



PREACHING IN THE  
POSTMODERN WORLD

*EPC: Belgrade 2024*

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“Preaching is not a medium of communication that is much liked or effective today. There was a time when thousands would gather in the open air to hear a famous preacher; today everyone wants to be heard, and attention spans are decreasing. Telling people what is good for them to hear, without giving them a chance to express their views or even ask questions, is about the worst attempt to communicate imaginable in our culture.” (Freeman, 2003)



# RELIGIOSITY IN EUROPE


- Big regional differences (30-80%)
- Big differences in age groups
- 80% Estonians between 16-29 do not identify themselves as religious. 41% do not attend any religious services (Bullivant 2018)








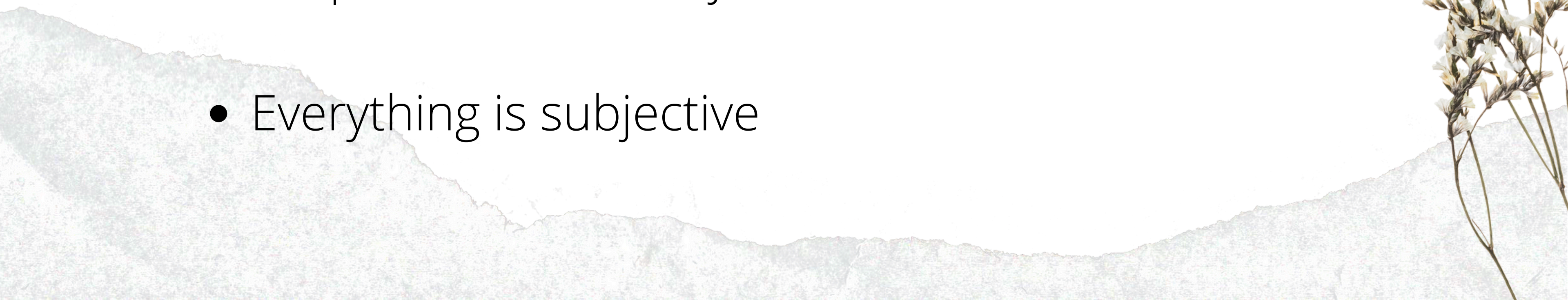
# Modernism

- Pre-Modernism until the 17th century - God and revelation at the core of life
  - 17th century - Enlightenment + scientific and industrial revolution, rational knowledge, secular and religious optimism
  - World Wars as the death of Modernism, science as a tool of destruction, deep intellectual and spiritual pessimism
- 





# Postmodernism

- No absolute truth
  - Pluralism
  - Suspicion of authority
  - Everything is subjective
- 
- 



“At bedrock, Postmodernism is the affirmation that there are no absolutes. Postmodernism is not so much a new worldview as it is the death of any coherent worldview.” (Henderson 1998)





- the church has remained Modernist
- discrepancy between us and the outside world

Is there any hope?







PREACHING  
& POST-  
MODERNISM

Both value experiences & stories.  
Narratives, not bullet points, create  
an emotionally accessible  
environment. We love good stories!

The metanarrative of the Bible  
invites us in and offers a point of  
reference. Community is important.





## PREACHING & POST- MODERNISM

“Jesus was in his early thirties when he began his public work; he had no career path and no place he could call home. His greatest battles were against the dogmas of his day, and he showed little faith in institutions and rules and regulations. He spoke against injustice and did not have the stomach for inauthentic people. He thought globally but acted locally.” (Tapia 1994)





Congregation not passive but active participant. Importance of listening. Equality, not ecclesiastic authority. Conversational style (Paul and *dialegomai*).

