The preacher's vulnerable attitudes in naming reality in a neglected society

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Ecclesiastical studies seem to reveal that the praxis of preaching is often confronted with a stumbling block in the negative attitudes of preachers despite their good intentions and the interdependence between prayer and preaching. In naming reality in society, it seems to be important that preachers first of all examine their own attitudes regarding their hearers and reality in society. In light of this problematic praxis, the research question is: To what extent do preachers with positive attitudes equip their hearers by means of a dialogue to listen profoundly to the content of preaching when the preaching names realities in society? In order to address this research question, the problem is investigated from the present practical-theological vantage points in the field. The matter is further explored by examining meta-theoretical perspectives from the fields of Social Psychology and Communication Sciences. As part of this process, the author seeks to investigate the difficult process of the formation and manifestation of attitudes in behaviour. An investigation into normative vantage points, perspectives from II Corinthians 5 and the Pastoral Letters, indicate that the message and the way in which preachers deliver their sermons are important. The conclusion poses that negative attitudes are indeed dangerous when it forms part of this ecclesiastical praxis and can even cause hearers to abandon all intent to be salt and light in society. Preachers must utilise dialogue in preparation for their sermons. They must focus on the dialogical nature of preaching in the context of the liturgy and must make time to stimulate feedback after they have delivered their sermons to make sure that hearers understand their calling in society. Congregations must become communities that live founded in profound communication.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article recognises the interdisciplinary approach to the social sciences. In Practical Theology, research focuses on communicative acts which bring the field into an overlap with other sciences that have the same focus. This article briefly focuses on an interdisciplinary discourse with the fields of Social Psychology and Communication Sciences regarding the forming and functioning of attitudes, which can possibly influence the sermon delivery of preachers. This article addresses the issue of naming reality in society. In this process, the naming of the attitude of the preacher is very important.

Introduction

Practical-theological investigation of the person and character of the preacher is not new (Craddock 2001:3; Larson 2012:61; Troeger 2007:119). Craddock (2001:3–4), for instance, explains the contours of a problematic praxis of naming reality and describing it as an attempt to serve up a monologue in a dialogical world. The reason for the critical voices against preaching is that critics have heard many sermons by preachers that helped establish their viewpoints. Joubert (2009:23) joins in by indicating that modern people tend to choose reliable persons for accurate opinions. MacDonald (2012:33) underlines the very important fact that preachers must realise that, in modern life, it is not the correctness of dogma in the first instance but the authenticity of the preacher that becomes the measure of homiletic credibility. It sounds incredible, but the possibility indeed exists that preachers can preach the truth incorrectly (Keller 2012:85).

Preaching is an act that exposes the attitudes of the preacher, who remains a vulnerable person (Brueggemann 2010:2; Geisler & Geisler 2009:14). Long (2005:177) indicates that hearers actually listen faster than preachers preach and quickly position themselves to decide whether they can believe the content of the sermon or not. In this process, preachers must never neglect the reality that, whilst they are preachers of their sermons, they are simultaneously hearers of their own sermons (Dingemans 1991:14; Long 2005:64). Naming reality in society has a starting point, namely the explorative consideration of attitudes. Preachers must name their own attitudes in order to name reality in society. In his inquiry, Keller (2012:86) expresses his concern about the vulnerable attitude of preachers if the spirit of their preaching is not right. In this sense, the word

vulnerability refers to the danger of sermons that can cause wounds because of negative attitudes. Applied to a South African context with immense problems – with *inter alia* crime, corruption, poverty, poor service delivery and moral decline – it is often the easiest for preachers to act like the prophet Jonah with his adversarial approach towards engaging culture (Buchanan 2012:20). If the truth is not spoken in the right tone, like the prophet Daniel does for instance, it can become a falsehood (Buchanan 2012:26). The vulnerability of this kind of preaching is that it can easily become one-sided and can create a distance between the pulpit and reality in society. This leads to the neglect of realities in society. The important question about neglecting reality in society remains: What is the reason(s) for neglecting societal realities?

To be true to homiletic principles, one has to agree with Long (2005:52) when he states that preaching is biblical whenever the preacher allows a text to serve as the leading force in shaping the content and the purpose of preaching. However, Long opens up the following all-important question: If the God of the Bible exists, what is wrong with preaching in our contemporary societies? Why is it possible for preachers to neglect the importance of daily realities in society to such an extent that society can be called a neglected society? Craddock (2001:4) makes an interesting point when saying that the critical voices against preaching are not always the result of a disinterest in religion or preaching but rather a reaction against preachers that create a caricature on the pulpit. Therefore an investigation into preaching as the naming of reality in a neglected society is important but then within the context of the existence and functioning of the attitudes of preachers. Buttrick (1998:2) highlights the sense of God moving in on our world, pointing out that it is very often a neglected subject and that it contributes to the fact of a neglected reality.

