PR 620 The company of Preachers

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FOR WE DO NOT PREACH OURSELVES, BUT JESUS CHRIST AS LORD, AND OURSELVES AS YOUR SERVANTS FOR JESUS’ SAKE.” II Cor. 4:5.

PR 620: THE COMPANY OF PREACHERS

FALL TERM 2006: Monday 5:30 – 8:15pm BC 114
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The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the theology and practice of preaching in service to the Word of God. The core objectives of this course have been established to facilitate a critical understanding of and competence in view of: 1) preaching as a witness to the Gospel of Christ as revealed in the whole of Christian Scripture; 2) preaching as a both a gift of the Holy Spirit and pastoral vocation which serves the creation of a community called to worship the Triune God. This course, in particular, approaches preaching as a historical practice of the church and from within a historical and theological perspective shaped by the Wesleyan tradition. In addition, it is informed by concious integration of doctrinal and biblical exegesis, the practice of reading Scripture in a theological manner as demonstrated in the Christian tradition. Sermons will be preached and evaluated in order to provide an opportunity to cultivate a habit of integrating theological reflection and pastoral practice.

Emphasis will be placed on the life-long task of acquiring practices or habits appropriate for cultivation judgment that promotes faithful communication of the witness of scripture in service of the Word of God as an act of Christian worship within larger contexts and circumstances characterized by personal, social and cultural change. This course will assume that proclamation of the Gospel by means of Scripture is the central (although not exclusive) activity by which the Church is continually created, sustained, corrected, and strengthened by the Spirit through the Word, the crucified and risen Christ, to worship and participate in the life of the Triune God.

This course is therefore designed as an extended conversation that will exemplify and encourage pastoral credibility and competence in speaking the Word of God to form Christian faith and character within a community that bears witness to the Kingdom that has arrived in Christ. Preaching will be regarded as an act of worship offered to the God of Israel and Jesus Christ who continues to speak and enact his gracious promises and saving purposes through the witness of the Prophets and Apostles in the power of the Holy Spirit.

An important objective of this course will be to gain a vital and necessary understanding of preaching as a theological and ecclesial practice that requires: 1) the practices of daily prayer and obedience --- pastoral discipline; 2) consistent reading, study, and appropriation of Scripture as the Word of God addressed to God’s people and for the life
of the world; 3) the testing of biblical interpretation by means of the central theological convictions of the Church Catholic, and in particular, the Wesleyan tradition, to insure faithful homiletic performance that glorifies God and produces Christian disciples who aspire to a shared life of holiness in Christ. To be consistent with the nature and purpose of preaching as a theological and traditioned discipline, a strong emphasis will be placed upon the life-long task of acquiring practical wisdom appropriate to the pastoral vocation: the spiritual and moral attentiveness and insight necessary to call the Church to know, love, and serve the Triune God whose speech authors its life and secures its future.

A primary goal of this course is that students will come to see themselves as members of the whole company of preachers - guided by the scriptural witness of the prophets and apostles - in conversation with God and his people across time. The conditions of our conversation together, therefore, will encourage the discovery of a discourse by which preaching as a theological and pastoral practice may be examined, understood, articulated, and defended. Students will be encouraged to view themselves as responsible participants in the ongoing narrative of the Word of God rather than detached consumers or users of skills and techniques; as life-long learners who aspire to embody Christian virtue and exercise Christian discernment for responsible ministry in the concrete forms of life and circumstances of particular congregations where gospel proclamation brings Christ to speech.

**Course Objectives (Asbury Seminary Catalogue):**

1. Identify critical issues related to articulation of the biblical witness to God within a variety of contemporary contexts, and reflect on their relationship to the primary pastoral responsibility of communicating the Gospel in a manner that calls the church to worship, love and obey the Triune God.

