



**STRUCTURAL- VARIABLE
MODEL
OF THE FUNERAL
SERMON**

ALBÍN MASARIK

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of the Funeral Sermon**

Inštitút teológie, misie a sociálnej práce, n.o.

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FOREWORD

During the course of my pastoral ministry, I used to prepare for each funeral as though I had carried out all my years of theological study on behalf of this one occasion. I realised that the situation where those closest to the deceased found themselves was one of the most serious crises of their lives. They needed help, therefore, I asked myself what kind of help they needed, and what role Christian funerals - and more specifically the funeral sermon itself - play in helping. Out of this came the natural question of how to get to grips with these tasks in such a way that they were carried out with the maximum possible benefit for all involved. I searched, therefore, for good theoretical works in the area of occasional homiletics.

After some searching and selecting of the methodology of practise, as I describe in the Introduction to this book, I decided to address Professor Igor Kišš, who was my teacher at the Slovak Evangelical Theological Faculty in Bratislava (now known as Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia). His published collection of funeral sermons (*Hope at the graveside. Funeral sermons, Sections 1-4*) is suitable for studying the structural-variable model and various possibilities of access to its individual parts.

With many years of pastoral practice behind him as a Lutheran pastor, Igor Kišš has continued to advance academically since his earlier days, gaining a doctorate in theology and later also the academic and pedagogical titles of senior lecturer and university professor. He also gained two noteworthy distinctions for his academic work: in 2002 the Comenius University gold medal, and

in 2004 he was awarded the cross of honour for first-class research by Austrian president Dr. Klestil.

I took the liberty of asking the professor for provisional approval of my research project at his funeral sermons, on the condition that I show him the first results of my work as soon as possible. About two months after submitting them, we met again and the professor kindly agreed to the continuation of my project. Over the course of our conversations together my conviction grew that the chosen collection of funeral sermons was a fitting sample from a fitting author and the study of this collection will allow us to get a picture of the partial roles of the individual parts which together form the funeral sermon.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In this study, the reader will come across abbreviations used for individual parts of analysed funeral sermons. I was obliged to create these abbreviations to shorten references to citations.

<u>Abbreviation:</u>	<u>Meaning:</u>
<u>AB</u>	<u>Addressing the bereaved</u>
<u>ABa</u>	<u>Addressing the bereaved, Section a): Connecting with the family's grief</u>
<u>ABb</u>	<u>Addressing the bereaved, Section b): Short description of the family's loss.</u>
<u>ABc</u>	<u>Addressing the bereaved, Section c): circumstances of death</u>
<u>ABd</u>	<u>Addressing the bereaved, Section d): Positive personal references to the deceased</u>
<u>C</u>	<u>Conclusion of a funeral sermon</u>
<u>Ca</u>	<u>Conclusion of a funeral sermon, Section a): Appeal to take leave of the deceased</u>
<u>Cb</u>	<u>Conclusion of a funeral sermon, Section b): Expression of the difficulties of the parting</u>
<u>Cc</u>	<u>Conclusion of a funeral sermon, Section c): Circumstances of death</u>
<u>Cd</u>	<u>Conclusion of a funeral sermon, section d): Parenthetical elements</u>
<u>Dif.</u>	<u>Differentiation</u>
<u>GI</u>	<u>General Introduction</u>
<u>KP</u>	<u>Kerygmatic Part</u>
<u>S+number</u>	<u>Sermon no. (For example, S1 = Sermon no.1)</u>

1 INTRODUCTION

The theme of this study is the structural-variable model of funeral sermon. Can such a study make any practical sense?

I believe it can - despite the fact that one of the participants at the homiletic conference in Poland criticised this model, because according to him, the preacher should freely and creatively approach the preparation of any sermon or homily and should not be limited by any models.

In an ideal world, I would agree with my critic. But the implementation of pastoral service does not take place in an ideal world. Priests, pastors, and preachers must carry out their ministry even when they are tired, close to burnout, and perhaps burdened by their personal problems and grief. Sometimes, the pastor is heavily involved in the loss of the grieving family. This happens in small church communities where members have very close relationships. This then causes stress and can block his creativity in a situation with limited time to prepare a funeral sermon.

The opposite problem can be that a pastor or priest from a large church succumbs to the routine performance of many ceremonies. During research observations of 100 funerals at the crematorium in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, I heard the same funeral sermon from two priests at three funerals.