This article investigates the important role of the attitudes of preachers in naming the reality of the Word in society, given the fact that the light of the Word on reality is often neglected. The consequence is that preaching can easily become a dysfunctional instrument, and preachers can become irresponsible escapists instead of preaching or naming the realities of the Kingdom of God and the realities in society (Stott 1999:18). Arthurs (2012:64) rightly indicates that this trend is a roadblock in the way of inspirational preaching because hearers can easily ask the 'so-what-question'.

The methodological insight of Osmer (2008:3) will be utilised to consider the various phases in this investigation. Osmer identified a hermeneutic spiral in practical-theological research[1] along four lines:

- *Descriptive-empirical research*: During this stage, the researcher intends to gather information to arrive at a better understanding of the problematic praxis. In this case, the problem is ineffective preaching due to the wrong attitude of preachers.

- *Interpretative investigation*: The researcher intends to analyse the reasons for behaviour in this problematic praxis.
- *Normative research*: The researcher includes normative questions from other fields within theology.
- *Pragmatic research*: The researcher gives perspectives to rectify the problematic praxis of neglecting the reality of the Word and the reality of society.

Descriptive research on the literature available on in this problematic praxis

This section presents examples of research on preachers and their attitudes. This research field is extensive, and therefore, this section highlights only a few examples of research from the past ten years to examine the current trends in this field of naming and neglecting reality and the functioning of attitudes.

The attitude of the preacher regarding the text and hearers: Naming reality

Brueggemann (2010:36) investigates the triangular relationship between the text, the preacher and the hearers. Because of certain things that happened in society and the critical voices against preaching, the danger exists that the voice of the text can become silent and less authoritative. Preachers can easily become substitutes for the voice of the text because their voices can become overly important. Brueggemann (2010:37) states that this fact leaves preachers vulnerable and exposed because their own voice is now pitched against the voices of people in society. In connection to Brueggemann, Pieterse (2009:253) expresses his concern about the attitude of preachers within a South African context with specific reference to their reluctance to deliver their sermons in such a way that the Word can perform true transformation. He identifies a possible reason for this, namely doubt about God's presence during the worship service and during the act of sermon delivery.

Hansen (2004:131) expresses his view about the attitude of preachers and indicates the attitudes of preachers about the life and values of their hearers and the influence of this in shaping sermons. The problem with this attitude is that it sets up the preacher against sinful society and sinful hearers. The attitude of preachers influences their message of persuasion and also the effectiveness of their message. The wrong attitude, namely exercising control over their hearers, is destructive.

Noetic attitudes in the marketplace: Neglecting reality or neglected society?

Borden (2012:161) underlines the attitude of preachers that do not realise that there is a growing church for people who are not there yet. It can happen that preaching with the negative attitude towards people in society can become a hindrance to the mission in the marketplace. Preachers must carefully consider what they are going to say and also how

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they are going to say it. Through their preaching, preachers must open the vision for what should happen in society and in the community. Mohler (2011:56–57) convincingly points out some of the negative attitudes of preachers, focussing on the following aspects:

- Preachers show ignorance, and they neglect things and the attributes of God.
- They tend to show intellectual prejudice.
- Preachers often have a finite perspective on reality. This could be the reason why preachers neglect reality in society. The way in which believers expect the day of the Lord is important for the way in which they live.
- Preachers often draw the wrong conclusions, and this determines their attitude. The reason for this is that people in general have a wilful denial of and blindness towards evidence.
- Preachers have problems with the stigmas attached to the outcasts in society whose lifestyle is seen as deviant. Such lifestyles are different from the mainstream church member's lifestyle. It often happens that a minster just wants to minister to the obedient people but has no eye for the vacuum where no-one is ministering. This asks for a change of attitude in the preacher's mind and heart.

Cilliers (2004:41–42) is concerned about an attitude undergirded by the fact that people do not realise that God is God, in other words, they neglect the very essence of their existence. Preachers can also be guilty of this. Preachers must try their best to mediate the fact that hearers are dealing with the living God (*praesentia realis*).

