

Preaching The Word of God in the Artificial Intelligence: Challenges And Opportunities

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing life on Earth. Many tasks are executed through AI applications. With AI, the physical contact and presence are no longer required to deliver or receive a service applied for. For the preaching activity, the introduction of AI in preaching remains an unexplored area. This paper aims to seek the implications of the use of AI in preaching the word of God, its challenges, and opportunities. A qualitative approach is used to gather information. The desk review will be used to gather data from documents related to this topic. Findings reveal that challenges related to the introduction of AI in preaching include plagiarism of sermons, a universal message that does not take into consideration the culture, audience, and context of local communities. The critical analysis and creative spirit are reduced because people believe that everything needed has been prepared already and machines preach well than human beings. This creates a lazy habit of the mind, moral abdication and blind obedience. Temple will loose the attendees. The aspect of socialization among church members after the church service will end its chapter. The present generation likes to interact with machines rather than human beings, and this will affect church life in all its sectors. Untrained ministers in the use of AI tools will no longer have a place in the church. It will negatively affect the exegesis work because everyone is a preacher through an AI platform, which is the basis for the preparation of preaching. On the other side, Opportunities are the access to many sermons well written. The audience has many choices of the

sermon to follow, reaching anybody without much effort breaking denominational barriers). The churches are requested to think about how they should value their Temples and train their members to use the AI.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, preaching. Word of God,

I. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Preaching has profoundly, and for the most part positively, influenced the morals and customs of humanity. Although the influence of the pulpit may at times be open to criticism, its negative effects have generally been minor and short-lived. Conversely, preaching itself has also been shaped at times for better and at times for worse by the prevailing customs and ethical standards of its era.

This sensitivity to the surrounding environment has often helped preaching stay active and relevant, giving it the strength to address the needs of each generation. However, we must admit that at times, public opinion and deeply rooted wrongs have influenced the message of sermons more than the officially recognized moral or religious authorities.

The history of expository preaching starts with the kind of preaching found in the Bible, where God's message was revealed and explained. True preaching in the Church today continues this same biblical pattern. Those who dedicate themselves to explaining the Scriptures inspire and challenge us

because their ministries have produced deep and lasting results

In the Old Testament, the art of proclaiming the will of God was in the hands of the Prophets. Here we can mention some of them, like Ezekiel, Nehemiah, Isaiah, etc. According to Ezekiel 3:10-11, God said to me. “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God’, whether they hear or refuse to hear”.

Ezekiel was commissioned to speak to stone-faced people who were impudent(the word in Ezekiel 2:4). Impudent people with faces showing zero emotion. That was his congregation. They were dead-faced. The preacher delivers what God has spoken, even hard words. And that means no preacher is fit to preach until “they have received the word in their heart and have a zeal for it and delight in it.

As Proverbs 16 1 says: “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.” All outputs, all talk, all Google searches, all AI Chatbots; God divinely governs every output. And without a sweat. God is not pushed out of a technological culture; he remains at the center, gloriously relevant to it (Casey T. Signon 2023).

Paul instructed Timothy to “preach the Word”(2 Tim 4:2). god has used the faithful efforts of expository preachers of his Word to bring honor to His name and to increase the faith of His saints(1 Cor.2:5) throughout history.(James F. Stitzinger,1992;5-32).

In the New Testament, before the coming of the great preacher who is Jesus Christ, Paul the Apostle played a great role in preaching the word of God. The preaching of the Apostles and other early church leaders contributes significantly to the history of expository preaching. The messages of Peter(Acts 2:14-36), Stephen (Acts 7:2-53), Paul (Acts 17:16 31), and James (Acts 15:14-21) have elements of both revelatory and explanatory

preaching. The epistles are , for the most part, written expositions designed to teach various lessons. Paul in particular gave his life to preaching Christ(1 Cor.1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5) to reveal who he was (Rom.1:18;1 Cor. 2:10; Eph.3:5) and to explain Him to people (Rom.15;4;1 Cor.10:11-17;1 Thess.3:14;1tim.1:5). During the time of Jesus Christ. He preached the Gospel and used to go from place to place preaching the Gospel to the people publicly. He left this ministry of preaching to his disciples, who used the physical presence while preaching. With the advancement of New technology, the physical presence while one is preaching is shifting to an AI Preaching system.