Many problems of this practise can be eliminated, if we practical theologians support the pastors and provide them with tools to improve the quality of their service. That is also my aim. By offering this structurally variable model, I want to help different preachers. For example, those who lose the ability to focus on a balanced structure of thoughts when working under stress. A clear set of

preparation steps can significantly reduce their stress and help them enter the pastoral dimension of this process. It can also help those who feel the need to look for new motives and alternative approaches. Finally, there are also those who think that with their number of funerals, it is not possible to prepare a personalised formulation of funeral sermons. They can learn that funeral sermon can be personal and safe, even though they often bury people they could not know. This model has several parts, which are personal. Information for these parts can pastor obtain safely and quickly when meeting with grieving relatives, who arrange the funeral. The inclusion of these personal notes about the deceased and their truthfulness is very important and paves the way for the preacher to fulfil his God-given role.

In this book, I present only one existing model of the funeral sermon with alternative approaches to the solution of its individual parts. I obtained it by analysing the published funeral sermons of my university professor, who followed my work but did not live to see the updated edition of this book in English.

Since 2008, I have also offered this model to my students. After years of practise, several of them told me that it worked very well for them. They perceive the service at funerals as an important accompaniment to believers in the period of their loss of life. They can do it with inner commitment and without overwhelming stress. Therefore, I believe that the described model can also help other pastors.

Reason for my chosen theme. My ultimate reason for devoting attention to the theme of funeral sermons is an attempt to encourage the church in its work to make full use of the potential in funeral sermons to fulfil the tasks in which it is accountable to God.

Knowing that I am a theologian, people often address their comments about the church to me. Sometimes they bring positive comments, other times they are negative. They react in a similar way to church funerals. At times they express satisfaction (“It was a nice funeral”), at others they express dissatisfaction (“...I couldn’t listen to what that preacher was blathering about”).

I am not merely interested in the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the standard of the funeral ritual. I am interested in whether the bereaved found the funeral service helpful in processing their grief and whether it gave the other funeral participants a serious inducement to live the rest of their lives in view of human mortality and accountability to God. I am interested to see whether the church fulfils its role in this with an adequately Christ-centered proclamation. It is for this reason that I am devoted to this topic. Of course, these theological objectives must be reached in a culturally acceptable liturgical framework for the ceremony.

If funeral participants are to be helped by the funeral, the perception of it needs to become that ministry at funerals is not just an unpleasant burden but a real ministry for the bereaved in their difficult time. However, a change in attitude is not enough. Real help is required in order for preachers, amidst their duties, to prepare well for the funeral and for ministry. One way is by using the texts of published funeral sermons. However, in my mind, a better possibility is to dismantle funeral sermons by module into their individual parts and point out ways of solving the partial tasks. In this way, greater potential for freedom is achieved for the preachers, and selected illustrations from real sermons will help them to express the particular tasks with their own approach, from their own

perspective and based on their own gifts.

Structure of the study. The study is divided into 7 chapters, a Conclusion, and a Bibliography. Within this structure, chapters 2-3 deal with homiletic study preparation (Chapter 2: Elements of homiletic differentiation; Chapter 3: Relation between choice of sermon text and homiletic differentiation), and chapters 4-7 deal with the sermon itself, focused on its individual sections: Chapter 4 dissects Kišš's approaches to the general introduction of the funeral sermon, Chapter 5 titled "Addressing the Bereaved" investigates possibilities for carrying out the four tasks of this section. Chapter 6 (Division of the kerygmatic part) examines the possibilities of structuring the main part of the funeral sermon.

Chapter 7 identifies the four steps in Kišš's sermon conclusion, which belong to the parting in the hope of the resurrection in his work. This is followed by the conclusion and the bibliography.

2 HOMILETIC SITUATION AND ELEMENTS OF HOMILETIC DIFFERENTIATION

In preparing for any sermon, the preacher needs to be aware of the situation in which he will be preaching. We call the entire set of these indicators the “homiletic situation”. In Kišš’s collection, this information or part of it is found in the heading of individual sermons as so-called ‘differentiation’, through which he conveys basic facts about the case that can be divided into the three following categories: (1) facts about the deceased; (2) the bereaved; (3) the liturgical year.

