

Pastoral care in the pulpit

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This Sunday's [lectionary texts](#) are particularly awful. I'm like the boy who cried wolf with bad lectionary selections, but hear me out on this one. At my church, we are using track two, the thematic track, of the RCL. Here are the lessons for Sunday.

- Genesis 2:18-24 – the second story of the creation of humanity, including such favorites as “it is not good that man should be alone,” “this at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,” and “therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh.”
- Psalm 8 – the “How Great Thou Art” Psalm
- Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12 – Christology and Angelology all in one tidy, selected verse package.
- Mark 10:2-16 – Questions on divorce and, inexplicably, Jesus blessing children

As I've run around like an idiot this week, I've had several sermons jump into my brain, but I'm pretty sure none of them are worth preaching. Here's my list of things you shouldn't preach this Sunday in the name of Pastoral Care from the Pulpit.

- Any joke about the lonely man, lost in a paper bag because he refused to stop and ask for directions
- Any joke involving Adam, upon seeing Eve, shouting WOAHH! MAN!
- Any sermon meant to correct greeting card theology about angels that includes the line, “I know you think great aunt Martha is wearing wings and a halo and playing a harp on a cloud next to Jesus, but lemme tell you, human beings don't get to be angels...”
- Any sermon that begins, “All right, all of my adulterers, raise your hands!”

These all seemed funnier as they ran through my mind earlier, but it is too late to go back and start over now.

The problem with the texts for Sunday is that they set you up to preach a proof text. Thousands of half-hacked sermons will be written this week on the merits of children in worship and/or platitudes about entering the Kingdom with the trust of a child. Here's the thing: though they get cut some slack because they don't know any better, kids are just as selfish and just as frustrating as adults. We don't use "childish" as an insult for nothing. If you are going to preach that direction, then at least be real about it. We are all screw ups. We all spend most of our lives looking out for number one. We all have our foibles and faults. And do you know what?

Jesus puts his arm around us and blesses us too.

That might be the hardest pill to swallow this week.

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