

**The Worship-Shaped Life: Spiritual Practices in Anglican Worship**  
**Week 5: Reading and Preaching the Scriptures**  
**October 13, 2024 — Adam Wood**

1. What does it mean to read the scriptures in a worshipful way?

- A definition of worship, from week 1 (w/ Fr. Arcadi): "worship is acknowledging God's worship-worthiness with awed, reverential, and grateful adoration."
- Passage from Søren Kierkegaard's *For Self Examination*, to be read aloud.<sup>1</sup>
- How does Kierkegaard's love-letter analogy help us to see what reading the scriptures in an awed, reverent, gratefully adoring way might look like?
- Are there points where Kierkegaard's analogy might potentially break down, or obscure the worshipful reading of scripture?

2. What does it mean to read the scriptures in a (worshipfully) Anglican way?

- Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* 5.8.1: "Be it in matter of the one kind or of the other [i.e., of theological doctrine or of church practice], what scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth. That which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true and good, must in congruity of reason overrule all other inferior judgments whatsoever. To them that ask why we thus hang our judgment on the Church's sleeve, I answer with Solomon 'because two are better than one.'"

3. How is preaching the scriptures related to reading the scriptures?

4. What makes for good (worshipful) preaching, or bad?

5. How important (for us Anglicans) is worshipful preaching, anyway?

- Michael P. Jensen's view, in *Reformation Anglican Worship*: really important!
- He discusses the 1548 "Sermon of the Plough," by Bishop Hugh Latimer (1487-1555), one of the Oxford Martyrs along with Thomas Cranmer and Nicholas Ridley.<sup>2</sup> Here is an excerpt:

"For preaching of the gospel is one of God's plough-works, and the preacher is one of God's ploughmen. ... And well may the preacher and the ploughman be likened together ... for the diversity of works and variety of offices that they have to do. For as the ploughman first setteth forth his plough, and then tilleth his land, and breaketh it in furrows, and sometime ridgeth it up again; and at another time harroweth it and clotteth it, and sometime dungeth it and hedgeth it, diggeth it and weedeth it, purgeth and maketh it clean: so the prelate, the preacher, hath many diverse offices to do. He hath first a busy work to bring his parishioners to a right faith, as Paul calleth it, and not a swerving faith; but to a faith that embraceth Christ, and trusteth to his merits; a lively faith, a justifying faith; a faith that maketh a man righteous, without respect of works: as ye have it very well declared and set forth in the Homily. He hath then a busy work, I say, to bring his flock to a right faith, and then to confirm them in the same faith: now casting them down with the law, and with threatenings of God for sin; now ridging them up again with the gospel, and with the promises of God's favour: now weeding them, by telling them their faults, and making them forsake sin; now clotting them, by breaking their stony hearts, and by making them supplehearted, and making them to have hearts of flesh; that is, soft hearts, and apt for doctrine to enter in: now teaching to know God rightly, and to know their duty to God and their neighbours: now exhorting them, when they know their duty, that they do it, and be diligent in it; so that they have a continual work to do. Great is their business, ... for the preaching of the

<sup>1</sup>From Kierkegaard's preface: "My dear reader, read aloud, if possible! If you do so, allow me to thank you for it; if you not only do it yourself, if you influence others to do it, allow me to thank each one of them, and you again and again! By reading aloud you will gain the strongest impression that you have only yourself to consider, not me, who, after all, am "without authority," nor others, which would be a distraction."

<sup>2</sup>Latimer is the one who supposedly said to Ridley, before the three were burned at the stake, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out."

word of God unto the people is called meat: scripture calleth it meat; not strawberries, that come but once a year, and tarry not long, but are soon gone: but it is meat, it is no dainties. The people must have meat that must be familiar and continual, and daily given unto them to feed upon. Many make a strawberry of it,

ministering it but once a year; but such do not the office of good prelates. For Christ saith, "Who think you is a wise and a faithful servant? He that giveth meat in due time" (Matt. 25:45)."

- Jensen writes:

"In this we find the nexus between the Reformation doctrine of Scripture and the Reformation doctrine of justification. If a person is to be justified by faith, then the preaching of the word is necessary, since 'faith comes by hearing' (Rom. 10:17); and this faith, by God's grace in Christ, is what enables sinful human beings to receive the gift of justification. That favorite Reformation phrase, 'a lively faith' is used: the faith that the preacher seeks to cultivate in his hearers is the faith that enlivens by the power of the Spirit as it draws the believer to the risen Christ. ... [T]he people of God need [also] to be confirmed in that right faith: to be disciplined by the law and comforted by the gospel, to be exhorted and rebuked. Changing his image, Latimer speaks of the preaching as 'meat,' namely that which is in constant need for a solid diet. Therefore, the preacher ought to be diligent in all seasons. The key role that preaching has in the soteriological system of the evangelical Reformers means that the preacher has a particular and extraordinary calling, and a responsibility to match. ... In sum, we can observe two features of the Reformation description of preaching in this example of the preacher's art. The first is that, for Latimer, *the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone is the basis for the new emphasis placed on preaching*. ... Sermons are urgently needed for the purpose of leading people to salvation. Second, *the ministry's chief responsibility is the preaching of the word, and not something else.*" (*Reformation Anglican Worship*, 78-79).