An interpretative investigation of the forming and functioning of attitudes as the reason why realities are not named

This article recognises the interdisciplinary approach of the social sciences (Cartledge 2003:15; Pieterse 2001:13). In Practical Theology, research focuses on communicative acts, which cause the field to overlap with other sciences that have the same focus. This section briefly focuses on interdisciplinary discourse with the fields of Social Psychology and Communication Sciences regarding the forming and functioning of attitudes, which can possibly influence the way in which preachers deliver sermons.

Perspectives from Social Psychology
The nature and forming of attitudes

Attitudes are an important field of Social Psychology (Bergh & Theron 2006:173). Attitudes influence the perceptions, thinking and behaviour of people. It is important that preachers take note of the influence that attitudes have. Woolfolk (2007:89) indicates that attitudes can distance people from each other but can also bring people together. The result of this is that negative attitudes on the side of preachers can cause a distance between hearers and their relationship with the Word, church and society.

Attitudes are orientations that locate objects of thought on dimensions of judgement (Weiten 1992:593). With the help of attitudes, people make favourable or unfavourable evaluations of the objects of their thought. Changes in one of the components also influence the other components. It is important to take note of the fact that certain attitudes are difficult to change and can be regarded as central attitudes. Other attitudes are regarded as peripheral attitudes as they are subject to change (Bergh & Theron 2006:174).

Preachers must be cognisant of the fact that their attitudes and the way in which those vulnerable attitudes are realised in behaviour influence hearers and their attitudes. Attitudes enable persons (preachers) to appraise people, objects and situations (Wood & Wood 1999:586). Furthermore, it provides structure and consistency in the social environment and helps people to process social information. Attitudes are formed either by first-hand experiences with persons, situations and issues or vicariously by hearing parents, colleagues and persons talking about certain matters. The mass media also influences people's attitudes positively or negatively (Bergh & Theron 2006:175). Attitudes that are formed through own and direct experiences are stronger, and they are more resistant to change (Wood & Wood 1999:587). Preachers live in this world, and their experience of a variety of things can easily contribute to the formation of negative attitudes.

Lord (1997:223–231) distinguishes four main sources in the forming of attitudes:

- Persuasive communication: People influence each other through persuasive communication.
- Classic conditioning: Children and hearers are examples of this kind of conditioning. Parents, preachers and other persons are constantly influencing people.
- Instrumental conditioning: Children learn from their parents what behaviour to regard as correct. Children want to do things to secure their parents' approval.
- Modelling: The example people set with their behaviour influences other people.

Functions of attitudes

Attitudes influence social behaviour and provide people (preachers) with ways to react to their social environment (Tubbs & Moss 2008:149). Bergh and Theron (2006:174–175) distinguish the following functions of attitudes:

- Attitudes determine the meaning of facts and situations. Persons tend to protect their own attitudes by rationalising facts that conflict with these attitudes. The problem with this is that preachers can use their sermons to rationalise certain facts instead of preaching the reality of the Word in the reality of the world.
- Attitudes become substantiated by the organisation of facts.
- Attitudes select facts. Persons tend to select facts that confirm their attitudes. In this regard, it is important to take note of the tendency of people (also preachers) to select facts.
- Attitudes defend the self and affirm or protect self-esteem.

- Attitudes express the self in that they can express the individual's central values and incorporate self-concepts.
- Attitudes provide the individual with a position in the social environment.
- Attitudes transmit social beliefs.
- Attitudes justify and explain an individual's orientations in the social world. The attitude of preachers towards the social world can easily become known by others by listening to his sermons.

In conclusion it is, firstly, important that preachers keep revising with their own attitudes. Secondly, it is important that preachers constantly ask whether they are naming the reality of the Word or the reality of their own attitudes or whether they use their sermons to rationalise certain facts.

Changing attitudes

Gass and Seiter (2003:357) investigate the subject of ethics in persuasion. They did their investigation against the background of critical voices that regard persuasion as manipulation (cf. Baron & Byrne 1994:151). Smit and De Cronje (1999:169–170) point this out as the mechanism that people use when their relationships are under pressure or when their needs are not fulfilled (Gass & Seiter 2003:358). Persuasion is therefore a process, and it takes time for persuasive communication to take hold (Smit & De Cronje 1997:188).

