

# **PREKEN TUSSEN DE VERHALEN**

- een homiletische doordenking van narrativiteit -

Kees van Dusseldorp

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## **PREKEN TUSSEN DE VERHALEN**

- een homiletische doordenking van narrativiteit -

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

TER VERKRIJGING VAN DE GRAAD VAN  
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OP GEZAG VAN DE RECTOR DR. M. TE VELDE,  
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ZO GOD WIL IN HET OPENBAAR TE VERDEDIGEN  
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# INHOUD

<b>WOORD VOORAF</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INHOUD</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>HOOFDSTUK 1: INLEIDING</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.1 Motieven</b>	13
a. De preekpraktijk	13
b. De preektheorie	15
c. Persoonlijke motieven	16
<b>1.2 Onderzoeksvraag</b>	17
<b>1.3 Eerste verkenning in narrativiteit</b>	18
a. Verhalende preken	18
b. Narratieve homiletiek en theologie	19
c. Narrativiteit als paradigma	20
<b>1.4 Basislijnen in de gereformeerde homiletiek</b>	21
a. Gereformeerde praktische theologie	21
b. Formele homiletiek	24
c. Theologische homiletiek	24
<b>1.5 Onderzoeksweg</b>	28
<b>1.6 Vertel het Verhaal</b>	29
<i>Vertel het Verhaal &lt;Genesis 18:1-15 &gt;</i>	<b>31</b>
<b>DEEL A: EXPLOREREN</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>HOOFDSTUK 2: HERMENEUTISCHE NARRATIVITEIT</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.1 Hermeneutische ontwikkelingen</b>	36
a. Verschuiving object	36
b. Problematisering methode	37
c. Subjectivering normativiteit	39
d. Cultuur, paradigma en ideologie	40
<b>2.2 Narratologische aspecten</b>	42
a. Literaire verhaalwetenschap	42
b. Communicatief verhaalonderzoek	46
c. Semiotisch verhaalmodel	47
<b>2.3 Hermeneutiek en narrativiteit</b>	52
a. Relatieniveaus	53
b. Narratieve hermeneutiek	54
c. Hermeneutische narrativiteit	57
<b>2.4 Onderzoeksweg</b>	59

<b>HOOFDSTUK 3: NARRATIEVE THEOLOGIE</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.1 Ontwikkeling van narratieve theologie</b>	61
a. Angelsaksische wortels	61
b. Continentale wortels	63
c. Verdere ontwikkeling	64
<b>3.2 Narratieve thema's uit de theologie</b>	65
a. Bijbelwetenschap	66
b. Kerkgeschiedenis	70
c. Ethiek	73
d. Pastorale zorg	76
e. Catechese	77
f. Systematische theologie	81
<b>3.3 Narratieve structuren in de theologie</b>	82
a. Niveaus in narrativiteit	83
b. Belangen bij narrativiteit	86
<b>3.4 Onderzoeksweg</b>	87
<b>HOOFDSTUK 4: NARRATIVITEIT IN DE HOMILETIK</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>4.1 Overzicht</b>	89
a. David Buttrick (1987)	89
b. G.D.J. Dingemans (1991)	94
c. C.J.A. Vos (1996)	99
d. Albrecht Grözinger (2008)	101
<b>4.2 Homiletische sleutels</b>	103
a. Horst Albrecht (1982)	103
b. Eugene L. Lowry (1980)	104
c. Richard A. Jensen (1980; 1994)	106
d. J.S. Kellerman (1991; 1995)	107
e. C. Trimp (1991)	109
f. Charles L. Campbell (1997)	110
<b>4.3 Narratieve structuren</b>	111
a. Narratieve ordening	112
b. Hermeneutische ordening	113
c. Homiletische ordening	115
<b>4.4 Narratieve trends</b>	116
a. Theologie van de preek	116
b. Preek en bijbel	120
c. Preek en hoorder	123
d. Praktijk van de preek	127
<b>4.5 Onderzoeksweg</b>	130
<i>Vertel het Verhaal &lt;Psalm 130&gt;</i>	<i>133</i>

**HOOFDSTUK 5: PREKEN IN HET VERHAAL VAN GOD** \_\_\_\_\_ **137**

<b>5.1 'Het Grote Verhaal'</b>	137
a. Het Verhaal in meervoud	137
b. Kenmerken narratief perspectief	140
c. Kritisch gesprek	141
<b>5.2 Bijbel, openbaring en prediking</b>	143
a. Bijbel en openbaring	144
b. Openbaring en prediking	149
c. Prediking en Bijbel	152
<b>5.3 Het Verhaal en gereformeerde homiletiek</b>	156
a. Historiciteit	156
b. Tekstualiteit	159
c. Heilshistorisch reliëf	162
d. Subjectivering	165
<b>5.4 Preken in het verhaal van God</b>	167