2. Demonstrate fluency in the biblical narrative as the language and grammar of preaching, and a capacity for integrating theological wisdom, scriptural knowledge, and cultural understanding in service of the mission of the Church;

3. Demonstrate homiletic competence that integrates exegesis, theology and hermeneutics for preaching as a liturgical activity of the church that bears witness to the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ and narrated in the whole canonical story.

4. Articulate a practical theology of Christian preaching that 1) demonstrates a capacity for integrating theology and pastoral practice 2) displays an understanding of how the Wesleyan tradition informs pastoral ministry and the ecclesial practice of biblical interpretation and preaching.

**It is my hope that you will:**
1) focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the power and wisdom for your ministry of preaching

2) listen with discernment to the whole canon of Scripture as source, norm, and goal of your sermons

3) share with each other and me in the joys, temptations, risks, and anguish of preaching

4) acquire practical intellectual, moral and spiritual virtues and skills appropriate for preparing yourselves for articulating the Word of God in Jesus Christ

5) appreciate the urgency of preaching in pastoral ministry and the mission of the Church for the life of the world

6) embrace the following criteria of a good sermon:

   faithfulness to the text
   articulation of the Gospel
   contextual accuracy
   coherence, simplicity, and gracefulness of expression

REQUIREMENTS

1) Read assignments as scheduled, prepare written responses, and participate in class conversation. Always bring a Bible to class.

2) Write a total of five sermons, preaching three in class by choosing for each from among four assigned texts: a lesson from a Gospel, Epistle, Old Testament book and a Psalm. In addition, your sermon preparation must include theological and pastoral reflection on your assigned texts for preaching on particular occasions: an evangelistic sermon, Holy Communion, a Baptism, and a Funeral. A manuscript, exegetical notes, theological and pastoral reflection that supports your homiletic judgments and decisions will be submitted on the day the sermons are due. I will provide worksheets to guide you in your sermon preparation.

3) Class attendance and participation is assumed. Assignments turned in late will be penalized. An important element of the course is to foster Christian friendship and mutual assistance rather than professional competition or jealousy. Your attendance, participation, comments, and encouragement when others preach are an important part of our class. Preachers will ask a fellow student to serve as a responder for each in-class sermon. The responder will initiate the discussion on the sermon.
Sermons will be preached on dates that will be assigned at the beginning of the semester. If it is necessary to change your preaching date, you may do so by working with the professor and another member of the class.

4) **Required Texts:** I am very enthused about the reading and discussion that we will be doing together this semester!

*Augustine, The Confessions.* Augustine’s theological narration of his life, conversion and ministry provides wonderful insight into what I will call the “preaching life.” That is, the preaching life describes the kind of person God desires to make of us so that we will be capable of hearing and speaking the Word of Christ in a manner that is truthful, inviting and life-changing through the work of the Spirit.

*M. Pasquarello, Sacred Rhetoric.* This book provides an overview of the “preaching life” from Augustine through John Calvin. It attempts to re-unite what has been divided by modern theological education: exegesis, doctrine, tradition, worship, spirituality and pastoral care in the person and work of the preacher.

*E. Charry, By the Renewing of Your Minds.* Charry’s book demonstrates how, during the first sixteen centuries of the Church, doctrine was life-shaping wisdom, not merely “beliefs” or “ideas.” She demonstrates that the history of doctrine serves a significant pastoral purpose in turning our attention to know, love and enjoy the Triune God. This book will help us recover preaching as a Christian practice that primarily has to do with the God and derivatively about ourselves.

*R. Wilken, The Spirit of Early Christian Thought.* This is one of the most outstanding books that I have read in many years. Wilken’s comprehensive picture of Patristic wisdom will provide a place for us to stand in our thinking about preaching within a larger and more compelling theological, ecclesial, and pastoral vision than that created by modern forms of Christianity.

*T. Long, The Witness of Preaching.* Although a contemporary work, Long’s book will enable us to make good connections with the other texts that we are reading. His emphasis on the importance of pastoral witness, exegesis for proclamation, and the pastor’s location within a theological tradition will provide us with a perspective by which we will better appreciate the wisdom of the “company of preachers” and our place within it.