1.2.The problem statement

Today, the whole world is facing a rapid advancement of new Technology where the use of AI is taking the lead. The church and its church members are forced not to remain behind that technological advancement; they should embrace the use of technology and integrate it into its daily activities. Reflecting on Adoption or rejection of novel technology in a church context,Mannerfelt & Roitto R. (2025, p. 127) expresses a dilemma and argued that“Adoption or rejection of novel technology in a church context is a complex negotiation process, where the community frames the new technology in relation to core beliefs and practices as well as the community’s history and tradition of using technology”. The emergence of ChatGPT in 2022 has introduced in the public sphere the debate about how AI should be used in the church context. Competing discourses were presented to frame the adoption of this new technology.

This paper aims to explore how the physical preaching of the word of God should survive in this AI Era. The paper shall also explore the opportunities and threats brought by AI in the area of preaching. To carry out this research, the following objectives were put in place.

1.3.Objectives of the study

the main objective of this paper is to explore the challenges and opportunities of preaching the

Word of God in the era of Artificial Intelligence. From the main objective, the following specific objectives are adopted.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives:

- To explore the mode of Preaching before the coming of AI
- To explore the preaching of the word of God during the AI era
- To identify Opportunities and challenges in preaching the Word of God in the AI Era
- To address challenges faced by preaching the word of God in the AI Era

1.4. The Methodology

The methodology used is the descriptive method, where a desk review was taken into consideration to collect qualitative data from published articles on AI.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The mode of Preaching before the coming of AI

2.1.1. The Physical preaching the word of God

Preaching the word of God is the proclamation of the Good News with the purpose to call people to come to Jesus who is the great teacher. in Luke 10:25, Jesus taught his disciples and the people concerning their faith or relationship or relationship with god in the synagogue, in the villages, by the roadside, by the seaside, and wherever he found them (Kurerwa 2000: 90).

In preaching the word of God, the preacher has to be present in physical appearance and behaviour. This signifies that all things the congregants can sense about the preacher. These could include the gestures, movement, the facial expression of the preacher, the nonverbal communications used by the preacher. The way the preacher presents himself/herself before the audience, their voice and tone, all these behaviours make the sermon smooth.

The physical preaching involves the face to face between the preacher and the congregation. the use

of the hard copy Bible becomes necessary. Here, the preaching becomes biblical preaching. According to Kurerwa, Biblical preaching is the proclamation of the gospel to the gospel to the people in relation to their contemporary life, through faithful exposition of the scriptures, as one is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Such a proclamation often concludes with an invitation for a decision or action (2000:92).

According to Kurerwa, the Biblical Preaching has five components. the first is that biblical preaching is the proclamation of the gospel. Second, the biblical preaching is done in relation to people in their contemporary lives. It must be directed to people for a particular reason. Third, biblical preaching occurs through faithful exposition of the scriptures. Fourth, biblical preaching occurs as one is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Fifth, biblical preaching is often concluded with an invitation for a decision or action. (2000:94)

2.1.2. The place of preaching the word of God.

In physical preaching mode, places are used. we have the Temple, the Home place, outside the temple, on the street, in marketplaces, in the Bus while travelling. This method of going out of the temple carrying the Good News was used by Jesus. John 6:3; Luke 19:37; Luke 9:28; Marc 9:9; Marc 3:13; Mat 15:29; Mat 5:1, Mark 6:6; Mat 9:35Luke 5:3, Luke 8:1, Luke 13:22. All these verses demonstrate that even Jesus used this method of going out of the temple, teaching the Good News. Whereas the performative homiletic views the preacher as the sole and chief interpreter of Scripture and Christian identity (Lose 2013, p. 105).

The participatory homiletic sees the preacher as a creator of space for the congregation to become fluent interpreters of the Christian faith (Lose 2013, p. 107). Space is created in the sermon for the congregation to interact and participate rather than merely watching the performance of the proclamation.

The place for preaching is still Sunday, from a pulpit to a pew. The preacher is called to better connect with her congregation in the real world by visiting their place of work. The preacher has guided conversational sermons with congregants in the pulpit. The preacher has a small group come together to reflect on the upcoming text for the week, and their voices make it into the sermon. However, Lose cannot imagine for the reader a form of preaching that involves, in real-time, a community of proclamation. (Casey T. Signon, 2023).

