do we look at our neighbors? If I got a "stranger" next door? How would I react? If there was someone who was not like me at all? There, the thoughts also led further into conflicts. Bringing conflicts - inherited conflicts. Conflicts that

¹⁶⁷ Jer 29:7

¹⁶⁸ Informant 2

¹⁶⁹ Informant 1

¹⁷⁰ Informant 7

can be inherited for generations they live after all the thing and the people who had the conflict are dead.

As a point in the text, someone in the group emphasized that God is still involved no matter what happens, at the same time it was experienced as frustrating. Who is God? Punitive? Demanding? Loving? God is angry, 70 years in captivity, but God is still with us.

From this the group went on to the epistle text from Romans 13: 7-10. There, the conversation began in that forgiveness and love. To be in debt in love-what is it? The question Can one really love one's neighbor as oneself? Lifted by several. What is it to love oneself? This was an important issue in the group and it came to reflect the need for forgiveness, reconciliation, grace, prayer and acts of love. Someone in the group stated that it is very difficult to love ourselves and that that love is also reflected in how we ourselves feel. If we are critical and judgmental towards ourselves, we often become the same towards others.¹⁷¹ Here the group also talked about praying for their enemy and how difficult it is and that we may judge ourselves very harshly because we cannot. It becomes a punishing sight instead of looking with love at oneself.

Someone wondered if, according to the letter to the Romans, we should not do, not commit adultery, not steal and so on also a way of keeping to ourselves. If we do not do this, it may be easier to love ourselves.¹⁷²

Someone raised that love is not just a feeling of love. To love is a verb - do I have to feel for love to count? What actions are important for love? Here the text from Jeremiah came back, build up the land, plant gardens, build houses, do everything for the city to flourish. This is a lot about deeds.

The group also linked the concept of Reconciliation to love and forgiveness. The conversation was about the fact that reconciliation does not need to be linked to forgiveness, but that reconciliation is about becoming an agent in one's own life. The group stated that love is difficult, love for God, for one's neighbor and for oneself. All of these

¹⁷¹ Informant 2

¹⁷² Informant 4

areas hold challenges. The group reminded that God himself comes in occupied land, in war and in need and right there urges us to love. To love God, to love almost and to love oneself.

Of these areas, the group lacked that the church talked about what it is and what it means to love oneself.

The same question was carried into the Gospel text. There the group saw fear, hatred, deceit and envy. If fear rules the world - can love dispel fear? Someone asked the question, Can we love back someone into a community? What does it require of ourselves?¹⁷³ Once again, love challenged- The difficult love, to God, to fellow human beings and to ourselves.

Results from the Group Interview after the sermons

When the group gathered after the sermon, I asked the group four questions. In order for everyone to have a say, we did rounds where one at a time was allowed to talk. We took one question at a time. I asked what they had heard in the sermon, what they felt when listening and what was left in them. I asked if they had heard the topics we decided the sermon would touch on.

When everyone said something, the conversation became freer. Also in that conversation, I listened to whether the participants heard the topic we chose together and what associations it aroused in them.

Sermon one

In the conversation after the sermon, several in the group felt that they felt a connection to what we talked about in PPG, but they did not see the connection to Sunday's theme, Unity in Christ. Someone asked: "How free from Sunday's theme can you be?"¹⁷⁴ Someone else found it difficult to connect with the Lord's Supper. One person said: "The Holy Communion does not mean much to me. I'm not really used to communion and I can think it feels a little strange, as if everyone is looking at me."¹⁷⁵ This led to several thoughts about thinking about

¹⁷³ Informant 1

¹⁷⁴ Informant 1

¹⁷⁵ Informant 4

what unity could mean and the group stated that we never defined the word together in the conversation where we prepared the sermon.

