

# The Art of Preaching

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**Rev. Dr. Phil Huebner**  
WELS Worship Conference  
2024

# Short Bio

- Becky, Noah (17), Gwen (14)
- Christ the King, Palm Coast ('07-'16)
- WLHS Campus Pastor (2016-Present)
- '99 WLHS, '03 MLC, '07 WLS
- '11 WLS, '19 CTS-FW





# Shaping this presentation . . .

- The privilege of preaching hundreds of times
- Listening to thousands of sermons and chapels
- 5 continuing education classes on preaching:
  - *Freshness & Variety in Law & Gospel Preaching* (WLS)
  - *Preaching in a Postmodern World* (WLS)
  - *Preaching Sanctification* (WLS)
  - *Writing for the Ear* (WLS)
  - *Liturgical Preaching and Teaching* (CTS)

# **Part 1: Sermon Basics**

# The Sermon - The Goal



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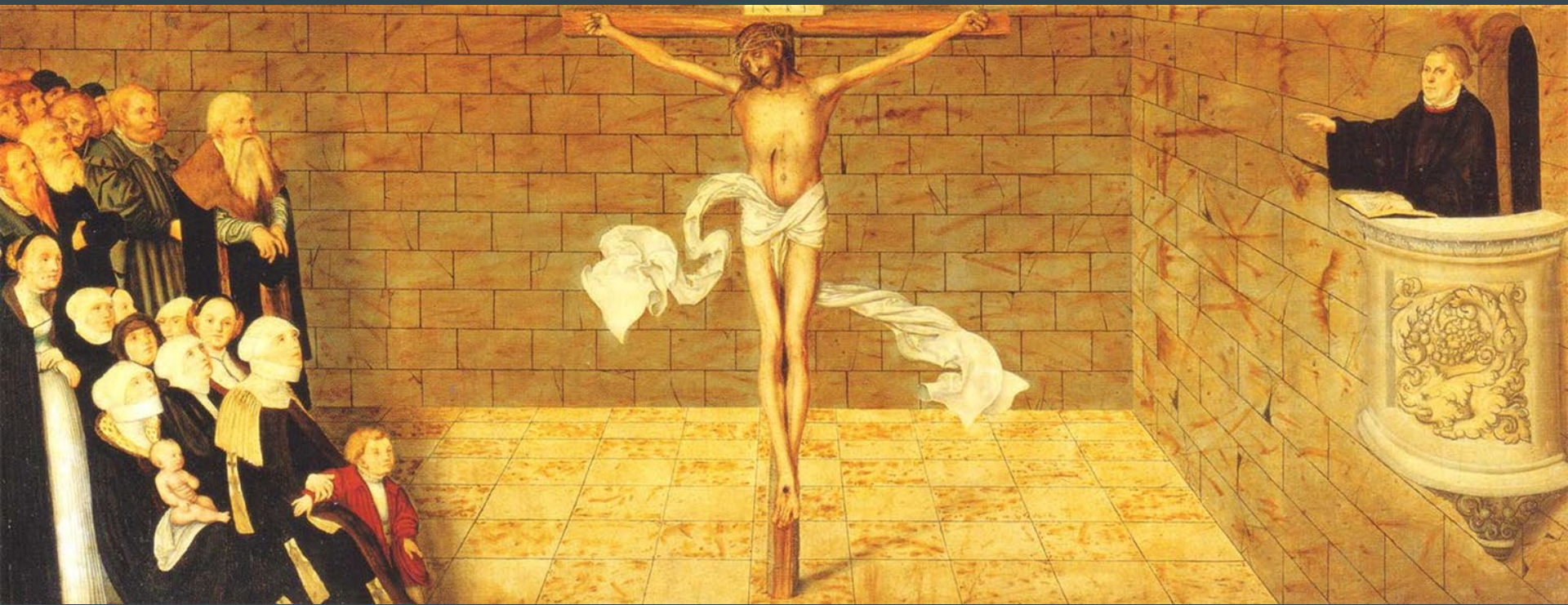
Mark 16:15 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει.











