

Sunggu A. Yang. *Digital Homiletics: The Theology and Practice of Online Preaching*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024. 176 pages. \$19.99.

While using digital platforms for preaching is not entirely new, the COVID-19 pandemic forced preachers worldwide to adopt online preaching as a regular practice. In his timely and much-needed work *Digital Homiletics*, Sunggu A. Yang addresses the lack of critical understanding that accompanied the rapid rise of online preaching. He observes that this sudden shift left online preaching “standing on shaky theoretical ground with no concrete performative strategy” (1). Yang’s groundbreaking contribution has a twofold purpose: first, to provide a robust theological foundation for online preaching, and second, to explore a variety of digital preaching styles, offering deeper theological reflection alongside practical strategies for contemporary preachers in the online age.

Throughout his work, Yang demonstrates bifocality. He grounds his insights in deep theological reflection while also offering highly practical advice. He respects the traditional foundations of preaching while embracing fresh strategies suited to today’s digital landscape. In the opening chapter, Yang builds a theological scaffold rooted in Reformed-conventional theology, drawing from the work of Karl Barth. Barth’s understanding of the Word of God appears in a threefold form: 1) the Written Word—Scripture, marked by immutability and reliability; 2) the Incarnate Word—Christ, characterized by proximity and presence; and 3) the Preached Word—Proclamation, defined by transference and assurance. Barth maintains a concrete unity among these three, referring to the Trinitarian doctrine (3).

However, the pandemic disrupted this conventional framework, leading to what Yang introduces as a “fourth dimension” of the Word: the *Word digitalized*. This new form, he argues, inherently contains the previous three dimensions—written, revealed, and preached—but transforms their characteristics in the digital environment. For instance, the digital Bible shifts from immutability to *fluidity* and from static reliability to *usability*. Christ’s image, now shared widely across cultures and platforms, morphs proximity and presence into *ubiquity* and *connectivity*. Meanwhile, online preaching, accessible anytime and anywhere, trades the Preached Word’s transference and assurance for *spontaneity*, *accessibility*, and *shareability*.

In comparing Barth’s six traits (derived from the threefold Word) with his newly identified seven traits of the digital Word, Yang emphasizes that this is not a matter of replacing the old with the new. Rather, the emerging traits rely on the foundational six while pushing them toward self-transformation. Effective online preaching, Yang asserts, thoughtfully integrates these traditional and emerging elements into a renewed homiletical theory and practice (13). This thought-provoking insight invites readers to consider the Trinity within a new technological dimension and challenges them to expand their understanding of the Word of God in a digital world.

Chapters two through eleven delve into ten distinct styles of online preaching, offering practical guidance alongside relevant homiletical theory. While not exhaustive, these ten styles are among those most commonly adopted by contemporary preachers. The styles include: Podium Style, Conversation Style, Reporter Style, Metaverse/VR Style, Interview Style, Drama Style, Zoom/Chat Style, Rock Concert Style, Film/Vidpod Style, and Artist Style. Each is explored in depth, including how it functions, where and when it fits best, and to whom it might appeal. Yang connects each style to homiletical theories such as testimonial preaching, the four-page sermon, roundtable preaching, vivid preaching, and episodic preaching, grounding his practical guidance in sound theoretical underpinnings. In each style, Yang traces the presence of

the seven traits of digital preaching: fluidity, usability, cross-cultural ubiquity, connectivity, instant communication, holistic artistry, and shareability.

As a reader, I found myself wondering whether an eighth trait might be added: *retrievability*. Yang notes, “we must respond to the needs and requests from the ‘digital pews’ (that is, anywhere people now worship online) as pastorally as possible” (82). But these digital pews don’t just span physical spaces—they transcend time. Traditionally, preaching has been tied to the present moment—a sermon delivered to a particular congregation, in a specific place, during a specific season. But in the digital age, sermons are saved, archived, and re-watched. The sermon continues to “preach” long after its initial delivery. This raises a profound theological and pastoral question: Are we, as preachers, responsible not only for the needs of our immediate audience but also for those who may encounter the Word days, months, or years later? In this light, I believe the retrievability of digital preaching demands further exploration.

Yang’s work opens the door to rich conversations and invites a broader digital homiletical imagination. Readers of *Digital Homiletics* will find themselves inspired to engage this new online era with renewed curiosity, theological depth, and the practical support needed for meaningful participation in today’s evolving landscape of digital ministry.

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