**HOOFDSTUK 6: PREKEN IN HET VERHAAL VAN DE MENS** \_\_\_\_\_ **171**

<b>6.1 De narratieve mens</b>	172
a. Achtergronden	172
b. Narratieve aspecten van de mens	176
c. Theologische vragen	186
<b>6.2 Het bijbelse Verhaal van de mens</b>	188
a. Geschapen: het verhaal als persoonlijk antwoord	190
b. Gevallen: de fragmentatie en manipulatie van het verhaal	191
c. Verzoend: de waarheid of leugen van het verhaal	192
d. Voltooid: de openheid en beweging van het verhaal	193
<b>6.3 Narrativiteit en normativiteit</b>	194
a. Een narratieve wereld	195
b. Een narratieve identiteit	201
c. Narratieve communicatie	209
<b>6.4 Preken in het verhaal van de mens</b>	217

**Vertel het Verhaal <Efeziërs 6:10-20>** \_\_\_\_\_ **219**

<b>HOOFDSTUK 7: PREKEN TUSSEN DE VERHALEN</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>7.1 Preken: het vertellen van Gods Verhaal</b>	225
a. Preken als roeping	226
b. Preken als wonder	228
c. Preken als kunst	232
<b>7.2 De prediker als verteller</b>	234
a. De prediker en de verhalen	234
b. De prediker en het vertellen	236
<b>7.3 De narratieve competentie van de prediker</b>	237
a. Homiletische competenties	237
b. Narratieve competentie	243
<b>7.4 De narratieve prediker</b>	247
a. Het verhaal van de prediker (perspectief: narratieve sensibiliteit)	248
b. Het verhaal van de hoorder (perspectief: narratieve attitude)	252
c. Het verhaal van de tekst (perspectief: narratieve kennis)	257
d. Het verhaal van de preek (perspectief: narratieve vaardigheid)	263

<i>Vertel het Verhaal &lt;Lukas 2:12&gt;</i>	<i>271</i>
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<i>LITERATUUR</i>	<i>273</i>
-------------------	------------

<i>SAMENVATTING</i>	<i>293</i>
---------------------	------------

<i>SUMMARY</i>	<i>297</i>
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<i>INDEX VAN AUTEURS</i>	<i>301</i>
--------------------------	------------

<i>CURRICULUM VITAE</i>	<i>303</i>
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## SUMMARY

*Preaching amidst the stories.* The title of this study contains the two terms which refer to the field of research. Preaching and telling both refer to the communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It not only is related to activities, but to the products of sermon and story as well. In this study both fields are actively linked to each other by means of a hermeneutical methodology. After a brief explanation of the underlying motives for the research topic, Chapter 1 leads to this research question: *What is the value of a narrative perspective for Reformed homiletics?* The aim of the study is to offer an evaluation of the narrative perspective with a view to extending the homiletic practice. A first orientation shows that a narrative approach is taken at various levels of homiletics, whereby narrativity – as a hermeneutical paradigm – is the most fundamental and all-embracing level. This is summarized in the statement that “human are narrative beings”. Before the actual research begins, a number of basic lines in Reformed homiletics are drawn by means of which this study positions itself within the whole of practical theology.

The first stage of the study is about exploration. There is no such thing as THE narrative perspective. There are just too many different methodologies, perspectives and intentions in an ever-widening stream of publications. Exploration involves collecting as well as analysing contributions, positions and developments within the field of research. In Chapter 2 this exploration is used in a versatile way within homiletics and narratology in order to conceptualize narrativity. Developments in hermeneutics result in three fundamental groups of questions focusing on: subjectivity, temporality and the reference of human knowledge. Narrative approaches provide space for these groups of questions in a postmodern way. Narratology explains why contemporary hermeneutics is referred to as ‘narrative’. By means of literary, communicative and semiotic insights into narratives a new narratological model is designed, which accommodates the various characteristics of a narrative. This narratological model not only answer the question of what constitutes a narrative, but it also helps to analyse and develop narrative approaches.

Narrative approaches occur everywhere in theology. The outline of the development of these approaches in Chapter 3 shows to what extent the rise of narrative theology is connected with the resistance to rationalism and objectivism in culture and theology. By now, narrative theology has long outgrown the phase of a reactionary theology and has been developed in all branches of theology. In this development, the relation to the Bible or God’s Narrative plays an important part. Narrative approaches keep demanding attention for the non-rational aspects of man and an open, critical and subjective perspective on reality. The different narrative applications within the various theological disciplines can ultimately be distinguished on the basis of two criteria: (1) What narrative level is under discussion (the narrative *content*)?; (2) What narratives are in view (the narrative *shape*)?

In Chapter 4 we finally arrive at our immediate field of research: narrativity and homiletics. In this chapter we start a journey of exploration, first of all through four recent hermeneutically oriented textbooks on homiletics. Next, a number of important indicators are discussed: homiletic contributions that have played a decisive role in integrating narrativity in homiletics. After that, as an interim step, the various positions are ordered in three models. Firstly, the various narratives that play a role in the homiletic situation are distinguished. Secondly, a layered model is designed for distinguishing the narrative applications according to the hermeneutically communicative levels. Finally, the narrative themes are positioned in the formal division of homiletics. This formal division then functions as the framework for an extension and deepening in current homiletic literature, as far as it has explicitly dealt with narrativity. This offers a wide panorama of narrativity in homiletics. Theological implications of a narrative perspective for Reformed homiletics have been described. This concludes the stage of exploration.