# The Sermon - The Law

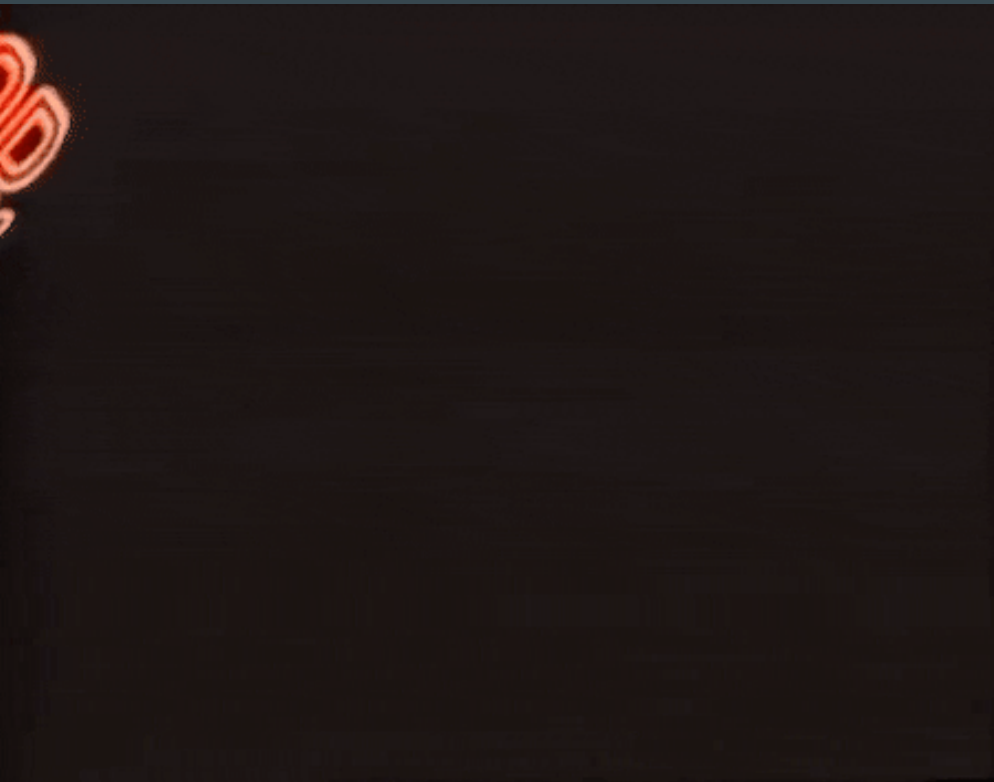


# The Sermon - The Law

In such a way the law is just like a beater who drives the hungry to Christ so that Christ might fill them with his good things. Therefore the proper office of the law is to make us guilty, humble us, kill us, bring us to hell and take everything away from us; but for the purpose that in this way we become righteous, are saved, are made alive, are brought to heaven and obtain everything. Therefore it does not simply kill, but it kills to make alive.

*Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians*

# The Sermon - The Gospel



# The Sermon - The Gospel

Everything that comforts, that offers God's favor and grace to transgressors of the Law, is, and is properly called, the Gospel. It is a good and joyful message that God will not punish sins, but will forgive them for Christ's sake.

*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article V*

But the Gospel is properly the kind of teaching that shows what a person who has not kept the Law (and therefore is condemned by it) is to believe. It teaches that Christ has paid for and made satisfaction for all sins [Romans 5:9]. Christ has gained and acquired for an individual—without any of his own merit—forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life [Romans 5:10].

*Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article V*



# The Sermon - The Challenge



**IT AIN'T EASY.**

# The Sermon - The Challenge

The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is the highest and most difficult art.