5) **Plagiarism.** Preachers are notorious for borrowing from the work of others. I want to encourage you to see your sermons as a statement of the whole Church’s truth, and to allow yourself to be guided by the wisdom of others. However, in your exegetical notes and sermons let me know whom you are reading and from
whom you have learned. In addition, I will expect that your sermons will be fresh, new, and current, rather than work you have already used.

More on Sermons:

Sermons will be 10 to 12 minutes in length. In order to allow for adequate feedback and discussion it will be necessary to adhere to this time frame. Please be respectful of others and stay within your limit! Sermons will be videotaped, please bring a tape on your assigned days. Tapes are available from Information Technology, 3rd Floor, Beeson Ctr.

Please double-space your manuscripts and type your text at the beginning in single-spaces. In preparing your exegetical notes, I will expect you to utilize the skills you have learned in your courses in biblical studies and your knowledge of the biblical languages. Please do not use Internet preaching helps and sources (here I do not mean ATLA) or one-volume commentaries (Such as the Abingdon one-volume commentary on the Bible). For this course, it is important that you use solid, critical commentaries, essays, and other works that have been written to support proclamation and teaching in the Church. This will include pre-modern sources. Please do not skip exegetical and doctrinal work in order to go directly to exposition and application. I also encourage you to limit your use of illustrations, making them brief and related directly to the message of the sermon. Examples that demonstrate the embodiment of the Word in life are superior and more faithful expressions of the Gospel. (We will discuss this issue) In all cases, keep your eye on the central focus of the sermon based upon your careful reading and listening to Scripture within the larger world created by the Church. The form and function of the sermon should serve the proclamation of Christ and the claims he is making to shape our life into his image.

Remember that we are interested in serious engagement with Scripture, and through Scripture with God, as both the context and content for proclamation. We are moving from the classroom to the sanctuary, from an academic setting to the praise and adoration of the Triune God. You will discover your sermon by engaging in prayerful study that positions you to listen to, learn from, and be led by the Spirit who speaks in the text; the Word which God desires to speak that will inform, shape, and guide your thinking, speaking and acting in order to do the same with your listeners. Your sermon, however, is not about the text. Neither is your sermon a lecture or a talk about your exegesis, nor is it a testimony about your experience and journey. The Word we proclaim is not a text, nor is it our selves; rather it is Jesus Christ, the living Lord who speaks and summons us to follow him today in the power of the Spirit. Your scriptural text is a particular witness to the God of Israel and the Gospel; its purpose is to render his identity and activity to us in the present, and to invite us to offer faithful and fitting response by which we are drawn into the future, the “new creation” God is actively creating in and of the world.

Consider the following when you are preparing to preach:

1) How does the text witness to the character and activity of God? How does the text witness to the character and activity of humanity by the grace of God?
2) What sin or sins does the text uncover or address? What examples of faith, hope and love, or other expressions of obedience, witness and service?

3) How does this text PREACH the Gospel of God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ? How will this text shape and inform your words to follow its lead?

4) What is God doing and saying: teaching, judging, forgiving, commanding, asking, inviting, persuading, encouraging, promising, blessing, cursing, etc.? What will you do and say to be faithful to this Word?

5) What is surprising in this text? Odd or strange? What is good and newsworthy?

6) How is this text a Word to and for the Church: what is it doing to form, to sustain, to correct, to encourage, to build up, and to empower faithful disciples? How is it doing this? How will you do this?

7) Where and how have I seen this Word being enacted in the life of the Church, among Christian people, or in the world?

Think of your sermon in terms of Focus and Function:

The focus of the sermon should communicate one major claim God is making upon our life to:

   a) unify the whole text
   b) encapsulate the Gospel
   c) have an impact on life

You should be able to state this in a sentence or two. Keep it clear and simple.

