

**THE CONTEXT OF PREACHING IN 21ST CENTURY AFRICA:
IMPLICATIONS FOR PREACHERS
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ABSTRACT

This paper conducted a prognosis of the context of preaching in the 21st century Africa by first, doing a historical overview of preaching, underlining the various issues preaching had, had to deal with historically. The paper considered the nature of 21st century Africa, highlighting the influence of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism on present day Africa. The paper drew important implications for preachers in the African context, concluding that preachers who are involved in preaching on the African continent think of the sermonic climate in Africa and therefore emphasize discipleship in their message, preach the right theology of prosperity, model their message and preach expository sermons as these are the consequences of the context of preaching in 21st century Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The African continent has evolved over centuries. There appears to be gravitation toward a more technologically thriving Africa. The dividend of this paradigm shift does not come without its price. The economic, political, social, and religious landscape of the continent bears the mark of post modernistic transformation. Complex homiletical issues have been raised in the twenty first century and many have questioned the viability of preaching as a means of communicating God's word. Several suggestions have been put forward with regards to whether other means of communication can be used in replacement for preaching. The contemporary sermonic climate is rigged with homiletic dynamites that tend to work contrary to congregational persuasion. Divergent authors recommend different means and methods to curb the increasing negative persuasions against preaching that continues to pervade the preaching atmosphere of the twenty first century.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his discussion of the primacy of preaching stated that preaching is the furthestmost imperative of the church². This statement made almost five decades ago still forms an existential reality for today's church. David Larsen alleged that there is the view in some quarters that the days when the church was moved by the persuasiveness of its frontrunners are now relics.³ Larsen's observation accentuates the idea that preaching in the 21st century has antagonists. The changing world breeds changing attitudes, politically, economically and of most concern to this paper socially. The questions that arise from all the above arguments therefore are what is the nature of preaching required for these changing times? How did the generation before handle the change in their generation? And how can the current generation of preachers become effective in a context such as contemporary Africa? These are the pertinent questions this paper intends to answer.

The essence of this paper is to do a diagnosis of the sermonic climate of Africa in the 21st century, and to draw implications for preaching in the African context; the paper will therefore consider preaching: yesterday and today, characteristics of 21st century Africa, and implications for preachers in the African context.

Preaching: Yesterday and Today

Preaching as constantly been central to church tradition, other religions may have something analogous to

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²D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 9.

³David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 11

preaching in their worship convention, but for the Christian faith preaching is primary to worship.⁴ The convention in most Christian traditions is that preaching features in most gathering of the saints. Preaching's evolution was not an experimentation of communication theories by the Church. The sermon should not be viewed as a fortuitous historical incident as it is believed to have its origin in God. Albert Mohlar insists that preaching is a charge, a responsible theology of preaching seats in the humble admittance that preaching is not an anthropological discovery, but a central part of God's purpose for his church.⁵

Preaching is one of the obvious continuities between the Old and the New Testament. Liam Goligher argues that biblical proclamation has been since the world began. Goligher suggests that Abel and Noah can be said to be prophets of God. This idea of Noah been a prophet is rooted in the idea that Noah was referred to as the "preacher of righteousness" during the flood.⁶ Goligher suggests that the first time the term 'prophet' was used in the Old Testament it was used in reference to Abraham. Goligher suggests that these individuals mentioned above had the responsibility of passing God's word as communicated to them to their families. These men could therefore be referred to as preachers for their families.⁷

The Old Testament prophets can be regarded as precursors of modern day preaching. Their kind of preaching may not have had the same morphology with modern day proclamation; it was the declaration of the word of God. Old Testament prophets were not fortune tellers or soothsayers as many believe them to be mere foretellers of Israel's destiny. Though the prophets often pointed towards future events, the message of the prophets also triggered the recollection of what God had done before as much as they anticipated what God was going to do.⁸ The context within which the prophets preached was a society where to a great extent the word of God had authority. The prophets whose accounts are in the Old Testament were speaking in a context of significant public endorsement.⁹ A larger part of society accepted the prophets as speaking the word of God as sent from God. Prophets were revered and most of them had direct access to the kings of their time.