*C.F.W. Walther*

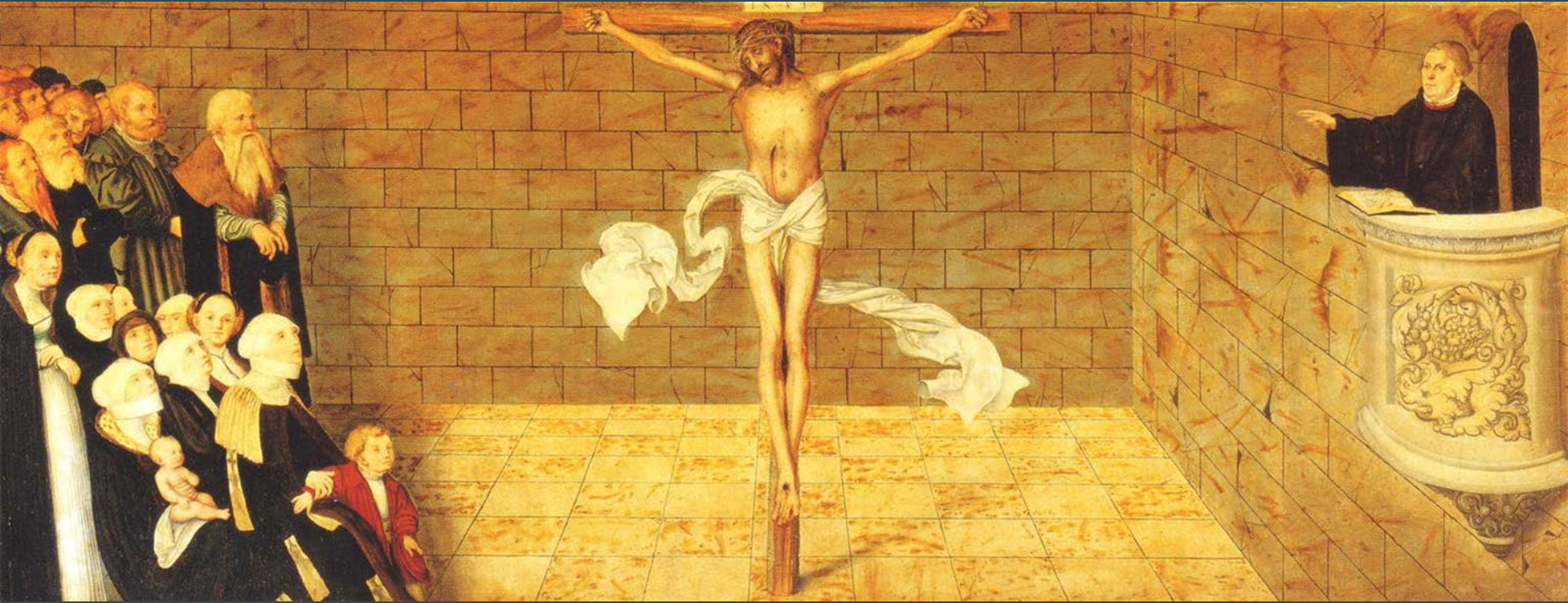


# The Sermon - The Challenge

This distinction between law and gospel is the highest art in Christendom, and whoever claims or takes for himself the name Christian should understand and know it. For where something is lacking at this point of doctrine, there one cannot tell a Christian from a pagan or a Jew, so much depends on this distinction . . . there neither law nor gospel can be understood and consciences must be lost in blindness and error . . . Therefore no one can mix the two together or mistake one for the other without falsifying doctrine. . . . Therefore whoever knows the art of distinguishing law from gospel well, set him on top and name him a Doctor of Holy Scripture. For without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to arrive at this distinction. I experience for myself, and see daily in others, how hard it is to distinguish the doctrines of law and gospel from each other. Here the Holy Spirit must be master and teacher, or there would be no one on earth who could learn or teach. . . . For if the gospel is not clearly distinguished from the law, Christian doctrine cannot be kept free from error.

