

J. Dwayne Howell and Charles L. Aaron Jr., ed. *Preaching in/and the Borderlands*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2020. 167 pages. \$24.

God gave the law unto the Israelites through Moses, saying, “You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34b). The way in which we treat strangers should be shaped not only by our memory of God’s liberation of the oppressed, but also our understanding of the identity of God: God is the God who listens to the cries of the disinherited and defends their causes in God’s justice and mercy. Today, however, we witness migrant children being separated from their parents and locked up in cages, migrant families being chased away with tear gas, and the building of border walls. Therefore, in *Preaching in/and the Borderlands*, the two editors, J. Dwayne Howell and Charles L. Aaron, ask a poignant question: “What is to be the Church’s response to the immigrant?” (xi). Various contributors attempt to answer this question biblically, ethically, theologically, and homiletically.

The book consists of four sections. The first section considers the ethical and legal dimensions of immigration. Cláudio Carvalhaes points out to the reader the current inhumane treatment of immigrants at the border and emphasizes the importance of standing in solidarity in the fight against injustice. Miguel A. De La Torre argues that liberals often regard the current crisis around immigration as a matter of hospitality. However, he believes that migration is a question of justice caused by the US, which has exploited the “cheap labor and natural resources of its neighboring countries” (20). Gerald C. Liu explores how the expansion of US territory was often justified by Protestant hegemony, as seen in the Philippines. Sarah Ellen Eads Adkins gives an overview of various types of immigration, as well as a definition of the term “undocumented.”

The second section discusses immigration as found in the Old and New Testaments. Howell notices that the stories of both Abraham and Exodus indicate the importance of hospitality in the ancient Near East where hospitality was “a matter of life and death” for those who traversed dangerous paths. As God reminded the Israelites that they were once “immigrants in the land of Egypt,” Howell argues that these biblical narratives imply a moral directive for today. Melanie A. Howard explores how Jesus’s command to love our enemies, as in Matthew 5:38–48, could sound like a “text of terror” that could victimize undocumented immigrants by forcing them to forgive their victimizers. Thus, a more sensitive reading of the scripture may be required to determine its application.

The third section presents homiletic insights for preaching about immigration, as well as sermons. Owen K. Ross provides homiletical advice on how to guide the conversation regarding immigration, such as trusting that the Bible has something to say about immigration rather than focusing on “personal opinions on immigration or politicians and political parties in the presentation” (99). In addition, special Sundays, such as Labor Day, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, provide excellent opportunities to hear God’s view on immigration more directly in our contemporary context. Lis Valle discusses a border-crossing homiletic, informed by Judith L. Herman’s theory of healing from trauma. Border-crossing preaching allows the survivors to feel safe, empowers them to remember and lament, and restores them to reconnect with their community. This section ends with sermons by Rebecca David Hensley, Michael W. Waters, and Heidi Neumark.

The final section shares stories of integrating ministries with immigrant communities into local churches. Rhonda Thompson shares her work with the Nehemiah Center, which has come to serve Mixtec, an indigenous people of Mexico (139). In realizing that their relationship with

their gods is based on fear, anger, and harassment, Thompson witnesses to a God who is “all powerful, kind, loving, a sacrificial giver, who calls us to love” (143). Her cross-cultural wisdom, gained from serving Mixtec families, is that one should meet people where they are, listen to them, and learn from them. Jason Crosby reflects on what it takes for a church to be multicultural in working with Karen refugees. He concludes that forming a multicultural congregation is not easy and requires active listening. Further, he calls on those with power to give up their privilege and share their resources.

As this book is a compilation of contributions from authors with different academic backgrounds, expertise, and work experiences, it presents diverse yet fragmented voices. Nonetheless, the book is a useful resource for both homileticians and preachers, since immigration is not just a question of social justice, but also a fundamental aspect of the identity of all Christians who journey in this world as sojourners: God calls us to leave our homes and go to the place God has prepared for us. Preaching itself is a border-crossing event in which we encounter God who has crossed the walls to proclaim good news to the poor, the captives, the blind, and oppressed (Luke 4:18). While many preachers find themselves standing in front of politically divided congregations today, they are likely to consider it unbiblical not to speak of immigration, as immigrants are sent by none other than our God (148).

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