According to Gass and Seitner (2003:363), preachers and communicators must keep the following aspects in mind when they formulate persuasive messages:

- Intentionality: There are intended and unintended consequences to persuasive communication. Unintended messages can damage the reputation of the preacher or communicator. In naming the reality in society, preachers must make sure of the content of their messages.
- Conscious awareness: Messages (sermons) that take place with the conscious awareness of all parties involved are far more ethical than persuasion that does not. This kind of message opens the possibility for all parties to participate.
- Free choice: Persuasive messages allow persons to make free choices. This includes the possibility to question the persuasive attempt of the communicator.
- Language and symbolic action: Persuasion through language or symbolic action is more ethical and more easily recognised.
- Persuasion must take place in an atmosphere of love. The abovementioned authors describe three kinds of persuaders:
  - Seducers: They use trickery, deceit, charm and flattery to persuade their hearers.
  - Rapists: They use threats, force and coercion in an effort to win their arguments. They also use personal attacks and threats to convince people to do what they want them to do.
  - Lovers: They respect the dignity of other persons (hearers) and are open to the other person's opinions. Therefore they seek mutual solutions to problems.

Persuasive communication is communication that aims intentionally to change a person's attitudes and behaviour (Louw & Edwards 1998:711). Preachers must keep in mind that people have a natural tendency to oppose persuasion. Lord (1997:266–270) highlights the following aspects in this regard:

- If hearers are aware of the content of persuasive communication, they will have the natural tendency to ignore the message of persuasion and transformation. Hearers would not want to let other persons know that their heads have been swayed by the message.
- Hearers need time to elaborate persuasion messages. They must receive time to process information.
- There must be time for cognitive closure. If hearers receive the opportunity to reach closure about certain things, they feel secure. Cognitive closure opens the way for attitudes to change. Communicators (preachers) must keep in mind the tendency of hearers to use self-defence strategies.

Perspectives from Communicational Sciences

In Communication Sciences, efficient listening is an important field of investigation (Cleary 2010:75; Steinberg 2011:67). Therefore it is important to note the overlap between the fields of Practical Theology and Communication Sciences. It is furthermore important to realise in Practical Theology that the biological ability of people to 'hear' differs from their ability to listen actively (Barker & Angelopulo 2010:270). Steinberg (2011:68) points out that hearers are bombarded with messages. They spend 42% – 60% of their time listening to the messages of communicators. The problem is that the average adult listens with 25% efficiency and 75% of messages get lost (Tubbs & Moss 2008:533).

Communication and attitudes

Each person's mind is shaped by his or her unique frame of reference (Cleary 2010:12). This frame of reference is the sum of an individual's cultural background, educational background, attitudes, values, beliefs, physical attributes, age and gender (Steinberg 2011:69). This frame of reference can change as a result of all of a person's experiences over a lifetime. Tubbs and Moss (2008:532) indicate that all aspects of a person's frame of reference develop through a process of interpersonal communication. The development of the different aspects of a person's frame of reference affects the way in which that person communicates with others and acts towards others (Cleary 2010:12–13). The differences in frames of reference complicate understanding between people and can cause a communication breakdown (Grant & Borcherds 2009:47).

Steinberg (2011:151) emphasises the fact that attitudes are an acquired reaction to a person or situation. It therefore implies a positive or negative evaluation of someone or something. In Practical Theology, it is important to take note of the fact that

people come to expect a pattern of behaviour from preachers based on what they have learned from the exposure to their attitudes. Should a preacher behave differently, people recognize that such a preacher is acting out of character, and they might revise their opinion of that preacher's attitudes and values (Barker & Angelopulo 2010:8; Grant & Borcherds 2009:49; Steinberg 2011:151). Communicators (preachers) communicate their attitudes during their verbal and non-verbal interactions. Communication (preaching) is always an act of exposure.

Attitude influence

Tubbs and Moss (2008:524) pay attention to the role of persuasive messages where the primary intention is not mere information but change. Communicators (preachers) must examine the sources of their own attitudes before creating persuasive messages. From the viewpoint of communication, the abovementioned authors also highlight the role of the following aspects in the forming of attitudes:

- The media: Despite the role of the Internet, the importance of television can never be underestimated. Exposure to different points of view through the mass media often serves to strengthen the receiver's initial attitudes and opinions. However, it must be said that the media's interpretation of matters often takes on greater importance than people initially think. The effect of television, and to a certain extent newspapers, lies in the repetition of the major issues in society day after day. If the media decides to emphasise an ethical issue, the public is given more information more frequently. In this way, the mass media raises the level of people's consciousness. Preachers must always remember that their own attitudes could easily be the product of the influence of the media. At the same time, preachers must be fully aware of what is going on in the world by carefully reading newspapers with polished lenses.
- Organisation of information: People's attitudes are also framed and influenced by how the information they receive is organised. Frames select and call attention to particular aspects of the reality described and direct attention away from other aspects. It is important to watch and read critically by asking what is left out of a particular message.
- Modelling and imitation of role models: During childhood, the importance of modelling is very important. Films, books, radio, television programmes, Internet and other instruments of communication present a number of models for behaviour. Role models propose a kind of behaviour to people that influences their view of gender, social issues, violence, morals and a number of other issues. In theological seminaries, colleagues could be role models and influence the preacher's attitudes.
- The mean-world syndrome: People often distrust the world, are pessimistic about it and try to alienate themselves from it.
- The role of the mediated home: Homes these days have cell phones, personal computers, fax machines, email and satellites. This has increased the speed of information. People are focused on the visual. Communication between people must be mediated by computers and technology. People communicate across real and electronic spaces. The danger is that technological communication can overshadow human issues and the naming of reality in society. Media is indeed an important instrument through which the world's reality can be named, but ethics in communicating becomes a necessity. The challenge for preachers is to become acquainted with technology and to listen carefully to the content that people aim to convey.

Normative investigation on the preacher's worldview and attitudes

This section investigates the normative background of the functioning of the preacher's attitude to indicate the correct attitude towards preaching. Preaching must always be a matter of naming reality in society. The following aspects will receive attention.

The preacher's view in naming reality in society: II Corinthians 5:16–21

I recognise the fact that there are various perspectives from the New Testament that can contribute to this aspect. However, I intend to explore the meaning of II Corinthians 5 in this paragraph in order to highlight the attitude of the preacher in proclaiming the Word of God. Vorster (2011:7) emphasises the fact that God endowed humans with value, and therefore, they must regard and value each other. This very fact has definite implications for the preacher's attitude towards hearers and towards naming reality in society. In II Corinthians 5:14, the apostle Paul mentions that the love of Christ compels his children and by implication preachers in the ministry of the Word. The apostle's point of departure is that the love of Christ has implications, namely that life is now a life that must glorify Christ. The Kingdom of God therefore has a definite Christological foundation because of the fact that God's Kingdom has come in and through Jesus Christ. Floor (1981:91) indicates that this Kingdom was realised on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is living in the midst of his church. Consequent to this fact is the content of preaching and the persuasive work of preaching through the Spirit, according to II Corinthians 5:16–21. McShane (1986) indicates the following aspects regarding the positive assessment of the death and victory of Christ (Word-character of the Kingdom of God):

> The life in Christ put an end to many things, especially Paul's view of those around him (II Corinthians 5:16). The verb οιδαμεν is evident. To know someone after the flesh is to value them as they appear to the eye of nature. Paul's new vision is the view in relation to Christ. This is the result of a new understanding of the work of Christ. (p. 304)

The new way of judging matters and people implies that all people in Christ are new creations (καινή κτίσις). In II Corinthians 5:17, Paul refers to the newness of God's children in Christ. The verb παρηλθεν means to pass away. The tense of the verb has the meaning that the thing that has passed

away is gone forever. There is also mention of the fact that God's people become new. The tense of the verb highlights the fact that this is a continuous process:

- In this new creation in Christ, people are brought back into relationship with God. It is sin that initially broke this relationship. According to II Corinthians 5:18, God did two things:
  - He reconciled (καταλλαγη) his children with Him. The word reconcile means that sinners are brought into a relationship with God so that they can repent their wrong and sinful attitudes. It is important to take note of the fact that the changing of attitudes is something that emanates from the right and organic relationship with God.
  - He gives his church the ministry of reconciliation. Gunton (2003:1) states that II Corinthians 5:18–19 is the core of the biblical doctrine about reconciliation.
- In II Corinthians 5:20, God's children receive the command to be reconciled to God (καταλλάγητε τω θεω). They must accept this reconciliation. This command is founded on their being υπερ Χριστου (in Christ) The proclamation of the reconciliation of God (act of God) becomes concrete at the point where people react to this by accepting the reconciliation through faith (Joubert 2009:203). Paul adheres to this command because of the fact that he regards himself as an ambassador of God. Therefore he pleads in the name of Christ.
- Preachers must consider the fact that it is necessary for people to try and make society a better place (Floor 1981:91). The implication of the fact that the Kingdom of God has come is a new relationship with God and people and a life according to the standards of the Kingdom of heaven. It is important to address matters like poverty, corruption, human rights and pollution in light of this new relationship. The reconciliation in Christ must always lead to reconciliation between people in society (Vorster 2011:81). To a certain extent, preachers tend to neglect the naming of those realities because of uncertainty or perhaps fear of the different opinions of people. People tend to have their opinions on reality because of the existence of their attitudes and beliefs. All of the attempts to name reality will not really help unless preachers start with the message of reconciliation in Christ. Preachers must bring the Creator and creature in touch with each other. Preachers must proclaim the indicative of God's work in Christ and on that basis plead for a life under the guidance of the Spirit. Hearers must hear the plea to subdue their lives so that they adhere to the values of the Kingdom of God.