*Martin Luther, Sermon on Galatians 3:23-24, WA IX:412f*

# *Christus pro nobis*



# **Part 2: Sermon Preparation**

# Thoughts on Sermon Preparation

- Living the context
  - *What's the season or time of year?*
  - *What's the theme of the day?*
  - *What's the vibe?*
- A text that connects - with you and the people
- Living in the text
- Studying the text
- Researching the text
- Writing and memorizing

# Thoughts on Sermon Preparation

- Questions to ponder about the text:
  - *When were these words said/written?*
  - *Why were they said/written?*
  - *What was it like to be the author in that moment?*
  - *What was it like to be the audience in that moment?*
  - *What was the intended affect and effect?*

# Thoughts on Sermon Preparation

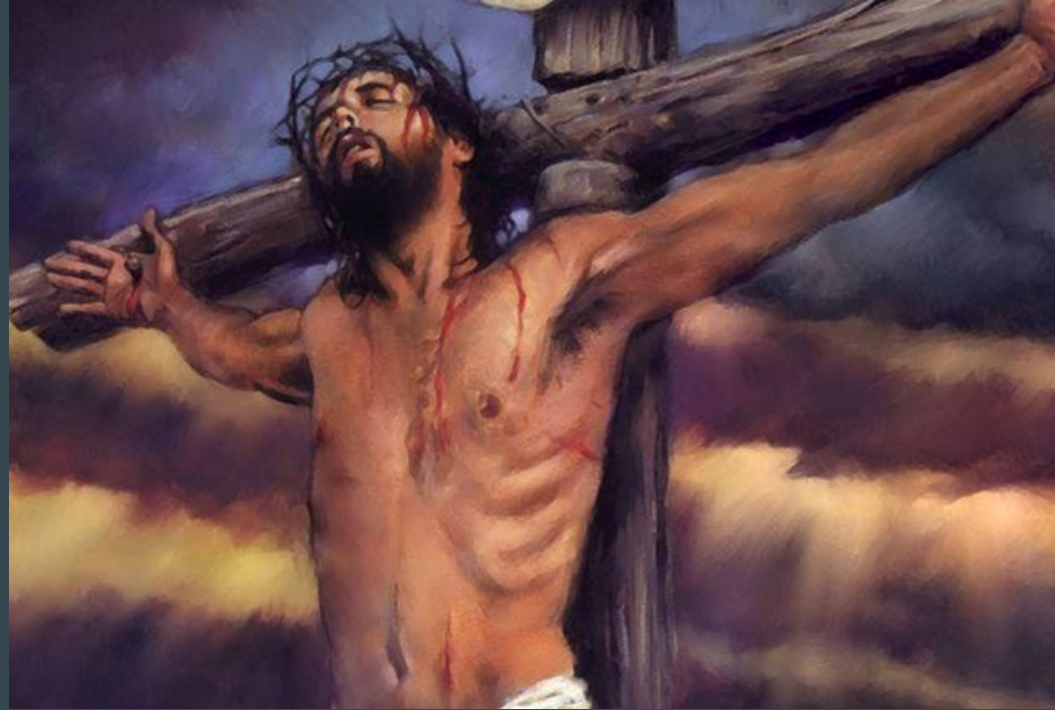
- Key textual questions:
  - *What is the very specific Law?*
  - *What is the very specific Gospel?*
  - *What is the specific application of sanctification?*
  - *What's the point?*

# Sermon Preparation: The Law





# Sermon Preparation: The Gospel



# Sermon Preparation: Sanctification



# **Part 3: Sermon Improvement**

# Top Sermon Problems

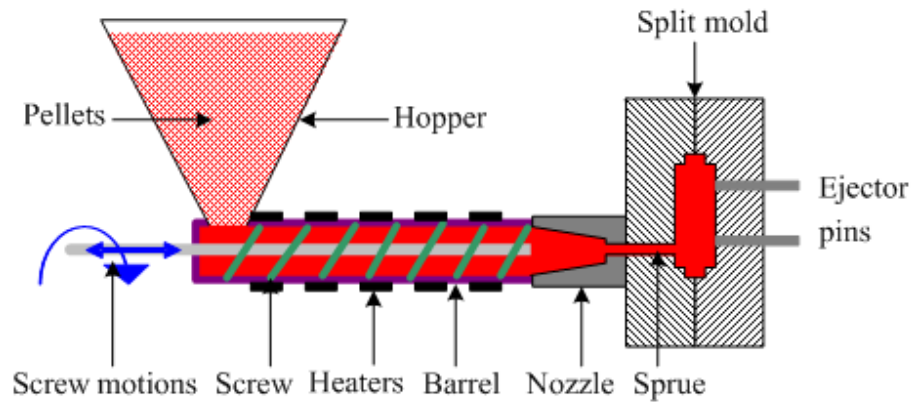
- Same old, same old, every single time
- Generalized or generic Law . . . or . . . no Law
- Picking out pet sins and harping on them out of place
- Talking *about* the Gospel
- Trite Gospel
- Pulpit as a personality showcase
- ZERO heart
- No textual color