The function of the sermon is what you believe and hope the Holy Spirit will do with your words in the listening of your hearers. This function should be derived from a close reading of the biblical text in conversation with your preaching context. You may assume we are your congregation for your in-class sermons.

ASSIGNMENTS: A course schedule will be distributed during the first week of class.

On the day of our class final (there is no final exam!) you will hand in a Practical Theology of Preaching, which will be a revised compilation of your written work throughout the semester, with a concise summary statement attached. This is not a research paper, but is a serious, reflective essay on our life as pastors who are called to preach the Word of God in and for the Church. Drawing from our reading, discussions, and your study and preaching of Scripture, this paper will provide an opportunity to
express what you believe is most important for us to remember concerning whom we are and what we must do to in becoming faithful preachers in our contemporary situation.

I encourage you to begin the practice of listening to sermons with theological and spiritual discernment. This practice is not for the sake of being critical of others, but to help you internalize the self-critical capacities necessary for faithful preaching. Consider:

Faithfulness to Scripture, Articulation of the Gospel, Fittingness for the situation, Coherence, clarity, gracefulness of expression. What did you see in this person and hear in this sermon that turned your attention to the God of Jesus Christ and moved you to respond with your mind, heart and action?

I am available to meet with you and to discuss matters concerning this course, preaching, and our call to pastoral ministry. Please feel free to email me at any time. I will respond as soon as possible. I also would welcome the opportunity to have lunch with each of you at least once during this semester to get better acquainted and to discuss your vocational plans and this course.

GRADING:
In-class sermons and exegetical notes= 60%
Written assignments and class participation= 25%
Participation= 15%

Sermons will be graded on a pass/fail basis. However, a letter grade will be assigned to the exegetical notes and reflection that accompany them, with sermon delivery, form, style, etc., being factored in. The purpose of this way of grading is to place maximum emphasis on developing the necessary habits for prayerful scripture study and attention to God that generates strong, fruitful proclamation.

I hope you will enter fully into this conversation with me and with one another. I consider you to be my colleagues who are being formed to share a common ministry of the Word.

Peace,
Mike Pasquarello
Sermon Evaluation PR 610

Preacher _______________       Scripture Text ________________

Faithfulness to the sermon text

Articulation of the Gospel

Contextual appropriateness
PR610: Thinking about preaching for Baptism, Holy Communion, and a Service of Death and Resurrection

The pastor is charged by God to always preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ by means of the Word of God that is spoken through Holy Scripture. This primary responsibility is not set aside on the days when the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are celebrated, nor at the time of a funeral, when the church participates in a service of Death and Resurrection. These occasions are special times when the Church pays particular attention to its authoritative narratives (the Bible and Christian tradition) and customary practices (baptism, eucharist, and remembering the dead) in order to have its judgments, emotions and life shaped and formed according to the pattern of Jesus Christ.

Christ is the One whose presence is most important during these occasions, when our Risen Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, comes to give new life in the waters of Baptism, reconciles and renews his people through the Bread and the Cup, speaking with the power of resurrection and life in the midst of death to grant hope, assurance, comfort, and strength.

Baptism, Holy Communion, and a Service of Death and Resurrection enact the Gospel, showing through dramatic and corporate actions what God is doing in the present, based upon his faithfulness and promises that have been demonstrated in the past through the witness of Scripture. These services are times when God is remembered and praised for his mighty acts of salvation, the same mighty power that works in and through them once again to call us into the future, which God is creating through the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.

Your sermon is a pastoral opportunity and responsibility to name the particular identity and activity of God at these times, and to invite your people to respond appropriately. It is only through the lens of Scripture that you will be able to see such events in ways that point to God’s faithful and gracious action.

