Restoring truth: The biblical homily role amidst pragmatic challenges of congregation life

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Abstract: Homilies in the Church cannot be separated from the concrete challenges faced in the life of the congregation. One of the major challenges confronting contemporary homiletics is the growing dominance of pragmatism in congregational life, where preaching is often expected to address immediate needs, interests, and practical concerns rather than to proclaim biblical truth. In such a context, the congregation tends to evaluate homilies based on their usefulness or relevance to daily life, rather than their faithfulness to the truth of God's Word. This tendency risks reducing biblical homilies to motivational or problem-solving speeches, thereby weakening their theological depth. This article aims to analyze how pragmatic orientations influence the reception and content of homilies within congregational life and to explore ways in which homiletic practice can respond critically to these challenges. Drawing on biblical foundations and Pauline homiletic perspectives, the study seeks to restore the essential role of homilies as faithful proclamations of divine truth. Ultimately, this article contributes to contemporary homiletic discourse by offering theological and practical insights to ensure that biblical and Pauline homilies remain rooted in God's truth while engaging meaningfully with the real-life challenges of the congregation.

Keywords: congregation, God's word, homily, pragmatism, preaching

1. Introduction

The homily, as God's truth proclaimed, has received little attention in the life of the congregation today. This seems to have been a phenomenon in church history. Martin Luther observed this, switching the topic to God's justification, but during the homily, the people seemed to catch their breath because the congregation was more interested in their practical needs.[1] Luther pointed out that some congregations see homilies only as fun talks (e.g., comedy talks, confessions, motivational talks, etc.). The reasons for this include several factors, such as the personality of the preacher, the presentation of the preacher, the content of the homily, and the unpreparedness of the congregation. Another very significant factor can also be caused by the influence of the pragmatic

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[1] James F. McCue, "Luther and the Problem of Popular Preaching," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 1 (March 1985): 33–43, https://doi.org/10.2307/2540932.

lifestyle needs of the congregation. This pragmatic way of life is related to the development of the philosophy of pragmatism.

The philosophy of pragmatism exposes the need for a practical life. A life that is practical in its use, so that individuals gain quick and practical benefits.[2] Pragmatism spreads to various aspects of human life, such as religion, sociocultural education, ethics, law, politics, and economics. Pragmatism has also entered the field of Christian church life. In the course of the Church today, pragmatism translates into thinking in terms of visible results (e.g., membership growth, larger offerings, bigger buildings, varied activities, or a better reputation in the eyes of the world) rather than the essence of preaching God's Truth to the congregation.[3] The practical understanding is the view that God must be blessing the Church. Whatever is useful to the consumer is true, even if it may not be useful to others. The truth of any idea is its ability to produce the desired result. If it does not produce the desired result, then it is untruthful.

Pragmatism sees that a sermon message is valuable or true based on the achievement of personal gain. This understanding can hinder the growth of the congregation's genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the source of the congregation's life. This can be seen in the empty content of the congregation's minds, in the thoughts of Christ, and in the actions of truth. The congregation listens to the proclamation of the Word of God in a pragmatic understanding of practical life. The function of the homily in this era of pragmatism is indicated as from, by and for the practical interests of the congregation. The congregation has an orientation, and the center of the homily is the fulfillment of its practical needs. Such homilies, it is understood, should adjust their content and message practically according to the wishes of the congregation. Then what should the Church do? Does the homily adjust to the context of the pragmatic era so that it becomes a homily in the understanding of such pragmatism? Homilies like this cannot build the spiritual life of the congregation for the purpose of the proclamation of the Word of God by the Church. The Church must not be silent about this phenomenon. Pastors, administrators, and congregations need to pay full attention to this, especially to the issue of the principle of homilies in the congregation. This is necessary so that the life of the Church and congregation as the body of Christ can continue to radiate life as the light and salt of the world.

