

Preaching Matthew 16:13-20: An African Oral Homiletic Approach

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ABSTRACT

Matthew 16:13-20 presents a focal point for the ecclesiology of the Church. It unveils the Messiahship of Jesus amid speculations, pitches the Church upon the confession of his Lordship and rightfully positions it in the place of authority that makes things happen in heaven and on earth. For Africa, dealing with a biblical concept of the Church is a critical exercise that must be engaged in from time to time. This is due to its global position as the centre of Christianity as it is now and will be for a long while. This study considered the homiletics of Matthew 16:13-20 using the African oral homiletical approach. The African oral homiletic approach engages the scripture, on the one hand, in its oral originality and exegetical accuracy and, on the other hand, communicates the passage in the African communication paradigm that utilises songs, drama, folktales, proverbs and related elements. There was, therefore, an exegetical overview of Matthew 6:13-20, providing an inductive preaching outline for the passage, and a sermon manuscript using some African oral elements.

Keywords: Ecclesiology, Church, Preaching, Orality, homiletics, Exegesis, inductive preaching, African homiletics

Introduction

The pulpit and the pew have a long history of companionship. The church has been and will always be a reflection of its preaching. A church may not grow beyond its pulpit ministry.

When the issue of ecclesiology is raised, two complementing components surface: the theology that defines the ecclesiology, which is largely based on the way God's word is interpreted, and the proclamation of that theology largely done through the preaching of the word. Altogether, ecclesiology, theology, and ecclesiological proclamation or homiletics must be done within a context.

The church in Africa has come of age, and as the western mission enterprise declines and gospel accession faces the direction of Africa and other parts of the Global South, there is the need for more and more contextualisation and contextualised definitions of the gospel apparatuses. This paper would attempt to investigate what an African ecclesiology is and look at a major scripture hub of biblical ecclesiology, Matthew 16:13-20. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to develop a homiletic of a contextualised African ecclesiology through the same biblical text, providing a sermon manuscript based on an African oral homiletic paradigm.

The Concept of Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is the study of the church. According to E. P. Clowny, the scripture presents the church as "the people of God, the community and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁰⁷ The Greek *ekklesia* and Hebrew *qahal* mean "assembly" and is translated "church" occurring 114 times in the New Testament.⁵⁰⁸ While it is used to refer to assemblies called to perform specific tasks in Greek cities or even a gathering like the notorious one in an Ephesian amphitheatre in reaction to Paul and his gospel incursion (Acts 19:32, 39,

⁵⁰⁷ E. P. Clowny, E. P. "Church" in Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (eds), *New Dictionary of Theology*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 140.

⁵⁰⁸ Mark E. Dever, "The Church" in Daniel L. Akin (ed), *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 771.

41), most of the uses of the word *ekklessia* in the New Testament is for a Christian assembly.⁵⁰⁹

Several images are used for the New Testament church as revealed in the scripture. Among them are, a people of God – bringing together the nation of Israel and those redeemed from among the Gentiles. The church is a multinational, multi-ethnic church.⁵¹⁰ Another imagery of the church is the body of Christ. With Christ as the head, the community of saved and baptised believers function as the body with their individual gifts.⁵¹¹ The church is also a covenant community. In this use, the church was to serve “as a confessional body holding to the truth of Christ as revealed by the prophet and apostles He has chosen.”⁵¹² The imagery of the church is not exhaustive. Paul Miner is recorded to have identified ninety-six images of the church in the New Testament.⁵¹³ Some have identified it as the flock of God, living stones, God’s temple, royal priesthoods, holy people, soldiers, arm of God and a lot more.⁵¹⁴

There is the ‘church invisible’ of all whose names are in the Lamb’s book of life and the ‘church visible’ – family of believers as is currently visible to an observer. There is the ‘local church,’ and local assembly and there is the ‘universal church’ where the local becomes a part of the global.⁵¹⁵ The church exists for the purposes of worship, evangelism, fellowship, and

⁵⁰⁹ Dever, “The Church,”

⁵¹⁰ Russell D. Moore "Church" In Chad Brand (ed), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 291.

