

진실로 너희에게 이르노니 너희
중에 두 사람이 땅에서
합심하여 무엇이든 구하면
하늘
저희를
두 세
곳에는 나도 그들 중에
있느니라.

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마태복음 Matthew 18: 19-20

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (NRSV)

*Journal of Korean American
Ministries & Theology*

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Beautiful Preaching in the Korean-American Context: Communicating in Non-Verbal Languages

Paul Junggap Huh

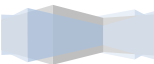
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Introduction

For about a full year I was in great distress going through orthodontic surgery and treatment in Seoul, Korea. The work involved a major change in the most important part of the body which I use for delivering sermons. However, I couldn't stop to take any break from my weekly preaching assignment. And the treatment was a painful experience, painful just eating and talking, let alone preaching in public. Preaching in these circumstances was such a difficult challenge that it prompted me to engage in a new and completely different method of sermon preparation, one which I had to learn from scratch.

Learning to speak with metal braces attached to the roof of my mouth was like learning how to walk all over again after a traumatic accident. The wires and metal pieces attached to the teeth caused great pain each time I moved my tongue or jaws. Soon the physical pain was gone; however, a different kind of pain remained to bother me, and I discovered that my speech pattern with the added hardware in my mouth prohibited the free movement of my tongue muscle.

Eventually, these painful orthodontic procedures prompted me to discover the world of non-verbal communications — using body language such as gestures, symbols, and facial expressions to communicate. Because of the limitations of oral communications, especially in the bilingual setting of Korean-American churches, I had to look for help in learning how to depend on non-verbal communications. And this research started with the question of what do we value the most as in the Korean-American church context in terms of preaching the Word on Sunday from the pulpit.



Beautiful Preaching

I want to begin my thesis by focusing primarily on the ‘beauty’ of the word preached in worship. When we talk about preaching in worship, the criteria of success and excellence are often based on the transmission of information and the formation of disciples. Does the sermon speak truth? Or does the sermon demonstrate goodness? However, do we ever ask whether a sermon has uncovered something beautiful? By ‘beautiful’ I mean something more than the familiar aesthetic criteria.

A biblical image of beautiful preaching is found in Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” This passage from Isaiah is also quoted in Romans 10:15, “As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The Bible often speaks of beautiful women and the beauty of nature; however, the Korean pulpit is often occupied by men and our ability to see them is often obscured by gigantic furniture that hides their body movements. Being able to see the entire body of a preacher, including his or her feet, is not just a symbolic interpretation. Mary Eunjoo Kim at Iliff School of Theology proposes that women were the first Christian preachers; they preached with their bodies running to tell the good news of Jesus’ resurrection (Mark 16:1-8).¹ Matthew 28:8 tells us that the women ran to the disciples to testify about what they saw. And Peter’s dash to the tomb’s emptiness is described in Luke 24:12. I am envisioning a preacher who is soaked with sweat from running, trying to catch his or her breath, and telling the good news with the entire body trembling with the emotion of the message. That is beautiful preaching to me!

No matter how difficult or painful it may be, when a person preaches with her or his body, we have a chance to see the message’s beauty coming through. I have experienced this when I saw both feet of an organist busily making the pedal movements for Bach’s prelude on organ. I have witnessed beautiful preaching in testimonies of Korean Americans living here in United States about crossing cultural boundaries. ‘Crossing a boundary’ in this instance means preaching in English as a second language. Leaving one’s familiar ground to journey into an unknown and uncertain area is what we mean by crossing the boundaries.

When we cross liminal space into unfamiliar ground, we can only depend on our body to speak what is in our heart. When Korean immigrants cross the mountains and oceans to bring peace and good news to the land of North America, their feet and bodies will be beautiful. This form of preaching certainly opens up a new opportunity for Korean-Americans to engage in faithful preaching of the Word of God.

Contemporary Homiletics in North America

Postmodern contemporary preaching in North America also supports various ways of crossing boundaries to be more relational in our preaching. “Conversational preaching” is used in collaboration with “emergent” theology by John McClure in his ‘Roundtable Pulpit’ preaching.² Ralph Clingan introduces “Action Preaching” as a preaching method for postmodern society.³ I have collaborated with Dr. Clingan on his numerous visits to Korea in the past 5 years and learned many techniques to use physical action in preaching and worship to cross cultural and lingual boundaries.

In this age of multicultural societies, in which verbal languages present limitations to communication, non-verbal language can achieve more than verbal language is able to accomplish. Worship also can be defined as a bodily response made by those who serve God. Similarly, James F. White’s definition of worship is that we speak, hear, and touch in the name of God. The spoken and proclaimed ‘Word’ comes to us as a ‘visible Word.’ The Word who is Jesus Christ (John 1:1) comes to us in many different ways—in symbols, signs, images, music, and arts. All these non-verbal languages embody the Word in flesh and present fresh ways to communicate the beauty of God’s divine mystery. The total picture of embodied Word in time, space, music, bodily gestures, and non-verbal languages helps us to participate in the divine mystery of God’s living Word.