Homily, as a practical endeavor, indeed has complex problems; however, at the same time, it is the most important in the ministry of the congregation, and needs attention to return to its essence.[4] This is what is discussed in this essay. Starting from

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[2] Jacquelyn Kegley, "Classical American Pragmatism: Practicing Philosophy as Experiencing Life," *Human Affairs* 24, no. 1 (January 2014): 112–19, https://doi.org/10.2478/s13374-014-0210-4.

[3] Nathan Houser, "The Church of Pragmatism," *Semiotica* 2010, no. 178 (January 2010): 105–6, https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.2010.007.

[4] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (London: Viking, 2015), 28.

the problem of the blurring of the essence of homilies in the era of pragmatism is the impetus for the author to seek a comprehensive analysis related to the position of biblical and Pauline homilies. This analysis is necessary because the era of pragmatism exists today and will persist into the future. Thus, it is hoped that the understanding and practice of homilies can return to their essence, facilitating authentic spiritual growth in the body of Christ.

Although pragmatism has been widely discussed in various fields, no research specifically examines the influence of pragmatism on the essence and reception of homilies. Previous research, such as by R. Vivian Pietsch, did discuss how John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism influenced the Church Growth Movement's methodology, especially in mission and evangelism strategies, but did not specifically examine its influence on homilies in the Church.[5] Likewise, Thomas Schlag focuses solely on how pragmatism can contribute to public practical theology in facing the challenges of modern life, without touching on the homily aspect.[6] Nathan Houser, in his research titled "*The Church of Pragmatism,*" discusses the relevance of pragmatism to church teaching, but focuses more on the role of pragmatic theology in social ministry than in the context of church homilies.[7] In addition, J. J. (Ponti) Venter also examines the influence of pragmatism on church teachings, but this study focuses more on how James' pragmatism, which emphasizes effectiveness and practical results, led him to criticize gentleness and kindness in Christianity as ineffective forms of humanitarianism.[8] Therefore, there are still gaps in this study, and further research is needed to explore how pragmatism affects homily practice and its impact on the spiritual growth of congregants, especially in the context of an increasingly pragmatic church.

2. Research Methods

The author will conduct qualitative research using a literature-based approach, focusing on methods for collecting data from library sources, reading, recording, and processing research materials.[9] This approach aims to analyze the role of homilies in facing pragmatic challenges in congregational life. In this research, various theological

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[5] R. Vivian Pietsch, "The Influence of John Dewey's Pragmatism on the Church Growth Movement," *International Review of Mission* 111, no. 1 (May 2022): 138–68, https://doi.org/10.1111/irom.12407.

[6] Thomas Schlag, "Approaching Modern Life: Pragmatism and Public Practical Theology," in *Pragmatism and Modernities*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Thomas Schlag, and Fritz Osterwalder (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2010), 225–38, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789460913457.

[7] Houser, "The Church of Pragmatism."

[8] J. J. (Ponti) Venter, "Pragmatism Attacking Christianity as Weakness – Methodologies of Targeting," *Koers - Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 78, no. 2 (June 2013): 2–7, https://doi.org/10.4102/koers.v78i2.61.

[9] Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan (Library Research Methods)* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008), 3.

literature, philosophy, and social-religious studies will be reviewed to examine how homilies can serve as a means of restoring truth in congregational dynamics. The author also examines theories related to homiletics to see the relevance and effectiveness of homilies in answering the needs of congregations faced with pragmatic realities. In addition, this research will pay attention to historical and contextual aspects in the development of homilies, as well as how social changes affect the congregation's acceptance and meaning of the sermon delivered. This analysis is expected to provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities for homilies in guiding congregations toward a fuller understanding of the truth.

3. Results and Discussion
Homilies in the Era of Pragmatism
Pragmatism Philosophy

Pragmatism, derived from the Greek word *pragma,* meaning action, is a philosophy that emphasizes practical consequences as the measure of truth.[10] It emerged in the late 19th century in the United States, primarily popularized by Charles Sanders Peirce, who defined pragmatism as understanding truth through its consequences—ideas are true if they yield expected results in practice.[11] This view was later developed by philosophers like Dewey, William James, and Jane Addams, who are considered the founding figures of pragmatism.