⁵¹¹ Moore, “Church,” 292

⁵¹² Moore, “Church”

⁵¹³ Dever, “The Church,” 772

⁵¹⁴ Ayodele A. Atowoju, "The Church: One Body in Christ" in Ademola Ishola & Deji Ayegboyin, (eds), *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, The Church, and the Contemporary Society, Papers in Honour of Rev. Dr. S. T. Ola Akande*, (Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, 2006), 485.

⁵¹⁵ Clowny, “Church,” 142

discipleship.⁵¹⁶ It has its governmental structures but the pattern differs for reasons of New Testament normativity or contextualisation.⁵¹⁷ Church polity may be reformed, congregational episcopal or presbyterian.⁵¹⁸ The beauty of the church is its potential for unity in the midst of its diversity. That was the prayer of Jesus in John 17 and remains the aspiration of most genuine believers in Christ.

African Ecclesiology

Some African scholars have come up with their perspectives of ecclesiology that resonate with the African worldview and sociocultural milieu. Worthy of note is the work of John O. Enyinnaya titled, 'Ecclesiology through the Centuries: A Critical Assessment of Historical Paradigms.'⁵¹⁹ Here, he identified and reviewed nine paradigms of the church, five of which are advanced by Africans and bear some weight on the development of an African ecclesiology.⁵²⁰ The church as family was proposed by Harry Sawyer. He described the church as the entire

⁵¹⁶ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995).

Also see Charles R. Swindoll, *The Bride: Renewing Our Passion for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 39..

⁵¹⁷ Clowny, "Church," 145

⁵¹⁸ Clowny, "Church,"

⁵¹⁹ John O. Enyinnaya, "Ecclesiology through the Centuries: A Critical Assessment of Historical Paradigms of the Church" in Olusayo Oladejo, Emiola Nihinlola, John Enyinnaya and Moses Audi (eds), *Contemporary Issues in Systematic Theology: An African Christian Perspective*, (Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, 2011), 65-89.

⁵²⁰ These include Harry Sawyer, *Creative Evangelism: Toward a New Christian Encounter With Africa* (London: Lutleworth, 1968); Yusufu A. Obaje, "The Church as a Theocentric Community with Special References to Certain Aspects of Traditional African Ideas of God and Man," Ph.D. Dissertation, (Edinburg: University of Edinburg, 1982); Israel Akanji, "The Church as Mother: An African Christian Perspective," M.Th. Thesis (Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), Charles Nyamiti, "The Church as Christ's Ancestral Mediation: An Essay on African Ecclesiology," in J.N.K Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds) *The Church in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Initiatives, 1990), 129-177, and John Mary Waliggo, "The Clan as the True Model of the African Church," *The Church in African Christianity*.

congregation of believers scattered all over the world. Sawyer wrote at a time African nations were becoming independent and demonstrating their self-identity in different flags and currencies. So, a family paradigm of the church in Africa could help persevere the unity of the church as the household of God with Christ being the firstborn. Sawyer, however, strived to root his ecclesiological concept in the unique African definition of family as made up of those living, dead and unborn. He, therefore, advocated a doctrine of salvation of non-Christian ancestors. According to Enyinnaya, "Sawyer destroys his own argument by this claim since he had predicated this model upon the fact that Christ is firstborn... It is not clear therefore how a person not related to the firstborn can become a member of this family."⁵²¹

The theocentric community paradigm was propagated by Yusufu Ameh Obaje who sees the church as being brought into existence by the Triune God as against other definitions that over-identify the church with one member of the Godhead. He did this to help Africans feel at home spiritually because of their belief in the Supreme God, an "overwhelming God-consciousness of the African worldview and the equally overwhelming God-consciousness of the biblical worldview."⁵²² The problem with Obaje's theocentric paradigm is that the church is not just a community conscious of God, it is a community in close union with God.⁵²³

The mother paradigm propounded by Israel Akanji sees the church as playing the roles of reproduction, nurture, service and discipline. Motherhood is a strong African imagery except that the argument breaks down when Akanji distinguishes between the mother and the children, the church and its members. The members are actually the church.⁵²⁴ The

