

PREACH THE WORD

Essays on Expository Preaching:
In Honor of R. Kent Hughes

EDITED BY

Leland Ryken & Todd Wilson

“Kent Hughes and even more the Word of God that he has faithfully preached are worthy of this astonishing array of contributors. I rejoice that the ripple effect of one man’s allegiance to the Bible has pushed so many new waves of blessing out of their hearts and into these pages.”

—John Piper, pastor for preaching and vision,
Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis

“That Kent Hughes can inspire contributions of such quality tells us something of the esteem in which he and his ministry are held. Here in these papers lasting treasure is to be found—in rare wisdom, fresh thinking, and occasional plain speaking. Highly recommended by one who has been uncommonly impressed and helped.”

—Dick Lucas, rector emeritus, St. Helen’s Church, Bishopsgate

“A book packed with preaching wisdom to honor one of this generation’s greatest expositors of Scripture. Kent Hughes is rightly honored, but God’s Word is ever-more highly honored in this special book.”

—Bryan Chapell, president, Covenant Seminary;
author of *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*

“Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of Dr. R. Kent Hughes is not just a treasure trove for preachers; it provides what amounts to a refresher course in pastoral theology. Faithful ministers frequently pause to reflect, “What am I doing and why am I doing it and what does God want me to be doing and how does he want me to be doing it?” This book will prove a tremendously helpful conversation partner for this kind of all-important reflection and self-evaluation. I warmly commend it to all who are serious about doing biblical pastoral ministry today.”

—Ligon Duncan, senior minister,
First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi;
president, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals;
chairman, Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

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Leland Ryken
and Todd Wilson, Editors

CROSSWAY BOOKS
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes

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Published by Crossway Books

a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers

1300 Crescent Street

Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Josh Dennis

First printing 2007

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Preach the Word: essays on expository preaching in honor of R. Kent Hughes /
Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson, editors.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-58134-926-9 (hc)

I. Preaching. I. Hughes, R. Kent. II. Ryken, Leland. III. Wilson, Todd A., 1976– IV. Title.

BV4211.3.P725 2007

251—dc22

2007016848

TS	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07
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For Kent and Barbara Hughes

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Introduction

Todd A. Wilson

What could be more full of meaning?—for the pulpit is ever this earth's foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world. From thence it is that the storm of God's quick wrath is first descried, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt. From thence it is that the God of breezes fair or foul is first invoked for favorable winds. Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete; and the pulpit is its prow.

—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

For nearly four decades R. Kent Hughes has devoted himself to expository preaching. Believing that not just the world but also the church is on its passage out and not a voyage complete, he has made the pulpit its prow—and the priority of his ministry. This year marked not only Kent's sixty-fifth birthday, but also his retirement from the position of senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton, a post he held for over a quarter of a century. To mark this occasion and pay tribute to his life and legacy, we assembled this collection of essays written by Kent's friends and colleagues. Our primary goal has been to produce a volume of good essays on the subject of expository preaching and a book that Kent himself would enjoy reading, because it covers the topics that are dearest to his preaching heart.

Celebratory volumes like this are usually reserved for those in academic guilds and are seldom produced for pastors. However, we thought it entirely fitting to honor Kent in this way because of his substantial contribution to raising the standard of expository preaching in North America and beyond. His own distinguished pulpit ministry, his nu-

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merous expository commentaries and published writings, and his extensive training of other preachers have done much to strengthen pulpits across this country and around the world—and we believe the evangelical church is the better for it!

This project has brought together a diverse group of contributors. Not all are North American. Nearly half are from Australia and the United Kingdom. Nor are all pastors or preachers. In fact, we have essays from college and seminary professors, a university chaplain, a college president, and urban church planters. This attests to the scope of Kent's influence, his professional ties extending to several continents and a variety of ministry spheres. This diversity also attests to the fact that expository preaching is more than the fascination of a particular wing of North American evangelicalism or the interest solely of pastors and preachers. As this collection testifies, interest in expository preaching crosses national and vocational lines; indeed it is a concern for all who love the church and desire to see her flourish.

