

Matthew D. Kim. *Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. Xv + 251 pages. \$24.99.

Preaching to People in Pain is a practical guide for those who seek ways to deal with suffering in their preaching. Matthew D. Kim understands suffering as a form of discipleship, imitating Christ, and participating in Christ's sufferings. Kim points out that by revealing the weaknesses of not only the preacher but also the individual members of congregation, sharing suffering can contribute to creating a culture of healing in a church. Arguing that preaching suffering is beneficial for the life and transformation of individuals and communities, the first part of this book names the pain of preachers and listeners and considers a plan for preaching pain.

In the first chapter, Kim notes that the preacher also struggles with suffering and addresses the reluctance of our culture to respond to others' suffering. Kim is concerned that preachers may tend to minimize or hide their pain because preachers have thought that revealing their vulnerability might damage their pastoral authority or leadership. Kim invites preachers to explore their suffering in the physical, psychological, emotional, relational, financial, and spiritual areas. In chapter two, Kim says preachers need to give their congregations the time they need to immerse themselves in their grief, avoiding the mistake of seeking an immediate happy ending. Congregations need ears to listen, people to pray with, and people to sit with in sorrow: "We preach to comfort those in pain, but we also remain close to them in their suffering" (46). Kim argues that having a culture of vulnerability in a community increases the possibility of creating a safe place to speak openly and share suffering. In the third chapter, Kim presents how to read the Bible through the specific lens of suffering and how to apply this reading to sermons.

In the second part, Kim presents six themes of pain, including sermons related to each theme. Through nine questions, Kim considers dealing with suffering in preaching in each chapter. He examines and analyzes biblical texts and offers sample practices for how to shape a sermon. Chapter four considers painful decisions that deal with the matter of moral decision in relation to sensitivity to sin. Related to the painful subject of finance, in chapter five, preachers may give biblical suggestions about financial issues. When dealing with the theme of physical and mental health issues, Kim notes that meditating on the sufferings of Christ in these afflictions can serve as spiritual and emotional balm. Especially, Kim emphasizes the sovereignty of God in terms of illness and the trials related to it, seeing that sickness and other trials can bring us closer to God. Readers may compare his idea with another view on preaching disability and illness offered by Kathy Black in *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. While covering the subject of painful loss, Kim brings attention to the loss of agency or identity. Kim notes that the suffering experienced by immigrants and powerless people is often a source of shame and sadness. Chapter eight, which talks about painful relationships, argues that preachers may have the courage to tell the truth, even on difficult or confusing topics. Specifically, Kim insists that sermons may address violence such as sexual harassment, abuse, assault, and rape. Kim also refers to racial and ethnic conflicts and divisions as forms of painful relationships, arguing that we need to face the painfully wrong principle that minorities ought to submit to the authority of the majority culture. In the last chapter, on the subject of painful sins, Kim opposes the belief that present suffering is a direct result of that sin and argues that we need to lament for our sin. He admits suffering is

how God tests disciples and presents the image of God who calls sinners and does not let the faith and salvation of sinners be lost.

Kim contributes a valuable consideration when he suggests that preachers and communities need to deal with suffering in preaching and in their community life. Kim's theological approach related to theodicy may work at some point; however, he could explore more diverse theological perspectives on understanding and expressing suffering in preaching. Further deep consideration of the complexity of suffering and how to make space for the reality of suffering is also needed while presenting the God who suffers and weeps with those who suffer. As Kim confesses, "God [he] is here with us before, during, and even after our initial pain" (202).

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