⁵²¹ Enyinnaya, "Ecclesiology through the Centuries," 83

⁵²² Enyinnaya, "Ecclesiology through the Centuries," 82

⁵²³ Enyinnaya, "Ecclesiology through the Centuries," 84

⁵²⁴ Enyinnaya, "Ecclesiology through the Centuries," 84-85

Ancestral Mediation paradigm was propounded by Charles Nyamiti. This is a model flowing from the Christological analogy that presents Christ as the ancestor whose incarnation and redemption make him “our king, our holy and glorified mediator and perfect model of conduct.”⁵²⁵ The problem with Nyamiti’s submission is his expansion of the ancestral concept to include Mary, saints in heaven and those in purgatory. As Enyinnaya surmised, this model places Mary and the dead saints on the same pedestal with Christ, and that is unnecessary.⁵²⁶

The last is the clan paradigm developed by John Mary Waliggo. His aim as a Catholic theologian was to use the clan paradigm from the Baganda tribe of Central Uganda to help in the inculturation of the leadership arrangement of the African church. The church as a clan conveys a community of unity with God and Christ where all segments of the church can fully participate as against the current monarchical structure of the Catholic Church which tends towards dictatorship.⁵²⁷

With the above, Enyinnaya has brought to the fore the development of an Ecclesiology that is not a western prerogative but could resonate with the African context despite some of the loopholes that could be found in the concepts developed. But African Ecclesiology is not limited to these few African scholars. Mention could also be made of Moses Audi, who authored the book, *The Church as a Pilgrim Community*. Using the imagery of the nomadic life of the Fulfulde Fulani, he pictures the church as a pilgrim community, an image which “provide for God-centered and goal-oriented living, eschatological expectancy, moral standardisation by the enabling power of God in the Holy Spirit, appraisal of the sovereignty of God, and commitment to the commission even if it means ‘carrying the cross.’⁵²⁸

⁵²⁵ Enyinnaya, "Ecclessiology through the Centuries," 86

⁵²⁶ Enyinnaya, "Ecclessiology through the Centuries," 88

⁵²⁷ Enyinnaya, "Ecclessiology through the Centuries,"

⁵²⁸ Moses Audi, *The Church as a Pilgrim Community* (Kaduna: Soltel Enterprise, 2014), xiv

Some conclusions can then be reached on the nature or characteristics of African Ecclesiology using a template provided by Kalemba Mwanbazambi. First, is that African ecclesiology holds to the centrality of Christ and the Bible. The scripture is held as the supreme rule of faith and the centre of comprehension of God's revelation in Christ. So, African ecclesiology is highly Christocentric even when there is the suggestion of its being Trinitarian.⁵²⁹ Second, is that African ecclesiology consists of a renewal of inherited liturgical practices. As could be observed from African instituted churches, African ecclesiology is a liberation ecclesiology which transforms traditional ecclesiologies in the African context. As Mwabanzambi observed, African preaching remains "the definitive feature and liturgical heart of African worship."⁵³⁰ For example, the Bantu prophets are among several that demonstrate ecclesiologies that construct an explicit Afrocentric conception of the Christian faith, forming a key social, political, educational and organisational entity in the collective and communitarian experience of African people.⁵³¹ Third, is that African ecclesiology considers Africa existential experience or felt need. Africa is a continent in need of total positive transformation. Any ecclesiology that does not put this into consideration would not be definitive.⁵³²

African ecclesiology is progressive. More work needs to be done, and the good news is that the work has begun and it continues. Jesus' words in Matthew 16:13-20 is pivotal to the study of ecclesiology and any contextualisation that would be attempted. That is where Jesus declared for the first time ever, "I will build my church." Before an attempt is made to study that passage and produce a homiletical resource for it, there is the need to look briefly at the concept of an African oral

⁵²⁹ Kalemba Mwambazambi, "A Missiological Reflection on African Ecclesiology" *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32, no. 1 (2011): 4

⁵³⁰ Mwambazambi, "A Missiological Reflection on African Ecclesiology"

⁵³¹ Mwambazambi, "A Missiological Reflection on African Ecclesiology"

⁵³² Mwambazambi, "A Missiological Reflection on African Ecclesiology," 5

homiletics – the vehicle through which the oral resource for Matthew 16 passage will be provided.