Peirce's philosophy centered on testing the truth of ideas through their practical consequences, emphasizing that beliefs are meaningful only if they guide effective action. According to pragmatism, the value of human actions and beliefs lies in their results and their ability to solve real-world problems. Heba Maarouf defines three types of pragmatism: functional pragmatism (knowledge for action), referential pragmatism (knowledge of action), and methodological pragmatism (knowledge through action).[12] These highlight how actions are driven by their anticipated consequences, which then shape future decisions.[13]

For pragmatists, the key question is whether beliefs and actions bring beneficial and positive results. James argued that pragmatism would be a philosophy of the

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[10] Jaloni Pansiri, "Pragmatism: A Methodological Approach to Researching Strategic Alliances in Tourism," *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development* 2, no. 3 (December 2005): 191, https://doi.org/10.1080/14790530500399333.

[11] Alex Gillespie, Vlad Glăveanu, and Constance de Saint Laurent, "Pragmatism," in *Pragmatism and Methodology: Doing Research That Matters with Mixed Methods*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 1, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009031066.

[12] Heba Maarouf, "Pragmatism as a Supportive Paradigm for the Mixed Research Approach: Conceptualizing the Ontological, Epistemological, and Axiological Stances of Pragmatism," *International Business Research* 12, no. 9 (2019): 1, https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v12n9p1.

[13] Vibha Kaushik and Christine A. Walsh, "Pragmatism as a Research Paradigm and Its Implications for Social Work Research," *Social Sciences* 8, no. 9 (September 2019): 255, https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8090255.

future, similar to the Protestant Reformation, and it has indeed become widely influential today.[14] Pragmatism emphasizes experience and its practical consequences, with a focus on ethical and political implications. According to Lois-ellin Datta, the truth of a statement is determined by its practical outcomes and how it aligns with subsequent experiences.[15] In popular perception, pragmatism is often seen as a culture that favors practicality, instant gratification, dislikes process, or solving only short-term problems.[16]

Homily Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a practical life. A life that sees everything from subjectivity or relativity. A life that sees everything precisely in actions and deeds based on their utility or profitability. There is no definitive truth. The truth belongs to everyone, depending on how they see its usefulness.[17] This shows that the right homily is judged individually, and there is no universal benchmark for the right homily. In the era of pragmatism, homilies are valuable to the extent that they can be proven useful in everyday life. This view can fall into subjectivism if usefulness is seen as dependent on each individual. Extreme subjectivism will lead to the absence of a shared homily truth value that the congregation believes in.[18]

For congregants who adhere to this pragmatism, the hypothetical homily is correct and appropriate if the homily delivered moves satisfactorily.[19] In the congregation, whatever one's choice of homily must always be placed in the framework of "Does the homily bring consequences of usefulness and satisfaction to our lives?" The congregation can choose any type of homily depending on the needs of its life.

The pragmatism framework in church life brings both good and bad things.[20] Homilies are good if the pragmatic way of thinking is interpreted as true; homilies must bring changes in one's life experience for the better. However, a pragmatist frame of mind can lead to bad things if usefulness is interpreted only as narrowly as practical

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[14] James T. Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 1 (June 1996): 100, https://doi.org/10.2307/2945476.

[15] Lois-ellin Datta, "A Pragmatic Basis for Mixed-method Designs," *New Directions for Evaluation* 1997, no. 74 (June 1997): 34, https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1070.

[16] Anastasia Jessica Adinda Susanti, "Prolog: Meninjau Ulang Dan Menyikapi Pragmatisme Dewasa Ini," in *Meninjau Ulang Dan Menyikapi Pragmatisme Dewasa Ini*, 1st ed. (Surabaya: Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya, 2015), 13.