Someone else, on the other hand, liked the connection to communion and the perspective that it continues on the other side of the grave. The person said: "we may not see everything now, but it is a thought to rest in that it is bigger than myself."¹⁷⁶

When I asked how it felt to listen to the sermon, several in the group answered that it was easy to follow but that they wanted more breaks. "I got stuck in that man with the hood, what had really happened to him? I would have needed a little more time there..."¹⁷⁷ Several recognized themselves in both roles in the sermon, both to be the one who is affected but also to be the one who stands next to them. One person said: "It's so difficult to stand next to someone, you so want to do something. It was good to hear that you met again and that the person said that it was good that you were there then. It gave comfort, that you cannot do anything but that it means something that you are there anyway".¹⁷⁸

Sermon two

In the conversation after sermon two, the group immediately linked to the theme for the day. Someone said:

"I felt so strongly that I wanted to take responsibility and that it should not be quiet so I had to stay in church for a while and talk to the woman who had become a widow. I thought, yes, that is my mission - a social responsibility that I can take and do here and now."¹⁷⁹

Several more thought arose. How can we take responsibility if preaching is about difficult things? One question came up: "How can people who come to church know that they can talk to us or to the pastor?" The group talked about this for a while and someone summed up the conversation: "I think we can put out notes in the benches where it says that you can talk to the priest, with phone numbers on, it can be on the agenda as well. Yes, and to others

¹⁷⁶ Informant 2

¹⁷⁷ Informant 3

¹⁷⁸ Informant 7

¹⁷⁹ Informant 4

about the more who feel they want and maybe to the invitation maybe as to a group like this...¹⁸⁰

We also talked about the story, several had felt strong for Barbro. "I was affected, especially when it came to children, then I get sensitive..."¹⁸¹ Several thought it was easy to feel with the woman in the sermon and connected to people in our church can have it like her without us knowing. Someone said, "Why are we so afraid to ask?"¹⁸² Someone also said that the story aroused thoughts and feelings in them and they had thought of people around them. Most had fasted on Jacob. Someone thought: "When have I met Jacob in my life? And can I be Jacob for anyone?"¹⁸³ Jacob had aroused curiosity.

All the material from the Questionnaire and the group interviews is in the author's private archive.

Analysis and results

In this project, I have had the ambition to highlight topics that are difficult and challenging to preach about, topics that may be surrounded by silence or taboo both in our own lives and in our environment. At the same time, I have wanted to provide space for the listener so that the listener has the strength to listen and be able to reflect on their own lives. As a background in my work, I have used some homileticians that have written about prophetic preaching and for the listener's perspective, I have turned to attachment theory and mentalization. During the work, I have experienced that these areas have several points of contact. I think of the seeing and affirming gaze and of listening. I think they fit both in Barbara K. Lundblad's theory of attentive listening¹⁸⁴ and in the concepts Christine Smith highlights, weeping, confession and resistance.¹⁸⁵ I also think that these areas have points of

¹⁸⁰ Informant 6

¹⁸¹ Informant 2

¹⁸² Informant 1

¹⁸³ Informant 5

¹⁸⁴ Lundblad Barbara K, *Transforming the Stone Preaching Through Resistance to Change*, p 30-31 Abingdon Press Nashville 2001

¹⁸⁵ Smith Christine M, *Preaching as weeping, Confession and Resistance-Radical responses to Radical Evil*, p 4-5 Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1992

contact in what Campbell describes as powers and strategies. There are strategies such as division and demoralization.¹⁸⁶ I think that these concepts on some level also reflect an attachment relationship that is not secure and that in the next step can give a frighteningly erratic God. Describing a God who does not meet a person with a loving gaze can affect the listener who may experience shame or do so that the person stops listening. If we feel that we are insecure or threatened and our attachments patterns are activated, our various defense mechanisms are also activated. They can lock us in different ways and our defenses affect how we interpret what we experience. What we then hear in the sermon may be about a God who judges or rejects us and that we are not good enough as human beings. If that happens, I think the sermon will be threatening and embarrass the listener. The sermon can then make us lock ourselves and not experience any mercy or forgiveness or think that we have any capacity to act. The listener becomes excluded and the sermon becomes somewhat negative. If the listener instead feels safe and confirmed, hopefully one can experience another image of God. An image of a God who sees us with the loving gaze and who meets us and envelops us with grace. Here I also think that there is a connection to what I read about prophetic preaching. There I experience that grace in various ways has been an important concept to highlight. Grace is a supporting foundation that gives courage and makes it possible to talk about what is difficult and which can give power to change. Highlighting grace can also be a way to create a room where the listener has a place and does not feel ashamed. Grace becomes a resonant bottom that reflects the good loving gaze that attachment theory highlights.