The people involved are not the primary actors, neither should they receive the primary attention of your sermon. Thus Baptism in not simply a human response, nor is Holy Communion effective because we understand it or have certain feelings about it. Neither is a funeral simply a eulogy about the person who has died. To preach in these ways is to empty the Gospel of its power by placing the emphasis on ourselves rather than the Triune God.
In addition to placing the central focus on Christ, the Church needs to be the primary recipient of the message rather than individuals. Scripture reveals that our Christian identity is given in and through the Body of Christ; Baptism, Holy Communion, and a Service of Death and Resurrection have to do with the whole Body, not just a few of its members. These acts offer a public and corporate witness for God; they show the kind of God we worship and the kind of people we are because of him.

It is important that you do your homework in preparing to preach on such occasions, since Scripture offers rich resources for speaking to your people in terms of Baptism, Communion, death and resurrection. It is best to keep things simple, clear, and personal, reminding all involved of the identity and activity of God in the particular situation. As a preacher, your sermon should reflect the appropriate awe, wonder, gratitude, and praise that God richly deserves for new life in Christ and his Body, for renewed life at the Lord’s Table, and for life that is even stronger than death: the life of God’s kingdom, triumphant in the death and resurrection of Christ, which is the richness of the inheritance of the saints. These services are signs of God’s miraculous work, they also effect what they proclaim, and your sermon is a means by which the Spirit will do so in the present.

A strong tendency among pastors is to see these services as means for creating a meaningful experience for the people involved. Such sermons usually end up becoming exercises in sentimentality with little Christian content. Psychology replaces theology as the primary way of seeing what is going on, and emotional gratification is substituted for Christian formation, for building-up and strengthening Christian people. By focusing on Christ, and by allowing the story of Christ to guide your sermons, you will be able to resist the strong temptation to reduce the Gospel to the size of our humanity. Baptism, Holy Communion, and the memory and hope of the church at the time of death announce that a new world is on its way, and these are particular moments when this reality is especially intense.

There is a common sort of pastoral malpractice that happens most often at funerals, when the attention being paid to the person who has died exceeds the attention given to Christ, the strong Son of God who has conquered sin and death. In addition, eulogies are often little more than pagan speeches that praise people for their accomplishments and achievements without giving due credit to God who is the gracious author of every life and good gift. It is very important that Christians be remembered for whom they are in Christ, and that our words about them be offered as a witness of Christ’s grace and faithfulness to and through them. In this way we simply name the reality of our Christian life, acknowledging that we have been called to entrust and to give ourselves to Christ in both life and death. This witness provides an opportunity to proclaim the Easter faith of the Church, to announce that God’s love in Jesus Christ is stronger and more consuming than death itself, the last enemy we all must face.

It also is very easy to allow a baptism, especially that of an infant, to become a sloppy, sentimental moment, one in which the cuteness of the baby overshadows the claim of death and resurrection being made on the life of the child. Baptism marks the child as a child of God, an identity that is revealed and imparted by Christ himself through the
Spirit’s ongoing work in the church. This is a life of faithful obedience, lived by following the pattern of Jesus in his relationship with the Father, and in relationship within the family of God, the new humanity created in Christ Jesus. This commitment, which is made by the parents, must eventually be adopted and embraced by the child, which means the baptism must be seen as a beginning rather than an ending. This implies significant responsibilities on behalf of the congregation and the family, which should be spoken by the pastor in the sermon. Without a strong theology of baptism, the Lord’s Supper loses its significance, and the power of resurrection hope is diminished for those who die and those who remain. As St. Paul says, if we have only to hope in this life, we are the most to be pitied! Preach the Gospel: not self-help, sentimentality, or psychology.

As you prepare sermons for these very important occasions, remember that your words not only inform and instruct, but your words are actually instruments the Spirit is using to create the world that God is bringing about in Jesus Christ, and that you are inviting your people to enter that world through their hearing and response. These are holy times, set apart and sanctified by Christ himself; we need to give them our full, careful, and reverent attention. This is only possible when the preacher has also done his or her pastoral work in visiting, counseling, instructing, and praying. It is most important to take time to know those involved so that the Word you proclaim is spoken to and for them in the midst of a witnessing church, which also needs to hear and to rehear the story of its salvation at critical times in its life.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXEGETICAL/THEOLOGICAL/ HOMILETICAL NOTES

Notes are due with a manuscript of the sermon on the day you are scheduled to preach. Please type in a double-spaced format. References may be included in the body of the text, set off in parentheses.

