

## *Preface*

Why another book of sermons? There are a host of authors who have written books on Homiletics and others who have published award winning books of sermons. Some of these notable preachers in my lifetime have been Fosdick, Bonnell, Chappel, Peale, Marney, Forbes, Allen, Shearer, Lowry and the Buttricks. Is there anything new under the sun? I appreciate the literary style and the artistic genius of many great American preachers and I have benefitted from their example. Furthermore, I listened to my father's sermons every Sunday until I went off to college at the age of 18. It was in my Senior year of High School that I committed to ministry and by that time I had pretty much decided what course my sermons would take and what course they would not take. That may sound presumptuous. Let me explain.

My father was the greatest influence upon the course which my sermon preparation would take. His sermons were expository in nature and he could quote from memory more scripture than any other preacher I have heard or read. At the same time, his philosophy was that his sermons, weddings and funerals were Christ-centered and should never include personal references. His illustrations, as well as those of many prominent preachers, were drawn from literature, history or famous people. Thus, I wondered where was the personal witness or testimony to the gospel which was being preached. That was often missing in the preaching of my father and of some popular and notable preachers. It was in a Homiletics Course taught by Paul Shearer at Union Theological Seminary in New York in the summer of 1961 that I really heard on a deeper level that "the Biblical story is my story." Oh, I knew that it was the Hebrew story and the story of the early Christian church but I had not before personalized the messages. This confirmed in my mind that the sermons which I would prepare and preach would include my personal witness to that which I read in the scripture and that which I experienced in my life.

In my Seminary courses in Systematic Theology I was influenced by the writings of Barth, Bultman, Buber, Niebuhr, Moltmann and Bonhoeffer and in Pastoral Theology by the likes of Hiltner, Howe, Clinebell and Tournier, M. D. In Clinical Pastoral Education I began to integrate my theology with the psychologies of Rogers, Erikson, Kopp, Glasser, Frankl and May. The essence of it all is that my understanding of Incarnational Theology took me beyond God's manifestation of God's Self in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth to the manifestation of God in all human flesh, including the preacher. Thus, I can authentically preach only that "which I have seen and heard," that to which I can bear witness. Consequently, the uniqueness of what I have to offer, I believe, is the autobiographical nature of these sermons. It is the essence of Incarnational and Process Theology interspersed with some Narrative Preaching. If that excites you as it has me in these 45 years of learning and preaching, then I have succeeded in this project. I invite you to join me in this journey through the Judeo-Christian Year of preaching.

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