

Great Preachers

Norah Anderson

All over the millenia there have been great preachers; Men and Women inspired by the Holy Spirit to spread the Word of God. How varied these people have been, how they varied their approaches.

From the Bible come, in the Old Testament, the songs of King David – the Psalms. From the New Testament comes St Paul, perhaps the greatest preacher of them all. He turned his experiences, sickness or shipwreck into lessons that survive today.

Two much respected preachers were Charles and John Wesley. They were the sons of an Anglican clergyman and were well versed in the scriptures. From their home in the West Country they rode round the countryside spreading the word.

Like the later General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, they were concerned not only with the spiritual needs of their followers, but by their material needs too. No beggar would ever pass from their door without being given food to sustain him as he plodded his weary way. Today the soup kitchens instigated by General Booth and his wife still survive in London and other big cities.

A very different type of man was the Scotsman John Knox. He ranted and raved from the pulpit all over Scotland. His listeners were abashed and terrified. They fled to their tenements, hoping to hide from the wrath to come. The quotation *The monstrous regiment of women* shows his scorn for humanity. In his own way he served God.

Many politicians have been followers of the Christian faith. William Gladstone was one. He was disliked by the hierarchy and abused for his work amongst prostitutes. He ignored this and worked quietly on.

Across the Atlantic they do things differently, perhaps inspired by the spirit of the Pilgrim

Fathers on the *Mayflower*.

Moody and Sankey were evangelists who composed their own Sacred Songs. These became popular in England and, on Sunday evening, many a family sat down round the piano and played and sang such songs as *Shall we gather at the River?*. These may not have been the highest art but they contained the truth.

Then came the greatest orator of all – Billy Graham. His fervour overcame all who listened to him. Pushing, and falling over each other, they found their way to his rostrum. Some of this may have been hysteria, but many were convinced and their lives changed for ever.

Many centuries before, Christianity had come to Britain, and the early saints played a large part in the search for truth.

The words of Bishop Latimer as he and Bishop Nicholas Ridley were burnt at the stake - *Be of good comfort Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such as a candle, by God's grace in England as shall never be put out* – have echoed through the centuries.

From Europe come the great musicians. The *Messiah*, Handel's great oratorio contains the Hallelujah Chorus. As its sounds swell to the rafters it inspires all who hear it. The triumphant march of *Zadok the priest* sets the seal.

Our current Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, is an unassuming figure, but a deep thinker. From the *dark, satanic mills* of the Welsh Valleys he guides us in to more sun-lit paths.

Surrounded as we are by the *Great Cloud of Witnesses*, we know that we, in turn, must copy The Cross. We pray that we may be given strength to do so, and *To God be the Glory* now and for ever. Amen

My Church

Mollie Day

My church is quite a beautiful place
It is lofty, large and gives much space
For its visitors to sit and admire the sculptural
altar screen
Showing the Last Supper, the message is not
of "has been" but rather giving out hope,
comfort and joy.
There is a feeling of well-being and nothing
can cloy
The sense of unity, dedication and love
Bestowed on us all from above.

The Vicar gives a purposeful lead
Sermons are a great comfort and are not of
generalisations
But rather messages so simple, yet true
If they are taken seriously we shall never feel
blue!

The church organ and choir are quite
delightful to hear
The music very uplifting and always so clear
Also you can only admire the depth of
commitment many parishioners show
From this, devotion and love for each other
must surely grow
Into a spiritual journey that will enrich each
of us in our life
And in turn we hear there "brotherly"
messages so there is little strife
But rather a true sense of belonging, and
camaraderie will follow on
The bonding could last forever, as it is
infinitely strong.

Where there's smoke...

It was common practice for the preacher to
invite the children to the front of the church
and have a small lesson before beginning
the sermon. He would bring in an item they
could find around the house and relate it to
a teaching from the Bible.

One particular morning, the visual aid for his
lesson was a smoke detector. He asked the
children if anyone knew what it meant
when an alarm sounded from the smoke
detector. A boy of five immediately raised

his hand: "It means Daddy's cooking
dinner."

Worried that your life is changing beyond recall?

A wise farmer rotates his crops: no one
thing should always be grown in the same
place. Change and diversity are the key to
long-term health. It is the same for us: for us
to be at our most productive, we must not
be surprised if God suddenly rests us from
'growing corn', and gives us something else
to do. Often it is something we would never
have imagined!

Life is lived in seasons: in each of our lives,
there is a time to do this, a time to do that.
Too many of us lose our sense of self-worth
and direction because we don't
understand when we're leaving one season
and entering another in life. We struggle
and want to hang on to what we had. But
sometimes God wants to give us something
new, to make us productive at every stage
of our life. God will never put you in a
place too small to grow. You may be asked
to grow in ways that seem uncomfortable at
first, but he is out to develop you fully, in
every aspect of your being – not just the
ones at which you are already good!