Understanding African Homiletics

Just as the concept of African Christianity keeps being developed and defined, so is its preaching. For a working definition, preaching is the communication of the text of God's word in its literary, grammatical and historical context for the purpose of life transformation. Three elements are worthy of attention in this definition. First, preaching is communication. Any effective communication anticipates a sender, receiver, the medium and the feedback, and those are all interrelated. When African preachers preach to an African audience, they must recognise that Africans have a communicational paradigm, the lenses through which they receive and process information. Africans are largely oral people and this has been proven over time.⁵³³ To be oral in this context is to prefer the spoken rather than the written word. Charles Madinger defined orality as "the use of the spoken word to formulate, send, receive, and understand message."⁵³⁴ At a deeper level he defined it as "significant learned framework for interpreting the world around us."⁵³⁵ So, African orality makes use of "such literary devices as stories, proverbs, idioms, drama, poetry, dance, myths, fables, folklore, or combination of these to not only deliver messages but also to assimilate them, to use them to interpret the world and process wisdom with or without the

⁵³³ Ezekiel A. Ajibade, *Expository Preaching in Africa: Engaging Orality for Effective Proclamation*, (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Partnership International, 2021), 83-93

⁵³⁴ Charles Madinger, "Will our Message 'Stick?'" Assessing a Dominant Preference for Orality for Education and Training," in Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (eds), *Beyond Literate Western Contexts: Honor & Shame and Assessment of Orality Preference* (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2015), 127.

⁵³⁵ Madinger, "Will our Message 'Stick?'"

technology of literacy.”⁵³⁶ If preaching is communication, a preacher who wants to preach to Africans must consider orality.

The second element of the working definition is that preaching should communicate the text of God’s word. Biblical preaching should be text-driven. God gave the inspired scripture and in that, God has spoken once and for all. When Paul charged Timothy to preach the word in 2 Tim. 4:2, he simply reminded Timothy that the only way he could assure his listeners that God had spoken to them was that the inspired text of the scripture was the basis of his sermon.

The third component of this working definition is that it is not enough for a preacher to read the Bible and comment on it or refer to it, it is assumed that such must have had a studious encounter with the passage under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The passage must have been studied in its background considering its literary genre, original language and meaning, historical context and immediate context, and these all must inform the sermon outline or manuscript the preacher is out to preach. For a contextualised homiletics, mother-tongue hermeneutics is also a needed task. Kwame Bediako described mother tongue as “the language in which God speaks to each of us. He does not speak in a sacred language, but in ordinary language, so that we may hear him and realise that his gospel is about us and that we have been invited to join a company drawn from every people, tribe, tongue, nation and language.”⁵³⁷ So, a mother tongue hermeneutic according to Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, is “the scholarly engagement of the indigenous language translations of the Bible in order to understand what they say and mean to the

⁵³⁶ Ajibade, *Expository Preaching in Africa*, 2

⁵³⁷ Kwame Bediako, "Scripture as the Interpreter of Culture and Tradition." In Tokunboh Adeyemo (ed), *African Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Corporation, 2006), 4

readers.”⁵³⁸ It is, therefore, not enough to use Greek and Hebrew Bible and Lexicons in the exegetical process of sermon preparation; engaging the Bible translated in the local language is also significant.

The fourth element of importance in the working definition is that preaching should be aimed at life transformation. The goal of any good sermon is that people become like Christ in character and piety and become salt and light in their communities and societies. Africa is in dire need of transformed men and women who will transform the society.

Therefore, it could be deduced that an African homiletics is largely oral. It considers and engages the uses of orality methodologies in sermon preparation and delivery. Ronald J. Allen was opportune to listen to forty sermons in two months from preachers across the African continent during his visit to Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia, in 1990. He also visited Sunday congregations and other meetings where he listened to eight more. One of his conclusions was,

...religious life contains practically no propositional exposition similar to Euro-American style systematic theology. Instead, the world view, beliefs, and moral expectations of native African religion are expressed in myth, story, song, and drama...Critical interpretation of Christianity and traditional African religion will likely mean a more narrative approach to preaching than is typical of the sermons we heard.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor “Doing African Biblical Studies with the Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics Approach” <https://bit.ly/3IpdSQR>. Accessed on February 12, 2023.

