

WAYFINDING: DEVELOPING A METAPHOR FOR  
CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

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*Introduction*

When we arrived in the doldrums, the sky was black. It was solid rain. The wind was switching around. The wind was blowing at about twenty-five knots, and we were moving fast. That's the worst thing that can happen—you are going fast and you don't know where you're going. The guys steering the canoe were looking for direction and that increased the pressure, especially because it was my first voyage as navigator. I couldn't tell the steersmen where to steer. I was very, very tense . . .<sup>1</sup>

This pitch-black night, on a seemingly endless ocean, describes a moment during Nainoa Thompson's first journey as a navigator. It was 1980, but Thompson was not using the tools of a modern navigator. He had no map, no compass, and was, to the untrained eye, sailing blindly. This particular journey set sail without these tools on purpose. Thompson was part of a small group of researchers trying to relearn something they had lost in the Westernisation of their culture: Wayfinding, the art of Polynesian navigation.<sup>2</sup> It was on this first journey that Thompson experienced navigating in the dark. Despite his years of study, his apprenticeship with one of the few remaining Polynesian navigators, and his diligent preparation, here, in the middle of the night, he was suddenly lost.

1. Thompson, "Wayfinding: Intellect and Instinct," para. 3.
2. The term "wayfinding" was given to the method developed by Nainoa Thompson. Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, x.

There is a parallel between Thompson's sudden loss of direction and the issues facing the church in North America. The church, in the increasing pressures of a post-Christendom society, finds itself in what feels like a vast and darkened ocean. That is to say, just as Thompson lost sight of his position, as the markers such as stars and waves were hidden from view, the church finds itself no longer able to see its position in society clearly, as the foundations of Christendom are obscured. Some of the presumed stable foundations of the North American church are shifting, and the markers of that stability are harder to see. In such a context, the present situation is perhaps best described as disorienting.

Though there is much to be said about how we got here and where exactly "here" is, the greater concern of this article is to explore what it means to minister in such a climate and more specifically to preach in this context. To that end, we can draw a closer parallel between Thompson's role as the navigator, and the role of the preacher in a post-Christendom society. A. J. Swoboda recently described the situation of the contemporary preacher by writing that "preachers are struggling to keep up with the pace of the tsunami of swelling cultural questions presented to them week in and week out in their local congregations."<sup>3</sup> That is to say, the pulpit is not immune to the disorientation felt by the members of the church. Swoboda explains "Preachers, no doubt, feel this pressure from just about every angle—the church, culture, leaders, and, hopefully, the inklings and leadings of the Holy Spirit."<sup>4</sup> This pressure can leave the preacher feeling like Thompson: going fast and unsure of where to go.

For both Thompson and the preacher, however, this is not the end of the story. Thompson continues his telling, writing:

Then something happened that allowed me to understand where the moon was, without seeing it. When I gave up fighting to find the moon with my eyes, I settled down. I suddenly felt this warmth come over me and I knew where the moon was. The sky was so black, I

3. Swoboda, "Beautiful, Beautiful," 78.

4. Swoboda, "Beautiful, Beautiful," 79.

couldn't see the moon, but I could feel where it was. From the feeling of warmth and the image of the moon came a strong sense of confidence. I knew where to go. I directed the canoe on a new course and then, just for a moment, there was a hole in the clouds and the light of the moon shone through—just where I expected it to be.<sup>5</sup>

Thompson's role on the ship was that of the navigator. When the time came, in the midst of the disorienting forces of darkness and storm, he found clarity. Thompson's experience of sudden warmth and comfort was not magic, as if wishful thinking or simply feeling good could address the serious challenges of preaching in a post-Christendom society; rather, it was the result of his persistent dedication to a practice that serves to orient himself and his crew. That is to say, he did not merely arrive in the middle of the ocean hoping for the best, but instead by way of a consistent and focused practice he was able to see clearly.

This article is about this kind of clarity. Assuming the premise that the church in North America is struggling to find direction in the midst of disorienting cultural shifts, is there something to be learned from the experiences of Nainoa Thompson and the reclamation of Polynesian navigation? Further, if we accept Swoboda's analysis of the situation of the contemporary preacher, can the role of the navigator give the preacher a framework from which to understand their role in guiding the church in disorienting times?