The study then continues with evaluating the theological and homiletical questions that have been formulated. In Chapter 5 the questions in relation to 'God's Narrative' are discussed, together with the implications of that expression for the content of preaching. Views on the revelation of God, the historicity of the Bible and the role of preaching come under discussion. A preliminary confrontation between 'God's Narrative' and classical Reformed homiletics results in the number of exciting questions with respect to historicity, textuality, redemptive history and subjectivization. Answers to these questions can only be convincing if they are formulated on the basis of a transparent concept within foundational homiletics. That is why – within a Reformed paradigm – a new description on the relation between revelation, Scripture and preaching is presented. This concept functions as a homiletic framework for evaluating the critical questions and objections raised against a narrative perspective. The conclusion is that Reformed homiletics must be reinforced and enriched from a narrative perspective. This should be considered not only legitimate and sound, but also desirable and necessary. If this does not take place, the result will be a hermeneutical, communicative and theological deficiency in homiletics. In the proclamation of the gospel, God's Narrative about man and the world continues.

Chapter 6 discusses the second fundamental group of questions revolving around the narrative of man. The point of entry here is the 'narrativity thesis' which states that human consciousness is structured narratively: that human beings live in a world full of narratives and that they are continually busy with the narratives of their own lives. First of all, the narrative identity of man is described and elaborated by means of the narratological model that was already developed. This description produces a great deal of homiletic questions that can be summarized in the following three: (1) how narrative is the world in which we live; (2) how narrative is our identity?; (3) how narrative is our inter-human communication? A convincing discussion requires a normative concept in which the relations between God, man and world are described in a new way. The biblical Narrative of man offers a fruitful concept for a narrative approach of man within practical theology. On the basis of this normative concept, the narrativity thesis can be taken seriously, accepted and developed. With a critical, theological and homiletic attitude, narrativity and normativity are connected and the

concepts of narrative world, narrative identity and narrative communication are developed further. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the narrative perspective on man brings important aspects into view which Reformed homiletics cannot and should not ignore. If it does, this will result in an anthropological, normative and subjective deficiency in homiletics. The hearer – in his narrativity – needs God's Narrative that is told in preaching.

After the stages of exploration and evaluation, the way has been prepared for the third stage of this study, that of concretizing. In Chapter 7 the research results will be applied in the encounter with the preacher as the one who tells God's Narrative in a world full of narratives and narrators. Before this approach is taken, a homiletic picture is drawn of preaching as a calling, a miracle and an art. The preacher has to deal with narrativity on many levels. This means he should have a narrative competence. After a critical evaluation of the way in which competence has been theorized within homiletics, a desired narrative competence is formulated: the preacher should be able to provide space for the Narrative of God's grace in Jesus Christ by constructing and delivering his sermon in such a way that the narratives of the hearer, of the text and of himself are done justice and are connected. This competence provides the homiletic practice with a good sense of direction. The study ends with a variety of practical applications and recommendations, whereby the preacher's narrative sensibility, attitude, knowledge and ability are connected to the way he deals with the narratives of himself, the hearer, the text and the sermon. Scattered throughout the book, there are four meditations that were written from a narrative and Reformed perspective. They are not meant as examples of how things *should* be done, but as illustrations of how things *could* be done. In addition to the abstract theoretical research, they offer an opportunity to show concretely how God's Narrative continues in the narrative of the sermon, whereby it is hoped that readers and hearers advance in their own narratives with God.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Kees van Dusseldorp werd op 24 oktober 1968 in Amersfoort geboren. Hij studeerde theologie aan de Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Kampen en specialiseerde zich in de homiletiek. Hij volgde colleges methodologie aan de faculteit sociale wetenschappen aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht en colleges ontologie aan de faculteit wijsbegeerte aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam. Hij schreef samen met Lieuwe Beuving een doctoraalscriptie getiteld: "Spoorzoeken. Over werking en effect van de prediking." Na het behalen van zijn doctorandustitel in 1994 is hij twee jaar als onderzoeker in dienst geweest bij de Theologische Universiteit. Ook gaf hij colleges aan het Institute of Reformed Theological Training. Vanaf 1997 diende hij als predikant binnen de Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) achtereenvolgens de kerken te Mussel, Wezep en Capelle aan den IJssel-Zuid/West. Hij was voorzitter van de vereniging Evangelisatie en Rekreatie en is dat van het Generaal Diaconaal Deputaatschap. Hij maakte deel uit van de Vakgroep Praktische Theologie van de Theologische Universiteit in Kampen en verzorgt aan die instelling een deel van het homiletiekonderwijs. Hij is getrouwd en heeft drie kinderen.