⁵³⁹ Ronald J. Allen, "African Christianity: A Soft Report" *Homiletic* 16, no. 1 (1991): 5

As he rightly observed, a deeper implication of the above is that the genre of narrative preaching will do well in the African context if and when fully developed.⁵⁴⁰

An African homiletics must be biblical. Africans love the Bible and they love it when the Bible speaks to them. Some of the greatest efforts at getting the Bible into people's hands happen in Africa. But it should not stop there. It is the duty of preachers to help open the pages, not just literally, but in the faithful exposition of the content, making it interesting and applying it to their daily existential needs.

Furthermore, an African homiletic should be transformational. One of the banes of Africa is underdevelopment, whatever may be responsible for that. Complicating this is the paradox of Africa's level of spirituality in relation to its existential challenges, such as poverty, corruption, bad leadership, poor infrastructures and ailing economies. The biggest question in Africa is how would the word of God profit the continent and develop it? Any preaching that will benefit the people of Africa should be one that challenges the individual and corporate life of worshippers to wholistic development.⁵⁴¹

An Oral Homiletic Approach to Matthew 16:13-20

Preaching has often been considered an oral event. Whatever volumes of sermon collection fill the theological libraries around the globe, they often have been preached or addressed as God's word to a particular audience or congregation in particular circumstances. Sermons become written after being thought of and spoken.⁵⁴² Dave McClellan has suggested it is possible to plan a sermon completely orally and he gave a few tips on how to do that. The preacher begins with a check on his or her own life in terms of character and theology and ensures congruence

⁵⁴⁰ Ajibade, *Expository Preaching in Africa*, 119.

⁵⁴¹ Ashimolowo, *What is Wrong with Being Black*, 348

⁵⁴² Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 47

with the word to preach. The preacher engages literate sources, especially the Bible but transits quickly to an oral composition. Part of their preparation is discussing the sermon content with some listeners before taking it to the pulpit. The preacher organises the message without using bullet points, and ensures the message is internalised. When they mount the pulpit, the sermon should be delivered with conviction and authenticity. There must be good eye contact.⁵⁴³ While McClellan's methodology is one among a few others, and while it has some criticisms, it is a good starting point for an oral homiletics.

For an oral sermon preparation, there must be an exegesis of the passage using a written or audio Bible. Exegetical materials can also be engaged in written or oral form. Some hermeneutical methods have been designed by orality and storying organisations like *Simply the Story*, which can help non-literate Bible interpreters make meaning from the scripture before preaching it.⁵⁴⁴

The next step is the organisation of the facts gleaned from the exegetical exercise. Stephen Olford's guide to organisation asks these questions – what is the dominating theme of the passage, what are the integrating thoughts and what is the motivating thrust?⁵⁴⁵ Haddon Robinson would rather ask, what is the Big Idea of the passage and what are the complementing ideas?⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Dave McClellan, "Preaching by Ear," E-Book, <https://www.scribd.com/read/389144615/>

Preaching-by-Ear-Speaking-God-s-Truth-from-the-Inside-out.

⁵⁴⁴ Jagerson Jennifer, "The *Simply The Story* Method: Next Steps in Oral Strategies" in Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy (eds), *Beyond Literate Western Contexts: Honor & Shame and Assessment of Orality Preference*, (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2015), 109-110.

⁵⁴⁵ Stephen Olford and E. A. Johnston, *Olford on Scroggie: Stephen Olford's Notes on the Sermon Outlines of Graham Scroggie* (Port Colborne: Gospel Folio Press, 2008), 21-24.

⁵⁴⁶ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Wheaton, Illinois: Oasis International Ltd, 2012), 30.

The Big Idea helps develop the title of the sermon and the complementing ideas help draw out the outlines.

In outlining a passage using the oral homiletic methodology, the linear-logical style is avoided. Since the target is a narrative sermon, the outline is usually in the form of a narrative plot. It could be a dramatic plot having a background, conflict, rising action, climax and resolution.⁵⁴⁷ It may follow the Monroe Motivated Sequencing moving from attention to need, satisfaction, visualisation and action.⁵⁴⁸ Lowry's homiletic plots consist of upsetting the equilibrium, analysing the discrepancy, disclosing the key to resolution, experiencing the gospel and anticipating the consequences.⁵⁴⁹ Paul Scott Wilson has also proposed the sermon in four pages method. Page one is trouble and conflict in the Bible, page two is trouble in the world, page three is grace and good news in the Bible and page four is grace and good news in the world.⁵⁵⁰