PREACHING  
& POST-  
MODERNISM





# DOCTORAL PROJECT

## *Finding a Voice*

Nov - Dec 2021

Compass SDA

Church, Tallinn

5 sermons

116 feedback

forms

Structure

Person and roll

of the

preacher

Inclusivity

Narratives

84% church

members

30% 15-30

38% 30-40







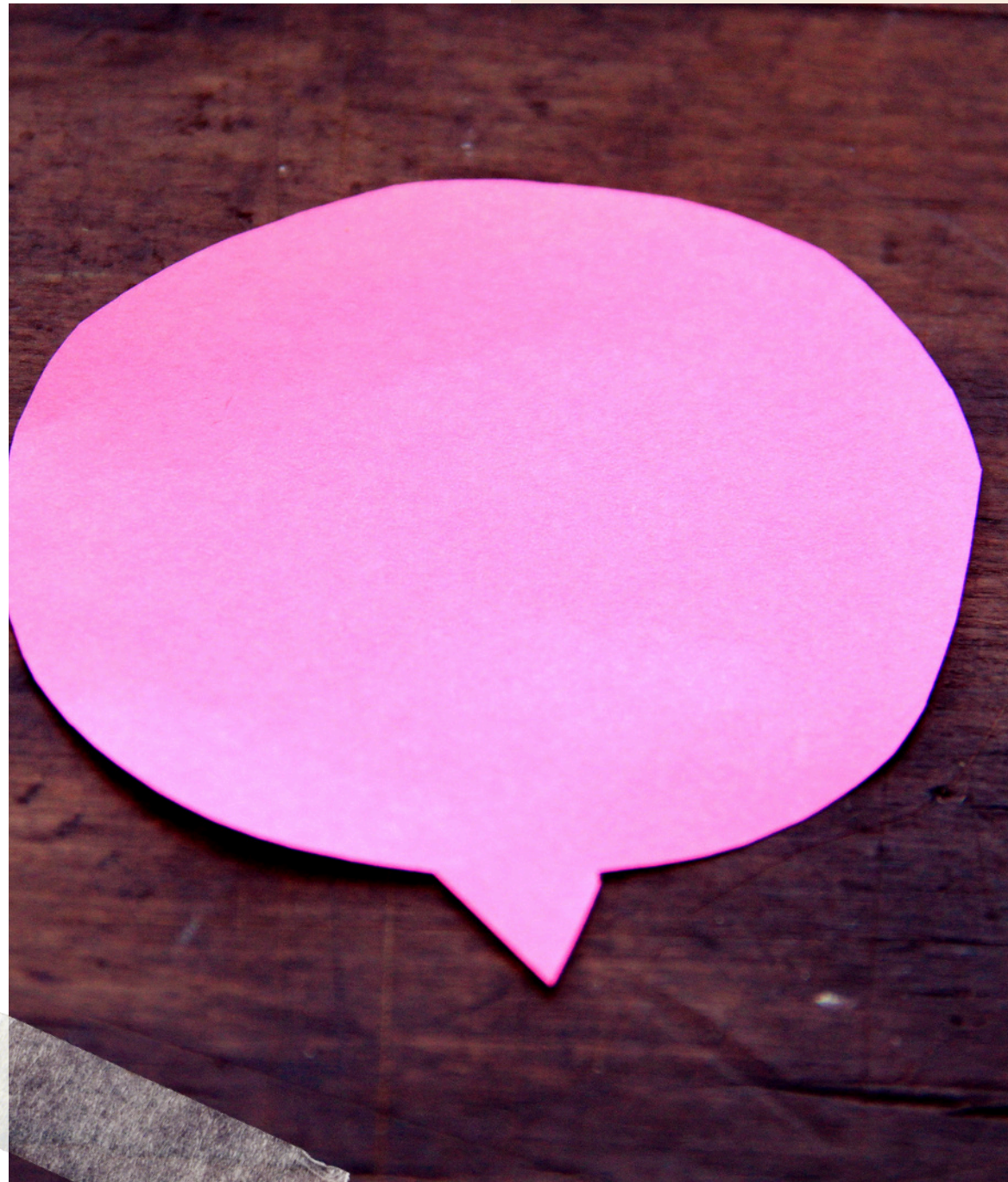
# RESULTS, I

Importance of listening. Need for topics that touch practical life, spirituality. Problems: evil, polarisation, mental health, cost of living, war, ecological crisis, close relationships, irresponsibility, anger, depression, loneliness, etc.



# RESULTS, II

Dialogical preaching - easy to understand, sensitivity to words & expressions; appropriate emotions & openness, no to authority; personal story & experiences; eye contact; catchy introduction







# RESULTS, III

Young people want to be heard; belonging & community very important; tired of political polarisation; the reality of the Kingdom of God essential





# RESULTS, IV

Simple sermon structure; same image in the beginning and end; no jumping between different topics; question & tension that needs resolving; up to 30 minutes





# RESULTS, V

Stories, stories, stories; real life changes, real connection with Jesus - knowledge does not change, experience does



# *Practical exercise*

Which Bible text / story would you use when preaching on these topics?

- depression
- ecological crisis
- loneliness
- breakup
- hunger
- anger
- poverty
- addiction
- suicide





## *Practical exercise*

Think about your personal experience with Jesus & how He has changed your life.

Share a story from your own life about

- how you have been changed / forgiven
- how you have found peace / joy
- a miracle God has done

Remember that your story is a powerful tool!



Thank you!

