

Ronald J. Allen. *You Never Step into the Same Pulpit Twice: Preaching from a Perspective of Process Theology*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022. 231 pages. \$31.

Ronald Allen, a renowned and prolific author in the field of homiletics, recently published his new book, *You Never Step into the Same Pulpit Twice*. In past decades, the author has written extensively on conversational preaching in the mode of mutual critical correlation (Paul Tillich and David Tracy). He further explicates the philosophical-theological framework behind his expansive homiletical corpus: process theology as set in motion by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead.

The book's structure consists of two main parts: theory (Chapters 1-3) and practice (Chapters 4-8) of preaching from a process perspective. Since process theology, also known as the philosophy of organisms, is less engaged in our field, Allen presents the main ideas of process theology (Chapter 1) summarized as follows: Every existence is regarded not as substance but as life in the constantly active *process* of "becoming" in recognized and unrecognized affective relationships. God is no exception. God is fully present in all contexts and changes in relational becoming. Since God's purpose is the "inclusive well-being" (a term coined by process theologian Marjorie Suchocki) of all existences, God invites them by ceaselessly offering possibilities for love, peace, justice, and abundance. In summary, God in *relational becoming* operates in the mode of *invitation*.

Based on this process conceptuality, how should preachers define the relationship between perception and language? (Chapter 2) Allen's answer is language, while incomplete and fragmentary, refers to realities of existence beyond itself and enables human perception in two modes: presentational immediacy and causal efficacy. While we perceive a piece of the world in the immediate moment with one-dimensional/*steno* language, we also perceive said piece in a wider relationship to the whole fabric of life with *depth* language. *Symbolic* language integrates and balances the two modes of perception (41-53).

The first two chapters lay a foundation for the rest of the book, which is on the practice of preaching. In Chapter 3, Allen argues that every sermon is a distinct occasion of homiletical becoming and should be performed with the process notion of God's invitation. The best way to move forward for process preachers is to employ the idea of the sermon as conversation, to name God's invitations, and to help the congregation identify and respond to them for the inclusive well-being of *all*.

The author presents the purposes of conversational preaching in process conceptuality as follows: 1) to invite the congregation (and world) towards inclusive well-being, 2) to help the congregation make sense of their lives, 3) to articulate invitations appropriate to the context, 4) to build up the church as a community that embodies and invites inclusive well-being, and 5) to evoke feelings consistent with said invitations to well-being (71-80).

The remaining chapters address more practical matters of methods of preparing and preaching using a sample case sermon on the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30): identifying the invitation of the text or topic (chapter 4), bringing the invitation into the conversation with other invitations (chapter 5), reflecting in a critical theological way on the invitations,

establishing a direction for the sermon (chapter 6), shaping the sermon in a way that invites conversation (chapter 7), and embodying the sermon in a conversational mode (chapter 8).

This book is an excellent addition to Allen's homiletical corpus, which has been characterized as a homiletic of conversation based on mutual critical correlation. The readers will benefit from the author's process theological insights to reconfigure their understanding of God, individuals, communities, and beyond, to reshape their preaching in a conversational mode based on many practical and detailed pieces of advice, and to embody their sermons in more engaging ways.

I highly recommend this book to working preachers and homileticians who seek to name, engage, and respond to God's invitations for the inclusive well-being of all through creative transformation.

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