



## *How (Not) to Preach about King David*

Why do we preachers preach the way we do?

You know what I mean. The pastor, the one with all that impressive seminary knowledge, stands up after the scripture reading and explains to the congregation what the Bible passage really means. To help the hearers keep up, the pastor divides the message into distinct points (three, usually) and then, to help people remember those points, the pastor makes them rhyme or alliterate. The skilled preacher will generally toss in a story or two. These are obviously unnecessary frills, but they keep people from nodding off. That's how we preachers usually preach. But why?

It isn't because that's how the Bible itself is written. Most of the Bible is story. Most of the rest is poetry. Only the New Testament letters sound like the sort of preaching that we do week after week. So why do we model our sermons after the least common sort of writing in the Bible?

It isn't because that's how Jesus taught. He mostly told stories. When he wasn't telling stories, he was using pithy, striking one-liners. Not a threepoint sermon to be found anywhere in the gospels. So why do we prefer to preach exactly as Jesus did not?

I don't know.

So this summer I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to preach. I'm going to tell stories. Like Jesus did. Like the Bible does. In fact, I'm going to be telling one of the Bible's greatest and most complex stories: the story of David. During the time normally set aside for a sermon, I'm just going to work through the books of 1 and 2 Samuel (with a bit of 1 Kings). In those books we find some of the most memorable people ever to appear in any history, more fully developed than any characters from a novel. I'm just going to tell the story as the Bible tells it.

So what will be the moral lesson you will draw from each sermon? What will be the doctrine that each passage teaches? What will be the direct application that you can make to your own life and faith? I'm not going to tell you. That's not how stories work. Oh, there's plenty of morality (and, um, immorality) in the story. There's a lot of theology and thousands of possible life applications. But pulling those out will be up to you.

That's how the Bible works, you see. And how Jesus taught.

I suppose it's worth a try.