1) Outline the text

2) Mark the boundaries of the text

3) Comment on any major textual problems

4) Note any significant translation problems

5) Discuss key words in the text, using concordance, lexicon, dictionary, word book, etc. This is the place to use your knowledge of Greek or Hebrew

6) Comment on the form, genre, of the text and its significance

7) Trace the text sources, especially (for New Testament texts) in the Old Testament, or other early Christian sources, such as prayers, liturgies, hymns, kerygma, didache

8) Relate the text to its cultural environment

9) Relate the text in its immediate context in scripture and compare to parallels in other books

10) Note the literary features of the text and their significance for proclamation

11) Pay careful attention to how the text embodies the theology of the Gospel

On the basis of your exegetical study, list three or four major issues raised by the text that the sermon must deal with. I encourage you to consult a variety of other sources, after you have done your exegetical work. Please do not limit your reading to contemporary commentaries and works. Look at the Fathers (such as Augustine and Chrysostom) the Reformers (such as Luther and Calvin) and John Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament and Standard Sermons, and the exegetical work of theologians such as Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics.
Reflect on the following:

How does the text witness to the character and activity of God?
What sin, or sins, does the text expose or address?
How does the text “preach” the Gospel of God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ?
What response (s) does the text require of us to be heard and enacted? What would the life of the church be like if we were to take this text seriously?
What is surprising, strange, or offensive in this text? What is comforting, assuring, and promising?
Has this text played a major role in doctrinal, ecclesial, liturgical, pastoral, ethical, historical debates, events, or controversies? (Creeds, heresies, Reformation, renewal movements, cultural and historical shifts or changes?)
How does our understanding and practice of Wesley’s “Scripture Way of Salvation” inform your reading of this text?
How is the text a “church word” what is it doing to form, sustain, correct, or empower the church?
What assumptions, values, wisdom, and behaviors of our culture does this text engage, challenge, undermine, or affirm?
Where or how have I seen this text being enacted in the church/world?

What theological, exegetical, historical, and homiletic sources have you consulted?

A FOCUS STATEMENT is a description of the central, controlling, and unifying claim being made by scripture (and the Word of God) that will shape and guide the sermon.

The focus statement should:
Unify the whole text
Encapsulate the Gospel
Have an impact on life

A FUNCTION STATEMENT is a description of what the preacher hopes the sermon will do as the Spirit uses your words to speak the Word into the lives of hearers. Ask yourself, based on your study and reflection, what you believe is the kind of response that is appropriate and faithful to the Word spoken through this biblical text and your sermon.

In one or two sentences, express the essence of the message you intend to preach

Give the sermon an appropriate title

In one or two paragraphs, tell how and why you would revise this sermon for appropriate use in an evangelistic event, Holy Communion, a Baptism, a Funeral.
Your notes are not a research paper. These instructions are a guide to assist you in the important work of homiletic exegesis, and to help you think by means of scripture for the purpose of proclamation.

Nine Theses on the Interpretation of Scripture

_The Art of Reading Scripture_, eds. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003) 1-5.

1. Scripture truthfully tells the story of God’s action of creating, judging, and saving the world.

2. Scripture is rightly understood in light of the church’s rule of faith as a coherent dramatic narrative.

3. Faithful interpretation of Scripture requires an engagement with the entire narrative: the New Testament cannot be rightly understood apart from the Old, nor can the Old be rightly understood apart from the New.

4. Texts of Scripture do not have a single meaning limited to the intent of the original author. In accord with Jewish and Christian traditions, we affirm that Scripture has multiple complex senses given by God, the author of the whole drama.