Using the theme of Polynesian navigation, this article argues that the preacher is a navigator and that, like the Polynesian navigator, the preacher helps to orient the congregation. It argues that preaching relies on a correlative relationship between the church and God. As such, the preacher cannot sustain their preaching alone. They are guided by God's presence in the world and in his word to lead the church in remembering God's past action in order to call the church to anticipate God's future action.

5. Thompson, "Wayfinding: Intellect and Instinct," para. 4.

*Why Navigation?*

One might take this initial description of the situation and be left asking: is there a meaningful connection between navigation and preaching? Are these concepts comparable? Navigation and preaching are similar tasks in that they are practices that orient us. Further, they are focal practices. The term “focal practice” originates in the work of Albert Borgmann. He developed the term within the context of his work developing a philosophy of technology. He offered the idea of focal practices as a counterforce to the disorienting nature of devices. In brief, he suggests that the overwhelming nature of technology can be overcome by a commitment to practices that bring the things that matter most to the surface of our lives. Thus, it is essential that if the context we find ourselves in is disorienting, whatever the social/cultural cause, committing to a practice can help us to orient ourselves.<sup>6</sup> For navigation, orientation is essentially a description of the purpose and practice. For preaching, more clarification is needed.

James Neiman described preaching as a focal practice in his article “Why the Idea of Practice Matters.” Neiman defines “practice” by saying “A practice can be recognized as including common, meaningful, strategic, purposive actions. Unpacked just a bit, this phrase conveys the ‘who’ (common), the ‘why’ (meaningful), the ‘how’ (strategic), the ‘where’ (purposive), and the ‘what’ (actions) of a practice.”<sup>7</sup> This definition describes the complexity of preaching and in doing so avoids the tendency to overemphasise one aspect of preaching over the other aspects.<sup>8</sup> Within this study, Neiman describes preaching as a focal practice in the context of the meaningful aspect of preaching. He writes “Practices are ‘focal’ about meaning, drawing us through a practice into a closer engagement with what is signified. At their

6. Borgmann, *Power Failure*, chapter 1, para. 36, location 284. This argument is made in greater detail in Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*.

7. Neiman, “Why the Idea of Practice Matters,” 21. This definition is developed in conjunction with Thomas Long’s definition of a practice in Long, “A New Focus,” 3–17.

8. This argument is also made in Long, “A New Focus,” 3–17.

best, practices focus us in a way that is integrative and sustaining.”<sup>9</sup> For Neiman, calling preaching a focal practice is to suggest that it is in the nature of preaching to focus, to orient.

Neiman’s point comes directly from a discussion of the nature of a practice versus the nature of a technique. Neiman argues that techniques “separate reality to means and ends or problems and solutions, techniques may help us briefly satisfy a particular challenge but fail to offer the broader patterns of significance that practices can convey. In their tendency to fragment and isolate, techniques are quite literally meaningless.”<sup>10</sup> Neiman’s description, a summary of Borgmann’s work, suggests practices are fundamental because they do not merely serve to offer us quick solutions or immediate answers. Alternatively, in engaging with a practice and meeting its demands, a practice offers meaning and insight into one’s context. As such, a practice can serve to orient a person.

Returning now to the original question: are preaching and navigation comparable? They share a common purpose in being focal practices. They are practices that serve to orient and guide a community, whether that community is comprised of sailors at sea or a congregation in a disorienting culture. As focal practices, both offer a foundation on which to understand one’s context and comprehend how engagement with these practices can orient the community. With this initial parallel more apparent, we can now return to the matter of understanding the work of the preacher through the lens of Polynesian navigation.

#### *A Brief History of Polynesian Navigation*

Polynesia refers to an area in the central and southern parts of the Pacific Ocean. Roughly speaking, Polynesia is identified as the area within a triangle created by Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island. The area is made up of more than 1,000 islands that vary in size and distance from each other. When Captain James Cook (1728–1779), the famed European explorer, sailed

