**Affective Preaching and Meditation**

**Doxology Grand Reunion**

Savior Pastoral Center

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1. **Affective Proclamation of the Embodied Word**
2. **Introduction**

* Touching of people by Jesus in the gospels
* Vital part of his incarnate communication with them
* Physical means of his emotional and spiritual connection with them
* Touch that accompanies and clarifies his speaking
* Luther: *das leiblich Wort* = the embodied word
* Continuation of his incarnate ministry by the embodied ministry of the incarnate word
* Embodied, affective, vocal proclamation

1. **Emotional Communication**

* Feeling as both physical and emotional: touching physically and being touched emotionally
* Harmony of physical perception, thought and feeling in a healthy person: my wife’s love of me
* Unhealthy disconnection of feeling from thinking and seeing since the Enlightenment: dissociation of sensibility (T. S. Eliot)
* The stress on feeling by people in the western world: how do you feel?
* Appeal to emotions in advertising, politics and the church
* Cognitive content as only a small part of effective communication
* Words: what I say = 10%
* Tone: how I say it = 34%
* Body: how I look and move as I speak: 56%
* Teaching of rhetoric in antiquity about the four elements of effective communication
* Logos: appeal to the mind of the hearers by the logical content of the argument
* Ethos: appeal to the hearers by the credibility of speaker and his speech
* Ekphrasis: appeal to the imagination and the desires of the hearers with vivid speech
* Pathos: appeal to the emotions of the hearers (Quintilian)
* Paradox: growing appetite for emotional stimulation with increasing emotional insensitivity in western societies
* People who are emotionally damaged and numbed
* People who are emotionally disabled and crippled
* People who are switched off emotionally and dead: self-harming to feel alive
* Ancient spiritual problem
* The idolatry of the sinful heart with its misplaced feelings and disordered desires
* The impact of sin on the human heart: impurity and disorder
* Bad conscience that produces “negative thinking” with a distorted self-perception
* Negative thinking that reinforces a bad conscience
* Resultant disconnection of feeling from thinking and seeing
  + God’s demand
* Call to love God with our whole heart as well as whole soul/understanding and body in Deut 6:5 and Mark 12:33
* Call *to draw near to God with a true heart* in the divine service in Heb 10:22: result of clear conscience
* Teaching of Jesus in Matt 5:8: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*.
* Seeking God with a whole heart (Ps 119:1, 10, 145)
* Inescapable, emotional communication in preaching by the physical presence of the preacher
* The avoidance of two extremes in preaching
* Emotive preaching: whipping up contrived emotions to make people feel good or bad about themselves and manipulating them by basing their salvation on how they feel ► sentimentalism: enjoyment of feelings rather than their object, like the feeling of being in love rather than the lover
* Cold preaching that ignores the human heart and fails to move people to love and joy and hope with the assurance of salvation

1. **Luther’s Teaching on the Affectivity**

* Luther’s recognition of the role of the emotions in preaching, meditation and prayer: see Birgit Stolt. “Luther’s Faith of the Heart. Experience, Emotion and Reason.” Pages 131-50 in Christine Helmer (ed.), *The Global Luther – A Theologian for Modern Times*, Fortress: Minneapolis, 2009.
* His stress on our affective relationship with God in His explanation of the Decalogue
* The observance of the first commandment by fearing, loving and trusting in God: see also the affective definition of original sin in AC 2 as being without fear of God or trust in God.
* Fearing and loving God as foundation for the observance of other commandments
* His inherited understanding of the four passive affects that we “suffer” as they take hold of our hearts
* Fear/worry about future evil
* Hope/confidence in future good
* Joy/security over present and past good
* Sorrow/grief with guilt and shame over present and past evil
* Christian change to Greek teaching: pleasure/happiness ► joy
* Picture: heart as a ship on the ocean with the affects as storm winds from the four corners of the world or as a wagon with four wheals
* Two active emotions of love and hatred as the drivers of the wagon
* Disorder and ill health from misplaced emotions and affects
* Cure from the opening of God the Father’s heart to us: see the Large Catechism 2 § 64-65*: In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love. He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed on us everything in heaven and earth, he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself… we could never come to recognize the Father’s favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is the mirror of the Father’s heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge.*
* The ordering and healing of the emotions by God’s word and His Holy Spirit
* Shift from feeling as God feels or trying to feel what He tells us to feel to awareness of how God feels about us: law ► gospel
* The affective experience of justification: see LW 26:117: *Therefore let everyone learn diligently how to distinguish the Law from the Gospel, not only in words but in feeling (affectu = affectively) and* ***experience****; that is, let him distinguish well between these two in his heart (affectu) and in his* ***conscience****. For so far as the words are concerned, the distinction is easy. But when it comes to* ***experience****, you will find the Gospel a rare guest but the Law a constant guest in your* ***conscience****, which is habituated to the Law and the sense of sin; reason, too, supports this sense.*
* Link between conscience and feeling
* Emotional healing and sanctification as the fruit of justification: emotional connection with others and God by feeling as He feels about us and others
* Result: the human heart is attuned to God’s heart and emotionally receptive to Him: receptive affective affinity rather than active affective uniformity