Based on what the group talked about before and after the sermon, I think it is important that the sermon really takes the listener's and the listener's life, experiences and perspectives seriously. The sermon must not leave out the difficult questions and be a pleasant time in the church. It needs to go into close combat and wrestle with the texts, the context and the time we live in. Based on what the group said, I think that the preacher needs to be both a good listener, brave and vulnerable. Here I also think of the defense mechanisms that are highlighted in the mentalization theory. When life abandoned and vulnerable, the defense mechanisms can also be activated in the preacher and it is easy to

¹⁸⁶ Campbell Charles, *The Word before the Powers on Etic of Preaching*, p 36-37 Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London 2002

escape the difficult, either to end up in the ditch of comfort or to start intellectualizing the texts and losing ground here and now. The sermon may then be a long exegetical exposition instead of wrestling with life here and now. Or as someone in PPG felt: Do I really fit in with my life here? I think the listened perspective of the preacher is also found in the theories about prophetic preaching. Smith emphasizes that the preacher needs to cry... to be able to do that, I think that as a preacher I need to be vigilant about my own defenses. What do they tell me if I see them? Maybe the same emotions are activated in the listener. Here I also want to highlight my supervisor Dr. Blåder's question, how do we take care of what happens in people when preaching challenges? How do we do it after the service and how do we offer pastoral care and fellowship in our congregation? Issues that I, based on this project, believe are important to shed light on. There was also something that aroused in PPG after sermon two, there was a clear will to be there for his or her fellow person.

During the work, I have tried two different forms of preaching, testimony and the story. I did not feel that it was so important for the group, in our conversations we did not stop at the form. The group's focus was more on the sermon touching in different ways, that it gave room for thinking for oneself and thinking further and that the Bible's stories became relevant here and now in our everyday lives and in life. The group also did not highlight special big words such as grace or hope, the conversation was more about the here and now than theological concepts.

Hope and heaven were also something I reflected on when I read about prophetic preaching. I feel that it is important to convey some form of hope to another world whenever possible and that there is a vision of a kingdom of heaven. It might have been different if I had written this in a different context where there was a stronger congregational community or if the group had chosen topics that affect the world and society in a more concrete way.

I am grateful for the honest conversation that took place in PPG, that they dared to express their feelings for and their relationship to the sermon and that despite that input they felt so much commitment in the conversation and really wanted to share the Word, faith and life with each other and me. The group influenced me as a preacher in several ways, partly I wanted to show the power that I think is in the preaching, but it also aroused the tremor I can feel. Who am I to stand here and talk about this great thing?

Summary and reflection

My first intention with my project was that I wanted to highlight topics around us that we do not usually talk about in the sermon. Substances that are silenced in different ways and for different reasons. I thought of a few different topics that would be possible to try in conversations with PPG. When I worked a little more on my project plan, I discovered that I would rather ask the group to name topics that they felt the church avoided and did not talk about. This was to make the voice of the congregation heard and to understand the members of the group, it was also important for me to ask the question of what the sermon was and what it meant to the members of the group. The conversation that followed was not what I expected. I was not at all prepared for what the group thought about the sermon and their relationship to the sermon.

When it came to topics that the group lacked that the sermon raised, it was a more introverted perspective than I imagined it would be. The group also expressed strongly that they lacked a parish community. I'm wondering if all this is connected. The members want to feel that they belong to a community and they want to share faith and life with each other, but how can this be done if there is no parish community to belong to? When it is lacking, it is difficult to share faith and life and even more difficult to act, so perhaps the first step is to build a community that can then grow in sharing, hearing, seeing and acting.