# Watch Out!

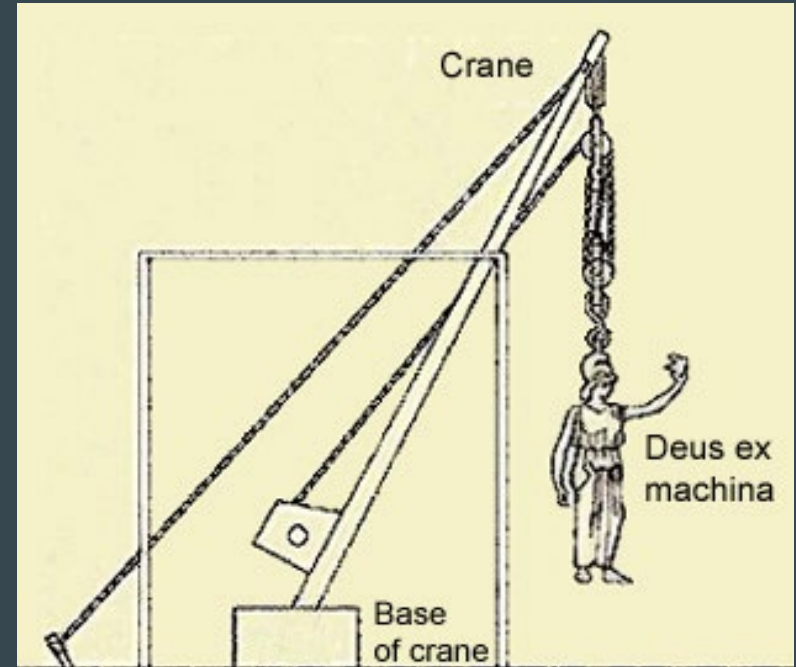
- *Opinio legis*
  - Do we minimize the role this plays in everything?
- **Minimizing sin**
  - Do we assume people know their sin and its danger?
- **Conditional gospel - attaching an “if”**
  - Do we unintentionally attach conditions to the Gospel?
- **Legalism**
  - Do we use the Law to elicit change without the Gospel?
- **Moralism**
  - Do we use the Gospel to create only outward change?

# Watch Out!

## Injection Molding



[www.substech.com](http://www.substech.com)



**Example Text: Luke 5:1-11**



1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

# Advice from: *Freshness and Variety* class

- Gospel puree/mush or Gospel 7 course meal?
- Gospel problems:
  - Cognitive info Gospel
  - 6 hour salvation Gospel
  - Rush to relevance Gospel
  - No-vacancy Gospel
- How can your sermon be colored by the text?

# Advice from: *Freshness and Variety* class

- Walk the Lutheran Middle with preaching the Law

## **Hardened Unbelievers**

Have no care for the Law

## **Self-Righteous Saints**

Feel no need for the Law

# Advice from: *Writing for the Ear* class

- St. Augustine said that in preaching our goal is to:
  - Teach
  - Delight
  - Move
- Think of the great variety of scriptural styles!
  - Psalms, doxologies, parables, rhetoric, narratives, exhortations, and more!

# Advice from: *Writing for the Ear* class

- How important to find the balance between the 2-Fold working of the Word!

## Psychological Working of the Word

God's Word touches:

- Emotion
- Intellect
- Will

## Supernatural Working of the Word

God the Holy Spirit works through the Word when and where he will.

### **WATCH OUT!**

The efficacy of preaching doesn't depend on me!

### **WATCH OUT!**

We dare not be careless preachers who forget God has sent and uses us.