[17] Anastasia Jessica Adinda Susanti, "Perkembangan Pragmatisme," in *Meninjau Ulang Dan Menyikapi Pragmatisme Dewasa Ini*, 1st ed. (Surabaya: Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya, 2015), 72–75.

[18] Harvey Siegel, "Relativism," in *Handbook of Epistemology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2004), 750, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-1986-9_22.

[19] Pietsch, "The Influence of John Dewey's Pragmatism on the Church Growth Movement," 150.

[20] W. Creighton Peden, "Christian Pragmatism: An Intellectual Biography of Edward Scribner Ames, 1870–1958," in *A Pragmatist's Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 166–69.

usefulness and self-gratification.[21] Pragmatism sees that all homilies are measured solely by whether they are useful to me or not. Truth is subjective or individual. Human reasoning is reduced to instrumental knowledge: useful or useless.[22]

The pragmatic way of life in the Church will affect the service life of the Church, including the homily service. A pragmatic congregation will only hear homilies that are pleasant and profitable for them. Conversely, a pragmatic minister will deliver a profitable homily. Individuals and families see all uses. Homilies in the era of pragmatism often fall into relativism.

In addition, homilies in the era of pragmatism are anthropocentric. Such homilies will focus on human beings and avoid the concept of God and God's revelation.[23] The homily is diverted entirely to man. The Gospel and scriptural passages are replaced by human systems and focus. Although homilies should consider human circumstances and needs, this is not the standard of homily truth. The homily should also pay attention to and consider another important aspect, which is the biblical, God-centered homily.

What happens to the homily when the preacher preaches something other than the Gospel? The Gospel and the gospel's world move into the background, replaced by Scripture verses, the situation of the moment, or the value system (piety, doctrinal beliefs, moral stance) of the preacher. When the situation becomes what is preached, the homily turns into an exercise in cultural, psychological, and political issues. When the Bible becomes what is preached, the thousands of views, topics, editorial sides, and stories of the ancient writers expressed replace the Gospel, and homilies tend to become moral applications.[24]

Biblical Homily

Homilies are an important practice of the Church's faith in the congregation. Homilies play a crucial role in the Church, shaping how Christians see to live out the faith of the congregation.[25] The biblical homily has become a central and important goal for preachers who confess and believe in the power of the biblical message for worship, evangelization, and discipleship. Elaine Farmer says that homilies are the "raison d'être" of the Church,[26] while David Buttrick reminds us that "Jesus' presence is the

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[21] Susanti, "Prolog," 20–22.

[22] Aribowo, "Pragmatisme Dan Perubahan Sosial Budaya," in *Meninjau Ulang Dan Menyikapi Pragmatisme Dewasa Ini* (Surabaya: Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya, 2015), 160–61.

[23] Michel Clasquin-Johnson, "Towards a Metamodern Academic Study of Religion and a More Religiously Informed Metamodernism," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (February 2017): 3–6, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4491.

[24] Edward Farley, *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 96.

[25] Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 527.

[26] Elaine Farmer, "Kindlers of Fire, Lighters of Firebrands," in *Don't Put Out the Burning Bush: Worship and Preaching in a Complex World* (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum, 2008), 19.

preacher."[27] Given this importance, it is not surprising that homilies require special attention and continuous renewal, especially in this era of pragmatism that obscures the important values in biblical homilies.

The congregation's need for practical homilies in this era of pragmatism, the author, in this case, proposes an alternative regarding biblical homilies, which are biblical. However, the author does not neglect the practical reason, to care for the human being or the people who hear the homily. This crossover occurs because the needs of practical and biblical homilies relate to both the sources that influence the homily and the direction of the homily delivered to the hearers. Practical and biblical homilies, of course, will provide distinctive theological tools to trace the origin and orientation of the homily as well as the action and naming of God in the homily. Each provides the transformative power of the homily. Homilies cannot exist without theological thinking, and this applies to all ages.[28] Biblical homilies pay attention to two things, namely, the text and the context.[29] A homilist must be sensitive to both. Text-focused homilies concentrate on biblical homilies, and context-focused homilies concentrate on practical ones, both of which are interrelated. Therefore, it is necessary in this section to pay attention to both context and text in the homily.

