

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

May 2, 2019

My dear Friends:

I don't know if you ever wondered about the preaching process before: how I go about thinking on what to preach, how I think through a text, or how I write a sermon and then preach it. It occurred to me the other day as I was on a (long) run that some of you may find that kind of thing interesting; others of you might not care as much about this process. Still, it might be helpful to have some appreciation for how I go about this.

Generally speaking, I try to plan out my preaching six to twelve months in advance. And so, in February, I laid out my preaching for April through the end of 2019 in the morning. That preaching plan accounts for Sundays that I know I will be out of town; communion Sundays; any special events going on in the life of the church; and obviously, Easter in the spring and Advent/Christmas in the fall/winter.

Once I've put that spreadsheet together, I generally take a look at another document I have that shows what books of the Bible I have preached since I've been at a particular place. That list helps me see at a glance how I've done in balancing Old Testament and New Testament as well as the various genres of the Bible. Since I've been at IPC, I have preached Exodus, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Jonah, Habakkuk, Mark, Galatians, and Revelation. I have also done series on Sunday nights with selected texts: "Every Square Inch," "Jesus Teaches Us to Pray," and "Children of the Heavenly Father." The goal is to expose you to the whole counsel of God and to model how to study each part of God's Word.

I also try to pay attention to what our various Bible studies and Sunday school classes are doing. Sometimes there is value in preaching through material that a group has just considered—for example, the men on Thursday mornings in the fall went through Exodus and then I preached my "Christmas in Exodus" series. I was hoping there would be two benefits of this: first, a line-upon-line reinforcement of what the men studied, but second, a deepening appreciation of how Christ and his grace are to be found in every part of Scripture. Other times, I try to avoid certain books that I know have received significant exposure so that we don't tire of a part of God's Word.

The most important thing I do is pray and reflect: what do we as a congregation need to hear? What portions of the Bible will "put me in the way" of certain issues to discuss or consider? What is God doing in our midst? Sometimes as I do this, I lay out a particular book only to change my mind as we get closer to the date. That actually happened to me this past Sunday—I was intending to preach through 1 Thessalonians this spring, but as we got closer to it, I felt the Lord directing me to the Psalms of Ascent instead. Once I started studying and preparing, I realized that was the right call for lots of reasons.

All to say, a lot more goes into preaching on Sunday morning than rolling out of bed and picking out a text to preach! Hopefully, reading this will give you a new appreciation for the thought that goes into seeking to feed you God's Word in a way that brings you the most benefit. The goal in it all is for all of us to be transformed by Word and Spirit into new people for a new Memphis.

In the grip of God's grace,



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