The development of the synagogues during the inter-testamental period adds to the profound foundation of preaching. Sermons were delivered in the synagogue, particularly on Sabbaths and during other festivals, from early rabbinic times. It appears that the later Midrashim had their origin in sermons, though the Midrashim themselves bear all the marks of literary productions in their own right.¹⁰ The Jews during this period though under foreign powers were still religious and looked to God as their law giver. The laws of scriptures still constituted the societal laws and traditions. The New Testament times give rise to other forms of preaching other than the prophetic and rabbinic preaching.

Larsen concludes that John the Baptist is most clearly the forebear of all gospel preachers.¹¹ This conclusion is centred on the idea that John the Baptist was sent by God as contemporary gospel ministers are expected to be called and sent by God. He further argues that since John the Baptist was not the light but sent to bear witness of the light as recorded in John 1:8 he qualifies as the progenitor of all those whose preaching are Christocentric.¹² Corroborating Larsen, Goligher argues that John the Baptist can be referred to as the primary preacher of the New Testament.¹³ Another Prominent preacher in the New Testament was Jesus Christ himself. Goligher suggests that Jesus Christ should be considered a model of the preaching ministry.¹⁴ There may be no complete portion of the discourse of Christ available in contemporary times; there are however, forty eight messages in the New Testament that may be pointers to the structure,

⁴ David L. Larsen, 12.

⁵R. Albert Mohler Jr, "A Theology of Preaching" in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*. Michael Duduit. ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman publishers, 1992), 13.

⁶ Liam Goligher, "The Place of Preaching in Church History" in *Preach the Word: The Call and Challenge of Preaching Today*. Greg Haslam. ed (Lancaster: International Biblical Teaching Books, 2006), 53.

⁷Goligher, 53

⁸ Thomas G. Long, "Preaching in The Prophets" in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, Michael Duduit. ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman publishers, 1992),306-307

⁹Long, Preaching in *Prophets*, 307

¹⁰Louis Jacob, "Sermon in the Synagogue: Rabbinic Sermonizing Has A Long History in Judaism"

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-synagogue-sermon/>

¹¹Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 15.

¹² Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching* 15-16

¹³Goligher, *The Place of Preaching in Church History*, 54

¹⁴Goligher, *The Place of Preaching in Church History*, 54

approach and method of the Lord Jesus Christ in relation to his sermons.¹⁵

James Stitzinger explains that the form of biblical preaching can be summarized into two basic forms which are revelatory preaching and explanatory preaching. Exemplifying is thesis of revelatory preaching, Stitzinger sights the farewell speech of Moses located in Deuteronomy 31-33, the farewell speech of Joshua located in Joshua 23:2-16 and 24:2-27 as logically, rhetorically, dialogically, historically, and passionately delivered revelation.¹⁶ Stitzinger points to the poems of David and Solomon as examples of explanatory and revelatory preaching. David produced many Psalms that address the revelation of the nature of God; the work of “the Preacher” in Ecclesiastics according to Stitzinger is good example of explanatory preaching through poetry. Stitzinger however, concludes that none of these can be compared to the preaching of the prophets that dealt most particularly in preaching and explaining revelation.¹⁷

The above arguments form the basis for the primacy of preaching in the early church, and among the early church fathers. John of Antioch is a typical example of one who built on the legacy of the prophets and the apostles. Chrysostom as he is most fondly remembered by history is one of the first great preachers of the Christian church. The sermons of John of Antioch were mostly homilies with simple structures which followed a specific scriptural passage meticulously.¹⁸ Corroborating the above, Stitzinger quoting Philip Schaff opines that Chrysostom was largely and rightly considered the utmost clergy orator of the Greek Church. Chrysostom is regarded greater in his preaching than any of the Latin fathers, in fact Philip Schaff considers John of Antioch the best example for contemporary preachers.¹⁹ During this era, other preachers like Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine of Hypo took centre stage in the circle of great preaching before seven years of decline. The early preachers had a formidable task. Their sermons dealt with morality, doctrine, politics and pastoral care. They had to also play other functions like apologetics, and polemicists; among preacher/theologians who shaped the doctrine of the church through their preaching and teaching are Tertullian, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome. These preachers /theologians addressed and expanded on questions touched, but scriptures did not elaborate.

