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drulogion

thursday theological thoughts

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2006

Christmas Connections Preaching

I've begun to notice a pattern. Most of the Christmas sermons I've heard (and preached) in the last few years went out of their way to make a **connection between Christmas and something else**. Christmas and the life of Christ. Christmas and the expectation of Israel. Christmas and the Cross. Christmas and Easter. Christmas and the Holy Spirit. Christmas and the Christian life. Christmas and ...

The great thing about these "Christmas connections" is that **it keeps things interesting**. New insights are brought in. Deep Biblical themes are interwoven. We avoid repeating the same thing every year. The one sermon heard by the most people in a congregation is probably the Christmas sermon. Attendance is up: the regulars are there, family is in town, the fringe folk come out of the woodwork, and guests abound. Because of this, we preachers are understandably worried about repetition. We don't want to preach the "same old Christmas sermon" every year. So Christmas connections keep everybody on their toes.

However, I am beginning to ask myself whether this habit has an **unintended and unfortunate side effect: preaching Christmas connections gives the impression that Christmas is not interesting enough on its own**. If we must speak of "Christmas and ...", what does that tell us about the significance of Christmas itself? Why can't we just speak of Christmas ... period? Why can't we just remind ourselves that one day God became human and that in itself is a pretty big deal. Sure, that is not the whole Christian story. But this important part gets its own day, and maybe we should give it proper attention.

I do not wish to reject Christmas connections preaching. I practice them and appreciate hearing them. But I do want to identify this possible danger. Even as we seek to interweave Christmas into the larger tapestry of belief, let us be sure keep the main thing the main thing.

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Keeping this possible danger in mind, I would love to hear back from you what Christmas connections you heard or preached this year.

Any thoughts?

What connections have you heard or made?

Were they fitting or forced?

Did they illumine Christmas or distract from it?

Labels: [Practice of Theology](#), [Preaching](#), [suggestion box](#)

posted by JohnLDrury @ 5:49 PM

[6 comments](#)

6 Comments:

At [10:39 PM, December 28, 2006](#), [Matt Guthrie](#) said...

Hi John,

I appreciate the warnings. One thing I always shy away from is jumping from Christmas to Easter. It seems that's the only reason people think we have Christmas. This year I preached a series in December called "Why Christmas?". The topics/answers were 1) God Promised - God promised to bless all people thru Abraham and Jesus (the descendant of Abraham) was the person thru whom that happened; 2) To model servant hood - God the Son gave up his divinity to take on flesh, have a lowly birth, and generally live as a servant; 3) We needed a king - Jesus came as the Messiah king; and 4) To participate in our lives - materially and spiritually.

Matt

At [6:16 PM, December 29, 2006](#), [Mark O. Wilson](#) said...

Informal Wesleyan Blogger Breakfast in Orlando. 8:00 a.m. Thursday Morning, Jan 4. Augustine's which is on site at Wyndham. Pricey, at around \$14 for breakfast buffet, but includes good company! Would love to have you join us.

At [9:19 AM, December 30, 2006](#), [David Drury](#) said...

How about this: "Christmas AND the Incarnation"

-David

At [6:42 PM, December 31, 2006](#), [Dan](#) said...

John,

I think you're right. It seems so easy to fail to appreciate the beauty and depth of the Incarnation.

I wonder if lack of preaching specifically about the Incarnation is indicative of the fact that many pastors have not ever been struck

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by how profound it is.

I know my own perspective dramatically changed several years after reading a theological piece on the significance and scope of the Incarnation.

Happy New Year bro.

Dan

At [12:32 PM, January 01, 2007](#), [Sharon D](#) said...

Might it be that using connection with something a person already knows is merely an educational technique that goes back to John Dewey?

At [11:58 AM, January 04, 2007](#), rgr said...

This year, we did a three part series on the incarnation, looking at it from a prophetic point of view (Isaiah), an in-the-moment point of view (Mary & Magnificat) and retrospective point of view (Paul in Colossians 1).

Very cool.

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