Biblical homilies, in their purpose, are also concerned with what can be called contextual homilies. This implies that homilies are contextualized. The homily as a theological reflection on the practice of homiletics begins as a contextually bound field. Every homily participates in the ongoing practice of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ and teaching the Old and New Testament Scriptures by doing so contextually and locally. Homilies are communicative and religious events in which the presence of God in his promise is mediated, not by the preacher directly, but through the homily as an event of speaking and listening, and the reception of the homily becomes the center of homily reflection, not merely of rhetorical interest, but primarily as a religious category.[30]

Adipati presented this form of contextual homily as a phenomenological homily. He stated that phenomenological homilies are the gateway to the Church's homily message into the life experience of the people. Phenomenological homilies have the

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[27] David G. Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 449.

[28] Hennie J. C. Pieterse, "Preaching with Integrity, Imagination and Hope," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 67, no. 3 (March 2011): 1, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i3.1138.

[29] Hennie Pieterse and Cas Wepener, "Preaching: An Initial Theoretical Exploration," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (April 2021): 3, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i2.6501.

[30] Theo Pleizier, "Homiletic Transitions in The Netherlands: The Spirit, Human Language and Real Preaching," *The International Journal of Homiletics* 2 (2017): 63–64, https://theopleizier.nl/pdf/publications/2017_pleizier2017j_Homiletic%20Transitions.pdf.

opportunity as an alternative approach as a carrier of change in the proclamation of the Word of God for people amid their daily lives with real faith.[31]

A proper homily should take into account the context. Long illustrates that it is important for a homily to convey the condition of the congregation and its culture, which need answers to their anxieties, and a thirst for the Word of God. Long helps us understand that when we preach, we must develop ears to hear and eyes to see. This is similar to James F. Kay's argument that the importance of context for the delivery of the word is determined by the elasticity of any condition and situation.[32] In this case, Jay added that a homily should be centered on Christ.[33]

In addition to paying attention to the context, a proper homily will also pay attention to the text. The text should be biblical. This is certainly not easy, but it does not mean impossible. Karl Barth stated that the only difficulty in homiletics is how to correctly say that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the congregation's life.[34] Barth argued that homilies have merit when the congregation reads the Word of God as the Word of God, as well as his concern that homilies have turned into a kind of religious discourse, from human needs and desires alone.[35] Barth, in his understanding of the biblical homily, attends to the text and involves Christ in it. Barth wanted the Word of God to be God speaking directly to the congregation.[36]

David Lyon Bartlett, in his view, says that in homilies, the Bible makes the framework of a homily.[37] When preaching the good news and telling good stories from God, the foundation of the story must be the Bible. With a text, we must listen, read, and do over and over again. Homilies in the era of pragmatism require serious attention to this. Thomas Troeger's work on proper homiletics should provide a useful insight that biblical homilies are not meant to replace the role of God with the practical use of the congregation, but rather to make the Bible the foundation of their thinking.[38]

Timothy Keller is also a recognized figure for his homilies, saying that biblical homilies have and use the authority of strong biblical texts in homilies and are not based on their own opinions (1Cor 2:1).[39] This should reveal the form or framework

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[31] Yustus Adipati, "Homiletika Fenomenologis: Pewartaan Firman Tuhan Dalam Keseharian Umat," *Missio Ecclesiae* 12, no. 2 (October 2023): 105–10, https://doi.org/10.52157/me.v12i2.202.

[32] James F. Kay, *Preaching and Theology* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2008), 132.

[33] Kay, *Preaching and Theology*, 130.

[34] Aaron Edwards, "A Broken Engagement: Reassessing Barth's Relationship to Kierkegaard on the Grounds of Subjectivity and Preaching," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2014): 56–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12043.