Our desire is that this volume serve as a useful resource for many. The privilege of expository preaching, its challenges and hermeneutical presuppositions, biblical and historical examples of such preaching, the priority of training the next generation—these are the leading themes addressed in the pages to follow. Students will find this an inspiring introduction to the great art and science of expository preaching. Those employed in the training of future pastors and preachers will find a good overview of the subject. Congregants will gain insight into some of the delights and difficulties attending pulpit ministry and thus be encouraged to pray more empathetically and strategically for their shepherds. And pastors and preachers will, we trust, find fresh encouragement in these essays and be challenged to make the pulpit the prow of their ministries!

Preach the Word: An Overview

Every editor anxiously wonders whether a collection of essays will in the end form a coherent book. To our delight this volume has come together not only in a way that provides good coverage of the subject at hand, but also with essays that reiterate many of the same themes, thus giving the volume an overall unity and coherence. We have grouped these sixteen essays under four broad headings. By way of introduction, I would like to offer you, our readers, a brief yet enticing preview of each of the sections in the hope of whetting your appetites.

Interpretive Principles and Practices

“What you believe about the Bible determines everything,” Kent Hughes was fond of saying to me as a College Church intern nearly a decade ago. He meant this not just in general terms, but specifically as it relates to preaching. If you believe the Bible to be the Word of God written, God’s words in human words, it should shape your entire approach to preaching. In other words, there are specific interpretive principles and practices that ought to flow naturally from one’s conviction about God’s Word. In this first section, our contributors invite us to reflect upon some of them: things such as listening carefully to the text of Scripture, approaching the study of a passage inductively, appreciating the historical dimensions of a biblical text, seeking to preach both Old and New Testaments as Christian Scripture, and being sensitive to the various genres of the Bible.

It should become clear as one reads these essays that if expository preaching is to be done well, certain habits of study need to be developed and certain pitfalls, both practical and theoretical, need to be avoided. However, as important as right interpretation and interpretive methodology are for preaching, the ultimate criterion of success is faithfulness. This section of essays thus concludes on the right note with pastor John MacArthur helping us to hear once more Paul’s charge to Timothy: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Biblical and Historical Paradigms

Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is arguably the most oft-cited work of the twentieth century. It is also responsible for injecting into our everyday parlance the term “paradigm.” A paradigm is a model. Our second section of essays provides us with a few paradigms, a few models for modern-day preachers. The first is a biblical one, the model of the rugged and indefatigable apostle Paul. Both Bruce Winter and Duane Litfin explore aspects of Paul’s gospel proclamation and set him up, as it were, as a pastoral paradigm for twenty-first-century preachers. Then, drawing upon the rich legacy of history, Wallace Benn and J. I. Packer offer us a glimpse into the lives of the great Puritan pastor Richard Baxter and the towering Anglican divine Charles Simeon. Baxter provides us, as Benn demonstrates, with a model of how the preacher’s pastoral care for his flock can enhance, rather than detract

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from, his work in the pulpit. And Packer's reflections on Simeon's life paint for us not only an impressive picture of an exemplary preacher and homiletician, but a moving portrait of a life and ministry characterized by earnestness over the long haul.

Contemporary Challenges and Aims

Expository preaching has never been easy. Indeed, as Don Carson rightly points out, challenges have confronted the pulpit in every generation. That being said, as this third section of essays recognizes, there are some distinctive challenges in the twenty-first century: multiculturalism; rising biblical illiteracy; shifting epistemology; increasing social, cultural, and technological complexity; rapid change; and a dearth of models and mentoring.

These are some of the challenges. But if this is what preachers are up against, what should they be trying to accomplish? En route to an answer Phillip Jensen reminds us of the theological basis and rationale for preaching. In simplest terms, preaching is communicating God's Word in human words. Or to borrow from the apostle Peter, it is speaking the very "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Don Carson defines it with the single, felicitous phrase: "re-revelation." Hence, preaching is nothing less than God re-revealing himself through the exposition of his sacred Word. Quite an ennobling vision of what transpires in the pulpit! As to the aims, then, of preaching in the twenty-first century, Philip Ryken rightly points in a threefold direction: through the proclamation of the Word, expository preachers must seek the reformation of the church, the reconciliation of the world, and the glorification of God in Christ Jesus. Anything less is less than truly *biblical* preaching, that is, preaching with Scripture-informed aims and ends.