9. Neiman, “Why the Idea of Practice Matters,” 25.

10. Neiman, “Why the Idea of Practice Matters,” 25.

these seas he was astonished to find, spread out among these islands, a common people, in culture and language.<sup>11</sup> Cook goes as far as to suggest that Polynesia was the “most extensive nation on earth.”<sup>12</sup> Though there existed hundreds of kilometres of ocean between islands, there appeared to be a cultural consistency unheard of in the known world of Cook’s day. He suggested it must be a result of travel between the islands. He was the first to be mindful of the traditions of navigation amongst the Polynesians and to suggest that they may have had expertise in the art of navigation.<sup>13</sup> Even more remarkable, there seemed to be no formal equipment for navigation, such as compasses or sextants. Despite the appearance of an underdeveloped culture, technologically speaking, they had somehow learned to traverse the sea without sophisticated devices. This sort of travel was a feat that had only been accomplished as a result of seafaring techniques developed in the Renaissance some three hundred years before Cook’s arrival and only with the inclusion of devices that made navigation possible.

The nature of Polynesian navigation was a mystery to Cook and was left unexamined by Europeans throughout the eventual Westernisation of Polynesia. David Lewis, in his work *We, the Navigators*, suggests “The very idea that people without instruments, charts, or writing could have developed an elaborate and effective art (or pre-science) was so utterly foreign.”<sup>14</sup> He further notes that the eventual missionaries and trade ships that made port throughout the Polynesian islands were more concerned respectively with teaching over learning from the Polynesian culture and business over understanding the craft of Polynesian navigation. The resulting Westernisation led to a diminishing of traditional Polynesian navigation. “The cultures of Oceania

11. Cook, *The Three Voyages of Captain James Cook*, 6:231.

12. Cook, *The Three Voyages of Captain James Cook*, 6:231.

13. Lewis has a good accounting of Cook’s perspective on the Polynesian skill in navigation. He notes that despite Cook’s original thoughts on the Polynesian’s navigation, Cook would eventually encounter Tahitian castaways which would convince him that his early assumptions of the Polynesian’s skill for the sea were limited. Lewis, *We, the Navigators*, 8–12.

14. Lewis, *We, the Navigators*, 9.

became devalued in the eyes of the inhabitants and Westerners alike by comparison with the spectacular achievements of European technology.”<sup>15</sup> With the Westernisation of Polynesia came the addition of laws prohibiting this kind of navigation and as a result, many of the traditions of Polynesian navigation have been lost to the present.

It is in this initial history of Polynesian navigation that the first, and perhaps the most critical, parallel to preaching in a disorienting culture comes to the surface. Polynesian navigation was almost entirely lost because it was deemed less useful than Western navigation. European colonizers undervalued and ultimately replaced Polynesia’s rich cultural heritage. Reflecting on this loss, Mau Piailug, a contemporary navigator in the style of Polynesian navigation, is quoted as suggesting “If my people didn’t do this any more, we wouldn’t be people any more.”<sup>16</sup> Western influence meant the destruction of a practice so critical to the Polynesian heritage and way of life that the loss of this practice meant the loss of the heritage of the people. It is in this sense that Polynesian navigation demonstrates the results of giving oneself and their culture up to an alternative culture. In the case of Polynesian culture, Western culture supplanted the heritage of the Polynesian people. The example of the loss in Polynesian culture is concerning for any group of people trying to exist in a society that increasingly devalues their practices and traditions. The same is true in the post-Christendom society where the practices of the Christian faith are shifted from a position of importance in society to a less significant place on the peripherals of contemporary life.

### *Wayfinding*

The term most commonly associated with Polynesian navigation, as mentioned above, is wayfinding. In the title alone there is a distinction between Western forms of navigation and wayfinding. Western navigation is founded on the principle that one

15. Lewis, *We, the Navigators*, 10.

16. Recorded in Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 59.

knows exactly where they are and exactly where they are going. Navigation, in this sense, is a matter of detailed study/preparation/execution of calculations and techniques. These are made easier, and possible, by relying on the devices that measure, record, and give context to one's location. Navigation has a sense of finality to it in that the work, once completed is assured, is accurate, and is perfect. Wayfinding, as an alternative, suggests an active process. One does not exactly know where they are or exactly where they are going but instead, in relationship to the ocean, the wind, the stars, and all of nature, seeks out direction on the journey.<sup>17</sup> In wayfinding, there is a direct relationship between the voyage, the navigator (or wayfinder), and the natural world. This relationship is best described as a correlative relationship.