This kind of preaching requires the right kind of attitude from preachers. The reconciled children always live in a broken world and that will be the case until the final coming of Christ (Vorster 2011:21). Schwöbel (2003) therefore underlines the functioning of the pneumatological perspective:

> Through the Spirit we participate in the reality of reconciliation constituted by God through Christ's death and resurrection. The Spirit in this sense is both the link to the past event of Christ's death, the medium of our relationship to the living God and the effective anticipation of the perfection of this relation in the eschaton. (p. 25)

The church and the proclamation of the Word of God must be examples of this reconciliation. Through all aspects of ministry, preaching, pastoral care, liturgy and mission work, the church must try her best to bring people together and must be a showcase of people working together. Preachers must name the main reality of the life in Christ and the implications of this reality for society. Stott (1982:15) puts this in the right perspective by indicating that the church without preaching loses its authenticity. The proclamation of the Word must bring the hearers to their responsibility to be part in society by witnessing and by serving in society.

The attitude of the preacher: Pastoral Letters

Manser (2010: 2174) indicates that the demand to κηρυξον τον λογον [preach the Word] is the mandate and main task of preachers. Their mandate is to preach the Word of God and not their own words. The communicative act of preaching coincides with the nature of this kind of communication, namely to bring good news. Paul gives this command to preach to Timothy in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. This command to preach and to preach with the right attitude must come in light of the final coming of Christ, his glorious appearance (επιφανειαν). The eschatological dimension of God's Kingdom must be the focus in delivering sermons (Fee 1995:284).

Kruger (1999:32) distinguishes three attitudes in the pastoral letters that have to do with the manner in which preachers must deliver their sermons. The three attitudes underline the importance of having the power of discretion, of being worthy in preaching and of having patience while preaching. The three attitudes are:

- be tender in rebuking (μή έπιπληξης)
- with all purity (έν παση αγνεια)
- with all longsuffering (έν παση μακροθυμια).

Be tender in rebuking: I Timothy 5:1 – μή έπιπληξης

Paul exhorts Timothy to look out for the different age groups in the congregation. Older men must be rebuked like fathers, younger men like brothers, older women like mothers and younger women like sisters (Fee 1995:103). This command has the meaning of admonish, exhort and the strict disapproval of something (Louw & Nida 1989:436). It is important to note that Timothy must not let the exhortation be because of his respect for older people (Guthrie 1990:119). In the exhortation, the preacher must have respect or piety for age. In naming reality in society, it is important to take note of this attitude towards hearers.

With all purity: I Timothy 5:2 – έν παση αγνεια

Bentley (1997:284) sees in this command the danger of preachers who have the wrong mind-set and who jump to wrong conclusions about the reality of circumstances in

hearers' lives. Preachers must never be afraid of naming reality and of proclaiming God's Word. Stott (1982:320), however, warns that preachers must never become too outspoken and so stand in the way of hearers hearing God's Word. Stott's concern has to do with an egoistic and selfish manner of ministering the Word of God (Kruger 1999:44). Further implications of this wrong attitude are the tendency of preachers to become high and mighty in delivering sermons and an over-sensitivity towards hearing critical voices against their preaching. Barnard (1994:17) warns against preachers who try to abuse their sermons in an attempt to give their hearers a hiding because of their negative attitude.

With all longsuffering: II Timothy 4:2 – ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ

Longsuffering (μακροθυμια) has the meaning of holding out for a long time before getting angry (Douglas 1986:883). Louw and Nida (1989:289) indicate that this word (longsuffering) falls in one of the sub-domains of the word attitude and highlight that this word has to do with emotional calmness in a situation of provocation. In naming reality in society, preachers must have patience with the weaknesses of their hearers without neglecting and ignoring it. The practice of preaching year in and year out must take place with an attitude of patience and emotional calmness because each hearer has his or her own story and history (Dingemans 1991:49).