In Kišš’s differentiation, there is relatively little account of the bereaved. Due to the infrequent occurrence of this criterion, I originally wanted to include it in Chapter 1.6: Other observations. In the end, however, due to its importance, I included it separately so that when specifying the differentiation, preachers would bear in mind the circumstances of the bereaved and would approach the task of finding an appropriate sermon text with these observations in mind.

2.1 Facts about the deceased as an element of the differentiation

Kišš uses seven groups of questions to characterize the deceased in his differentiation, some of which he includes regularly and some selectively: (1) sex; (2) age; (3) spirituality; (4) relationships; (5) state of health; (6) other remarks; (7) the arrival of death.

2.1.1 Sex

Kišš always indicated whether it was a man or a woman. In the presented collection, he does not include a funeral sermon for a child's funeral.

2.1.2 Age

Upon analysis of the whole differentiation complex, we discovered that age is found as a criterion in it:

- (1) Without specifying the deceased's age; (2) the deceased's age according to ontogenetic divisions; (3) in approximate terms and with indirect facts.

Ad 1) Without specifying the deceased's age. In twelve sermons at men's funerals and in 13 women's funerals, he does not mention their age directly or indirectly. That means that in 25/54 cases he does not mention the deceased's age.

Ad 2) Age presented by ontogenetic divisions. As we have already stated previously, Kišš does not include sermons from children's funerals in this collection of funeral sermons. Thus, he begins with young people and ends with old men and women. He uses consistent age categories for men and women:

- (a) Deceased young people: "young son"; "young person"; "young presbyter; "young man"; "young girl".
- (b) Middle age: For men, he indicates this with the comment: "middle age"; For women: "a middle-aged woman"
- (c) Elderly: Men: "elderly man"; women: 'elderly woman'
- (d) Advanced old age: men: "old fellow"; "old man"; women: 'old woman'

Ad 3) Approximate terms and indirect details. We find this in approximate statements of age (man in his sixties - S6; about 60

years old – S15) and indirect details of age (patriarch of the family – S44).

Summary of the observations. It follows from the above-mentioned observations that although the deceased's age is usually included in detail (years, months and days) in the biographical section of the protestant funeral, this kind of general statement about the deceased's age is adequate for the purposes of preparation of funeral sermons.

2.1.3 Spirituality

Data about spirituality also occur in a great variety of ways: (1) without comments on the spiritual life of those being buried; (2) with comments on the spiritual life of those being buried.

Ad 1) Without comments on the spiritual life of those being buried. In the differentiation of 25 sermons, we find no comments on the spiritual life of those being buried. Statistically, this means that in approximately half of the cases differentiation features are not defined by a deliberate inclusion of details of the deceased person's spiritual life. However, despite the risks involved in over- or underestimating the spirituality of the deceased person, we believe that these details should be part of the important data that the minister need to consider in his work (even if they do not use them in the wording of the funeral sermon in any way).

Ad 2) With comments about the spirituality of those being buried. There are two categories of comments about the spiritual life of the deceased person:

- (2.1) Positive comments;
- (2.2) Negative comments.

Ad 2.1) Positive comments about the spirituality of the deceased person. Kišš makes these references in an attempt to identify the important facts that should help form the language of the funeral sermon's wording. Thus, he takes note of

- (a) characteristics of spiritual life,
- (b) the deceased's roles in the church,
- (c) the significance of the deceased to the church congregation.

a) *Characteristics of spiritual life.* In this category we find the following remarks: "committed to God's will" (S50); "good Christian" (S24); "sincerely believing" (S43: S20); Lord's servant, self-sacrificing, humble, obedient to God (S29); 'loving service of her family and the church' (S52); "believing.... mother" (S31); godly man or woman (S2, S22; S35; S42; S1; S7; S27; S3; S5; S36;); "Mary and Martha in one" (S33); a wife whom the Lord helped overcome all difficulties (S41).

b) *Church roles.* In the collection analysed, we find references to roles in the context of a local church congregation: a church curator (S44); a young presbyter (S16). These details may or may not be an expression of the spiritual life of the deceased. The history experience in all types of churches reveals that people whose spiritual life is not consistent with them frequently occupy church offices. Therefore, we recommend that the significance of these details always be considered in the context of specific cases. However, it would be an equally big mistake for the

preacher to overlook these details, as church ministry is, in normal circumstances, a significant way in which the spirituality of the deceased person is demonstrated.