2.1.3.The Advantages of face-to-face preaching the word of God.

This has been used by preachers of the word of God, and it has its own benefits. The congregant can hear the real voice of the preacher, they can observe the gestures made by the preacher, and understand better what the preacher wants to express deeply. Knowing that non-verbal communication plays a vital role in a physical face-to-face dialogue. According to D'Souza, the Non-verbal Communication refers to those messages people send by facial expressions, by changes in voice, and by body movement (D'Souza, 2003:121

The preacher is able to control the emotions of the audience, and physical repentance is possible. This can motivate others who don't yet have the willingness to repent to do so. By observing the mode of the congregants, the preacher can examine if the message has been received or not by the audience.

2.2. The Description of Preaching in the AI Era

As the world increasingly embraces Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Church is encouraged to integrate AI into its daily activities, particularly in preaching, since it offers new opportunities for enriching religious experiences. AI can provide personalized spiritual guidance, virtual companionship, and even simulated encounters with divine figures (Okwuchukwu Azuakor, 2025, p. 104).

Therefore, Christopher Manning of Stanford University defines AI (artificial intelligence), he used the definition of John McCarthy, who coined the term AI in 1955 as it follows: “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines.” (Manning, 2022). In other words, it refers to the machines that are designed to execute the tasks that require human intelligence, such as preaching and so on.

The modern era of AI was significantly marked by the emergence of ChatGPT in 2022. Its introduction into the public sphere sparked broad discussions on how AI should be used within the Church context. Diverse and competing discourses emerged, attempting to frame the adoption of this new technology in theological and ethical terms.

A central focus of the debate has been the role of AI in sermon writing. Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025, p. 128) contend that an AI-generated sermon cannot fully convey the true message from God. However, they acknowledge that AI can serve as a valuable tool in the process of sermon preparation, assisting preachers in generating ideas and organizing their thoughts. According to them, listeners ultimately seek messages that arise from the preacher's personal experience and theological reflection (Mannerfelt & Roitto, 2025, p. 128).

They also highlight the warning issued by psychologist Nelsson, who asserts that preaching is a sacred craft requiring deep personal effort and inspiration. Nelsson cautions that reliance on AI for sermon preparation may become a spiritual temptation, likening it to worshipping the “golden calf.”

Moreover, the rise of virtual preaching has expanded the reach of the Church's message beyond physical boundaries. Online platforms now allow sermons to reach audiences regardless of location or attendance capacity. This shift from temples to computers and smartphones connected via the internet reflects the attributes of transcendence and immanence often associated

with AI, a phenomenon that has led some to perceive it as possessing quasi-supernatural power.

2.3 Opportunities and challenges in the AI Era

Knowledge of God and the world is shared and spread throughout the community. Congregations increase participation. Every day, Christians find their voice. churches will be closed, and socialization among memberships will come to an end in the AI era. Casey T. Signon(2023).

The digital age, especially the social media technoculture, disrupts the tradition as it amplifies the fruit of our centuries of ecclesiological formation based on a top-down communications model. Our technological advances have simultaneously introduced the technoculture of Web 3.0—a radically vertical and non-boundaried life-world for public conversations and connection—and amplified the means for mass mediation. Not all online preaching models a new how and who into practice. Satellite preaching, livestreaming, and the phenomenon of ordering DVDs of great preachers to play in the church reflect the one-way amplification of the preacher's voice. The new media of this age (Twitter, smartphones, Facebook Live, etc.) are luring the church into novel ways of breaking down the divide between professional Christians and lay Christians, which is irksome to many established Christians who are taught not to talk while the preacher is talking. (Casey T. Signon, 2023).

Lack of response in media preaching: In "Preaching and the Nature of Communication", Reid cites new discoveries in communications studies that show how an absence of dialogue leads to a communication breakdown in the intended recipient of a message. Reid says, "Until about 1950, communications researchers thought of communication chiefly as a simple, one-way process" (Reid 1963, p. 41).

The dependency and Laziness, the automation of mundane tasks by AI can foster a reliance on technology, potentially diminishing the need for

human cognitive engagement and problem-solving skills. It reduces mental activity (Okwuchukwu Azuakor P., (2025).

Mass media is by nature a one-way message system, privileging the distributor of the message. Distribution is not in the hands of the public. The flow of communication is top-down. The public is formed for receptivity and consumption of the message coming through the mass media pipeline. (Casey T. Signon, 2023).