[35] F. Gerrit Immink, "Homiletics: The Current Debate," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 8, no. 1 (January 2004): 93, https://doi.org/10.1515/IJPT.2004.006.

[36] Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, 1st ed., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Donald E. Daniels (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 44.

[37] David Lyon Bartlett, *Between the Bible and the Church: New Methods for Biblical Preaching* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1999), 36.

[38] Thomas H. Troeger, *Preaching While the Church Is Under Reconstruction: The Visionary Role of Preachers in a Fragmented World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 31.

[39] Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, 55.

of the biblical homily. The approach in biblical homilies requires academic rigor, but without making the preacher's intellect the focus. Instead, this rigor will lead to a sharper focus on naming God. The sharpening of biblical concepts in the homily makes it a study in biblical theology. A biblical homily seeks to discover and explore the grand metanarrative of the entire Bible. Regarding biblical scholarship itself, Sidney Greidanus states, "The Biblical approach is a specific theological discipline that seeks to uncover the theology of the Bible itself.[40]

This suggests that the biblical approach is specific to theology and is closely related to homiletics. Edmund Clowney, in his famous book, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, argues that biblical theology requires basic principles of biblical understanding to understand a consistent message, in order to explain away contradictions in it.[41] That way, in a homily, one of the important parts is that the homily contains biblical theology. This biblical homily relates to the proclamation of Christ as the center of biblical preaching.

Biblical homilies are fundamentally Christocentric because they are grounded in biblical theology. This Christocentric orientation is articulated by Graeme Goldsworthy, who defines biblical theology as "the study of how each text in the Bible relates to Jesus and His Gospel. Thus, we begin with Christ so that we can end with Christ. Biblical theology is Christological in nature, as its subject matter is Scripture as God's testimony about Christ. Therefore, from beginning to end, it is a study of Christ."[42]

These two cannot be separated because they are one and the same. To speak of biblical homilies is to speak of Christ as the center of biblical preaching, and every homily shows how the text to be preached relates to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In this sense, the biblical homily is Christocentric, emphasizing the importance of the doctrine of Christology, which is concerned with teaching about who Christ is and what He has done. Therefore, Christocentric homilies want to direct the congregation to see and understand Christ as the center of each homily more clearly. Thus, it can bring the congregation to life transformation based on the work and will of Christ.

The correlation between practical and biblical homilies can clearly enrich the power of change (transformative), which will influence pragmatic life into a life in God's truth. Both homily approaches have their own weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, in today's church, it is necessary to pay attention to both homily approaches as a transformative homily. Throughout the history of the Church (early church,

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[40] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 35.

[41] Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishers, 2002), 13.

[42] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 23.

reformation until now), the Church in preaching the Gospel cannot be separated from these two homily approaches. Here, the author presents some examples to reinforce these two homily approaches.

Paul's Homily

Pauline homilies, known as apostolic homilies or homilies, were an integral part of the spread of Christianity in the first century. One of the most influential apostles in Christian history, Paul often gave homilies as a way to teach the Gospel to various communities. Paul's homilies are recorded in the Book of Acts and the epistles in the New Testament. Paul's homilies were essential in early church history for the conversion and edification of believers. However, some preachers have minimized the role of Pauline homilies in preaching, especially in the era of pragmatism. James W. Thomson states in his article that, "Paul is the forgotten mentor in the understanding of the homily. His homilies in the age of pragmatism have much to tell preachers living in the age of pragmatism."[43] His critical analysis of Pauline and contemporary homily dialogues exposes significant areas for study and for application in the age of pragmatism.