David Strong used this term to describe the critical relationship between humankind and engagement with the world in which they live. For Strong, this engagement is central to humanity's existence and their understanding of that existence. He writes:

We may say that humans are always and already correlated with materiality. We can account for feelings in two ways—by giving an account of the feeling *or* by giving account of what evokes the feeling. Similarly, we can speak of interests, desires and motives *or* we can speak of what is attractive, appeals to us or moves us. From the standpoint of being in the world, the former are accounts of the self, the latter accounts of the world.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, Strong suggests that understanding of one's place and context is determined both by a person's understanding of their self and the relationship between a person and their world. In this sense, humanity shares a correlational coexistence with their context and this relationship is fundamental to understanding one's place, role, and purpose in the world. The use of

17. It is important to note that western navigation, such as at the time of Cook, relied on some natural clues, such as stars, but even then the knowledge of the stars and the resulting knowledge position are arrived at via devices that filtered the natural into the technical.

18. Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 70. Emphasis in original.



the phrase “correlative relationship” draws on Strong’s concept of correlational coexistence. We will use it to describe wayfinding, and eventually preaching, and highlight the importance of the necessary bond of person or community to their context.

With this definition in mind, what exactly are the features of wayfinding? Will Kyselka defines wayfinding by writing “Wayfinding is a set of principles. An art. And at the center of the circle of sea and sky is the wayfinder practicing the art, trusting mind and senses within a cognitive structure to read and interpret nature’s signs along the way as a means for maintaining continuous orientation to a remote, intended destination.”<sup>19</sup> This definition provides a broad understanding of wayfinding and offers key insights into the nature of the practice. First, wayfinding is not about moving a ship; it is about orienting a ship. Second, wayfinding depends on nature. Third, the wayfinder uses their experience and knowledge to interpret nature’s signs. Finally, wayfinding leads to an approximate destination. Taken together these four ideas define wayfinding and suggest that it is built on a correlative relationship between wayfinder and nature. To make this point, each of these points needs to be examined further.

First, wayfinding is a matter of orientation. This first point is critical for understanding the practice. The wayfinder is incapable of controlling nature or generating the necessary wind patterns for motion. Throughout the process of learning to wayfind, described in *An Ocean in Mind*, there was a constant barrier to both the learning and the eventual sailing of their vessel. The primary source of this barrier was the wind and the weather. Jeff Evans, in his text *Polynesian Navigation and the Discovery of New Zealand*, notes “It is not uncommon for a navigator to wait weeks or even months for the right wind conditions.”<sup>20</sup> Wayfinders required good sailing days just to start the journey from Hawaii to Tahiti. Thompson’s 1978 voyage ended when the force of the wind and the ocean capsized his canoe. His 1980

19. Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 234–35.

20. Evans, *Polynesian Navigation and the Discovery of New Zealand*, chapter 5, para. 27, location 975.

voyage, which would be Thompson's first successful navigation without devices from Hawaii to Tahiti, was delayed five days when he was forced to wait for ideal conditions.<sup>21</sup> Thompson, the wayfinder, had no control over these factors. Wind and weather are dangerous and wild elements of seafaring, and a wayfinder cannot control them but instead must respond to them. "The canoe can only sail in the direction the wind allows it to sail. The art of wayfinding involves adapting to variable and unexpected conditions of wind and weather."<sup>22</sup> Navigators must be aware of the wind and its effect on the craft. With this in mind the work of a wayfinder, in response to the wind and weather, is directed to the orientation of the canoe. The wayfinder cannot move the canoe but can, by keeping in mind the current position of the boat and the effect of natural forces on the boat, maintain an orientation that will allow the natural forces to move the canoe near to their destination.

Second, wayfinding and the wayfinder depend on nature to orient their craft. The stars, the sun, the moon, the ocean swells, the wind, and birds are some of the key clues offered by the natural setting of the ocean. Thompson explains:

How do we tell direction? We use the best clues that we have. We use the sun when it is low down on the horizon. Mau has names for the different widths and the different colors of the sun's path on the water. When the sun is low, the path is narrow, and as the sun rises the path gets wider and wider. When the sun gets too high you cannot tell where it has risen. You have to use other clues. Sunrise is the most important part of the day. At sunrise you start to look at the shape of the ocean-the character of the sea. You memorize where the wind is coming from. The wind generates the waves. You analyze the character of the waves. When the sun gets too high, you steer by the waves. And then at sunset you repeat the process. The sun goes down-you look at the shape of the waves. Did the wind direction change? Did the swell pattern change? At night we use the stars. We

21. See chapter "Waiting for the Wind." Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*.

22. Kawaharada, "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Designing a Course Strategy," para. 5.

use about 220 [stars], memorizing where they come up, where they go down.<sup>23</sup>

Essentially, every aspect of the world in which one sails and navigates offers insight into one's current position. There is a fundamental set of relationships among the act of wayfinding, the wayfinder, and nature.