After the first conversation I had with my PPG, I felt sad about their experience and experiences of preaching. It felt like preaching had a long way to go to be a tool for the kingdom of God. I thought about why the group was so negative to the sermon and I thought that they must have heard many bad sermons, many adapted words and maybe many simplifications of difficult texts.

I thought a lot about what kind of sermons they heard and what they were that they reacted most strongly to, were they authoritarian sermons or were they superficial? I linked to the question Anna Carter Florence asked in her book *Preaching as Testimony*, Can I really say that?¹⁸⁷ And that question also became mine in relation to PPG. Can I say this without losing my roots or the message? How can I say it so that it is said with integrity and anchorage without becoming authoritarian?

¹⁸⁷ Carter Anna Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, p xvi Westminster John Knox Press Louisville London

At the same time, I felt that the group gave me great confidence when they dared to put into words how they experienced the sermon and I felt that they also gave me out of their longing to let God's word take place in life and the church. I had decided to let the group control the topic of the sermon and after the group shared about the sermon, it felt even more important to do so.

During the two sermons I worked on in this project, I felt that it was important to be sensitive, both for the group's need to share God's word both in conversation and worship and to be sensitive to the listener's life and needs in the sermon.

Chapter 7 concluding reflection

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I want to highlight some aspects of the literature on prophetic preaching and from my contiguous field that have meant a lot to me during this project. I want to look ahead and see what I can work on further both in the context in which I find myself but also in the great task of being a preacher.

Prophetic preaching and attachment theory

I am deeply touched by the books I read about prophetic preaching in this project. They challenge me and give me courage going forward. I want to continue working with grace and the areas that Barbara K. Lundblad highlights in her book - has grace touched them? Here I also see connections to the other books on prophetic preaching, the importance of the preacher really seeing and listening to the world around. To tell the truth about life and the world. While the need to speak the truth exists, it needs to be linked to grace and hope. The darkness must not overwhelm and paralyze us. I want to continue to wrestle with how the hope that another reality is possible can be shown while the struggle here and now is not diminished. I also hope in a grant of this project that my congregation can reach all the way to the act- in the big and in the small that is close to us.

What I read about attachment theory, mentalization, shame and guilt has made me more cautious with the listener. I think of the universe that the listener carries within him or her and that I do not know anything about. How can the words reach and how can they be received? How do I make space for the listener's life, interpretations and needs? How can I show grace? Here I also want to carry with me the question from my Advisor Dr. Blåder, what do I do as a preacher with what is raised in the listener when it comes to challenging and difficult topics? Are there any openings to continue the conversation? Can we or we as a church take care of what people carry? For me, it also becomes an important perspective in sermon preparation.

What I read I can also connect to myself as a preacher. What's happening with me? Where and when do my own defenses go in? Can I detect it and if so, how? What prevents me as a preacher and what are the risks of locking the listener?

[Some thoughts on continued work](#)

This project has given me many thoughts going forward. Thoughts that I as a preacher want to work on. I'm still wondering about the topics that the sermon cannot touch on? Maybe, or it's so about my own fears as a preacher that sets the boundaries. Am I too scared that the words will cause conflict and hurt someone? But if the words need to be said anyway? I think of the words of the prophets, they probably provoked conflict. Conflicts needed. Conflicts that led to change for the most vulnerable. Their voices protected life:- their voices were the salt of the world. Their voices are still shouting. We hear them in different ways, but I also think if we in my congregation would need to listen more to that cry. I think we should dare to focus on what we know is rubbing but which is easier to avoid. It can certainly be done in many different ways, but one thing that has become visible to me during this project that I have not reflected so much on before is how important the parish community is. The congregation does not have to be large, but there needs to be a trust between the people who come so that they can feel that they get a place and that they have an important role and task. In the context of this project, I believe that community must continue to be built for words to lead to action that builds since change. I also feel great gratitude to my

PPG, that they were so brave both in the conversations before and after the sermon but also that they dared to draw an honest picture of how they experienced the sermon. It was challenging to hear, but it was very important that it told it and I carried it clearly with me in my own preparatory work.