During his visit to Seoul, Korea in 2007, Chuck Campbell lectured on “Wild Diversity” borrowing Richard Eslinger’s *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method*. He suggested employing new methods to communicate in preaching. Conversation and collaboration are encouraged to bring about fuller participation by the ‘hearers’ in non-verbal actions embodying the Word. Don Saliers also supports many forms of art in worship to enable

‘listening with eyes’ and ‘seeing with ears’—employing imagination and creativity in liturgy during his visits to Korea in 2007.

Minister of Word and Sacrament

The Word and Sacrament of God in preaching and worship are the call to ministry for all Korean-American churches. God uses our human language to speak to us, using words that we can hear and understand. God’s words reveal God’s presence and communicate his communion, the divine fellowship, ‘koinonia,’ with us.

Beautiful preaching in the Korean-American context may come when we share our feelings and actions in response to the word of God. The highest form of beauty in worship is reconciliation with God and with one another. Tears and smiles express the pain and joy that the Word moves us beyond our imagination. The message of forgiveness and peace is beautiful preaching. The bread and wine shared in the broken body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ invites us to this beautiful reconciliation of God, humanity, and creation.

Koreans seek to reconcile one generation with another, North and South which have been separated since 1950, other races, and the unnecessary tension between each that develops as a result of a male-dominated, hierarchical society. Theologically conservative Korean churches and Christians seek to reconcile with non-Christians to initiate community relationship. And that constitutes beautiful preaching of the Word of God.

Kinesics

The study of body movement and facial expressions is called Kinesics.⁴ Hand motions and eye movements are in this category which can be utilized to tell a congregation how the preacher is feeling as he or she is speaking. Preaching is not only communicating logic and emotion; it is also leading people to imagine the Word of God in order to think, feel, respond, and react together as community.

Korean preachers need to keep in mind that what we preach must match how we preach in tone, volume, intensity, and phrasing. A preacher’s ‘presence’ does not begin solely with the person’s voice; it also includes the body. Breathing deeply and exuding confidence to embrace every living soul in loving ways will capture the heart of his or her listeners, engaging them in

the beauty of God's embodied word. A body of 'presence' that moves and shapes a community of believers is a beautiful witness to the Word of God.

Musical Interlude

'Vibration' is an important expression in music to be communicated in performance art. In Korean vibration in 'Chang' style music, the musician shakes the whole body to make the appropriate vibration with the performance and calls, 농현(弄鉉), the vibrato. The body shakes as the 'Spirit' shakes the preacher to use his or her entire body. Afro-American preachers also make a 'humming' sound as part of their preaching, relating the sound of their voices and 'resonance.'

Musical interludes help us to identify the beauty of God's proclaimed word in rhythmic and melodic pattern of dynamic preaching. Fear and trembling may come in many different forms and shapes. In preaching, the preacher's body may tremble to reflect the movement of the Holy Spirit working to bring changes in the air.

Performative Aesthetical Task



Figure 1, Saint John the Baptist by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) 1878, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The naked body of Rodin's *John the Baptist* bronze statue captures our attention and imagination. This sculpted body of a healthy man with a finger pointing upward reminds us of 'ecce homo' (behold the man, John 1:29), a voice crying out in the wilderness. All his body and energy are focused on his mouth and the tip of the finger. The full movement of the preacher in body, mind, and spirit are dramatically captured by the artist's work. The beauty is in giving everything to indicate and witnessing who Jesus is.

The word 'beauty' in Chinese is 美(羊+大). It means a big sheep. So, beauty is depicted as a sizable carcass of meat, which is shared by the entire community in times of scarcity of food. The word 'beauty' is used to describe our country, America, the beautiful. Life in America is reflected in sharing our resources in the abundance of God's grace and gift of life. Once again, beautiful preaching is deliberately crossing the mountain, the boundaries of our cultural, racial, sexual, and socio-economic divisions in our life to bring good news to all.

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Abstract

Title: Beautiful Preaching in the Korean-American Context: Communicating in Non-Verbal Languages

Paul Junggap Huh

When preaching is only evaluated based on doctrinal (truth) and ethical (goodness) criteria, it misses the sacredness presented on aesthetical (beauty) grounds. The beautiful feet of those who bring the good news in Isaiah (52:7) and in Romans (10:15) represent the importance of crossing boundaries in preaching. The boundaries of theology, culture, and verbal languages erect limitations and barriers, communicating in non-verbal languages can help a preacher journey into the mountains to bring the good news to those who live on the other side.

In this study, contemporary homiletics in North America are discussed quoting Mary Eunjoo Kim, Chuck Campbell, and John McClure. And Don Saliers and James F. White are included in conversation about liturgical importance in homiletical development.

The study deals with performative aesthetical tasks including musical interlude, visual arts, kinesics, paralanguage, proxemics, and other non-verbal communications. Also this study attempts to include Korean cultural adaptations with respect to applying gestures and subtle communication skills in storytelling methodology. Preaching is a beautiful act when the preacher's body is used fully in accordance with what is preached.

Key Words: Korean preaching, aesthetic, kinesics, non-verbal communication, liturgical preaching

¹ Mary Eunjoo Kim, *Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 28.

² John McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995)

³ Ralph Clingan, *Action Preaching*, (Korea: Preaching Academy, 2005)

⁴ See Abne M. Eisenberg and Ralph R. Smith, Jr., *Nonverbal Communication* (New York: Bobs-Merrill, 1971); Mark L. Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972).

