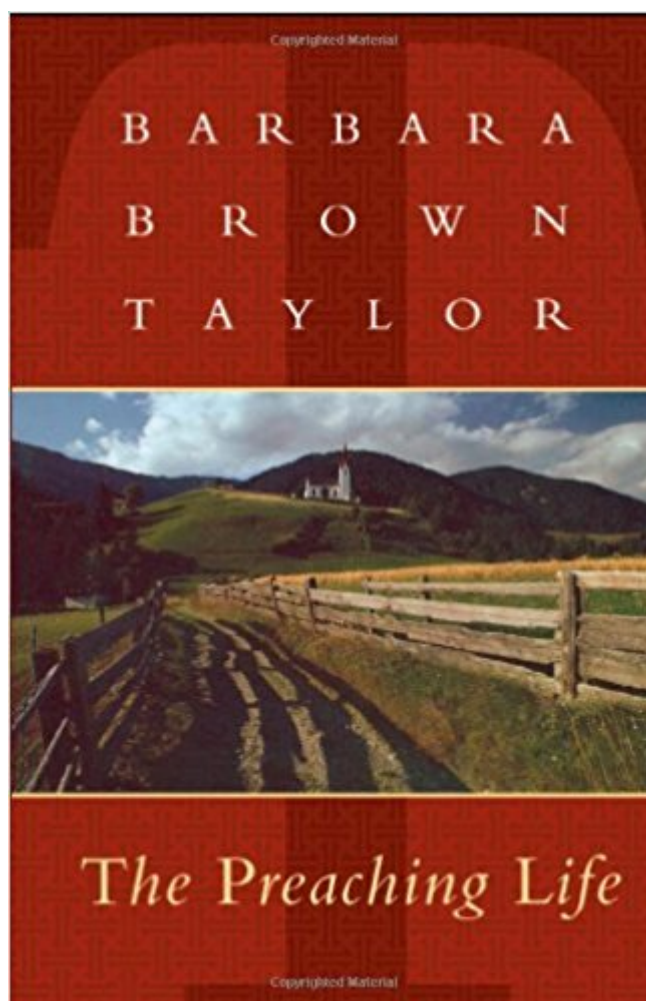


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The Preaching Life (Dan Josselyn Memorial Publication (Paperback))



Synopsis

In her bestselling preaching autobiography Barbara Brown Taylor writes of how she came to be a preacher of the gospel as a priest in the Episcopal Church. In this warm and poignant collection, Barbara Brown Taylor's humor and wisdom delve into the meaning of Christian symbols and history—both her own, growing up in the Mid-West and Georgia, and the Church's, from its earliest beginnings in the Near East. Seamlessly, Taylor weaves together reflections on her vocation with the long-standing struggles of the Church to hear, respond, and remain faithful to its mission of holy love. She moves effortlessly from reflection to homily, concluding the volume with thirteen sermons illustrative of the answered call. This rich meeting of memoir, theology, and sermon stands at the center of Taylor's work, bringing into one book the origins and the vision of her remarkable preaching life. But her voice is not sentimental. Instead, Taylor explores Christian meanings and histories in order to hear and speak, in the present, for God. "God has given us good news in human form and has given us the grace to proclaim it," she writes, "but part of our terrible freedom is the freedom to lose our voices, to forget where we were going and why. While that knowledge does not yet strike me as prophetic, it does keep me from taking both my ministry and the ministry of the whole church for granted." This book on the calling to preach is itself a call to reawaken to the activating presence of God. "Because I am a preacher, it is through a preacher's eyes that I see. . . , but because I am a baptized Christian too, it is from that perspective I write. Either way, my job remains the same: to proclaim the good news of God in Christ and to celebrate the sacraments of God's presence in the world. Those two jobs are described as clearly in the baptismal vows as they are in the ordination vows, which give all Christians a common vocation." —from Chapter One