The work with PPG has also clarified and reminded me of how important it is to be able to talk about existential issues and to share faith and life with each other. The group has expressed a clear desire to connect the biblical texts to life and the world here and now as well as that they want to be challenged by the Word and be used. God's word is active and alive, and they expect the sermon to show it and connect it, the bible text, the present, the world and their own life. My PPG group wants to continue to meet and share faith and life. A book that I think we in the group could continue to work on Lisa Thompson's book, *Preaching the Headlines: Possibilities and Pitfalls*.¹⁸⁸

I also wish I had the courage to continue wrestling as a preacher. To wrestle with the word and to challenge with the Word the silence that hides the difficult and that binds us humans.

In many ways, it feels like two sermons are just the beginning of a way forward.

Finally, I want to say a big thank you to everyone in my Parish Project Group for wanting to be involved and for everything you shared with you. I also thank my Advisor Rev. Dr Kimberly Wagner and Rev. Dr. Niclas Blåder.

¹⁸⁸ Thompson Lisa, *Preaching the Headlines: Possibilities and Pitfalls*, Fortress Press Minneapolis 2021

Appendix

Appendix 1

Letter of invitation

Dear.....

Thank you for wanting to be part of my parish preaching project group.

I am currently studying preaching at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The education includes writing an essay about the sermon. Your participation is absolutely central!

I will preach on two occasions and these sermons will be prepared and evaluated by a project group in the congregation. In the project group we are 7 people and we will need to meet on 4 occasions during the autumn as below:

Meet 1 Thursday 26 August at 18- about 20 in Ede parish home

I will tell you a little more about the work with the essay, we will read the texts for September 5 together and we will talk about the sermon together.

Sun 5 September at 11 in Näskott's church

Sermon 1 then we continue talking about the sermon after the service (about 1 hour)

Wen 13 October 19-20:30 in Ede parish home

Conversation about the sermon 2. We read the texts together and talk about the sermon

October 24 service at 11 in Offerdal's church

Sermon 2 then we continue talking about the sermon after the service (about 1 hour)

In the work of preaching, I need your help. We talk about the texts and the theme for Sunday and then we choose a topic together. It would be good if you wanted to think about the questions on the next page before we meet.

At the first meeting, I thought I would write together the topics you have included on a common list and we will choose together based on it.

Therefore, I am also already wondering if you would like to answer the questions below and bring it on 26/8. You do not need to name that paper.

If we need to change any of the dates above, we can talk about it on 26/8.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

I'm glad you want to join!

With kind regards

Hanna

Hanna.pettersson@svenskakyrkan.se Tel: 0640-171 07

I have a holiday until 23/8, until then you can reach me most easily by e-mail above or on the mobile number 073-7554250.

Appendix 2

Consent Form ¹⁸⁹

Mr/Mrs _____

I am very grateful that you will be a part of my parish preaching group during the autumn 2021 and that you will participate in the study “Sound of silence,”.

The purpose of this research is to study the practice of preaching in Krokoms pastorat. I am trying to learn more about how preaching can challenge us to see what we do not want to see and hear what we do not want to hear in order to break silence and open paths to change.

In this study I will send you a some questions in the invitation letter and ask you to write the answer. This answers will only be read by me. You will also participate in Group interviews before and after the sermons is held. I will take note during this interviews. The notes will only be read by me.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

If you feel distress in the course of conversation, please inform me promptly.

Your name will be kept confidential in all of the writing related to this study. If I need any names in my study I will use pseudonyms-made up names- for all participants.

By signing this Consent Form, you are agreeing to the conditions mentioned above. If you agree to participate in this study a copy of this Consent Form, signed by both of us, will be given to you.

If you have any questions about the purpose of the study or on your participation, you can reach out to me by sending an e-mail or by calling me.