Practical-theological perspectives on naming reality in a neglected society

Wiersbe (2006:304) underlines the fact that preaching is logic on fire and indicates that preaching passes through a human being on fire. The naming of reality in society always starts with the work of God (the fire) in a human being, the preacher. In this process, it is the task of preachers to explain and apply God's Word to their hearers (Long 2005:45). Arthurs (2012:66) explains the problem of explaining and applying the truth in listeners' lives by indicating the fact that the distance between the text and the hearers is one major barrier in naming reality in society. Brueggemann (2010:37) refers to three voices, namely the text, the preacher and the hearers. These three voices stand in a triangular relationship to each other. Preachers must internalize the text and not project the idea that the preacher and the text are ganging up against the hearers. Preachers can easily make the hearers the lone ones in this triangle.

The important role of the preacher's attitude in naming reality in a neglected society

In previous paragraphs it is indicated that attitudes are formed either from first-hand experiences with persons, situations and issues or vicariously by hearing parents, colleagues and persons talk about certain matters. In addition, the mass media influences people's attitudes positively or negatively. Preaching has the intention of naming reality in hearers' lives. The issue at stake is that preachers should not dare to preach without a thorough examination of their own vulnerable attitudes. Gibson (2004:12–13), for example, is interested in the

answer to the question whether it is possible for preachers not to be influenced by shifting culture. Hansen (2004:131) highlights the fact that the preacher's decision about the life and values of the hearers in a shifting culture qualifies everything in the sermon. Preachers will not take the reality of their hearers seriously if they do not take their own lives seriously (Hansen 2004:137). Firet (1988:285–287) warns against the fact that preachers can live in a show-world with a particular view on reality in society and their hearers. Preachers' attitudes can play a dominant role in this show-world. A few of these examples could be *inter alia* fear, the tendency to be too assertive, beliefs, perceptions, views and the danger of not being in touch with reality in society, the typical study preacher. The problem for Firet (1988:285) is that sermons very often become something that is dominated by the likes and dislikes of preachers.

In naming reality in society, it is important for preachers not to neglect a careful examination of their attitudes. In the previous discussion the attention fell on the attitudes regarding the manner of preaching. It becomes evident that preachers must have pastoral sensitivity for their hearers because of the ambivalence of the hearers' lives (Kruger & Venter 2002:179). God the Holy Spirit is working in his children, and therefore the pastoral attitude of individualisation must be part of the preacher's attitude. The preacher must always be a person of relationships. To be tender in rebuking has nothing to do with neglecting the reality in hearers' lives, but it opens the way for the right manner to do it (Kruger & Venter 2002:180). To preach with all purity has to do with the intentions of preachers. Preachers must always be aware of wrong ideas about reality and wrong ideas about their hearers (Kruger & Venter 2002:181).

It is to a certain extent easy to name reality in society in a clinical manner, and in this process, preaching becomes something of the projection of the preacher's own feelings and attitudes. To preach with all longsuffering implies that preachers must have patience with their own shortcomings as well as with the shortcomings of their hearers (Kruger & Venter 2002:181). Preachers can become over-enthusiastic in preaching, and a lack of growth in the congregation and society can cause them to experience frustration. This negative attitude can lead to a crisis in their ministry and can encourage preachers to preach with a negative attitude.

Robinson (2001:201) rightly indicates that the effectiveness of sermons depends on their content but also on the way in which the content is said. The attitudes of preachers are transmitted by their voices and gestures. No preacher can hide these attitudes. Tidball (2011:23) warns against the danger of making the pulpit an idol that can corrupt the motives and attitudes of preachers. Robinson (2001:203) also states that only 7% of preachers' message comes from their content of their words. Thirty eight percent of the message comes from the manner in which they uttered words, and 55% of the message comes from their facial expressions. In naming reality in society, it is very important to take note of this.

The preacher's attitude towards society

Stott (1999:4) expresses his concern about the possibility that even believers dare wonder whether they have a social responsibility. In preaching and ministry, the church must always have a clear vision of what to do in the social sphere. Stott (1999:8–12) also highlights certain reasons why churches become reluctant to name reality and get involved in societal issues, and it has also to do with certain attitudes:

- The liberal neglect of the Gospel: Churches have become so involved in the defence of the Gospel and have tried so hard to proclaim the Word in the biblical sense that this actually occasioned the evangelical neglect of social responsibility. Neglecting realities in society can be the result of churches becoming involved in conflict regarding church polity and other ecclesiastical matters.
- The reaction against the so-called social gospel: After all the attempts to transform humanity into the Kingdom of God, it became clear that these efforts cannot succeed. This resulted in confusion about whether the Kingdom of God can even become a Christianized society.
- Pessimism about the exposure of human evil during the world wars: The tragic fact of this pessimism was that preachers neglected to name reality in society.
- There is the widespread view that if the world is getting worse and if the coming of Jesus at the end will make it right, there seems to be no point in reforming society.
- The negative social influence of organised religion.