After outlining, is the preparation of the manuscript. The manuscript is the full text of the sermon to be preached. It is a paradox to want to write a sermon that ought to be oral. So, a manuscript can be avoided completely. The sermon can simply be internalised. However, for the sake of record, a manuscript becomes useful. In the case of this paper, a manuscript will be provided since that is the only visual representation of what can be preached. Whether internalised or written, an African oral sermon should be enriched with stories, proverbs, folklore and other oral elements that make communication come alive. The

⁵⁴⁷ Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching With Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 2007), 70-71

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid, 88

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid, 89

⁵⁵⁰ Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of a Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2018), xiv

amount of oral resources to be engaged depend on the length of sermon and timing of delivery.

The delivery of an African oral sermon should be extemporaneous and full of life and passion. Richard Lischer encourages that in reaching oral audiences, the sermon style must be marked by “falsomeness, repetition, high emotion, frequent use of formulaic language, inclusion of words and phrases because of their euphony rather than cognitive contribution, patterns of organisation that is anything but syllogistic.”⁵⁵¹ The sermon should be enriched with pointed, pithy and reasonable sayings and the surprise and drama of the story kept intact. There should not be dryness, nor should there be over explanation of the story at the expense of the listeners reliving the story.⁵⁵²

The elements of exegeses, organisation, outlining, manuscript and delivery will now be applied to Matthew 16:13-20. Since this is a short journal article, the treatments will be as brief as possible.

Exegesis

The setting of this story is a pagan city called Caesarea Philippi, close to a grotto that was devoted to the worship of Pan, a Greek deity. There was also the temple dedicated by Herod for the worship of Caesar. It, therefore, was a most unexpected place for the kind of divine revelation that emerged.⁵⁵³ The response of his disciples to the question, “whom do men say that I am” showed a Jewish understanding of the nature of Jesus’ coming as the Messiah. The suggestion of John the Baptist was based on the opinion of Herod Antipas in Matt. 14:1, 2. Elijah was

⁵⁵¹ Richard Lischer, “The Limits of Story.” *Interpretation* 38, no. 1 (January 1984): 26-38

⁵⁵² Ivor Calvin Greer, *Orality and Christian Discipleship: Developing a 'Living' Word*. MA diss., Bangor University, 2011, 80

⁵⁵³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 89

prophesied by Malachi as destined to return before the coming of the Messiah. From extra-biblical sources such as 2 Esdras. 2:18; 2 Macc. 2:4-7, Jeremiah was also expected to come as a precursor of the Messiah. "One of the prophets" indicates that Jesus might have been any of the celebrated prophets revived and restored to life. These are all indications that Jesus was highly revered but not regarded as the Messiah as at this time.⁵⁵⁴

Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah. The use of the term Messiah for Jesus implies "a confession that in Jesus, the Old Testament promises of restoration and salvation are coming to pass."⁵⁵⁵ While the Jews expected a triumphant Messiah, the New Testament revealed a suffering Messiah. This is usually a secret identity that Christ maintained. Even after the confession, he warned that no one should mention this (v 20). Christ affirmed that the revelation that led to Peter's confession was, however, divine, not by "flesh and blood" – a Jewish phrase for human beings.⁵⁵⁶ The name "Peter" and "rock" are cognate terms used interchangeably in the Greek. As the confessor, Peter became the rock and others would "build on the foundation by their proclamation of the same confession."⁵⁵⁷ The feminine form, *petra*, and not the masculine *petros*, which means "a lump of stone" was used. So, the foundation of the building is a large expanse of rock. Arguments continue to exist on whether it was on Peter or his confession that the church was built.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 90

⁵⁵⁵ I. H. Marshall, "Church." In Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (eds), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 124

⁵⁵⁶ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 90

⁵⁵⁷ Lothar Coenen, "Church, Synagogue." In Colin Brown (ed), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 1, (Exeter, Devon, U.K.: The Paternoster Press, Ltd., 1975), 302. Also see Marshall, "Church," 124.