Participant’s signature

Researcher’s signature

¹⁸⁹ The model for this Consent Form in found in: Sensing Tim, *Qualitative Research A multi-methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* Appenix 1, 2011 Wipf &Stock Eugene Oregon

Appendix 3

Opening Questionnaire

Sent by e-mail to the participants before meeting 1

Are there any topics you think about that we do not talk about / preach about in church that you wish we talked about?

What do you need to feel safe talking in groups?

What do you need to be able to listen to a sermon on a difficult subject?

Appendix 4

Group interview Questions before sermon one and two

What is a sermon for you? (only before sermon one)

What topics do you miss that the Church is talking about/ what topics would you like the sermon to touch on?

What themes in these texts do you miss that the Church is talking about?

Appendix 5

Sermon one

Sermon one 14th Sunday after Trinity Unity in Christ
(Näskotts church)

He sat with his hood up, I sat and bit away. We were silent. The words were small. The pain and sorrow would never be able to comfort, just learn to live with.

Our eyes met quickly before he left. I sat for a while longer. Too empty to go. The brokenness and pain of life was so obvious that I felt completely empty and heavy.

Almost as if I was afraid that life would crash under my feet as I got up and walked away.

That it must have hurt so terribly to be human.

Why does it have to be this way?

Life hurts us, we hurt ourselves, we hurt each other. Then the loneliness remains.

I often think of Jesus when he is in Gethsemane, he is full of worry and anxiety. And he will be alone. It is as if no one really has the strength to be in pain with Jesus. The disciples fall a sleep.

The loneliness remains. Jesus breaks down and dies. Life, just as it is, with all its depth with all its brokenness and pain becomes visible and exposed.

The loneliness. The disciples sleep and when the soldiers come they flee. Jesus is taken away alone.

Maybe we share that experience, when life has collapsed we have been left alone. Been there in our Gethsemane and not found the way out. Loneliness torments. Life torments.

Perhaps the longing to belong is aroused at the same time as it feels unreal that it could happen. That there could be such a place where I got a place with my life as it is broken and imperfect feels completely unreasonable. We pull up the hood and hide.

Or we pull ourselves together, try to smile and respond nicely while the feeling of exclusion grows within us.

The loneliness. Life.

A day long time later, a man stops in the square. Looking at me, Hi! It's you! You who were there then, do you remember?

Our paths diverge before I really have time to understand that it was the him, the man with the hoodie. We who only managed to sit quietly together and barely even that.

You were there.

Maybe it's so easy and so difficult. You were there. Maybe that's what Jesus is saying to us in Gethsemane - I'm there. Life hurts just as much, is just as broken, but the brokenness is shared by the body of God which is broken.

At communion we are reminded, likewise he took the bread, broke it, gave it to the disciples and said: Take and eat, this is my body which is given for you.

The words deepen-you are there. In Gethsemane, in my broken life, in my imperfection. You are there. Maybe that's just what grace is. You are here. In everything. Even when everything breaks down.

Concrete in the bread of communion that is placed in my hand. A piece of broken bread, your presence on the way to the cross. To the extreme - to death. Without understanding, I have to grab and hold on of that hope.

You are here.

In need, in loneliness, in the longing for life. Even in death, into the grave. The brokenness carries out as a whole. A whole we do not yet know but a whole that carries, that holds and that encloses.

Appendix 6

Group interview Questions sermon one and two

How did you feel when you listened to the sermon?

What was left in you after the sermon?

Did you feel that the sermon touched on the subject we decided the sermon would touch on?

Could you listen and follow the whole sermon or was it something that diverted your attention

Sermon two Elective course (Preaching and the Problem of Evil)

Sermon 21Th Sunday after Trinity Social responsibility

Barbro rested her hands on her lap for a moment. She looked back on her life.

She remembered how everything had started, how she as a little girl moved with her mother to a completely new city. She remembered the first time she saw the gray house, all the windows and doors, the smell in the stairwell.

She had felt scared and turned to her mother, but her mother had not been there. She didn't look at her, did not bend down and comfort her, did not take her hand. Mom had just walked away. Fast.