- c) *Significance for the church congregation.* We created this category based on a single reference (the support of the church congregation, S21), which points to a whole field of characteristics of which the preacher should be aware in his consideration of the case. People who enrich their church fellowship in various ways (catechists, choir, diaconal ministry, etc.) are also significant to the fellowship. That is, their departure is a loss for the church congregation.

Ad 2.2 Negative remarks about the spirituality of the deceased

We find only two occurrences of the same negative remark about the deceased in the whole collection: “religiously indifferent” (S37; S45). The text did not give any more precise indication of the comment in specific cases or how it should affect the preparation of the funeral sermon. The expression ‘religiously indifferent’ is not clearly defined. Different church traditions will understand this in different ways. For some denominations, it might be a person who only attends services on high days and holidays; more radical fellowships use this expression about a person who elsewhere might be considered an exemplary Christian.

2.1.4 Relationships

The funeral ceremony is not just a question of hygienically depositing the body of the deceased person, but it provides motivating force for coming to terms with the loss of interpersonal relationships. The minister needs to be aware of these relationships

so that he can support the process of coming to terms with grief with his message. The analysis provided us with the following themes - differentiation is composed of

- (1) without relationship data;
- (2) with relational data.

2.1.4.1 Differentiation without relationship data

The social dimension of a funeral has to do with the severance of relationships. Therefore, we were surprised to discover that relationships dwindle in importance as a basic detail in the case in 33 of 54 sermons in the analysed collection. We can only explain this observation by assuming that Professor Kišš, as a minister who knew his parishioners well, considered this fact to be an obvious attendant feature of each funeral and assumed that those who used his published collection of funeral sermons, would also view it in this light. However, this could be seen as a problematic approach for those pastors who have a less powerful empathy. In such cases, they might be at risk of not fulfilling the funeral sermon's partial tasks because they overlooked details that were not included in the differentiation because they were taken for granted.

2.1.4.2 Differentiation with Relationship Data

We found references to the relationships of or to the deceased both

- (a) in positive remarks as well as
- (b) in negative remarks.

Ad a) Positive remarks about the relationships of the deceased person. In the positive remarks, we found (1) statements about the deceased which presuppose healthy relationships; (2) relationships expressed through caring for various groups of people.

a1) Statements about the deceased that presuppose healthy relationships. The deceased's interpersonal relationships are not directly commented on in some of the differentiation, but indications are given that the deceased had worthwhile relationships and that his departure is a loss for their community. With this in mind, we read remarks such as in S41: 'A wife God helped overcome all the difficulties of life.' This comment implies that the author had in mind the extent of life difficulties that the deceased woman had to deal with. Overcoming her difficulties by faith would have been such a powerfully formative experience that she could not have formed negative relationships. There are no relationship data in S44 either ("Patriarch of the family and church curator."). But the differentiation is described in a way that indicates that this was a socially healthy individual whose departure represents a loss for various groups of affected people.

We find the same fact expressed more succinctly in the remarks: 'beloved old man' (S2); "pillar of the church congregation' (S21); "good wife and mother" (S39); 'good mother' (S10 and S11); "loving mother" (S31). Here, we can include Kišš's comment in S47 that the deceased 'will be missed' and in S49 that 'his wife will miss him'. Each of these comments speaks of relational wealth which will be lost with the departure of the deceased person.

a2) Relationships expressed through care for various groups of people. He expresses it with care (1) *in general*: S32 – a man who served those around him; - an expression of wealth of social relationships and a willingness to be there for others; (2) *in his*

family; S52¹/III – caring husband and father; an expression of relationships within the framework of his own family; (3) *in the family and in the church*: S52/IV –her loving service to family and the church – an ability to be available to her relatives and to those in the church; (4) *in the family and in society*: S24 – a model father of the family, active in society – care for family and society.

We must warn emerging preachers not to automatically generalise even such positive observations because an individual's quality of relationship within the setting does not necessarily mean a good quality of relationship, in general. That is, there is a risk of “collective egoism” where a person acts one way within the framework of a defined group and differently outside of it. The expression ‘collective egoism’ is unsupported from an etymological point of view because it assumes in its primary sense an individual's focus on his own interests and an ignorance of the interests and needs of others. However, in context, ‘collective egoism’ indicates behaviour which behaves considerately within the bounds of a defined group but shows itself to be egoistic beyond the limits of the group.

b) *Negative comments about deceased persons*. Comments included in this category actively express either:

- (b1) an absence of relationships or
- (b2) Relationships in crisis.

b1) *Absence of relationships or inadequate quality or extent of relationships*.