⁵⁵⁸ Marshall, "Church," 124

Jesus' promise to build his church, *ekklessia*, is an indication that the *ekklessia* belongs to the Messiah in the Messianic community. The gates of Hades signify the cosmic scale of the church and the fact that "this is the divinely instituted community of the end time against which the full force of evil is pitted."⁵⁵⁹

Situation	Jesus arrived at Caesarea of Philippi and decided to ask his disciples a question, "who do people say the son of man is?"
Complication	The disciples swiftly announced the different prophets Jesus had been likened with and the story might have ended there. But Jesus asked again who they personally think he was.
Resolution	Peter declared by revelation that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Simon was blessed and Jesus promised to build his church on the rock, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. He also promised to give him the keys of the kingdom empowering him to bind and lose.
Application	The church was founded upon the revelation of Christ's identity as the Messiah, the Son of the living God and membership of it continues to be based on this revelation and confession. The church is a project of Jesus who would build it. He remains the head of the church and the one that continues to love and nurture it. The church is pitched against the gates of Hades, and every believer will carry on with the spiritual warfare to keep its victory The church is empowered with the keys of the kingdom, to bind and lose and hence empowered to see result as it carries out its mission on earth.

Table 1. Organisation and Outlining⁵⁶⁰

The gate of Hades is the realm and power of death.⁵⁶¹ The mention of "keys" is very significant. The keeping of keys is the most important role of a household servant, so it is for high

⁵⁵⁹ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Comentary*, 90

⁵⁶⁰ This plot is an adaptation of the SCR (Situation-Complication-Resolution) framework which is known to have been used for millennials, going back to the ancient Greek and beyond. With application added, it remains one of the simplest plots for narrative sermons. See "How to tell a Business Story Using the McKinsey Situation-Complication-Resolution (SCR) Framework," www.thecuriosityvine.com/post/how-to-tell.

⁵⁶¹ Keener *The IVP Bible Background Comentary*

officials in a royal kingdom and for the temple. Craig S. Keener stated, “keys here refer to the authority to admit into the kingdom (Mt 23:13), based on the knowledge of the truth about Jesus (16:16).” Binding and losing are used for Rabbis for using the scripture to prohibit or permit in judicial situation.⁵⁶²

Sermon Manuscript

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

Matthew 16:13-20

The question of identity is usually a big one when it comes to knowing who we are, who others think we are, and who we expect others to know we are. There is this story of a camel and his father in a London zoo. Listen to their conversation:

“Father, why is it that we have humps on our backs?”

“Well son, we have humps on our backs which contain fat to sustain us through many days when we are out in the desert.”

“Oh thanks, Dad,” said the youngster.

He then asked,

“Father, why is it that we have long eyelashes over our eyes?”

“Well son,” said the father, “in the desert, there are many sandstorms which whip up a lot of sand which can get into our eyes. The long eyelashes protect our eyes from being blinded.”

“Oh thanks, father,” said the youngster.

“Father, why is it that we have great big padded feet?”

⁵⁶² Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Comentary*

“Well son, in the desert, the sand is very soft and we need big feet to be able to walk on the sand without our feet sinking into the soft sand.”

“Well thanks, Father, but what are we doing in London Zoo?”

The questions that this young camel raised are questions of identity? If the father did not care, this young son cared to know who he was. For him, if they had humps to sustain them through many days in the desert, long eyelashes to prevent sand from entering their eyes and blind them, great padded feet to walk without sinking in the soft sand, then, he thinks they don't belong to the London zoo. They ought to be masters of Africa Saharan deserts. That is who they are!

Unlike these London-confined masters of the African desert, Jesus did not have a problem with identity. He knew who he is. Seven times in the book of John, he boldly declared: I am the bread of life (6:35, 48, 51), I am the light of the world (8:12; 9:5), I am the door of the sheep (10:7, 9), I am the good shepherd (0:11, 14), I am the resurrection and the life (11:25), I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), I am the true vine (15:1). But today and on this occasion, there was something he was driving at. He asked the disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” It's like we used to ask in one of the praise songs in my local church:

Ki le nfoba pe?

Who do you say the King is?