And Barbro had run after her into the small apartment that would become their home. Or maybe mostly her mother's home, Barbro thought. In the evening she had prayed to God in a childlike way that it would be as usual. That her dad and her big brother would come back. That everything, the accident, the death and the funeral were just a bad dream. And so many evenings she had prayed that at least her mother would come back and become a mother again. But God remained silent.

Sharp words, mother's sighs and absence.

Barbro felt like a stranger. A stranger in the city and a stranger in her own life.

So she moved away from home, trying to share life with her mother was too difficult.

Pretty soon Lennart had moved in. He was kind at first, but life with him was not easy. He took what he wanted and did as he pleased. But Barbro gritted, she did not complain.

She had three children, two boys and a girl.

It was as if she came alive then. When the little bundle was placed in her arms. I will never abandon you had she whispered, loved into the little ones. Every night when they had fallen asleep she had gone in to them and whispered the same word. I'll never leave you. Never.

She had kept her words, she had stood up, she loved them, hugged them, sat on patches, baked and stood in the kiosk at the soccer matches, sold and bought tickets, been a class parent, helped them with their homework and hung up the jackets that landed on the floor.

The family had bought a house and she had grown in the garden, she had eaten fruits and berries, boiled juice and jam. Given to neighbors and donated to the church's harvest auction.

She had intervened when Lennart became angry and annoyed with the children. She had been their shield, she could think and feel. She had given them everything she ever could. And yes, it had gone well for the kids. They had jobs and families. She was a grandmother. And she had lined up then too. For the grandchildren. Dessert of life.

She had done everything but still she could feel so desperately empty. She loved her children, she knew that, but still she was empty. Many evenings when the loneliness was consuming her she had cried out to God but he had remained silent. She had become a little girl like the time she lay in bed in the apartment and the sadness and fear filled her. Her dad and her older brother did not return. Her mother did not return and inside she heard Lennart's harsh words, saw his judgmental gaze and the times he had beaten her still burned with shame.

When she met her own gaze in the mirror, the verdict was harsh. She was not worthy of love. Every cell in her body knew that and crawled inside her. God was silent, she was not worthy of love.

She felt ashamed that she had not left Lennart, she felt ashamed that she had wanted him to disappear but the years passed and he remained until three years ago. Then she had found him dead on the couch when the morning came.

At the funeral she had felt empty, but also calm in some way. Therefore, from time to time she went to the empty church and sat down on the pew. She had hoped to feel that calm again, but the voice of self-accusation was heard louder each time. What are you doing here?

She wanted to apologize, maybe the emptiness would disappear. But she did not even succeed. She just sat there full of shame.

But she did not give up, many times she sat on the bench, but each time the shame filled her. She tried to formulate the words. Why God? Why did you leave me? She did not even manage to get angry. Just empty of love and full of self-accusations.

Several times when she had been in church she had seen an older man. She saw that he was lame and he went and hummed at himself. Then there was something in his eyes. For a brief second she had met his gaze. It had touched her deeply.

Then one day he had settled down next to her. Jacob, he had said and talked, and suddenly she too. They had started to share. Share a bit of their life stories. Later she had carefully asked how his legs were.

Just fine, he had answered with a thunderous laugh. I've wrestled with God, you see, and I did not release him unless he blessed me. And do you know Barbro, he had said, I think you need to do the same. Throw all that you are struggling with on God. God endures.

She had hesitated for a long time, how do you do that? Are you allowed to? May I? So one night she had turned to that darkness. Shouted, accused, threw her grief and her pain on God. Shouted why? Why did you leave me? And in the end she just cried.

The crying had opened something in her, perhaps some kind of reconciliation, not so much with God, but with herself. That she was who she was, that her life was as it was. That she did her best after all and that it worked. That she was ok enough.

Maybe she thought, the fight that night had also changed her relationship with God, the silence and the darkness was a little more restful in some way. As a place that she also got to come to the way she was.

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