¹ Kišš mistakenly marked two sermons with the number 52 - at the end of the 3rd part and at the beginning of the 4th part.

When including information in this category, we may come up against the problem of interpretative assumptions and the attendant difficulty of objective evaluation. This is true, for example, of the remark in S43 where the deceased is characterised as a ‘lonely widow’. This may mean a lack of interpersonal relationships or only a lack of daily contact with relatives, but active contact with relatives through letters or telephone calls. In the first case, it follows that we would not expect many deeply emotionally hurting people to attend the funeral. But in the second case, this may not be true. The same thing also applies to the remark in S13 about the ‘lonely widower’.

It is different in the case of the deceased person who, according to Kišš, is ‘an egoist’ (S48). Egoists who harm (abuse) their families can manipulate them into feeling guilty. Therefore, the minister must count on the bereaved who need help to deal with memories of the quality of relationship with the deceased and to deal with so-called “inappropriate feelings of guilt” when they blame themselves for things which they can do nothing about.

b2) Relationships in crisis. Behind the restrained language, we find in the differentiation of S51 (“Funeral of a mother murdered by her husband”) is the reality of crisis situations in relationships between partners. At the very least, the murder reference expresses the existence of a negative relationship on the part of the husband who was the murderer. If not a question of a short-term failure, it might be one of long-term dysfunctional relationships culminating in murder. The preacher in this situation must reckon with the emotional chaos of the bereaved

manifested in regret and hatred. In this case, the murder being proven and the guilty party convicted, the children are losing not only their mother but also their father. Overall, we can observe that the situation being dealt with requires extensive pastoral psychological involvement after the funeral, focused on processing the loss and healing of relationships². Living with hatred for the father- murderer has a negative impact on the future of the bereaved person. The bereaved cannot be pressured into forgiveness, but in time and with sensitivity they can be led toward it.

The differentiation in S9 points out a different type of stressful reality (“An unfaithful husband who left his family and before death returned to his first wife.”) In this case, parting with the deceased man is a widow who had been abandoned and who has had to deal with his abandonment and later on with her reacceptance of him. At the funeral service she will be aware of all of this. Besides this, it is possible that the deceased returned to his first wife after a crisis in his subsequent relationship or because a different crisis meant he reconsidered his departure. Therefore, it is uncertain what the quality of their partnership was after his return. The possible idealisation of the deceased on the widow’s part will hamper the process of dealing with the loss - all their relationship failings are then attributed to her. Instead of the guilt of her unfaithful husband, we might experience an unwarranted experience of guilt on the part of the bereaved wife (and perhaps also on her close family’s part). The minister should not neglect to pay pastoral attention to this kind of family. Of course, this also applies to the situation before the death of one of its members.

2.1.4.3 *Summary*

The absence of relationship data in 33/54 sermons is surprising. Of course, this is text intended for printing and concerns capturing basic data about the deceased. Professor Kišš was well-acquainted with his church members in a village community and in his preparation would have considered many important facts even though they did not feature specifically in the differentiation. But if a fledgling preacher were to limit his analysis of basic data in this way, he might inaccurately define the homiletic situation of any particular funeral. In that case, in the best-case scenario, he might only achieve a liturgically respectable, culturally acceptable funeral but one that does not arrive at preaching's objective – to bring the healing message of God's Word into people's real-life situations.

2.1.5 Health

In the differentiation Kišš gives only limited attention to remarks about the health of those being buried. They occur in only seven sermons and in the following way:

In S3 he mentions that the deceased woman was “healthy”. The departure of the healthy woman had come as a surprise, whereby there had been no indication of the need to prepare for a separation and where the bereaved had not been able to prepare for it.

S12 represents a different case where the deceased woman ‘finally needed the care of her children’. The period of care for a dependent elderly person is a period of preparation for the separation. It is also a period of daily attendance and at times also provides the opportunity to express important things. However, we must not forget that exhaustion and the discomfort of the dying person represent a separate area of stress that may be the cause of an uneasy

conscience on the part of the bereaved carers' part, despite their effort to provide the maximum amount of help.