This context had issues that preaching had to deal with. Preaching in that context had to contest with controversies, addressing crises, and articulating beliefs. Reading the preachers of the early church reveals the timelessness of the Christian struggle against heresy and false doctrines.²⁰ The church fathers were not also free from certain homiletical anomalies of their own day. Augustine for instance was known for his allegorical interpretation of scripture. This system of interpretation made Augustine susceptible to error, and wrong interpretations.²¹ In the light of the above, some authors have considered Augustine as a bad example for preaching. Preaching in the post-apostolic era had to battle with the spread of traditional rhetoric which took centre stage in communication.

The middle ages took a different twist to preaching. This period was time when the leaders of the church were accused of ecclesiastical corruption and there was much distrust for the clergy. The rise of the return to apostolic poverty “vita apostolica” took centre stage. This period witnessed a lot of emphasis on piety, believers were force to visit the holy land not only as acts of devotion to God but also penance of confessed sinners.²² This ‘vita apostolica’ was viewed as the way of following the example of Christ and the Apostles. There was the call to voluntary poverty and as a proof of true Christian faith.²³ During this period a large number of new monastic movements evolved, that taught high level piety and Christian poverty. Preachers of this period had to battle with the heretical teachings of the Cathars who taught baptism by laying of hands, the Cathars also thought that God had two son of Christ was only one of them. The

¹⁵Larsen, 16

¹⁶James Stitzinger, “The History of Expository Preaching” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* Vol. 3(1) spring 1992:7

¹⁷Ibid, 8

¹⁸Duduit, 12

¹⁹Stitzinger, 15

²⁰Bill J. Leonard, “Preaching in Historical Perspective” *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, Michael Duduit; ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman publishers, 1992),21-23

²¹ Brian Renshaw, *Augustine: Allegory and The Good Samaritan*. <https://brianrenshaw.com/2015/10/02/augustine-allegory-samaritan/>

²² Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W Lotz, and Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Christian Church 4th edition* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), 283.

²³Walker, Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 291

Waldensians founded by Valdes of Lyon constituted another heretical group that preaching in the middle ages had to address.²⁴

Despite the foregoing, it is important to mention however that most authors agree on the decline of preaching in the middle ages. There appears to be a general consensus on the irregularity of sermonic communication in the middle ages. R. Emmet McLaughlin suggests that the early Middle Ages specifically, constituted an inhospitable ecology for preaching.²⁵ McLaughlin however warns that the seeming failure of preaching in the early middle should be considered some worth of a blessing instead of a complete failure, he writes:

The early Middle Ages was a true dark age that lay sandwiched in between the glory of the ancient Church and the gaudy splendor of the late medieval one. And it would be hard not to see this as further evidence of the intellectual and spiritual decline of a society whose material existence itself was unsecured. The Church in such a view must surely be seen as striving mightily against the barbarism and decay, against the educational gaps and ministerial failings which threatened to thwart its very purpose and destiny. The dearth of preaching, to follow through on the reasoning, was but one more sign of the deviation of a much-put-upon early medieval Church from more authentic forms of Christianity. One might conclude that it was a case of the Church's reach exceeding its grasp. On the surface there is much to support that bleak view. But such an understanding of the matter, I would argue, badly misconstrues the reality not only of the early Middle Ages, but also of the ancient Church. It views the past through the prism of later developments. Specifically, it is the product of late medieval tendencies in the Church and general culture which helped produce the Reformation and shape modern attitudes toward religion: factors like rising literacy, urbanization, the universities, the printing press, the bureaucratization of the Church, and the appearance of the preaching order.²⁶ McLaughlin's argument is simple that preaching in the early Middle Ages should not only be evaluated by its failures but also by the great events that arose from Middle Ages and because of it.

