

Online Sermon: Challenges and Opportunities for Christian Preachers in the Industrial Revolution 4.0

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Abstract—The church is facing a momentum of change known as the digital era or the Internet of Things (IoT) era, known as the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The changing times have also affected ecclesiastical ministry, especially the ministry of preaching God's Word. Preachers uploaded their sermons in online media which everyone around the world can easily access. Not surprisingly, everyone from all over the world can watch and comment on the preacher's sermon. These comments influence the preacher's paradigm of the essence of a sermon. This study aims to describe the challenges and opportunities in this era of the Internet of Things. For this reason, the author applies a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. This study indicates that a preacher can take advantage of technological developments to preach the pure Word of God to the entire earth. **Research Contribution:** This research provides interdisciplinary contributions to practical theology (homiletics), pastoral ministry, and the study of technological developments. For researchers, this study is helpful as data for relevant analysis. In addition, this research is helpful for the valuable service of Christian preachers based on a description of the challenges and opportunities in preaching God's Word in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era.

Keywords— sermon; biblical preaching; christian preachers; internet of things

I. INTRODUCTION

The church is in the current of globalization which continues to flow until the current Industrial Revolution 4.0. This era is said to trigger disruption in various fields of human life, such as economic, social, political, and technology [1].

The existence of the church in a world full of changes has brought changes in the church's structure, including preaching ministry [2]. Today, the preaching ministry has changed along with the development of technology. Many Christian preachers presented various sermons on social media such as Whatsapp, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and Websites [3]. Moreover, Christians today are no stranger to the existence of Virtual Churches or Virtual Sacraments.

Every changing era certainly has challenges and benefits that must be faced. A preacher in the 4.0 Industrial Revolution era got a unique and strange challenge. Online media is an opportunity to communicate religion in this era [4]. Advances in technology encourage preachers to present online sermons relevant to all circles because the audience for sermons is not only local congregations anymore. The undeniable positive thing about the power of online media is its ability to reach audiences. Online sermons can also influence the views of the preacher. The quality of a preacher's sermon is no longer determined by theological and biblical weight, by the opinion of the netizens who consume their sermon. Not infrequently, negative opinions or comments stop in the media comments column used by the preacher. The comments on online sermons have influenced preacher's paradigm in defining sermons.

A preacher cannot avoid the changes that are in sight like today. He must be able to adapt and stand in change without having to conform to this ever-changing world. He must continue to struggle and struggle to deliver biblical sermons without being distracted by netizens' opinions. Paul once encouraged Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season,

out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2)." Timothy must preach the pure Word of God without being hindered by the circumstances or conditions of that time.

With such developments and advanced situations, every preacher is challenged to find creative innovations to convey God's Word without preaching God's Word to everyone correctly and responsibly before God. During this change, the church must act as a positive change agent without opposing the massive change [5][6]. This study aims to explain that Christian preachers' preaching of God's Word has faced challenges and opportunities in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era.

II. METHOD

This study is a qualitative study using a literature approach [7]. The method used is descriptive by describing the Industrial Revolution 4.0, which affected the preaching ministry. A preacher gets a challenge and an opportunity to preach the pure Word of God to everyone in this era. For this reason, the researcher describes biblical sermons and the Industrial Revolution 4.0 based on an analysis of various relevant literature. Researchers describe the discussion descriptively with a critical analysis approach [8]. The author conducts a critical analysis of the phenomenon based on theoretical and biblical studies through this method.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Industrial Revolution 4.0*

The term "Industry 4.0" was originally used as a strategy to reduce increased competition from abroad and differentiate German and EU industries from other international markets in 2011 at the Hanover Fair, Germany [9]. Sweet said that in the era of the fourth industrial revolution, everything that can be digital will become digital with a combination of several elements: digital, biological, intelligent networks, delivery drones, world brain, augmented reality, and GRAIN (genetic engineering, robotics, artificial intelligence, information). technology, and nanotechnology) [10]. Klaus Schwab writes that the core meaning of the word 'revolution' is the element of change that affects the way of life, working, and relating to other people [11]. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 is also referred to as an intelligent factory [12]. In this revolution, physical systems can communicate and cooperate with humans in real-time, which the IoT enables.

The concept of Industry 4.0 originated in Germany and has been recognized by other leading industrialized countries. However, it is known as the "Connected Enterprise" in the United States and the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" in the United Kingdom [13]. The main characteristics of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 are rapid and sudden changes. The Industrial Revolution 1.0 occurred when the steam engine was invented in 1760-1840. While the Industrial Revolution 2.0 occurred at the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the

20th century, which was marked by the discovery of electricity and the assembly line. The Industrial Revolution 3.0 itself began in the 1960s with the invention of computers. This era is marked by technological advances that help speed up communication, computation, and information dissemination. The widespread availability of technology such as computers, telecommunications, robots, and biotechnics has also influenced the social characteristics of society [14]. Until the turn of the millennium, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 began, which was marked by advances in digital technology and disrupted various fields of human life, including education, culture, government, politics, law, and society.