Training and Example

Who is responsible for training future preachers? When hearing this question, our thoughts tend to run toward the seminary. And not without good reason, since for over a century now, the seminary has been the primary conduit of formal ministerial training for pastors and preachers; and this situation is not likely to change anytime in the near future. So it is incumbent upon the church to think seriously about what seminary education ought to look like. To this end, Peter Jensen, dean of Moore College, Sydney, Australia, provides an incisive and sobering

analysis of the state of seminary education today, bedeviled as it is by increasing fragmentation, specialization, and generalization. However, his is not simply a song of lament. Rather, the burden of Jensen's essay is to challenge seminaries to prioritize the training of *preachers* amidst everything else they do. As Jensen contends, "It is the business of the whole faculty and the whole curriculum to produce preachers." Or to put it concretely, the sermon is the aim of the seminary.

Of course, seminaries are not the only ones who should produce preachers. The church is ultimately responsible to raise up her own shepherds. Thus in every generation the church must set itself anew to the task of raising up its own. But what might this look like in our day and age? Setting his proposal against the backdrop of the preacher-led Puritan movement in Tudor England, David Helm identifies several twenty-first-century strategies to help raise up not just a few but a whole generation of gospel preachers. This inspiring proposal is complemented by Jon Dennis's seasoned reflection upon Paul's charge to his pastoral understudy, Timothy: "Preach the Word!" (2 Tim. 4:2), which Dennis suggests provides us with a call and a model for training and deploying gospel ministers.

This entire collection of essays concludes, then, where it ought: with a warm, engaging and indeed fascinating sketch of Kent Hughes's life and ministry. Randall Gruendyke, longtime friend and former associate of Kent's at College Church, has done a great service in putting Kent's story down on paper. Such an exercise, however, serves more than the public record; it provides us with a *living example* of faithfulness to one's calling and faithfulness to one's Lord. We all need examples—preachers not least. May the reader see in this story an inspiring portrait of how the Pauline paradox of grace and discipline (1 Cor. 15:10) came to expression in the life of one godly and much-beloved pastor!

The Pulpit Leads the World

These are tumultuous and indeed unsettling times. As the rising tide of post-Christian secularism threatens to capsize the evangelical church and as many foul breezes rip across her deck, it is the pulpit that should be out in front, leading, navigating, warning of danger, signaling hope. Regrettably, however, it is the pulpit that is all too often relegated to the rear, pastors choosing instead to lead with all the rest. As a result, many churches are left adrift in a sea of moral and theological confusion, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Furthermore, as the pulpit recedes

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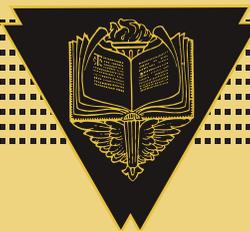
from the prow of many ministries, the church of Jesus Christ forfeits her divinely appointed means of bringing sinners to the Savior—and the world suffers.

This collection of essays on expository preaching, a labor of love and tribute to our friend and colleague Kent Hughes, is offered in hopeful anticipation of fairer days. So too we pray for favorable winds and a rising tide—a new generation of gospel preachers who heed the example of our honoree by ordering their lives and ministries around the conviction that the pulpit is ever the earth’s foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world.

Soli Deo Gloria!

PART ONE

INTERPRETIVE
PRINCIPLES
AND PRACTICES



“Kent Hughes and even more the Word of God that he has FaithFully preached are worthy of this astonishing array of contributors. I rejoice that the ripple effect of one man’s allegiance to the Bible has pushed so many new waves of blessing out of their hearts and into these pages.”

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DICK LUCAS, RECTOR EMERITUS, ST. HELEN’S CHURCH, BISHOPSGATE

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BRYAN CHAPELL, PRESIDENT, COVENANT SEMINARY; AUTHOR, *CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING*

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LIGON DUNCAN, SENIOR MINISTER, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI; PRESIDENT, ALLIANCE OF CONFESSING EVANGELICALS; CHAIRMAN, COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

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ISBN-13: 978-1-58134-926-9

ISBN-10: 1-58134-926-2