Paul's homily is further explained by Vern S. Poytress in his analysis of the text of 2 Corinthians 4:2, who states that Paul expresses his belief in homilies in three ways. Firstly, the origin of the message is divine, and its authority is divine, i.e. it is "the word of God" (2Cor 4:2). Secondly, the content of the message makes sense; Paul takes ownership of the truth, of what he calls "the public declaration of the truth" (v. 2). Thirdly, Paul was confident in the power of his homily to overcome opposition. His confidence was not based on his own rhetoric (1Cor 2:1-5) or his human qualifications (Phil 3:4-8), but on God (2Cor 3:4-6).[44] Paul's homilies contain God's truth that comes not from himself but from God. The power of Paul's homilies, as described by Poythress in his investigation, was in the situation of a free-living and cosmopolitan congregation that described the life of pragmatism. Michael P. Knowles, in his book *We Preach Not Ourselves: Paul on Proclamation*, illustrates that Paul's preaching was not self-centered but centered on the Truth of Christ. Knowles calls this "Preaching Spirituality".[45] Similar to Poytress' analysis of Corinthians, Abney, who focuses on a hermeneutical analysis of Paul's homilies in 1 Corinthians, argues that "Paul's homily model should inform modern preachers to develop an expository homily model-biblical,

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[43] James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 111.

[44] Vern S. Poythress, "Paul's Preaching and Postmodern Skepticism," *Unio Cum Christo* 2, no. 2 (October 2016): 127, 161, https://doi.org/10.35285/ucc2.2.2016.art9.

[45] Michael P. Knowles, *We Preach Not Ourselves: Paul on Proclamation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 115–20.

Christological, application, adaptable, personal, colorful, and sometimes confrontational."[46]

In his homily, Paul began by tracing the history of the Jewish people, showing the importance of the events in their journey as God's chosen people. Paul did not stop at the history of the Jews alone. Courageously, he expanded the scope of this message to include the Gentiles. Paul wanted to emphasize that the salvation brought by Jesus Christ was not only for the Jews but also for all nations. Paul said, "The message of salvation has been sent to us" (Acts 13:26). Paul's homily was not only informative but also confrontational. Like Jesus' homily, it serves to harden the hearts of some Jews. This was not to reject them but to extend the reach of the Gospel to non-Jews, who are often considered part of the divine plan for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. Paul's entire life was directed towards ministry and delivering homilies. Not only because of his deep understanding of the Scriptures, but also because of his ability to interpret them in a way that both Jews and Gentiles could understand. Hence, Paul's intellectual and spiritual prowess made him almost unrivaled by the philosophers of his day.[47] Paul was not only called to preach the Gospel, but he was also commissioned to preach the Gospel to the heathen nations that God had planned long before.[48] Paul's homilies were not only religious teaching but also a powerful tool for communication and propagation of the Christian faith, which had a great impact on the growth and development of the early church by emphasizing the interpretation and exploration of biblical truth.

4. Conclusion

Homilies are an essential ministry of the Church in all situations, including the pragmatic era. Homilies should not be affected by the existing situation but rather influence the life of the congregation in it. Through the search and re-analysis of homilies, it is clear that homilies cannot be separated from the essential task of the church, the Church's martyrdom vocation. This can be seen from the essence of the homily itself, which contains practical and biblical content. These two forms of homily show the Church's great role in the relationship between man and God.

This homily of practical and biblical truth is very important in the era of pragmatism, which is an essential service force in the Church. Of course, these homilies

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[46] Corey Len Abney, "The Apostle Paul's Methodology of Preaching in Acts and 1 Corinthians and Its Implications for Expository Preaching" (PhD dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 12–13.

[47] Nathan Daniel Shannon, "Apologetics and Preaching: Lessons from the Preaching of Peter and Paul," *Verbum Christi: Jurnal Teologi Reformed Injili* 9, no. 2 (October 2022): 177, https://doi.org/10.51688/VC9.2.2022.art4.

[48] Subhro Sekhar Sircar, "The Preaching of 'the Gospel of God': Paul's Mission to the Nations in Romans" (PhD dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 22, https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/3958.

not only play a role in the pragmatic needs of the congregation but also color the lives of all ages throughout human history. By maintaining these biblical homilies throughout history, the church can continue to be a force in the Church's primary ministry and calling in the world.

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