Third, the wayfinder uses their experience and knowledge to interpret nature's signs. The wayfinder is a role of special importance to the journey. They are special, not because of positional authority, but because of their relationship to the natural signs. It is in the relationships among the wayfinder, their experience and knowledge, and the signs of nature that the wayfinder can get a sense of their position. It is a sense of position because the results are not meant to offer pinpoint accuracy. Instead, the wayfinder is consistently keeping in mind where the journey started, how far they have travelled, where their journey is taking them, and, in light of the effect of natural forces and clues from nature, where they are. The wayfinder constantly remains aware of these things to be oriented in the right direction. Thompson writes:

You cannot look up at the stars and tell where you are. You only know where you are in this kind of navigation by memorizing where you sailed from. That means constant observation. You have to constantly remember your speed, your direction and time. You don't have a speedometer. You don't have a compass. You don't have a watch. It all has to be done in your head. It is easy-in principle-but it's hard to do.<sup>24</sup>

The wayfinder is not moving the canoe or magically finding a position. The wayfinder is dedicated to the work of observing the natural forces of the world and is mindful of the position of the canoe. These two insights help the wayfinder orient the canoe in the vast ocean.

23. Thompson, "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: On Wayfinding," para. 5. Parentheses added

24. Thompson, "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: On Wayfinding," para. 3.

Finally, wayfinding leads to an approximate destination. The results of wayfinding do lead a vessel from one place to another, but the resulting journey is not as simple as drawing a straight line from point A to point B. Wayfinding is centred on orientation, not precision sailing. Kyselka makes this point in his retelling of an interview he had during the journey from Hawaii to Tahiti in 1980. He speaks first:

“‘We’ve had good winds, and he thinks we’re back on the reference course.’

‘And that runs right to Tahiti, I suppose.’

‘Actually to Takapoto in the Tuamotus. It’s a line he has in mind, a way of staying oriented. Not a course to be sailed.’”<sup>25</sup>

The radio host assumed that a journey, governed by wayfinding, would be a matter of setting course on a direct line to Tahiti. This perception reflects a Western approach to navigating where the course can be controlled to a higher degree. Kyselka’s response highlights the fundamental truth about this sort of navigation: wayfinding is focused on orientation over the destination.<sup>26</sup> Yes, orientation, in the first hand, is determined by destination, but on the water, in the vast empty ocean, one must be wholly concerned with orientation, responding to the forces of nature and the signs therein, to be moved toward a destination.

25. Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 141.

26. It should be noted that there is a distinct difference between understanding how wayfinding works, by analysing the process, and actual wayfinding. This difference becomes most apparent in the reflections of Noania Thompson on his first journey, as described above. In *An Ocean in Mind*, some of Thompson’s reflections on his first journey as navigator have been collected and edited where he explains the difficulty of conveying what it is like to be a navigator (Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 205). One of the things that become most apparent when reading his material is a correlative relationship between his role as navigator and nature. In every sense, Thompson is rigorously dedicated to his work and to the formal processes of what he is doing, but at the same time, in the moments where his skill as a navigator are most needed, he tends to describe these situations in terms of dependence on his relatedness to his surroundings.

With a clearer picture of the relationship between the wayfinder and nature, we can now turn to the matter of describing the preaching event through the metaphor of navigation. To this end, the preacher is like the wayfinder in that their work is done in a correlative relationship with God. Framing preaching by this correlation means the preacher does not sustain their preaching alone, the preacher is guided by their experience of God and his word, and the preacher is called to enact remembrance and inspire anticipation. We will now look closer at each of these.