B. *Sermons in the Industrial Revolution 4.0: Challenges and Opportunities for Preachers*

The preaching ministry in this era has become more complicated because it is influenced by various factors, both from humans and the world. One of the impacts of the current era is the emergence of many preachers on various social media. These preachers have various backgrounds, ranging from pastors who serve in the church to the laypeople who are trusted to serve the preaching of the Word. Norman Pittenger emphasized that opportunities and needs are increasing for all Christians to serve [15]. Preaching is an activity to preach, talk, and teach the Word of God that comes from the Bible to people who have not or already believed so that they have true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ [16]. Based on this understanding, preaching comes from God.

According to Paul Murray, good preaching is the sermon that brings the preacher and listener together with Jesus personally through God's grace [17]. Without this grace, there is no power in the preaching of the Word. Wayne McDill himself explained the essential abilities that a preacher must have in terms of 4 main components: the ability to analyze text, the ability to translate sermons theologically, the ability to develop sermons, and the ability to design sermons [18]. Every preacher throughout the ages must imitate Jesus Christ the Word. The main point of Jesus' preaching is the presence of the Kingdom of God which refers to the reign of God in the present and future world. In His sermon, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God as a reality that involves an interactive and dynamic relationship between God and His people [19].

In this era, preachers face challenges preaching the Word to convey what netizens or their followers want on social media. They touch more of the gray area of the Bible and interpret it to satisfy and comfort the listener. The constant attacks on biblical preaching have undermined the preacher's belief in the biblical text. We must be careful not to present sermons that contradict fundamental biblical truths (such as the divinity of Jesus Christ, God as Creator of all things, or the doctrine of the Trinity) to be more acceptable to people.

The fourth industrial revolution can also influence preachers to display a visual display through the media. While this is beneficial for reaching souls, it can be dangerous. The Word of God is alive, strong, and sharp to the point that it

separates soul and spirit. The Lord Jesus also explained that God is Spirit, and those who want to worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:24). That is, the Word of God delivered by a preacher must restore the listener's spirit, not just his soul. The use of visual technologies such as graphics, films, videos, and other things can attract listeners' attention, not restore their spirits. They only manipulate the listener's emotions because they focus on the affective and emotional perception of the listener [20]. To avoid this, a preacher must continue to preach the Word verbally to be heard, not replaced with visual technology.

The next challenge for the preacher is the demand for in-depth Bible study. Sermons that many people around the world can hear are certainly a challenge for preachers not to upload sermons carelessly. Throughout the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, a preacher must think twice before conveying God's Word to post-modern society. In this era, everyone will not easily accept or believe something without a good reason. McGregor realized that people in the fourth industrial era had become masters of themselves living in a "postreligious era" [21]. For that, a preacher needs serious preparation to examine the Bible texts properly and communicate Jesus Christ, who was crucified to be a ransom for all people (1 Tim. 2:6; Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

In addition to challenges, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 provides great opportunities and benefits for the ministry of a preacher. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 can be a vehicle for preachers to explore all parts of the world and preach the Word of God. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God. However, the Bible must be presented in a way that people of every age can understand. Therefore, the Christian preacher must look for a method, theme, or method in the Bible and adapt it to the current culture or social location. Dreyer stated, "However when we adapt our biblical interpretations to our current circumstances and situation, we must take care not to do eisegesis, but still do exegesis" [22]. A preacher of God's Word must continue to practice authentic and critical hermeneutics in prepare sermons in all ages, including this era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

Oliver uses the terms normativity and relativity of God's Word. The Word is the truth that is timeless and becomes the norm for the believer's life. According to Oliver, the Bible also has actual relevance that can be applied based on the listener's current state [20]. However, every interpreter or preacher must remember that the Bible was written by God's men who interpreted God's Word in their style. God inspired the writers of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16). In other words, the relativity of God's Word does not allow interpreters or preachers to delete parts of the Bible that are considered outdated or criticize the Bible for variant translations.

A preacher must have creativity in conveying the Word of God in every different age without losing the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. The way or method of delivering God's Word can be relative, but the Word itself remains forever (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). Even though God's

Word does not change, we must continue to innovate without distorting the truth of the Bible but presenting the truth of God's Word as accurately as possible according to the principles of correct and responsible interpretation [23]. The era of disruption is an opportunity for preachers to be used by God to benefit the Kingdom of God so that all humans can hear it on this earth.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the context of the current Industrial Revolution 4.0, change is a natural thing. To be an effective agent of the Kingdom of God, a preacher of the Word should not only embrace change but also take part in change and the process of change while conforming to the calling of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27). Online sermons are proving to be both a challenge and an opportunity for today's preacher. On the one hand, online sermons can influence the preacher's view of the sermon itself based on the audience's opinion. In addition, online sermons also require good preaching skills starting from the material and delivery. On the other hand, online preaching is an opportunity for the preacher to communicate the Word of God to the whole world.

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