It is evident that the abovementioned perspectives have to do with certain attitudes of people and preachers. In the section about the forming and functioning of attitudes, it becomes clear that people can influence others with their attitudes. Preachers' attitudes on social issues are very important in naming realities in society because there is a tendency amongst believers not to become missionally involved in society. The message of reconciliation is preached to members of local congregations without the acknowledgement and commitment to equip hearers to becoming involved in a neglected society. Preachers can preach the Word of God in such a manner that listeners want to escape realities in society, or they can preach in such a manner that hearers can become involved (Brouwer 2004:26; Keller 2012:108; Ott & Strauss 2010:287; Stott 1999:17).

Naming realities in society without neglecting the liturgical participation of hearers in daily life

This article focused on the important role of the attitudes of preachers in naming reality in society. The previous paragraphs of this research indicated that attitudes can be changed by persuasive communication. It was also indicated that persuasive messages must be communicated in the sphere of relationships, both with God and with others. Therefore I want to draw a wider circle around the act of preaching, namely the importance of the context of liturgy. The realisation of God's presence during the worship service and thereafter must be a powerful force in the life of all preachers and hearers. Therefore it is important to realise that

God is present in this world (society) through his Spirit and, to a certain extent, through his church (Barnard 1981:405). Regardless of the preacher's own views and attitudes about social issues, there must always be the urgency to look through worship services to recognise and name realities in the world. Every worship service has an open end towards society. Barnard (2010:41) states that sermons are positioned within the broader context of liturgy. The message of reconciliation and the message of the Kingdom of God have no boundaries and will always be relevant for all people of all times. The proclamation of the Word within the broader context must now become part of daily life. Buttrick (1998:18) speaks about the vanishing of the realisation of God's presence in this world. Worship services and sermons must highlight in the naming of realities in society the important fact of God's presence in order not to preach a past-tense God to the present age (Buttrick 1998:22). Can it be true that modern preachers have lost this kind of vision?

All the elements of liturgy during worship services must focus on the liturgy of life, and therefore, preaching must reach out to the world (Barnard 1981:404). The naming of reality is not the kind of naming from a distance. It is also not a case of speaking about all the evils from the top. Hearers are participants in liturgy and in the act of preaching, and therefore, the worship service must be purposeful in equipping them for their responsibilities (Pieterse 2001:92). Pieterse (2001:93) adds that it is important that preachers must develop solidarity with their hearers within their context. Preachers must listen to the radio and the media. They must read newspapers, but they must do it with the intention to come into closer contact with their hearers and their concrete circumstances.

Purposeful liturgy and purposeful preaching are matters of dynamic interchange between text and context, and therefore, contextualization must always link to daily life (Ott & Strauss 2010:284). If preachers preach about topics and issues that people do not find significant or if they ignore the questions and problems in society that concern people, people start to question the relevance of the sermons. On the basis of the message of reconciliation, preachers must seek to preach with greater clarity and power into their context, to deliver prophetic preaching into the culture of society (Ott & Strauss 2010:285).

Conclusion

Congregations are not isolated units but exist in the context of the city and the social world. Preachers have the privilege of wrestling with theological and existential issues raised by the congregation's experience in society. Hearers are coming to worship services to be exposed to what God has to say. Therefore preachers must recognise the fact that no congregation or preacher can hide behind its local address and remain isolated from events in society. It is the wonderful task of preachers to proclaim the powerful Word of God to all people and nations. To preach is to name the reality of the text and the reality in society. Every sermon must point to God's presence in society and to the need to hear the message

of reconciliation. Preaching also has a personal-ness. Message and messenger are inseparable (Quicke 2003:94). Behind this opportunity to proclaim God's Word stand vulnerable preachers with their vulnerable attitudes. Preachers' sermons, each and every one of them, expose the preachers' attitudes. The attitude of preachers towards society and the reality in society that has often been neglected in the past must change and must be influenced by the content of their preaching. Preachers who have negative attitudes towards the reality in society without an answer to these realities will only make hearers negative. The intention of preaching must always be to equip hearers to be salt and light in the midst of the reality in society. No preacher and hearer must underestimate the role of attitudes in naming reality in society.

Acknowledgements
Competing interests

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