The Reformation produced preachers that dared to swim against the tide. Preachers of this period saw preaching as an eschatological struggle, they placed emphasis on the spiritual needs of hearers as opposed to the common theological treatises of their time. The reformation involved a great revival of preaching. Champions of the reformation like Martin Luther ventured to preach against the ills of the church of their time. For Luther, the text is king; the text was to control the sermon and to be aimed at the heart.²⁷ Another towering preacher of the reformation was John Calvin. Calvin was a brilliant scholar, his sermons were meticulously and carefully prepared through hours of study, and his preaching was free, and spontaneous.²⁸

Characteristics of 21st Century Africa

Evidently, traditional Africa is not the same as contemporary Africa. The rise of secular education has definitely changed the social, political, economic, traditional, religious, and philosophical framework of African societies. Agreeing with the above, Helen Olomu Ishola-Esan noted that there is dissimilarity between pre-modern, modern, and 21st century Africa. Ishola-Esan further asserts that postmodernism sets African societies on edge.²⁹ Jacob Olu Adetolu suggests that all areas of life in Africa have been infiltrated by Euro Western philosophies and ideologies. Adetolu explains that the problems of Africa are closely related to the post-modernistic challenges posed by the spread of Eurocentric ideologies among Africans.³⁰ These views though with opposing counterparts represent the opinion that Africa cannot be adjudged

²⁴Walker, Norris, Lotz, and Handy, *A History of the Christian Church*, 300-309

²⁵ R. Emmet McLaughlin, "The Word Eclipsed? Preaching in the Early Middle Ages" *Traditio* Vol. 49, 1991:78

²⁶R. Emmet McLaughlin, "The Word Eclipsed? Preaching in the Early Middle Ages" *Traditio* Vol. 49, 1991:78

²⁷ Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 19

²⁸Bill J. Leonard, "Preaching in Historical Perspective" 31

²⁹Helen Olomu Ishola-Esan, "Challenges of Post-Modernism to the Christian Religious Education of Youths in Nigeria" *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* Vol. XX (1) 2015: 66.

³⁰Jacob Olu Adetolu, "Religion, Postmodernism and Postmodern Scholarship in Africa" *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* Vol 3(2) 2014: 9

separate from the other parts of the world in terms of philosophical ideologies, technology, human rights, and other existential areas of life. To exclude Africa from postmodernism under the guise that Africa is still grappling with the modern era and not postmodern, basically negate the idea that the world is intertwined and that the world is a global village. The duo of Jimoh Amzat and Oliver Razum explain that the African continent is still grappling with idea of modernism. Africa in their opinion can still be perceived as traditional and may be a distance from what is called postmodernism as only a marginal effect of the wave of postmodernism can be felt in Africa.³¹ While this writer admits that all European postmodern realities are not completely visible in Africa, it is however unrealistic to conclude that they may not be found in tricycles in African societies even on the admittance of Amzat and Razum.

Vernon E. Light however asserts that Africa is a mixture of pre-modern, modern and postmodern communities. Light is convinced that because many African political leaders, Theological educators, and many University lecturers, receive their postgraduate training abroad, there is the tendency to be influenced by postmodern ideologies in the course of those training, and on returning to Africa such individual become catalysts for the spread of Western ideologies in Africa.³² Light further argues that the trio of globalization, world-wide-web, and the internet are the other major means through which traditional African culture and character is being constantly affected.³³ Collaboratively, Thomas Friedman suggests that globalization has taken the place of influence in global affairs. The world has been reduced to a global village. Friedman states that the world has become a global competitive playing field.³⁴ Friedman insists that the “world is flat”. Globalization has placed all men on the same level. The advantages available to the European may be available to the African if he takes advantage of the global village. Globalization has affected almost every area of man’s endeavour.³⁵

