Setting Words on Fire: Putting God at the Center of the Sermon

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In the second half of the twentieth century, a profound shift took place in how we think about preaching. We moved away from a vertical focus on the preacher who hands down the authoritative teaching, to more relational, narrative, and conversational models. Yet common to both of these understandings, says Paul Scott Wilson, is the idea that preaching is primarily about teaching, that it mainly conveys information about God.Important as this emphasis on "preaching as teaching" has been, Wilson believes that the time for a new approach has arrived. That new approach, which he names "preaching as proclamation," has begun to arise from a variety of Euro-American and African American sources. Its primary aim is not to convey information, but to engender an encounter with God's grace in Christ. More than guiding people to say "Yes, now I understand," it hopes to lead them to proclaim "I am redeemed; we are saved." More than telling the gospel story, it renders the gospel's claim on human lives, leading to conviction of sin, repentance, and transformation.

Pulling together the disparate strands of this new homiletical school, Wilson constructs a comprehensive introduction to preaching, focusing on its character as proclamation of the sovereign grace of God.

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