



## How does understanding scripture prepare for evangelization?

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### ABSTRACT

Preachers as servants who are given the task of conveying the word of God must have a strong understanding of the verses to be conveyed, so that there will be no mistakes or multiple interpretations in their preaching. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the Word of God so that we can communicate it with power and relevance in our daily lives. This research utilizes a qualitative method. This method involves analyzing the theology contained in the biblical text, including the study of theological concepts such as grace, justice, salvation, and others. Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth analytical analysis of the biblical text itself. The study concluded that the call to serve others, build inclusive communities, and trust in God's active work in bringing salvation to His people are at the core of Christianity. So it is important to live the Christian faith with dedication, loyalty, and love for God and others, thus strengthening the vertical relationship with God and horizontal with fellow humans in realizing grace and justice in the world.



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## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the scripture, it speaks of dust, earth, and sand as essential in the formation of man. "With sweat, you shall seek your food, until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). We are dust, and our lives are often dusty; we will return to dust.

Past experiences with God are not closed to present and future experiences. God works throughout the ages. He addresses every individual from the beginning, groups, and all of humanity. God does not change. Experience thus proves that the scriptures are the unfolding history of God's love, the history of liberation and life. So every stroke of the Word of God is a mirror for our lives, making our lives meaningful, and leading us closer to the God of love.

Preaching is the process of disseminating information or news. Preaching is one of the ways to convey God's words. Preaching is often done by religious leaders to spread the religious, moral, and ethical messages contained in the Scriptures to the wider community (Robinson, 2014). Preaching refers to efforts to proclaim the word of God as a source of joy, so that it is heard, lived out, and practiced in running life (Habur, 2019). This preaching is not limited to certain groups or races, as Jesus said "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The proclamation of scripture is related to conveying an understanding of God's holy book, where this holy book becomes a guide in running life, and strengthens faith in God (Mega et al., 2022). Therefore, the preacher, as a servant who is given the task of conveying the words of God, must have a strong understanding of the verses to be delivered (Broadus, 2014). Preachers must also have a good ability to convey God's words so that what is conveyed can be understood and applied by the people.

Based on Dewantara (2013) research, shows that by preaching the word of God through the quiz method, although there are complexities in its implementation, the delivery process and atmosphere are full of joy. Thus, in addition to educating and exploring young people, it is also entertaining and interesting.

In Karnawati & Claudia (2021) research, it was found that the method of reading the Bible text aloud is a very easy method to be applied by parents or other family members, easy to learn, does not require expensive costs, and does not require complicated material preparation. Apart from being a

means of evangelism, the read-aloud Bible method can provide benefits in helping children's brain development more optimally, influencing language development and imagination, training attentive listening skills, increasing children's vocabulary, improving emotional relationships between children and parents, introducing concepts about Bible books to children, and increasing literacy culture in the family environment.

Anggoro (2021) research states that the holy book is very important for the life of the faithful because it is from there that the faithful get spiritual nourishment from the Word of God. But in fact, the Scriptures have not yet become part of their lives. It is hoped that internal and external obstacles can be overcome. Thus, the faithful will truly be refreshed by the word of God in the Holy Scriptures.

In a situation where we often hear the statement that "God's word is so powerful that God does not always have to communicate His word to us," the challenge to understand the Scriptures becomes even more urgent. Therefore, by paying attention to deep reflection for a closer and more practical look at the content of Scripture, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the Word of God so that we can communicate it with power and relevance in our daily lives. This study focuses on how the preacher understands the words of God and his preparation in delivering the words of God.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research utilizes a qualitative method. This method involves analyzing the theology contained in the biblical text, including the study of theological concepts such as grace, justice, salvation, and others. The researcher studied how the biblical text develops and communicates religious doctrines and beliefs. Data collection techniques are conducted through in-depth analytical analysis of the biblical text itself. The researcher studies the biblical text in its original language (Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament) to understand its original meaning. Data collection is done through direct reading and study of the biblical text, as well as analysis of other documents related to the biblical text, such as theological literature, commentaries, or church historical records. Analysis of these documents can provide additional context and a deeper understanding of the biblical text (Windi et al., 2023).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Wilderness in Mark's Gospel Theme**

The Gospel of Mark begins with a prophetic message in the wilderness. It therefore portrays Jesus' life journey as a wilderness travel experience. Jesus walked from place to place; until Mk 8:21 Jesus only traveled around the Sea of Galilee. And from Mark 8:22 Jesus began to walk towards Jerusalem. On his journey, Jesus is reported to have visited deserted places, slums, mountains, and lakes.

Jesus met many sick people with various diseases. Many of them cried out for help. Out of the depth of His love, He healed them. But He also experienced many challenges. He did not run away from family situations, He fed 5,000 people. His journey was like a wilderness and culminated at the top of Calvary on the Cross. The Gospel ends with the resurrection and the angel's message that He has risen and is waiting for us in Galilee. We are all called to return, to return from the beginning of our journey, to walk with the Lord so that we too can arrive and see the risen Lord.

