

*Does Preaching Matter?
More Than Ever!*

Harry Emerson Fosdick Lecture on Preaching

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Does Preaching Matter? More Than Ever!

Amid a pandemic, economic and ecological crisis, painful reminder of racial justice, and a period of drastic political polarization, one may wonder whether or not the preaching of the church matters. Fair question. Yet at the same time, preaching the love, justice, and mercy of God has never mattered more. Preaching matters because it reminds us that the challenges of the day, while urgent, are neither the only nor ultimate realities with which we live. It matters because in the proclamation of the Gospel we are reminded of our primary identity as God's beloved children. And it matters because a central component of the Gospel is the promise that the future is in God's hands.

Today, the Office of Campus Ministry at Augsburg University in conjunction with Rev. Greg Renstrom and St. Ninian Press offers our fourth *Harry Emerson Fosdick Lecture on Preaching* entitled, "Does Preaching Matter? More Than Ever!" Our lecturer is Rev. David Lose, Senior Pastor at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Rev. Lose is the former president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA and is the author of the "Making Sense" series of books.

We are grateful for your presence among us to share in this morning time of reflection, conversation, and worship as we recognize the importance of resurrection hope in honor of the great 20th Century preacher, Harry Fosdick.

Morning Schedule in Hoversten Chapel and via Zoom

- 10:30 am: Welcome** by Rev. Dr. Justin Lind-Ayres, Augsburg University Campus Pastor and Director of Campus Ministries and Rev. Greg Renstrom
Lecture "Does Preaching Matter? More Than Ever!"
Rev. Dr. David Lose
Q & A Session
- 11:25 am:** Prelude
- 11:30 am:** Daily Chapel in Hoversten Chapel
Rev. Dr. David Lose, Preaching
- 11:50 am:** Go in peace

“Does Preaching Matter? More Than Ever!”

Daily Chapel

Worship as part of the Fosdick Lecture on Preaching

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

We come to this time of worship honest with ourselves and each other that all is not right within us, within our institutions and communities, within our city, our country, and in the world.

God of grace: grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour.

We come trusting in Christ's promise of freedom and a palpable sense of the presence of God for all of us who live under oppression and for recovery for all of us who falsely cling to the systems of privilege and power for our salvation.

God of glory: grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days.

We come empowered by the Holy Spirit's anointing to live into the counter-narrative of unconditional love and redeeming grace fulfilled in the embodiment of God in Christ Jesus.

God of love: grant us wisdom, grant us courage serving you whom we adore.

We come with purpose and calling, unbound and free, to worship our glorious God.

GATHERING HYMN

God of Grace and God of Glory

Hymn text written by Harry Emerson Fosdick

- 1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your pow'r;
crown your ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.
- 2 Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn the Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days,

- 4 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

Text: Harry E. Fosdick, 1878-1969; Music: John Hughes, 1873-1932

PRAYER OF THE DAY

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

HOMILY

Rev. David Lose

HYMN When We Are Tested

- 1 When we are tested and wrestle alone,
famished for bread when the world offers stone,
nourish us, God, by your word and your way,
food that sustains us by night and by day.
- 2 When in the desert we cry for relief,
pleading for paths marked by certain belief,
lift us to love you beyond sign and test,
trusting your presence, our only true rest.
- 3 When we are tempted to barter our souls,
trading the truth for the pow'r to control,
teach us to worship and praise only you,
seeking your will in the work that we do.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947 Text © 1996 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Permission to print, live stream, and podcast the music in this service is granted by CCLI License # 11525157 and One License Print/Streaming A-723242.

WORSHIP LEADERS

Preaching: Rev. Dr. David Lose, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis

Liturgist: Rev. Justin Lind-Ayres, Augsburg University Pastor

Pianist: Tom Witt, Interim Campus Ministry Musician

A Word of Gratitude

This event was made possible by many hands and hearts. First and foremost, thank you to Rev. Dr. David Lose for agreeing to enter into this venture. By the offering of your gifts, we enter again into God's hope for us and for the world. Our thanks also to the Riverside Church in New York City, where Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick served from 1930-1946, for supporting this lecture. Also, to the Events staff and A'viands at Augsburg University for logistics and food. And finally to Rev. Greg Renstrom and St. Ninian Press for imagining the possibility of this event.



Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969)

Harry Emerson Fosdick, the founding minister of Riverside Church in New York City, was regarded by Martin Luther King, Jr., as “the greatest preacher of this century.” One of liberal Protestantism’s most influential voices, Fosdick was a proponent of ecumenical Christianity, pacifism, and civil rights, whose radio sermons and writings reached millions.

Fosdick was born in Buffalo, New York, and earned his BA at Colgate University (1900), his BD at Union Theological Seminary (1903), and his MA at Columbia University (1908). Fosdick became pastor of New York City’s First Presbyterian Church in 1919. He sparked national controversy in the 1920s for challenging Christian fundamentalism’s literal reading of the Bible and rejection of historical biblical analysis, and was forced to resign from First Presbyterian in 1925 because of it.

After his resignation, millionaire John D. Rockefeller, Jr., asked Fosdick to head Park Avenue Baptist Church. When he declined because he did not “want to be known as the pastor of the richest man in the country,” Rockefeller responded: “Do you think that more people will criticize you on account of my wealth than will criticize me on account of your theology?” Fosdick accepted on the condition that the church be nondenominational, and the nonsectarian Riverside Church was born.

As Riverside’s pastor until 1946, Fosdick was also professor of practical theology at Union Theological Seminary. He wrote, “I am commonly thought of as a preacher, but I should not put preaching central in my ministry. Personal counseling has been central. My preaching at its best has itself been personal counseling on a group scale.

Fosdick was also a visible proponent of social gospel Christianity. In a copy of his own 1958 memoir of the boycott, *Stride Toward Freedom*, King inscribed, “If I were called upon to select the foremost prophets of our generation, I would choose you to head the list.” After receiving the book, Fosdick replied, “We are all unpayably in your debt, not only for what you did but for putting the story down where thousands of people can read it.”

Before each preaching event, Fosdick said, “My silent prayer rose each Sunday before the sermon started: ‘O God, some one person here needs what I am going to say. Help me to reach that person!’” This Fosdick Lecture in Preaching seeks to carry that prayer forward reaching out with pastoral sensitive, a call to social action, and a commitment to the God of grace found in great love story of scripture.

This material is a compilation from the *Martin Luther King, Jr. and Global Freedom Struggle* online encyclopedia (kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu) and the “Introduction” written by Henry Pitney Van Dusen from *Riverside Sermons* by Harry Emerson Fosdick (1958).