Olusegun Olawoyin explicates that though postmodernism can be viewed as possessing Euro-American origin, the influence of globalization as however exported postmodern realities to other parts of the globe including Africa. Olawoyin further explains that Africa may not have participated in the experiences that originated modernism and postmodernism, Africa has however been compelled into the two.³⁶ Momolu Armstrong Massaquoi quoting B.G Ahule explains that the structure of African families in general and Nigerian family value system specifically have been affected by postmodern thought imported from western culture.³⁷ Collaboratively, Emiola Nihinlola suggests that the effects of globalization blown-up by urbanization in Africa have had serious impact on cultural, customary, and symbolic meaning of life in third world countries.³⁸ Nihinlola reiterates that secularism and individualism which were erstwhile foreign to African societies have become vogue due to the influence of urbanization and globalization.³⁹

Aside from post modernization, globalization, urbanization, and industrialization that characterize 21st century Africa, there are other features that can be categorized as negative characteristics of 21st century Africa, some of these are:

Poverty

A discourse on the characteristics of 21st century Africa that neglects the issue of poverty may not be considered as whole in its analysis of Africa. One phenomenon that has had devastating repercussions on the African continent is poverty. The African continent houses 75% of the poorest countries of the world. Approximately 414 million people live in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, an estimated 589 million Africans live without electricity, over 700 million people live their lives without access to clean water in Africa, not less than 20% of African women live without access to education, there is an increase

³¹Jimoh Amzat, Oliver Razum, *Medical Sociology in Africa* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), 180

³² Venon E. Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextual-Relevant Discipleship Model* (Bloomington: Arthouse, 2012), 29

³³Ibid

³⁴Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of The 21st Century* (New York: Picador, 2007), 8

³⁵Ibid

³⁶Olusegun Olawoyin, “God and The World in The Postmodern Age: The Challenge for Nigerian Christian Theologians” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* Vol. 20 (1) 2015, 1.

³⁷Momolu Armstrong Massaquoi, “Postmodernism and Its Impact on the African Family Relationships: A Socio-Biblical Analysis” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* Vol. 20 (1) 2015, 27

³⁸Emiola Nihinlola, *Theology Under the Mango Tree* (Lagos: Fine Print & Manufacturing Limited, 2013), 152.

³⁹Nihinlola, *Theology Under the Mango Tree*. 153

in death rate due to malaria, the global hunger challenger as greater propensity to increase in poor Africa.⁴⁰ The results of poverty in Africa are not hidden, the continent has evidences of the effects of this monster concept that Africa grapples with since are foundation.

The causes of poverty in Africa may be grouped under different classes according Howard White and Tony Killick. White and Killick suggests that the causes of poverty may be classed under social classes which deals specifically with the political, economic, and social causes of poverty, the second class is in relation to the level which address international, national, or household level of poverty, and the third and lasted classification of the causes of poverty in terms of being primary or proximate.⁴¹ The proper understanding of the climate for preaching in 21st century Africa must include the understanding of poverty in Africa, preachers in the 21st African context should be aware of it and take advantage of it.

Terrorism

There is nearly no African country where terrorism is on the rise or being experienced. From whatever perspective terrorism is defined, whether religious, political, or social, terrorism always constitutes problem for the structures of any society.⁴² Contemporary Africa has its share of political and most commonly reported religious terrorism that has constantly placed the continent in a state of emergency. Israel Aboda Oche elucidates that the concept of terrorism is difficult to define because of the various spheres of terrorism.⁴³ Contemporary African landscape is stained with ceaseless bloodshed, continuous loss of property, incessant carnage, bombing, burning of Churches, killing of the innocent masses, religious and political uproar. Terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and recently popular Boko Haram have for many years perpetrated all kinds of evil on the continent of Africa. These destructive elements have painted the African continent red with the blood of many innocent Africans.⁴⁴ This situation forms a part of the climate under which the contemporary African preacher will preach.