5. The four canonical Gospels narrate the truth about Jesus.

6. Faithful interpretation of Scripture invites and presupposes participation in the community brought into being by God’s redemptive action—the church.

7. The saints of the church provide guidance in how to interpret and perform Scripture.

8. Christians need to read the Bible in dialogue with diverse others outside the church.

9. We live in tension between the “already” and the “not yet” of the kingdom of God; consequently, Scripture calls the church to ongoing discernment, to continually fresh re-readings of the text in light of the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work in the world.
Some thoughts on writing a practical theology of preaching

I would suggest you try to write a paper that is an extended reflection on the practice of preaching, one in which you will communicate to me your fundamental theological and pastoral convictions concerning the ministry of the Word in the church.

There is any number of ways to do this, and I encourage you to use your imaginations in order to best articulate your current commitments and understanding of Christian preaching as a central practice of the church.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage you to think through the large questions, challenges and issues related to preaching, which, unfortunately, are typically ignored in favor of more pragmatic concerns of “how to” relating to sermon construction and style.

I hope the manner in which this course has been conducted might have prompted you to think of preaching within a larger “theological world” that includes the Triune God, Holy Scripture, the life of the preacher, the praise of God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in worship, the ordering of the ministry of the Word, and finally, what we do to bring God’s Word and God’s people into conversation: the sermon, as a particular act in an ongoing conversation that is part of the grand story of creation and redemption.

I want you to cite the books we have used only insofar as they help you to do this. Do not feel obligated to fill your paper with a large number of quotations from these authors, but instead, refer to them in those places where they have helped to stimulate your thinking and led to important insights.

Be theological: after all, It’s About God!!!!! But God at work in and through preaching and God as the subject of preaching need to be spelled out. This cannot be accomplished apart from the church, since God has chosen not to be, nor to speak without his people, those whom the Word creates and enables to bear witness to him in the world; in the end, it’s the Church that does the most important proclamation through its life. So, how does the Gospel constitute the church, and how is the church, in its life and mission, an expression of the Gospel?

You may want to reflect on how the preacher’s life fits into all of this, and how the Bible functions, and how worship, as true home, Word and Sacrament, creates the most significant context for preaching.
Lastly, you might want to look to Scripture for examples and instruction concerning the activity of preaching. There are many, to be sure, but use only what is sufficient for the purpose of your paper. For example, the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles.

Your assignment for our second class session:

Choose one from among the following passages. Your assignment is to identify the “Gospel,” which is the Good News proclaimed by Jesus and then proclaimed of and about Jesus Christ, the Crucified, Risen and Exalted Lord. Christian preaching is bringing this Gospel to speech, articulating news that is good - about God, our selves, and the world. This news, which is of God and about God, is accompanied by the power and Spirit of God, which makes it effectively heard and obeyed, resisted and rejected. This is not up to us; we are not responsible for its effects, but only for being faithful to the Word which bears witness to Christ in the whole of Scripture and is communicated as Gospel proclamation in the church.

Write 2 pages, double-spaced, which describe the Gospel according to the scripture passage you have selected. In addition, tell me the implications for preaching the “Gospel” in our time. Is this a strange, unfamiliar subject to you? Are you accustomed to hearing the proclamation of the Gospel? If not, what do you consider to be Christian preaching? How do the accounts of the Gospel in the New Testament challenge and correct contemporary preaching? Who is the Gospel? Is the Gospel a person as well as a message? What is God doing in the preaching and hearing of the Gospel?

Mark, chapter 1

Acts, chapters 2 and 3

Romans, chapter 1

Romans, chapter 10

I Corinthians, chapter 1

Ephesians, chapters 1 and 2

We will discuss our discoveries next week, sharing our wisdom in order to better understand the nature of Christian preaching and the vocation of the preacher as bearing truthful witness as “Good News.”

I will look forward to hearing your reports next Monday evening.