Oba o, Oba alase Oba

The King the Sovereign King, the King

Oba toto bi aro

The King, as deep as indigo

Oba o, Oba alase oba

The King the Sovereign King, the King

Oba rere bi osun

The King is profound as camwood resin

Oba oba o, Oba alase, Oba

The King the Sovereign King, the King

And the answers began to roll in. Some said he was John the Baptist. Yes, Herod Antipas seemed to have sold that idea in Matt. 14:1, 2. Some said he was Elijah. Malachi hinted at that in his prophesy (Mal 4:5). Some said he was Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Those may be ideas coming from some extra-biblical sources. Whatever they said, there was an indication that Jesus was highly respected but no one knew what was coming from this probe he has begun.

The venue of the question is not an expected one. It was at Caesarea Philippi, a pagan territory close to a grotto that was devoted to the worship of Pan, a Greek deity. It was a place that hosted the temple dedicated by Herod for the worship of Caesar. But Jesus knew what he was driving at. And as my people would say, *“when a blacksmith continues to hammer the iron on the same spot, there is something he wants to bring out of it.”*

He threw the question at the disciples: But what about you?” “Who do you say I am? The “you” here is very significant. You are the ones I have walked with for these years. You are the ones who have known me in and out. You are the ones who have known my deepest secrets. Jesus was leaning on the power of relationship. The Yoruba would say, *when a leaf stays long enough on a soap, it becomes a soap*. One would have expected a chorused answer, but perhaps we would also have seen a dead silence because the only person who responded did not do so out of the ordinary. When Peter answered and said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” Jesus response was, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.”

But Jesus had arrived where he was heading. He did not waste any time in announcing, “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” When he made a sudden stop at Caesarea Philippi, the church was on his mind, a church that will not be for the Jews alone, but Gentiles, and for Africa and the entire world. When he asked, who do men say I am, he had the church on his mind. The church cannot grow above the revelation of those who would belong to it. When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah and he, in turn, affirmed that this revelation was divine, it means a few things about the church to which you and I belong.

First, it means the church was founded upon the revelation of Christ’s identity as the Messiah, the Son of the living God and membership of it continues to be based on this revelation and confession. Till today, the entry point into the church remains, “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Rom 10:9). If there is anyone who has not made that declaration, this is a very good time for that.

Secondly, the church is a project of Jesus who would build it. He remains the head of the church and the one that continues to love and nurture it. While the confession of Peter is pivotal to this declaration of Jesus, he did not build his church on any human being or depend on them to survive. Rather he has made believers to be a kingdom and priests to serve him (Rev 1:6). So, here is the challenge: What role are you playing to grow the church under Christ’s headship?

Thirdly, the church is pitched against the gates of Hades, and every believer has to carry on with the spiritual warfare to keep its victory. Paul told us in Ephesians 6:10-11, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the

devil's schemes." In Africa, the church is struggling under the siege of Islamic fundamentalism, nominalism from inside and secularism from outside. With Christ as the Commander of our army, we shall triumph.

Finally, the church is empowered with the key of the kingdom, to bind and to loose. The Geek rendered that verse: whatever we bind on earth must have been bound in heaven and whatever we loose on earth must have been loosed in heaven. Once we are connected with God's will and purpose, there is nothing we cannot use the key to do – salvation of souls for the sinners, healing for those who are sick, deliverance for the oppressed, and all that Jesus promised we will do in his name.

Jesus promised to build his church. For over two thousand years he has been building it. The gates of Hades have tried but have not overcome it. What would you want the Lord of the church, the Messiah to do for you this moment? You want to be saved, you want to be healed, you want to be restored, or there is a battle you are facing and you need victory? Please come over and let us pray together.

Conclusion

This paper examined what ecclesiology is, particularly what an African ecclesiology should be. It also provided a framework for utilising an African homiletical method for preaching Matthew 16:13-20 which remains a significant scripture hub of biblical ecclesiology. Using an oral homiletic approach, an exegesis was carried out for the passage, a narrative homiletic plot was developed, and a sermon manuscript was provided. The church is having its heydays in Africa, and this opportunity must be well sustained. The pulpit remains one of the great assets of the preacher to enthrone God's kingdom all over the continent, help it rise above its current existential and developmental challenges, and be a blessing to the entire globe. Africans are predominantly oral, and the western linear-logical approach to preaching does not resonate well with their communication

paradigm. Preachers can find a model in what has been presented in this paper to develop biblical and African sermons when they balance the task of good exegesis with sound delivery, seasoned with African oral elements such as stories, songs, proverbs, folktales, and drama.

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