Corruption

John Mukum Mbaku argues that corruption has become very pervasive in almost all of African societies. Mbaku proposed that corruption is a result of poverty and a poorly developed institutional arrangement.⁴⁵ Mbaku concludes therefore that corruption is to be understood in its context as “post-institutional opportunism” if Africa is ever to eradicate it.⁴⁶ Peter Anassi argues that the most common definition for corruption is “an inappropriate behaviour or abuse of authority for personal gain by public officials”.⁴⁷ It is not uncommon in Africa for public officers to make requests for bribes before performing functions for which such a public officer was employed. Emmanuel Ugono however mentions specifically certain issues that are causative of corruption in Africa. These issues are: Personal greed, confraternity, decline of personal ethical sensitivity, lack of sense of service when working for government or private organisations, lack of awareness or weak courage to denounce corrupt practices, cultural environments that condone corruption, lack of institutional transparency, inefficient controls, lack of patriotism, and slow judicial processes.⁴⁸

There is the argument that some part of Africa has a rare level of corruption, it is therefore easy to detect and control in such countries; while in some other African countries corruption is widespread and detecting it may be more difficult. However in some other African countries like Nigeria for example, corruption has become systemic and therefore very difficult to detect and control.⁴⁹ Emmanuel Ugono explains that it may be an herculean task to convince an African youth that corruption is not customary in

⁴⁰ www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview

⁴¹ Howard White, Tony Killick, *African Poverty at the Millennium: Cause, Complexities and Challenges* (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2001), xvii

⁴² Gus Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism: Concepts and Controversies* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), 2

⁴³ Israel Aboda Oche, “Africa and the Resurgence of Terrorism: Revisiting the Fundamentals” *Global Journal of Art Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 2 (2) 2014:1*

⁴⁴ Oche, 3

⁴⁵ John Mukum Mbaku, *Corruption in Africa: Cause, Consequences and Clean-ups* (Lanham: LEXINGTON Books, 2010), 4

⁴⁶ Mbaku, *Corruption in Africa: Cause, Consequences and Clean-ups*. 4

⁴⁷ Peter Anassi, *Corruption in Africa: The Kenyan Experience* (Victoria: Trafford, 2004), 17

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Ugono, *Impact of Corruption in Africa* (N/a: Xlibris, 2015), 5

⁴⁹ Kempe Roland Hope, Bornwell C. Chikulo, “Introduction” in *Corruption and Development in Africa: Lessons from Country Case Studies* Kempe R. Hope, Bornwell C. Kenyan, (eds) (London: MacMillian Press Ltd, 2000), 1

Africa. The systemic nature of corruption may make it very difficult.⁵⁰ Ugono insists that the consequences of corruption in Africa cannot be ignored. These consequences, Ugono explains are the loss of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), creation of an unfavourable business environment especially in relation to foreign trade, and the promotion of organized crime.⁵¹ This atmosphere of corruption should be taken seriously by preachers in the African context.

Scepticism against the Clergy: It is no news that an air of scepticism has risen against the clergy in Africa. Due to the actions of some clergy men, the larger population of hearers tend to have a negative persuasion against those who are expected to communicate the gospel. It is not unpopular in recent times to find Facebook postings, twits, and other social media platforms with writings that addresses certain ecclesiastical ill perpetuated by men of the cloth. In January 2016, Saharareporters.com published the article of Ijabla Raymond. This article attacked the expensive life of the clergy in Nigeria, the writer insisted that churches be made to pay taxes due to the flamboyant life of church leaders and senior pastors. Ijabla noted that the rich pastors were taking advantage of the poor, ignorant members to sponsor their flashy life styles.⁵²

In very recent events, Ifedapo Olarinde popular known as daddy Freeze condemned tithes and offering on social media, stating that the way tithes and offering is practiced in the contemporary church is unbiblical and inconsistent with apostolic practices. In another saga, one Pastor Timothy Omotosho the president and founder of Jesus Dominion International Church Durban South Africa was recently arrested and charged for allegedly abusing over 30 teenagers sexually.⁵³ In 2013 one Bishop Chibuikwe Nwabueze was arrested by the Rivers State police command for raping a 13 year old girl, Pastor Chukwunonso Okudiover was also arrested for raping a 14 year old boy, Emmanuel Mathew, Eze Fidelis, Philip Ogbeforfor, Ilesanmi Emmanuel are all pastors arrested for criminal activities or sexual promiscuity.⁵⁴ All of these kinds of events constitute a challenge for preaching and preachers in the African context.

