PREACHING & TEACHING

Good Friday Sermon

A Good Friday sermon framework that does not rush to Sunday. Fifteen minutes, built on one of the seven last words rather than all of them, with notes on the service shape and on why the temptation to reassure is the thing to resist.

15 min preached · 4 segments

Four movements, fifteen minutes, and a list of the seven words with what each one can carry. Deliberately unresolved.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Do not resolve it. The single most common Good Friday failure is a preacher who cannot bear the room's discomfort and jumps to Sunday in the last two minutes. The congregation came to sit in one day and you can let them.
- Fifteen minutes. In a Tenebrae or seven-words service the sermon is one element among many and should behave like one.
- Take one word, not seven. Seven short meditations is a service structure, not a sermon, and preachers who attempt all seven in one address give seven introductions.

01. Choose one word

pick before writing

[each carries something different - pick for your congregation this year]

Father forgive them: for a congregation carrying a conflict. Today you will be with me in paradise: for a congregation that thinks it is too late for someone. Behold your son: for the practical, domestic care in the middle of it.

My God, why have you forsaken me: for a congregation in the dark, and the hardest to preach honestly. I thirst: for the physical reality people skip. It is finished: for anyone who thinks the work is theirs to complete. Into your hands: for a congregation that has been bereaved this year.

02. The text and the setting

4 min

[be concrete about what crucifixion was]

[read the passage containing your chosen word]

Say plainly what this was: a public, deliberately prolonged method of execution used by an occupying power on people it wanted others to learn from. Not a religious symbol. A civic one.

The cross on the wall behind you has been smoothed by nineteen centuries of familiarity. Roughen it once, early, and the rest of the sermon has somewhere to stand.

03. The turn

8 min

[one claim, held - no movement to Sunday]

[your material, 600 words - stay inside Friday]

If you preach the forsaken cry, do not immediately explain it away with Psalm 22 ending well. The congregation needs to hear that this is in the book, unexplained, before anyone tidies it.

04. The close, unresolved

3 min

[stop before you comfort them - the silence is the service]

Say nothing about Sunday. Let the room leave in silence, without a closing hymn if your tradition allows it. Congregations that have sat properly in Good Friday arrive at Easter with something to arrive with.

USAGE

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