#### *The Preacher Does Not Sustain Their Preaching*

One of the challenges of contemporary preaching is the pressure on the sermon to be a driving force of the church. A 2016 Pew Research Center study suggests that “83% of Americans who have looked for a new place of worship say the quality of preaching played an important role in their choice of congregation.”<sup>27</sup> This statistic suggests that a church’s growth is impacted significantly by the quality of the preaching or the ability of the preacher. Conversely, one might conclude that a church’s decline is also a reflection on the quality of the preaching. While this is not the argument being made here, it does highlight something of the pressure that the contemporary preacher is facing.

In this context, the temptation is to focus on the ability of the preacher. Henri Nouwen, in his book *In the Name of Jesus*, explores the temptations of ministry. One of these temptations, the temptation of popularity, looks at the desire to be seen as capable. He suggests that ministry is not built on the capabilities of its leaders. Nouwen writes:

When you look at today’s church, it is easy to see the prevalence of individualism among ministers and priests. Not too many of us have a vast repertoire of skills to be proud of, but most of us still feel that, if we have anything at all to show, it is something we have to do solo.

27. Feeling welcome and the style of service were also high on the list at 79 per cent and 74 per cent respectively. Even still, quality of sermon remains at the top of the list. Pew Research Center, “Choosing a New Church or House of Worship,” 23 August 2016.

You could say that many of us feel like failed tightrope walkers who discovered . . . that we did not have the talents to create beautiful liturgies . . . But most of us still feel that, ideally, we should have been able to do it all and do it successfully.<sup>28</sup>

In leadership, there is a temptation to look to the abilities of the leader as the source of successful ministry. Preachers confront this challenge every time they step up to a pulpit. Preaching is a vulnerable act, and it is difficult, when listening to a preacher, to separate the practice of preaching from the ability of the preacher. In this sense, every time someone enters the pulpit, they confront the question of their ability.

Ability is not the only factor that determines the results of preaching, however. The preacher works in conjunction with God's spirit. Much like the wayfinder, movement is not a result of the preacher's effort. Alternatively, as the wind fills the sails and the ship is moved, the church is moved by God's spirit. This argument is not to suggest that the ability of the preacher does not matter but that the work of the preacher does not happen in a vacuum. Preaching relies on the relationship between the preacher's work and God's working. Kenton Anderson, in his book *Integrative Preaching*, has made a similar argument. He writes "No matter how good you get at these things, you will never make unnecessary the work of God's Holy Spirit. This is the great mystery inherent in our preaching—that the Spirit would unite with the servant, such that the Word of God is heard."<sup>29</sup> It is this unity—this correlational relationship—that is essential to preaching. Framed as a navigator, the preacher must put aside the temptation to rely on ability alone and work in conjunction with God's Spirit.

*The Preacher is Guided by Their Experience of God and His Word*

Just as the wayfinder can orient their ship by the signs of nature, the preacher can orient their congregation by the signs of God's

28. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 55–56.

29. Anderson, *Integrative Preaching*, xiv–xv.

work found active and alive in the community and his word. Put another way, the preacher is called to be aware of God's presence. Certainly, everyone should be seeking God's presence, but the preacher is specially called to this goal within the community of faith. Anderson uses the phrase "leading in listening" to describe this special role.<sup>30</sup> We can understand this kind of leadership by looking at the wayfinder. The wayfinder's goal is orientation, and so the navigator is constantly looking for signs that suggest their present direction. They are looking to the stars to understand their place, they are examining the shape of the waves to understand how the boat is moving, and they are feeling the wind to get a sense of where they are going. The wayfinder is constantly aware of how the forces of nature around them are shaping their ship. It is the same as the preacher. The preacher is called to be aware of God's movement, of God's spirit, of God's word, in order to understand how God's presence is shaping the church.

This conclusion leads to a critical question: how does the preacher attain this awareness of God's presence? What are the stars, waves, and signs for the preacher? The answer is found in the rhythms of pastoral ministry. Taking part in the wide range of pastoral vocations gives the preacher opportunity to be aware of God's working in the here and now. Time in God's word, prayer, being with the sick, caring for members of the community, and taking part in worship are all examples of moments where God is active and present. Further, in acts of evangelism, hospitality, and community care a pastor looks beyond the community of faith and is shaped by the lives in their local community and how God is calling us all to him. As such, pastoral ministry and preaching ministry are linked in a continuum of experiences of God in ministry and the telling of that experience in preaching. Just like the navigator, the preacher's work, throughout their study and pastoral ministry, requires attentiveness to the signs and markers of God's presence.