- Do we agree with Jensen's view here?

My listener, how highly do you value God's Word? Now, do not say that you value it so highly that no expression can describe it, for one can also speak so loftily that one says nothing at all. Therefore, in order to make something out of this, let us take a simple human situation; if you value God's Word higher, so much the better.

Imagine a lover who has received a letter from his beloved—I assume that God's Word is just as precious to you as this letter is to the lover. I assume that you read and think you ought to read God's Word in the same way the lover reads this letter.

Yet you perhaps say, "Yes, but Holy Scripture is written in a foreign language." But it is really only scholars who need to read Holy Scripture in the original language. If, however, you will not have it any other way, if you insist upon reading Scripture in the original language, well, we can still keep the metaphor of the letter from the beloved, except that we will add a little stipulation.

I assume, then, that this letter from the beloved is written in a language that the lover does not understand, and there is no one around who can translate it for him, and perhaps he would not even want any such help lest a stranger be initiated into his secrets. What does he do? He takes a dictionary, begins to spell his way through the letter, looks up every word in order to obtain a translation. Let us assume that, as he sits

there busy with his task, an acquaintance comes in. He knows that this letter has come, because he sees it on the table, sees it lying there, and says, "Well, so you are reading a letter from your beloved"—what do you think the other will say? He answers, "Have you gone mad? Do you think this is reading a letter from my beloved! No, my friend, I am sitting here toiling and moiling with a dictionary to get it translated. At times I am ready to explode with impatience; the blood rushes to my head and I would just as soon hurl the dictionary on the floor—and you call that reading—you must be joking! No, thank God, I am soon finished with the translation and then, yes, then, I shall read my beloved's letter; that is something altogether different. But to whom am I speaking . . . stupid fellow, get out of my sight; I would rather not see you—how could you think of insulting my beloved and me by calling this reading a letter from her! And yet, stay, stay—you know very well I am only joking. I would ever so much like to have you stay, but, to be honest, I have no time. There is still something left to translate and I am so impatient to begin reading it—therefore do not be angry, but please go so I can finish."

So, then, with regard to the letter from his beloved, the lover distinguishes between reading and reading, between reading with a dictionary and reading the letter from his beloved.

Let us not discard the metaphor too soon. Let us assume that this letter from the beloved contained not only an expression of affection, as such letters ordinarily do, but that it contained a wish, something the beloved wished her lover to do. It was, let us assume, much that was required of him, very much; any third party would consider that there was good

from Søren Kierkegaard,  
For Self Examination  
(1851)

reason to think better of it, but the lover—he is off at a run to fulfill his beloved's wish. Let us assume that after so long the lovers met and the beloved said, "But, my dear, not at all what I asked you to do; you must have misunderstood the word or translated it incorrectly." Do you think the lover would now regret rushing off straightway the second to obey the wish instead of first entertaining doubts, and then perhaps getting the help of a few dictionaries, and then having some more misgivings, and perhaps getting the word translated correctly and consequently being exempt—do you believe that he regrets his take, do you believe that he pleases his beloved less?

"But," you perhaps say, "there are so many obscure passages in the Bible, whole books that are practically riddles." To that I would answer: Before I have anything to say with this objection, it must be made by someone who manifests that he has scrupulously complied with all the passages that are easy to understand; is this the case with you? this is how the lover would respond to the letter—if there are obscure passages but also clearly expressed wishes, he would say, "I must immediately comply with the wish—then I will see about the obscure parts. How could I ever sit down to ponder the obscure passages and not comply with the wish that I clearly understood."

In other words, when you are reading God's Word, it is not the obscure passages that bind you but what you understand and with that you are to comply at once. If you understand only one single passage in all of Holy Scripture, well, that is what you must do that first of all, but you do not first have to sit down and ponder the obscure passages. God's Word is given in order that you shall act according to it, not that you shall first interpret obscure passages. If you do not read God's Word in such a way that you consider that the least thing you do understand instantly binds you to do accordingly, then you are not reading God's Word. This is how the lover would respond at it: "If, instead of rushing off at once to comply with the wish that I understand, I sit down and ponder what I do not understand, then I am not reading the letter from my beloved. I can go to my beloved with a good conscience and say: 'I were some obscure passages in your letter—with regard to them I have said it is no good to look ahead for trouble'

there was a wish I did understand, and I took care of that wish away."

Let us not discard the metaphor of the letter from the beloved yet. While he was occupied with translating the letter with the aid of a dictionary, he was interrupted by an acquaintance coming in to see him. He became impatient. "But, my friend, I would probably say, 'that was merely because I was disturbed; for otherwise it would have been of no consequence; I would have done the same time I was not reading the letter anyway. But it would have been another matter if someone had come in while I was reading the letter—that would have been an intrusion. How could I have been interrupted? I will make sure that it does not happen; before I begin to read the letter, I lock my door and am not at home. I want to be uninterruptedly alone with the letter; if I am not, then I am not reading the letter from my beloved."

He wants to be alone, uninterruptedly alone with the letter—"Otherwise," he says, "I am not reading the letter from my beloved."

And so it is with God's Word; the person who is not reading God's Word is not reading God's Word.

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