1. **Examples of Affective Preaching and Teaching from Luther**
2. Note the following features in these passages
   * + Affective proclamation of the doctrine of justification
     + Priority given to God’s feeling toward us
     + Focus on the reason for emotional response
     + Invitation to respond without manipulation and constraint
3. An explicit appeal to gratitude and joy by proclaiming the Father’s love in a sermon on the baptism of Jesus in Matt 3:13-17 (WA 20:228):

*Now how could God not pour out Himself and offer Himself in a more loving or sweeter way than by saying that His heart is well-pleased because His Son is friendly to me, is so heartily concerned about me, and suffers, dies and does everything with such great love for me. Do you not think that a human heart which actually feels that God is so well pleased with Christ that He serves us in this way, must not break into a thousand pieces because its joy is so great? For then it would peer into the depths of His fatherly heart, yes into the inexhaustible goodness and eternal love which God feels and has felt toward us from eternity.*

1. His implicit appeal to hope, joy, pride and confidence in the face of fear, guilt, shame and unworthiness in “The Freedom of the Christian” (LW 31: 351-52):

*The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery…Christ and the soul become one flesh. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage-indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage - it follows that everything they have they have in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own…Christ is full of grace, life and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ’s, while grace, life and salvation will be the soul’s, for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things that are his bride’s and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of his bride, how shall he not take all that is hers…Who can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means?...Here this rich and royal bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all evil, and adorns her. Her sins cannot destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as her own and confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, “If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all that is his is mine, all mine is his.*

1. **Luther on the most tender, intoxicating touch of God’s word** (LW 31:349):

*Since these promises of God are holy, true, righteous, free, and peaceful words, full of goodness, the soul that clings to them with a firm faith will be so closely united with them and altogether absorbed by them that it will not only share in all their power but will be saturated and intoxicated by them. If a touch of Christ healed, how much more will this most tender spiritual touch, this absorbing of the Word, communicate to the soul all things that belong to the Word.*

1. Conclusion (Luther in WA 3.549.30-35: *no one is able or competent to speak about any parts of the Scriptures, or listen to them with understanding, if his affect, his emotional disposition, is not in conformity with them, so that he feels inside what he speaks or hears outside, and agrees, “Yes it is really so!”*
2. **Affective Meditation on the Embodied Word: Inexhaustible Comfort**
3. **“Love itself will teach meditation”** (Luther on Ps 1: LW 14:297)

* My reading of letters from Claire during our courtship
* Attention to emotional purpose and impact: dwelling on some words and phrases rather than only on information
* Retention in my pocket for physical, personal and emotional contact
* Practice of affective meditation on God’s word in Ps 119: *intellectus*/understanding + *affectus*/emotional content and impact
* See Luther’s interpretation of “delight” in Ps 1 (LW 14:297-98: *Note this well: It is the mode and nature of all who love, to chatter, sing, think, compose, and frolic freely about what they love and enjoy hearing about it. Therefore this lover, this blessed man, has his love, the Law of God, always in his mouth, always in his heart and if possible, always in his ear.*
* Affective meditation on God’s word as the source of affective proclamation and affective pastoral care
* See Paul’s description of affective pastoral care in 1 Thess 2:7-8: *we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our very selves (souls), because you had become very dear to us.*

1. **The Affective Dimension of Christ’s Teaching and Practice**

* Comforting words and deeds
* Personal touch for sick and untouchable people (eg. Mark 1:31, 41; 3:10; 5:23, 41; 6:5, 56; 7:32-33; 8:22-23; 9:27, 36; 10:13-16)
* Explicit mention of emotions in dealing with people
* Compassion: leper (Mark 1:40), widow at Nain (Luke 7:13), hungry crowd (Matt 15:32; Mark 8:2), crowd with sick people (Matt 14:14), crowd without anyone to shepherd them (Matt Mark 6:34)
* Love for rich young man (Mark 10:21)
* Joy at the success of the 70 evangelists (Luke 10:21-22)
* Groaning at the plight of deaf-dumb man (Mark 7:34)
* Indignation at his disciples for their treatment of infants (Mark 9:13)
* Weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) and Lazarus (John 11:35, 38)
* Anger and grief at hard-hearted people (Mark 3:5)
* Sorrow in Gethsemane (Matt 26:37-38; Mark 14:33-34; Luke 22:45)
* Implicit emotional communication in all his interactions with people
* Paul’s teaching on sharing Christ’s tender, affectionate compassion (Phil 1:8; 2:1; cf. Col 3:12)