30. Anderson, *Integrative Preaching*, xiii.

*The Preacher is Called to Enact Remembrance and Inspire  
Anticipation*

Having said something of the experience of God, we can now discuss the preaching of that experience. The wayfinder's attentiveness leads them to share their insight with their crew to orient the ship. The preacher has a similar pattern: having been attentive to God, the preacher can preach their experience, leading the community in remembering and anticipating God's action.

Chris Waters describes this sort of remembering and anticipating in his book *Christian Moral Theology*. First, remembrance acknowledges what God has already done in Christ. Waters writes "One cannot be a Christian without remembering the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus. This memory is preserved is [sic] Scripture, refined in doctrine, enacted in worship, and celebrated in the sacraments."<sup>31</sup> God has chosen to disclose himself in the person and life of Jesus and within the words of scripture. For Waters, these disclosures inspire the church's acts of remembering through the practices of the church and are the source on which the practices are established. Second, the church is concerned with future things. This eschatological orientation takes the form of anticipation of what God has promised. Waters writes:

The work initiated by God in the Word made flesh is not yet complete, or, to change the metaphor, the final chapter of this story is not yet written: hence the ensuing restlessness of the Christian moral life; its sense of unsettled but patient pilgrimage. This eschatological orientation inspires an awareness that new and renewing possibilities for ordering human life in this time between the times can and do occur, precisely because it acts as a mirror casting attention back to the remembered.<sup>32</sup>

The church is constantly reminded of the work of God not yet complete. It is necessary for the church, looking to an eventual future, to remain both faithful to its identity and engaged with the shifting culture around it. For Waters, engaging in practices

31. Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 277.

32. Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 277.



that promote remembrance and anticipation serve to orient the church within the context of shifting cultures.

Waters looks at remembrance and anticipation in the grand scale of the Cross and Christ's return, but we could equally see this play out in the community of faith. We remember what God has done, which inspires us to anticipate what God will do. When God, consistent in his nature, acts again and fulfils our anticipation we have new experiences to inspire our acts of remembrance. In other words, experiences of God become the testimony of who God is, that testimony leads to new experiences and the cycle continues as God continues to disclose himself and his presence in the life of the community.<sup>33</sup>

Remembrance and anticipation help us to be oriented not by the pressures created by our context but by God's presence in our midst and his word. The preacher, as a navigator, leads this effort by being attentive to God's presence and preparing a fresh telling of what God has done and what God will do in Christ. Like the wayfinder, they interpret the markers to keep a sense of direction and guide the congregation to be oriented to God's presence no matter the present situation.

*"We Know Where We Are, We Know Who We Are"*

In concluding this article, it is helpful to reflect on a song written by Lin-Manuel Miranda for the Disney film *Moana*. The film is a celebration of Polynesian culture and draws on the connection between identity, orientation, and Polynesian navigation. The song's chorus says "We read the wind and the sky when the sun

33. We should note that this cycle is predicated on a relationship between the preacher and God. Michael Knowles, in his work *Of Seeds and the People of God*, explores the necessity of God's action in this cycle. For Knowles, all testimonies are possible "because they are first initiated and shaped by the divine testimony that precedes them, then corroborated and brought to completion by the divine testimony that ensues." (Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 5, para. 42, location 4577) Knowles rightly emphasizes God's self-disclosure. As such, the experience of God and testimony of that experience that the preacher presents require God's action and the preacher's attentiveness to that action.

is high. We sail the length of the sea on the ocean breeze. At night we name every star. We know where we are. We know who we are, who we are”<sup>34</sup> The prevailing wisdom of these lyrics is that regardless of the context, a sunny day or a darkened night, if we are willing to be aware, there are signs that can help orient us. To say it another way, no matter the circumstances if a navigator relies on their correlative relationship with nature they can find direction.

The same is true of life and ministry. The church, regardless of context, relies on its relationship with God to set the course, to define its identity, and to find direction. It is a correlative coexistence. The practices of the church, like preaching, emphasise this relationship and bring it into focus so that the markers of God’s grace and action in the world are given their due attention. Thus, we can call preachers navigators because they rely on this correlative relationship to direct their work, draw the church into remembrance, and inspire the church in anticipation.

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