The debate on the challenges of AI concerning preaching had Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025, p. 128) argue that "AI-generated sermons cannot render a true address from God, since preaching depends on the interpretation of the heart through human lived experience grounded in free will", a capacity that AI fundamentally lacks. Similarly, Ungar-Sargon (2025, p. 6) observes that "no matter how advanced AI becomes, it can never truly be a spiritual being," emphasizing its inherent limitations and its inability to replace the human dimension of faith and spirituality.

One of the major challenges posed by AI is not primarily technological but moral. As Mannerfelt and Roitto (2025, p. 5) note, the critical issue lies in the loss of moral responsibility. As AI systems become increasingly autonomous, questions arise about accountability: when harm is caused by AI, who bears responsibility? According to Ungar-Sargon (2025, p. 6), responsibility remains with human beings, who must act as co-creators and caretakers of technological progress.

Another concern raised by scholars is that the use of AI could gradually erode the moral instincts of preachers. As more decision-making is delegated to machines, humans risk diminishing their own moral agency and sense of responsibility. When people begin to assume that "the algorithm knows best," they may unconsciously surrender their critical thinking—the very quality that distinguishes human beings from machines (Mannerfelt & Roitto, 2025, p. 4). The danger lies

in the perception that, because machines perform tasks with precision, logic, and efficiency, they could even deliver sermons more effectively than humans. Such beliefs risk leading humanity toward what Mannerfelt and Röitto describe as “moral abduction” and “blind obedience.”

However, this substitution human being by the AI is neither possible nor desirable. Speaking robotically without personality is not preaching. Saying orthodox things without conviction is not preaching. Delivering sermons devoid of affection for God is not preaching. Speaking while being personally guarded is not preaching. Ministering without the love required to see needs in your congregation is not preaching. Sermons that never challenge a congregation is not reaching. Preaching is a deeply relational and experiential act rooted in faith, love, and personal connection with the congregation dimensions that machines cannot replicate. If human beings abdicate their moral and spiritual responsibilities, they open the door to misleading teachings. Once disseminated by machines, such teachings could spread widely and profoundly influence believers around the world, often without the critical discernment that human spiritual leaders are called to exercise.

The superpowers of AI come with dangers we must figure out. Surveillance culture, loss of privacy, reducing human identity to data, replacing human bonds with AI bots, the deskilling of the human workforce, and the dangers of multiplying online misinformation. All those concerns are real and all well addressed in the Vatican’s recent warning about how AI could dehumanize society and erode human dignity. Tony Reinke (2025; 19).

3. Discussion of findings

Findings have revealed that the practice of preaching has evolved significantly throughout church history. From the days of preaching under tents to the construction of large temples, the physical presence of both the preacher and the congregation was considered essential for authentic proclamation of the Word.

In the contemporary context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool offering new opportunities for spreading the Word of God. It has made access to Scripture and sermons easier and more immediate, allowing believers to engage with spiritual content regardless of location. However, despite these opportunities, AI faces clear limitations—particularly in the administration of sacraments and the performance of liturgical rituals, which require human presence, intention, and spiritual discernment.

While machines can execute tasks with remarkable logic, precision, and efficiency, often leading some to believe that they could perform better than human preachers, they fundamentally lack emotion, empathy, and spiritual consciousness. AI systems can only reproduce patterns based on prior learning, but they cannot generate personal testimony or express genuine love for the congregation. Yet, these are the very elements that define the art and authenticity of preaching.

Furthermore, questions of accountability arise concerning the errors or ethical missteps committed by machines in carrying out religious or pastoral tasks. When humans relinquish their moral and spiritual responsibilities to artificial systems, they risk falling into what scholars describe as “moral abduction” and “blind obedience.” Such surrender undermines the moral agency that has always defined human participation in God’s mission.

4. Conclusion

Findings have revealed that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preaching has become a necessity for the contemporary Church. AI offers significant advantages and opportunities, extending the reach of the Gospel beyond traditional limits, denominational divides, and geographical boundaries. However, its adoption also introduces serious challenge, such as moral abdication and blind obedience, that call for deep theological and ethical reflection. Addressing these challenges is essential in order to preserve human

moral responsibility and sustain the authentic relationship between humanity and God, which remains the foundation of genuine and transformative preaching.

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