1. **Luther’s Teaching on Affective Meditation**

* The human heart as a musical instrument with the Holy Spirit as the musician
* Tuning of the heart by the Holy Spirit through God’s word for the reception of His heavenly gifts: similarity to TV
* Conformity of the heart to the heart of Christ in order to think and feel and see like him
* Practice of affective meditation in association with cognitive and imaginative reflection and reception
* Reception of comfort from Christ for the provision of comfort to others by the proclamation of Christ
* Meditation to receive the virtue and so experience the effective power of God’s word
* See Luther’s comment on the inexhaustible word in connection with Ps 117 (LW 14:8): *I have taken upon myself to interpret this psalm, so that one may see how clear God’s Word is, how simple, and yet how inexhaustible. And even though everything were reasonable (understandable), which is not the case, still it is inexhaustible in power and virtue.* ***It renews and refreshes the heart, restoring, relieving, comforting, and strengthening us constantly****.*
* Luther on daily meditation on the catechism(LC 1 § 9-11): *Even if their knowledge of the catechism were perfect (although that is impossible in this life), yet it is highly profitable and fruitful to read it daily and make it the subject of meditation and conversation. In such reading, conversation, and meditation the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new light and devotion, so that it tastes better and better and is digested…God’s word is…the power of God that burns down the devil’s house and gives us* ***immeasurable strength, comfort and help****.*

1. **Distinction between Teaching and Comfort in Lutheran Orthodoxy**

* Doctrinal teaching and comfortable words
* Comfortable words = evangelical words that have the power to comfort
* Words that give joy and arouse gratitude
* Words that dispel sadness and grief from guilt and shame, pain and loss
* Words that give hope and confidence from the assurance of salvation
* Words that relieve fear and ease anxiety
* Words that encourage and strengthen the heart
* Words that move the heart to devotion
* Words by which God pours His love into our hears through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5)

1. **A Method of Affective Meditation on the Scriptures**

* Exercise of emotional imagination and reception in meditating on the stories of Jesus in the gospels
* Presupposition: explicit and implicit emotional communication by God in His word
* Aim
* To discover and benefit from the emotional dimension of God’s word
* To receive comfort from its impact on me
* Questions
* Who are the main characters in the story or passage?
* How do the main characters feel about themselves, others and God?
* How does Jesus or God feel toward them?
* How does Jesus or God deal emotionally?
* How does this story apply to me emotionally?

1. **Interaction between an impulsive woman and Jesus in Luke 11:27-28**: *As Jesus was saying these things, a certain woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked.” And he said, “Blessed rather/Even more blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”*

* Setting: teaching of Jesus on prayer and exorcism
* Characters:
* Jesus teaching
* The crowd of hearers
* The woman in the crowd
* How does she feel about herself and Jesus?
* Maternal woman who is proud of her femininity
* Envious of Mary as the mother of Jesus
* Disappointed mother
* Longing for maternal fulfilment with a son like Jesus
* How does Jesus deal with her emotionally?
* Comparison of womb and breasts with hearing God’s word and meditating on it: warm emotive imagery
* Affirmation and encouragement rather than rebuke
* Mary as doubly blessed: blessed as the mother of Jesus and even more blessed as a disciple
* Woman just as blessed as Mary the disciple of her son
* In what way am I like her and what emotional encouragement does Jesus offer me?

1. **Affective Meditation on Luke 7:11-17**: *11Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went him. 12As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd was with her. 13And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” 14Then he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” 15And the young man (the corpse) sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to her mother. 16Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” 17And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and the surrounding country.*

* The transformation of a funeral procession into a victory procession by Jesus
* Worst fear: death of only child
* Common fear of death and grief at loss of loved ones
* Life as a funeral procession in which the dying carry the dead to be buried
* Affective pastoral care by Jesus
* His sight of the woman
* His compassion for the grieving woman
* His word of encouragement to her: “Do no weep.”
* His contact with the unclean bier: exchange of death and life
* Presentation of living son to his mother
* The emotional transformation of the woman
* Grief at the loss of husband and only son: hopeless condition
* Replacement of tears with joy and hope
* The transformation of the crowd
* Fear of death to fear of God: reverence, awe, wonder, amazement
* Mourning of loss to the performance of doxology: see Luke 2:13 ► 2:20; 4:15; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47
* Praise of Jesus as the end time prophet promised in Deut 18:18
* Praise of God for His final “visitation” of His people (Ps 106:4; Zeph 2:7; Zech 10:3; Luke 1:) as He had “visited” them in Egypt (Gen 50:24-25; Ex 3:11; 4:31) and in Babylon (Jer 29:10)
* Two pastoral applications of comfort
* People who have been bereaved
* The members of the congregation who fear death and grieve at their mortality

1. **Conclusion: two proverbs on the wisdom of affective speech**

* Prov 16: 24:

*Kindly words are like a honeycomb,*

*sweetness to the soul and health to the body.*

* Prov 16:21:

The wise *at heart are called discerning/perceptive,*

*and sweetness of the mouth/speech increases reception.*