# Advice from: *Writing for the Ear* class

- A wonderful summary to remember . . .
  - “We use **1st Article gifts** to proclaim **2nd Article truths** having **3rd Article confidence.**”

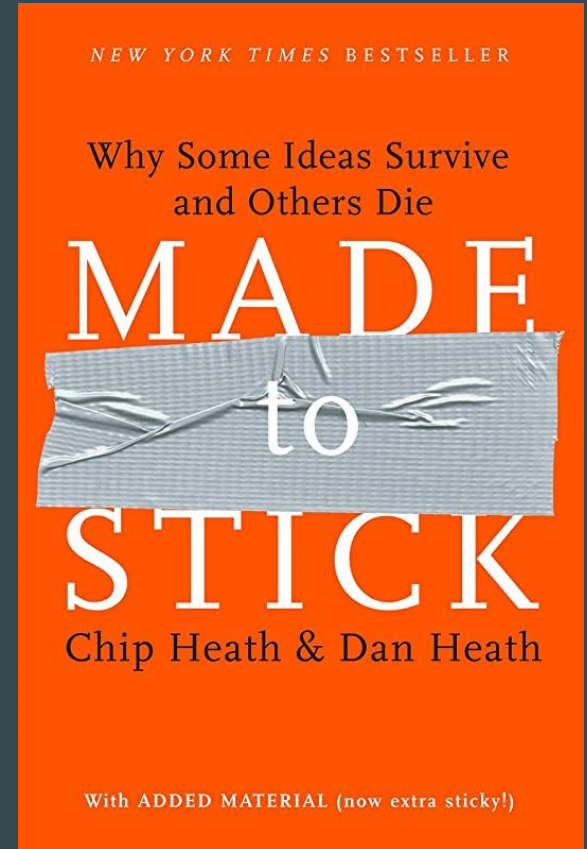
# Advice from: *Writing for the Ear* class

- Other reminders
  - This is not dogmatics class!
  - How clearly are you communicating?
  - How much fluff is in your sermon?
  - Paint pictures for the people!
  - FOCUS and KEEP IT SIMPLE



# Advice from: *Writing for the Ear* class

- Made to Stick Messages:
  - Simple
  - Unexpected
  - Be concrete
  - Credibility
  - Emotion / Heart
  - Stories



# Advice from: *Preaching Sanctification* class

- Wrestle with the fine balance of the *simul*



# Advice from: *Preaching Sanctification* class

- Walk the Lutheran Middle with the Law

## **Antinomian Attitude**

We are either sin-tolerant or we are such prodigals that we don't need the Law.

## **Legalistic Pride**

We are Pharisees who are so righteous that we don't need the Law.

# Advice from: *Preaching in a Postmodern World* class

- Walk the Lutheran Middle with culture

## Isolation from Culture

We ignore everything going on around us and stay in our bubble and our “Lutheran lane.”

## Compromise with Culture

We only talk about the culture, we preach more about the culture than Christ.

# Advice from: *Preaching in a Postmodern World* class

- Things to consider in a Postmodern World
  - Your vocabulary
  - Thinking about Worldview
  - Biblical illiteracy
  - The concept of identity
  - The value of community
  - Meaning/purpose in life
  - Emphasis and clarity on truth
  - Be real / authentic
  - Inductive thinking and sermons have value

# Advice from: *Liturgical Preaching* class

- Are you and your sermon really that special?
- How do your hymns connect with your preaching?
- Do you ever connect elements of worship in preaching?
- Take them to the Font!
- Take them to the Altar!

# Top Sermon Improvement Tips

- Take a class!
- Watch good preachers!
- Read! (Paustian, Deutschlander, and CS Lewis!)
- Soak up the Word in your heart and let it spill over
- Deliver with *your* personality throughout (not just in introductions)
- Deliver with passion
- Please memorize your sermon. Please.
- Don't let anyone guess if it was focused on Christ

# **Part 4: Sermon Resources**



# Sermon Resources

- The Preachers Podcast
- *Foundations*

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Why Some Ideas Survive  
and Others Die

# MADE to STICK

Chip Heath & Dan Heath

With ADDED MATERIAL (now extra sticky!)

FOR PASTORS AND LAY LEADERS

Just  
Say  
the Word!

