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# Preaching the presence of God: a homiletic from an Asian American perspective

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Observing Morrie's upbeat manner in the face of death, listening to the wisdom he generously shares, makes this a most engaging book. *Tuesdays with Morrie* was lent to me by a parishioner, himself confined to a wheelchair and without the ability to swallow or talk. As I began to read it I thought, "I can understand why this book appeals to him." By the third chapter I had forgotten my parishioner and was reading for myself. I read it in one sitting. Then I re-read it the next day.

Nor is this a "Christian" book. Morrie was a Jew who embraced atheism at an early age. Yet it is deeply spiritual, right at home with the teachings of the church. For example, Morrie has learned that material things don't satisfy. Rather, satisfaction comes from "offering others what you have to give". Morrie illustrates this with what might pass as a modern paraphrase of Jesus' cup of cold water: playing cards with a lonely old man. It's that simple.

This is an ideal book for those working with the terminally ill or permanently shut-in, for those wrestling with their own mortality, or simply for those of us who are searching for a refreshing alternative to our bankrupt modern culture's offerings. The layout of the book with its teacher-student paradigm, makes it an ideal study book for a college and careers group.

Dennis Becker  
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Oshawa, Ontario

## **Preaching The Presence of God: A Homiletic From An Asian American Perspective**

Eunjoo Mary Kim

Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999

\$24.95 Softcover

As an ethnic minister (Korean) who works in an English speaking congregation (White), I always wonder about whether or not there is a necessity for a specific sermon style for a particular context. The book, *Preaching the Presence of God*, focusses on the Asian American context, was enough to interest me. Historical and cultural background play an important role in making modern identity, especially in an Asian-American (Chinese, Korean and Japanese) context. The traditional religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and their own indigenous religions such as Shamanism, Shintoism, etc., could be their religious background. However, how much and still they have influenced Asian American life, especially in their Christian belief, is a controversial issue. Before reading the book, I wanted to get information about the real context of Asian Americans with a specific report, such as a result of a survey or a demographic

data. Today's society is characterized as rapidly changing, pluralistic and multicultural. I believe that today's Asian American context is much different from the actual environments of these three countries in the Far East.

The book gives excellent information to those who want to know about Asian American context, especially for those who want to serve immigrant churches. As the book stresses, the context of the Asian American church is different from the mainline church. The book explains why and what is different (religious and cultural background), and suggests how to approach the Asian American church in a sermon (methodology). Spiritual preaching and the "Spiral-Form" sermon are recommended as the most effective and efficient method of preaching for the Asian-American church. Unfortunately, there is a lack of theoretical development and detailed examples of the form and style in sermon in the book.

In my experience, both in the Korean-Canadian Church and White-English speaking congregations, there is a lot of differences and similarities. As the book points out, cultural and traditional background are crucial in understanding the Asian American church. However, the context cannot be the centre in the preparation of sermon. The Word of God has the power of transformation. Moreover, the church is not an organization, she is an organism which grows, adapts, adjusts and changes the context. Although a specific context can be a beginning point for a sermon, it is not the dwelling place. I believe that Chinese, Korean and Japanese Christians have their own characteristics and unique cultures and historical backgrounds different from those of Buddhism, Confucianism or indigenous religions. The culture of Asian American Christians would be closer to Western Christianity than other religions. That is how I can survive in a foreign context. *Preaching the Presence of God* is a good introductory book for getting to know the Asian American context with a lot of bibliographic materials.

Sung T. Shim  
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### **Preacher and Cross: Person and Message in Theology and Rhetoric**

André Resner, Jr.

Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1999

205 pages, \$28.99 Softcover

Let's have a debate. Is successful preaching dependent more upon the preacher's character or the sermon's content? What makes a sermon more persuasive: the messenger of the Gospel or the message of the Gospel? Resner deserves credit for reopening an old debate in homiletics – should preachers learn more from rhetoric or theology in order to preach better? As with most