In S6, the remark 'prematurely aged by illness' tells us that the deceased man had undergone a series of rapid changes due to ill health, possibly only from a physical perspective but perhaps also from a psychological perspective. The latter case might result in changes in values and behaviour, a narrowing of interests, and a whole complex of degenerative changes. If the people around them are socially perceptive, they might recognise in this the signals of the approaching departure. On the other hand, however, these changes might become a burden on the family's internal communication system and therefore the final phase of their lives together, even for families with a good past, could be remembered negatively because of these changes. In S36, the comment 'acute cancer' expresses that the family probably has an exhausting season accompanying a dying person behind them. But at the same time, they have had ample preparation for the process of grief. They may be psychologically and spiritually exhausted, but they can only have been surprised by death in the sense that they may have expected it to come a few weeks or months later. They enter the process of coming to terms with death at a different starting point than those who lose their relatives unexpectedly.

In S47 the health facts: 'serious imminent illness' tell us that the bereaved had been subjected to fear of the difficulties they anticipated. However, instead of the expected serious illness that threatened, the very thing which they expected was to conclude the envisaged testing time. The family had been preparing for a difficult period. The reality might be perceived in two ways: as a worse option (the deceased could have continued to enjoy life a while

longer), or a better one (at least Dad did not suffer).

The remark in S46 and S49 ‘gradually withering away’ might mean that the bereaved had the opportunity to intuitively notice clues that signalled that something was happening with their loved one. They could process the question ‘what if I lose him’ (or run away from this question). They may have feelings of guilt that they neglected something or feelings of anger that the doctors were negligent in their care. Such people may have been seeking help both on a medical as well as on a spiritual level for a long time and may have experienced a variety of responses to their pursuit.

2.1.6 The arrival of death

In 38 cases, he does not comment on the manner of death. In the other cases, we find the following remarks:

- a) Peaceful death: S25: ‘Quiet death’;
- b) Chronic health problems: S46 ‘gradually failing health’; S49: ‘his health failed gradually’;
- c) Difficult dying: S36: ‘acute cancer’;
- d) Sudden death (natural death): S5: ‘Sudden stroke’; S47 ‘Sudden death’; S26: ‘Sudden death’; S4: ‘suddenly’; S14: ‘sudden heart attack’;
- e) Tragic death: S21: ‘Car accident’; S8: ‘a car accident he did not cause’; S30: ‘suicide’; S17: ‘tragic death’; S16: ‘tragic death’; S51: ‘murder’; S38 ‘death in mysterious circumstances’.

2.1.7 Other remarks

Other remarks about the deceased person in Kišš’s differentiations can be grouped into the following categories.

- a) Serious difficulties (or absence of them) in the deceased person:
 - a1) difficulties: S20: “difficult life”; S41: “difficulties”³; S50: “hard life”; S53: “suffering”⁴ S51: murdered by her husband;
 - a2) absence of difficulties: S27: ‘a life without major crises’; S25: An old woman whose life and death were peaceful;
- b) the significance of the deceased person: S28: ‘key figure in the family, guardian of family traditions’;
- c) the professional life (or church ministry, if appropriate): In S14: “a bus driver”; S40: “bell ringer”; S42: “church custodian”;
- d) evaluating the deceased person:
 - d1) positive features: S16: “excellent person”; S35: ‘a sincere believer all his life’⁵ S29: “a self-denying, humble woman”; S5 and S36: ‘exemplary woman’;
 - d2) Negative features: S4: ‘a tendency towards alcoholism’; S23: “a mild alcoholic”; S38: “alcoholism”; S48 “egoist”; S9: ‘Unfaithful husband who left his family and before death came back to his first wife.

In these cases, the preacher did not give way to the notion of ‘only speaking well of the dead’. In order to assess a case, he must be aware of the truth.

³The wording of S41’s differentiation (“A wife whom God helped overcome all life’s difficulties”) presupposes that the deceased woman encountered difficulties in her life.

⁴ The differentiation of S53 is the most concise of all Kišš’s differentiation. It consists of only two words: “advent, suffering”. The first refers to a period in the liturgical calendar; the second word characterizes the deceased woman’s life.

⁵ This comment should convey to us the stability of the deceased person’s attitudes.