Writing  
for the Ear

G. ROBERT JACKS



# OUR WORTH TO HIM

DEVOTIONS FOR  
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP



# ON GIVING ADVICE TO GOD

DEVOTIONS  
ON THE  
WISDOM OF GOD  
AND THE  
FOOLISHNESS OF MAN

Part 1

DANIEL M. DEUTSCHLANDER

# Useful Articles

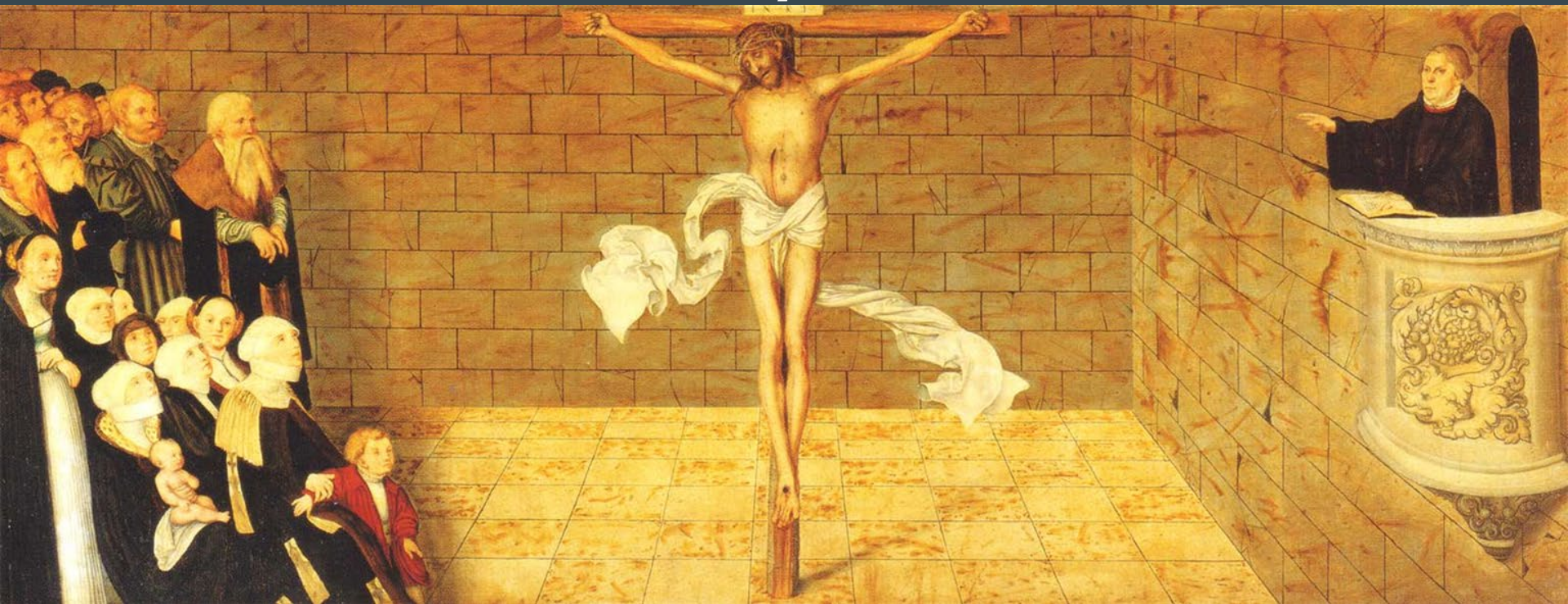
- *Driving Safely Down Sanctification Avenue*
- *Open Eyes to the Divine Glory of Being God's Masks*
- *Using Law and Gospel Pairs*
- *Talking About vs. Proclaiming Law & Gospel*
- *Some Warning Signs of Antinomianism and Legalism*
- *Where are You Standing in the Text?*
- *Samples of Inductive and Narrative Sermons*

# The Gospel for Those Broken By the Church: A Lecture Against Morality by Rod Rosenblatt





# *Christus pro nobis*



*1 Corinthians 1:23-24 But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

# Discussion/Questions

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