Book Information

Series: Dan Josselyn Memorial Publication (Paperback)

Paperback: 174 pages

Publisher: Cowley Publications; Eighth Printing edition (January 28, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 156101074X

ISBN-13: 978-1561010745

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.7 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 47 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #36,928 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Episcopalian #4 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Anglican #13 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Sermons

Customer Reviews

Taylor, an Episcopal priest and acclaimed preacher, begins with a series of personal reflections on her life, her perception of the church, and issues of vocation, imagination, Bible, worship, and preaching. Her reflections on post-Christian environments (from a visit to Turkey and her own life in America), on baptism and ordination, and on studying the Bible critically lead the reader to a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the familiar words of faith. The second half of the book consists of 13 of Taylor's sermons, which continue her emphasis on story. Throughout, there is a good balance between biographical material and a general reflection; the sermons support the discussion. Taylor's work is recommended for seminary, church, and large public libraries. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Barbara Brown Taylor tells an engaging story of the birth of her own voice as a preacher, the struggles to bring the gospel to speech, and the joys of being an instrument of God's will. (William H. Willmon) It is easy for those of us who preach to slip into thinking of preaching as a task, a chore, even a weekly homework assignment. . . . Taylor, as a parish priest, is fully aware of the incessant demands of the pulpit. But to her mind, preaching is not just a duty; it is also a ceaseless delight. . . . Her use of language is enchanting; her prose is luxuriant. Images spin across the pages like ballerinas. . . . Taylor has the rare combination of a sturdy theological mind and a receptive, almost wide-eyed, openness to experience. . . . In sum, this is a book about the life of a preacher, but more than that it is about being fully alive in the Christian faith. Barbara Brown Taylor is, to use her own words, 'a detective of divinity, collecting evidence of God's genius and admiring the tracks left for me to follow. . . .' I am grateful that she is on the case. (Thomas G. Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA Princeton Theological Seminary) The decision of the Episcopal Church in 1976 to ordain women to the priesthood and episcopate has brought us many blessings, not the least of which is the improvement in preaching. Probably no other woman has contributed as much to that improvement as Barbara Brown Taylor. Nor is it likely that another has received so much recognition for her contribution. . . . I am convinced that whoever reads the book will marvel at it, take pleasure in it, and be lured beyond their present

stage of progress by it. . . .In his essay on Anglican spirituality in *The Study of Anglicanism*, A. M. Allchin pointed out the close connection between our spiritual writings and the creation of great literature. This he attributes to a sense of the presence of God in all things and all people. Taylor's work has that quality. While all of us cannot expect to preach as well as she, reading her work can alert us to looking for what she sees and can also show us how she enables us to see it too and to show it to others. At the very least, we can quote some of her phrases and help them to continue doing their marvelous work. (O.C. Edwards Jr Seabury-Western Theological Seminary) Barbara Brown Taylor has been called "One of the twelve most effective preachers in the English language." When you read her anthologies of sermons you can see why. She has a fabulous command of English and is a marvelous storyteller. These, combined with her deep and essential faith, make her sermons powerful and engaging. . . . This summer when I was chaplain at our Diocesan Family Camp, I read these sermons to adults as a morning meditation around the campfire. Everyone was engaged and found them immediately relevant to their lives. (Robert J. Gaestel)

