

Editorial

The Most important sermon in Christian history is not eligible for www.sermonaudio.com

The State reported this week about an innovation by conservative Christian ministers to extend the reach of their preaching beyond the walls of their churches through a web site called SermonAudio.com. While the web site is open to anyone willing to sit at their computer and listen, it is not open to just any preacher. There are standards.

Standards are generally good and helpful, particularly when it comes to preaching. After all, if there is anything even preachers can agree upon, it is that there is a lot of bad preaching going on.

Unfortunately, bad preaching is not a new thing. Søren Kierkegaard, the 19th century Danish Christian philosopher, complained about the poor quality of preachers in his day, lamenting that “the preaching is like reading a cookbook to someone who is starving.”

Being a preacher myself, I was interested to discover what standards are in place for this web site. Apparently, no sermons are accepted from Catholics, Mormons or liberal Christian denominations. Also not welcome are women preachers. The web site embraces the “historic Protestant faith” which would appear to disqualify all sermons preached by Christians in the first one thousand five hundred years following the birth of Christ.

This confusing set of standards led me to consider the eligibility of the most important sermon ever delivered in the history of the Christian faith, and whether it would be permitted on the web site. Unfortunately, it appears you will not be able to find this preacher on SermonAudio.com.

Strike one for this preacher—she was a woman. Strike two for this preacher—she hung out with a group that was considered “liberal” by the religious authorities of her day. Strike three for this preacher—we do not have any evidence that she was ever baptized. Even if she was baptized, her baptism certainly did not take place in a Protestant Church.

The preacher of the most important sermon in Christian history is none other than Mary Magdalene. According to the Bible, she was the first witness of the risen Lord. She is also the first preacher personally commissioned by Jesus Christ himself.

She did as her Lord commanded, and faithfully went to the disciples to spread the unbelievably good news of the resurrection. As a result, she became the preacher of the very first Easter sermon.

As sermons go, it was the most powerful, clear, and wonderful good news ever preached about Jesus Christ. It was also blessedly brief (talk about standards). And since this preacher’s sermon is not eligible for posting on SermonAudio.com, you should at least have the benefit of reading it here:

“I have seen the Lord!” (John 20:18)

This remarkable sermon still echoes powerfully and clearly today, all over the world. And you don't even need to sit at your computer to hear it. Just show up in most any church on Easter Day and you will likely hear, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia!"

The Rev. Furman Buchanan is a priest at St. Martins in the Fields Episcopal Church in Columbia, where this Easter sermon will be proclaimed beginning at the Easter Vigil on this Saturday night!