Jesus' life journey began with steps in the silent wilderness, but within that silence, there was a call to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, just as the prophet Isaiah had predicted. Despite challenges and opposition, Jesus kept moving forward. With great care, He healed the paralyzed and even claimed to be the one who forgives sins. However, his actions often caused controversy and unease among those around him. Despite being misunderstood and rejected, Jesus remained steadfast in his mission. He empowered his disciples to perform similar miracles, showing that God's love and power continued to work through him.

Amidst struggles with religious traditions and opposition from dissenters, Jesus continued to serve and teach with love and compassion. He taught about the Kingdom of God with inspiring parables

and demonstrated His power by performing amazing miracles. Although accompanied by fear and anxiety over his fate, Jesus remained steadfast in his faith and accepted his destiny courageously. The silence that fell over His tomb after His death was short-lived, as the joyful news soon spread that Jesus had risen. His eternal presence and promise to always be with His people provide hope and strength to those who believe.

### **Proclamation of Scripture by the Word Leader**

An excerpt from the Book of Isaiah calls for the call of a nation guided by God to the holy mountain. This message is addressed to the people of Israel, especially those in exile, but it also applies to all those in distress. God's salvation is not only called to the chosen nations but also to their opponents. The holy mountain becomes a place of prayer for all and God will unite all (verses 7-8).

St. Paul in speaking of the Jews' rejection of God's call reminds others not to be proud of their calling. For God never withdraws his love. So the struggle of faith only needs to be fought.

The Gospel depicts the struggle of the stranger who was at first rejected by Jesus firmly, but because of his faith, his love, and his surrender, Jesus could no longer reject him. Jesus seemed willing to respond to the man's faith and set aside the debate with him. Faith and struggle do not have to mean yes and yes only. Being critical is also an attitude of faith. But what is more evident is that faith needs to develop its content, despite the direction of Jesus Christ.

### **Manuscript circle**

The opening of Isaiah's Trito collection (Isaiah 56-66) marks the period after the Babylonian exile in 538 BC. The people who returned from exile were involved in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (520-515 BC). In this context, they were faced with two major questions: where is God's promised salvation, and how to form a new church? These questions are presented programmatically at the beginning of this collection, especially in Isaiah 56:1-8. At the heart of the text are verses 3-7, which develop the teaching of the Torah to answer the concrete problems of the time. The question of who is saved, both the outcasts (verses 4-5) and the strangers (verses 6-7), is answered with God's full promise for them. In the introduction that begins the passage (verses 1-2), the general situation is considered, while at the end (verse 8), a conclusion is given. With a focus on the gathering of the excluded and poor, the direction for meeting the challenge is clearly stated. In the preparation of the homily, the entire pericope should be considered to understand the context and the message.

In Romans 11, St. Paul speaks of God's faithfulness to the people of Israel, regardless of their circumstances. He begins by talking about the "remnant of Israel", the small group of Israelites who remained faithful to God despite the majority rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. Paul affirms that God's grace still leads to the remnant of Israel. (Romans 11:1-10)

Later, Paul reflected on the "fullness of Israel". Although most of the people of Israel rejected Jesus, this opened up the opportunity for the Gentiles to receive salvation in Christ. However, Paul also emphasized that God has great plans for the people of Israel. Despite their temporary rejection, God will save all Israel in the end because of His mercy. (Romans 11:11-32)

Paul closed his thoughts by praising God's wisdom and knowledge. He taught that salvation is not the privilege of one particular nation or group, but is open to all mankind. God's love and mercy extend to all people, and the solidarity of mankind is a manifestation of His infinite love. (Romans 11:33-36)

In this context, St. Paul teaches the importance of understanding that salvation in Christ is open to all, including the people of Israel. He encourages Christians to reflect on God's great plan and be in solidarity in introducing salvation to all people, including the people of Israel. God's salvation is for all, and His love extends to all humanity, reminding us to live in love and solidarity with others.

(Matthew 15:21-28). This passage is fodder for exegetes. Especially 15:24 is disputed because it is said to disrupt the flow of the story. If 15:24 is dropped, then the arrangement is similar to Matthew 20:29-31 (Mark 10:46-52). Then 15:24 is called a loose logion inserted here. But then the question arises again: why is the logion included here? It is clear that Matthew, which is usually shorter than

Mark, adds some things when compared to Mark 7:24-30. Perhaps two sources were combined by Matthew. One (15:24) is narrowly Judaistic and the other universalistic. Matthew's redaction, which supports the universalistic view, does not dare to eliminate the old view.

Both Isaiah and St. Paul emphasize the importance of living in love, solidarity, and understanding of God's great plan that includes all of humanity, including the people of Israel. This reminds us to open our arms of love to all people, following the example of Christ who taught us to love our neighbors regardless of background or social status (Pikoli et al., 2021).