It became immediately clear in the opening pages of *"The Preaching Life"* that Barbara Brown Taylor is a wonderful story-teller. In fact, much of the first half of the book consists of anecdotes from her life as a child, a new Christian, a seminary student, and a pastor. But she weaves an engaging tapestry of stories that kept my attention without ever seeming self-indulgent or trivial. Instead, those stories helped to frame the points that she was making about a host of important topics. However, the breadth of her conclusions and assertions in the first half of the book, though interesting and compelling, were also a source of some frustration. Because she covered such a wide swath of issues like her theology of calling, her understanding of corporate worship, and her approach to handling the Scriptures, it just didn't seem to me that she was dealing very specifically with the topic of preaching. And that's why I read the book, to learn about preaching. I wanted to know how she prepares her messages, how she handles her notes, what she focuses on during delivery, and other nuts and bolts about preaching. And she never even scratched the surface on those sorts of topics. Instead, she danced around at 30,000 feet and spent literally just a few pages talking in rather abstract terms about her philosophy of preaching. And the second half of the book is simply a collection of sermons, presumably some of her favorites. To be fair, there's nothing wrong with a general overview of pastoral ministry and some of its major themes and responsibilities. And what she offers is most helpful. She offers some decidedly non-evangelical ideas about the Bible that challenged my evangelical thinking. Her call to honesty in the pulpit and in pastoral ministry, in

general, was refreshing. Just as William Willimon says on the front cover, "Her insight, poetic style, and good humor are a delight to read." That's totally true. But I felt like I was fooled by the title, since she didn't deal much at all with the specific act and art of preaching, beyond offering 13 examples of her messages. I wish the book had been titled "The Pastoring Life," in which case I would have been more prepared for what she had to offer. With this disappointment notwithstanding, it's still a good book. I don't necessarily agree with all of her theology (her notion of salvation seemed to be especially open-ended), and we certainly minister in different faith traditions of the American Protestant church (hers of the liturgical, Episcopal stream, mine of a more contemporary, evangelical stream). But she was sufficiently winsome in spirit and captivating in style that those differences seemed irrelevant. She challenged my thinking and assumptions in numerous ways and caused me to step back and reflect on how I approach pastoral ministry. Though I'll probably never preach sermons like hers (they are so short!!) and I didn't learn a lot of particulars about preaching, I suspect that I will ponder this book for quite some time and hope to revisit it somewhere down the road.

If there's one preacher I adore, it's BBT. I started reading her books in the mid '90s, but somehow missed this one until now. It has the feel of someone rising to the challenges of middle age: too wise to be written by a 20-something, but not world-weary enough to come from the pen of a 60-something. The book is roughly divided into two halves: part one a collection of essays, and part two a series of sermons. The opening essay, entitled "A Church in Ruins," expresses the dilemma of living in a post-Christian culture, and does it better in ten short pages than I have in ten sermons. "The Tenth Leper" - the fourth sermon in the book's second half - demonstrates the author's amazing ability to support scriptural interpretation by sharing an unsentimental analysis of personal memories, and articulating an empathetic description of life experiences far different than her own. If you're a fan of BBT, don't neglect to read this text, which was her first book.

Taylor's book is one of the most compelling books on preaching I have ever read. The vivid imagery she uses, drawn from everyday things yet brought to life in such a way as to give the reader a vision of what she is saying, is presented masterfully. I quickly realized how dull and drab my own preaching has been by comparison. Her writing has fired my imagination toward what I hope will be a transformation of my preaching.

Exceiiient! Makes you examine yourself and your life and spirituality!

"The Preaching Life" takes the reader inside the life of one woman who found her calling in serving God as an Episcopal priest. Her autobiography shimmers with the radiance of knowing her life has been held, through several challenging and difficult periods, by One greater than she. Barbara Brown Taylor also tells it like it is in this post-Christian era, and she issues a clarion call that should be heeded by all who care about the Church. Her sermons, which follow her life story, radiate with the grace that is there for all God's children. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to know why Christianity matters and the difference God's love can make in all our lives.

This uplifting book is about preaching and then some. Her chapter, *Worship*, is an excellent and poignant explanation of why we do what we do -- what part each of the liturgy serves. This is a great book for liturgical worship leaders and planners and for those learning to be.

I would recommend this to lay people and pastors alike. Rev. Taylor makes it clear we who call ourselves Christians are all called to ministry. I really enjoyed her sermons at the end of the book. I particularly liked the prodigal son sermon. Easy to read too!

Not the same cover but I am okay with it.

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