Implications for Preachers

What are the implications of the kind of negative atmosphere preachers find themselves in the contemporary church? Going by the prognosis of the 21st century African context what should be the attitude of preachers involved in preaching in present day Africa. This writer considers the following as implications arriving from the above prognosis:

1. African Preachers Disciple Their Congregants: Doug Pagitt insists that preaching is not carried out for its own sake. According to Pagitt the end of preaching is the transformation of communities to becoming the people of God.⁵⁵ Preachers in the African context should consider discipleship as part of the goal for preaching the word of God. David Schrock explains that any discipleship program that will be termed biblical should begin from the pulpit. Schrock posits that though preaching may not achieve the entire goal of discipleship as it requires more than just preaching, however preaching is not completely incapable in addressing the challenge of discipleship in the Church. Therefore, whether biblically or from the physical point of view, discipleship should begin from preaching the word.⁵⁶

Matt Brown mentions that preaching was Jesus' method of discipleship though Jesus' discipleship also included living an exemplary life for his disciples, the disciples also followed after him using preaching as means to winning and disciplining people for the kingdom. Brown asserts that there are three vital reasons why preaching is crucial for discipleship. The first is the that preaching is needed to constantly remind parishioners of God's truth, the second is that possessing

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Ugono, *Impact of Corruption in Africa* (N/a: Xlibris, 2015),1

⁵¹Ugono, 9

⁵²www.saharareporters.com

⁵³Fikayo Olowolagba, "Nigerian Pastor accused of sexually abusing over 30 girls in South Africa, arrested"

<http://dailypost.ng/2017/04/21/nigerian-pastor-accused-sexually-abusing-30-girls-south-africa-arrested-video/>

⁵⁴ Frank Adeche, List of Pastors Who Raped Church Members Released <http://www.9jabook.com/forum/topics/list-of-nigerian-pastors-who-rape-church-members-released>

⁵⁵Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005),18

⁵⁶David Schrock, "How Preaching Makes Disciples" <http://equip.sbts.edu/article/what-has-preaching-to-do-with-discipleship/>

the knowledge of God's word serves as a foundation for other areas of the life of congregants, and third, it is God's pattern to use simple things like preaching and preachers to fulfil his counsel.⁵⁷

The challenge of corruption in the nation and also in the Church can be easily addressed if preachers on the African continent concentrate on producing disciples for Jesus Christ. Preachers in the African context should consider preaching to share mere knowledge, showing they are expert preaching, preaching to show others are not good preachers, as unimportant reasons for preaching. African preachers should seek to produce messages that provide conviction and a dedication to be more like Christ in the life of parishioners. This can be achieved by preachers selecting biblical passages that deal with matters such as self-denial, sacrifice, Holiness, Following Jesus, becoming like Jesus and other biblical passages that deal directly with discipleship.

2. African Preachers should teach the Right Theology of Prosperity: Due to poverty in Africa, Africans are in search of greener pastures and many turn to the church for a message of hope to succour them. One phenomenon that has invaded the African preaching landscape due to the poverty of Africa is prosperity preaching. This concept of preaching tends to spiritualize success, insisting that getting comes by giving. Those who have been enslaved by this fast growing teaching believe all things are theirs and whether such believers work hard or not it is believed that grace will provide all they need. Parishioners who attend prosperity preaching churches are taught to name it and claim. Whatever congregants can claim by faith will become theirs on earth.⁵⁸ Prosperity preachers explain that prosperity is a reward of prayer and faith and poverty is the evidence of the lack of faith.⁵⁹

This concept represents the ideological mind set of lazy people. Many fold the hands expecting miracles to fall from heaven without putting their hands and minds to work. Preachers in the African context should teach biblical methods of prosperity to congregants, the preacher in Africa should teach sound theology of work, the African preacher should encourage parishioners to do excellently with their hands and pay attention to business. African preachers should preach God's kind of prosperity. Biblically, prosperity is beyond material wealth and physical abundance. The bible recommends an all rounded prosperity. Biblical prosperity addresses the spiritual as well as the material wellbeing of believers. This kind of holistic prosperity that is expressed in 3 John 2 which involves the prosperity of the spirit, soul, and body should be preached by preachers in the African context.