### **The Value of Proclamation**

Who belongs to the circle of the elect? The old covenant message reminds us of this issue. It can be asked what the relationship of the elect is with Christians. Except that it can also be asked how they relate to this group. Isaiah 56:1-8 is a strong criticism of the separatists. The God of salvation is not bound by sectarian laws; He loves all. So what is necessary to respond to God's offer is none other than personal faith, which is open to the lives of others.

Public worship as an environment of encounter. God's salvation for all is visible when the boundaries of difference are overcome. However, it is unimaginable how the answer to God's work of salvation is released from concrete, limited ties. Those who believe in God inevitably belong to a certain group (6). Inevitably, the place becomes an important part of group fellowship (7). But it is also true that in worship these boundaries must be minimized. Ultimately the group of the chosen people itself must become the living place of God's saving work. There the Spirit of God lives. In worship, the encounter with God and the encounter with others are not limited by the group.

God's salvation is seen in human honesty. The prophet invites the people to practice honesty because it is honesty that is implemented immediately by God (cf. Isa.60:1). Because God loves man, He makes him happy and saves him. Then humans must also display that salvation. Man must honestly bear witness to divine salvation. Without this action, salvation is just a theory that is not felt in life.

St. Paul's concern after living the Christian faith was to think about the salvation of his people. Once Paul said that he dared to leave the pride of the past in the Jewish environment (Phil 3: 4-14), but it turned out that what he threw away as garbage did not need to be thrown away arbitrarily. The past can give a positive color to the life of faith, and even nourish it. What is more important is whether or not the past saves them (14) (Romans 11:13-15.29-32).

Indeed, people's rejection of God's plan of salvation is often a blessing and salvation for others. But it is also true that people's acceptance of the plan of salvation is indeed a new life for many. The one is inoculated to the other and from it springs a new stem with choice fruit (16-24), which is embedded in the old base and becomes the pride of its owner. The church lives as grafting. It is nourished by a firmly rooted stem and is expected to bear fruit in full splendor, and fertility.

God does not regret his plans and efforts. Christians should not think only of their own needs, loving the good and the near, forgetting that they are ashamed to accept those who are misguided. Whoever acknowledges God's salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, should not forget his brothers and sisters to build the church of the living God. God's plans and efforts apply to all. Therefore, salvation must be continued by those who receive and live that salvation.

Hope that knows no defeat breaks boundaries. If Jesus finds faith/expectation of this magnitude, all guidelines and customs must retreat. Jesus' work is indeed carried out in a certain community, but if there are people who truly believe, the boundaries of the community are broken down. (Matthew 15:21-28)

Christ's endeavors and works follow certain customs. But we should not think that these customs are absolute laws. God's works cannot be regulated by man. The war of words between Jesus and the pagan mother is also interesting. Jesus did not get angry when he was challenged. Indeed, faith is not opposed to critical thinking. The mother's faith was undefeated. Even though her faith was not perfect and still needed to develop according to its content and wholeness, because it was absolute towards Christ, it was considered great by Christ Jesus.

God's salvation is not bound by human limitations. God loves all people regardless of their background or social status (Stevanus, 2020). Regardless of differences, God's grace extends to all mankind, and our task is to receive and live that love, and spread it to others (Amiman, 2018).

### Proclamation Scheme

1. **Called to Others:** This message highlights the essence of being God's true people. Being called to one's neighbor is not just about meeting one's own needs, but about giving and serving others with love (Tembay & Harefa, 2017). This reflects Jesus Christ's teaching on love of neighbor, which is at the core of His teachings. In our service to others, we reflect God's character and love to the world (Hura et al., 2023).
2. **Called to Be Happy Together:** The life of faith is not only about personal achievement or individual happiness but also about sharing happiness with others. When we live out our calling together as God's people, we experience greater happiness than we can individually. This emphasizes the importance of community in providing support, joy, and hope to one another.
3. **God Works Salvation:** Understanding God's work of salvation is central to the Christian faith. We recognize that salvation is not only the result of human effort but also a gift of God (Sulastio, 2020). This affirms the importance of our allegiance to Him and the belief that God is actively working in our lives and this world to bring salvation to all His people.
4. **Building the Church as a Sacrament of Salvation:** The love of God that we experience personally calls us to share it with others, and the community of faith has an important role in showing this love to the world. As the "sacrament of salvation," the congregation is a tangible symbol of God's love for the world (Setyawan, 2014). By serving, loving, and building inclusive and welcoming communities, congregations become a light to the nation and a source of joy and hope for those in need.

By understanding the call to serve others, sharing the joy of being together, and building the congregation as a sacrament of salvation, we can live out our faith in ways that inspire and positively influence the world around us.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the theological study that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the call to serve others, build inclusive communities, and believe in God's active work in bringing salvation to His people is at the heart of Christianity. Through meditating on the teachings of the Bible and applying them in their daily lives, Christians are encouraged to be a light to the world with their love and solidarity. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of living the Christian faith with dedication, loyalty, and love for God and others, thus strengthening the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with fellow human beings in realizing grace and justice in the world.

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