3. African Preachers Should Model their Messages: John Broadus quoting Phillips Brooks suggests that preaching is "the communication of truth by man to man. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality..."⁶⁰ The person of the preacher going by the above definition definitely has effect on the potency of the message. Preacher must therefore wash their lives and their doctrine closely. A.P. Gibbs concludes that the preacher is to do more than preach the doctrine of the word of God, the preacher must also wear that doctrine on him/her so the world can see the doctrine exemplified.⁶¹ The life of the African preacher should exemplify all that he/she preaches; this is because in the African context the effectiveness of the message is determined to an extent by the life of the messenger.

The African preacher can overcome the shadow of doubt cast on the clergy in Africa by living a life beyond reproach, a life that preaches the message again and again. African preachers cannot afford to live contrary to what their sermons teach, this will continue to affect the image of the clergy in Africa. Gibbs makes allusion to this when he stated that "more damage has been brought to the cause of Christ through the inconsistent lives of those who profess His name and

⁵⁷Matt Brown, "3 Reasons Preaching is Essential for Discipleship" <http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/23034-preaching-discipleship.html>

⁵⁸Rimamsikwe Habila Kitaluse, "A Historical Study of Prosperity Gospel Preaching in Nigeria 1970-2014" A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria Nsuka, 31.

⁵⁹ Bradley A. Koch, "Prosperity Gospel and Economic Prosperity: Race, Class, Giving and Voting" A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Sociology, Indiana University, 2009. 3

⁶⁰John Broadus, *On The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1944), 5

⁶¹Alfred P. Gibbs, *The Preacher and His Preaching* (Dubuque: ECS Ministries, 2010), 47

preach His word than anything else”⁶² The African preacher must rise above materialism, sexual impurities, ungodly competition in ministry, ecclesiastical corruption, and other vices that work against the promotion of the preaching ministry in Africa.

4. African Preachers should preach Expository Sermons: The kind of sermons preached in church among other things, determines the kind of members produced. John Stott perceives expository preaching to mean “to expound Scripture is to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God’s voice is heard and his people obey him.”⁶³ This method of preaching brings the awareness of the word of God to the congregation. Congregants are able to see the instructions from the word of God themselves. Jay E. Adams explicates that the ultimate goal of preaching is pleasing God and the only way preaching can please God is when preaching is true scripture, because the scriptures are the authentic word of God.⁶⁴

Expository sermons serve as a means of applying the word of God to the everyday life of congregants since it places priority on the word of God. Expository sermons also expose congregants to the broad knowledge of scripture as a whole. It enables the preacher to deal with current societal issues from the perspective of scripture. It also enables the preacher to consider some areas of scriptures that may be neglected. Expository preaching furnishes the preacher with enough material for a lifetime of preaching, since the bible cannot be exhausted.⁶⁵ Preachers in the African context should consider the above mentioned as gamine in combatting the inherent challenges embedded in preaching in the context of Africa.

CONCLUSION

This paper conducted a prognosis of the ecology of preaching in the 21st century Africa by first, doing an historical overview of preaching, underlining the various issues preaching had, had to deal with historically, the paper considered the nature of 21st century Africa, highlighting the influence of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism on present day Africa. The paper drew important implications for preachers in the African context, concluding that preachers who are involved in preaching on the African continent think of the ecology of preaching in Africa and therefore emphasize discipleship in their message, preach the right theology of prosperity, model their message and preach expository sermons as these are the consequences of the ecology of preaching in 21st century Africa.

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⁶² Alfred Gibbs, 45

⁶³John Stott, “A Definition of Biblical Preaching” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for today’s Communicators* Haddon Robinson, Craig B. Larson, (eds) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 24

⁶⁴Jay E. Adams, “Theology of Powerful Preaching: Nine Beliefs at the Heart of Biblical Preaching” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for today’s Communicators*, Haddon Robinson, Craig B. Larson, (eds) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005),33

⁶⁵Gibbs, 204

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