2.2 The mourners as an element of differentiation

Only in seven of 54 of Kišš's sermons are remarks about the family to be found, that is, defining the situation which has arisen with the funeral, into which the preacher must bring the biblical message. This is relatively few if we define the homiletic situation primarily according to the funeral service attendants rather than merely according to the deceased. At the same time, we would expect remarks which describe the composition of the funeral service both from a religious perspective as well as from the perspective of expectations regarding the grief process and a subsequent return to normal life (the impact of the loss).

2.2.1 Psychological Remarks

These are to be found in two formats in which he notices:

- (1) especially affected persons or
- (2) their absence: a funeral without close relatives.

2.2.1.1 *Especially affected persons*

Kišš makes references to the stressful situation of the bereaved in the following way: S34: 'a funeral for a single mother leaving a small orphan'; S39: 'A good wife and mother. The husband left lonely at home.' The deceased woman was a good wife, the husband is left alone, i.e., the children have left the parental home already. Differentiation stylised in this way shows that the preacher is also taking into account details that are not mentioned. S49: '... a young man whose health gradually failed, they will miss him.' S47: "Sudden death plucked her from a serious impending illness. She will be missed." While in the first case he mentions who will miss the deceased person, in the second case he does not specify the person or group of people who will miss them.

2.2.1.2 *A funeral without close relatives*

In some differentiation, we find expressed the departure of someone who had no close relatives and who has died without anyone intensively grieving their loss. This kind of situation is mentioned by Kišš in S13 where the wording of the differentiation: “lonely old man - widower.” – precludes mourners and the same is true in S43: ‘lonely widow, sincere believer, in autumn.’

2.2.2 Religious comments

Although faith in God is an important prerequisite to achieve the objectives presented by the funeral sermon (a prerequisite to spiritually deal with loss and for dealing with one’s own mortality from a Christian perspective), I only found references to the faith of the bereaved parties in S12: “one son, religiously indifferent”. This important criterion needs to be given more attention when the pastor specifies the homiletic situation.

2.3 The liturgical year as an element of differentiation

This only features in Kišš’s differentiation in terms of major church holidays, and we find it in six examples: S53: ‘Advent’, S1: Christmas; S19: ‘during Lent (Holy Week); S31: “during Lent”; S33: “Easter Saturday”; S18: “Easter”;

Elsewhere in the differentiation there are two mentions of seasons (in S46: “Autumn”; S43: ‘in Autumn’) and in the other 46 examples of differentiation we do not mention of when the sermon took place in details about the liturgical year or the calendar year. We may observe this finding without needing to comment.

2.4 Summary

The differentiation features outlined in Kišš's work offer us predominantly data about the deceased. Thus, the case is easily identifiable from the perspective of the user's needs, and quick orientation is possible if another pastor is to use this collection in his own preparation.

In our evaluation, however, other aspects of the homiletic situation are not sufficiently considered (at least in the published notes). Therefore, pastors must pay more attention to these elements when preparing funeral sermons and to the needs of subsequent pastoral care for the bereaved.

3 RELATION BETWEEN CHOICE OF SERMON TEXT AND HOMILETIC DIFFERENTIATION

One of the most demanding stages of funeral sermon preparation tends to be choosing the sermon text. During my private research among Protestant church preachers, I repeatedly encountered the observation that even after years of pastoral ministry sermon text choice continues to be the most burdensome part of preparation and that preachers lack clear and helpful criteria to help them in the decision process. Therefore, in this chapter, I deal with the relationship between the deceased person's case (differentiation⁶) and the choice of Bible text as the basis for the funeral sermon.⁷

In my evaluation of the relationship of differentiation and the chosen sermon text, I proceeded from the theoretical premise that two possibilities exist:

- (1) Choice of sermon text that takes the differentiation into account;
- (2) Choice of sermon text that disregards the differentiation.

I chose this structure on the grounds that a choice based on

⁶ Kišš uses the word “differentiation” for the basic characteristics of the deceased person's case. Basic characteristics include: sex, age, but also other facts like the type of death, relationship to the church, data from the deceased's working life and so on.

⁷ For example, in other limited studies I have analysed Kišš's procedure in his funeral sermon introduction (so-called general introduction) or his methods for progressing from the general introduction to addressing the bereaved, internal division of the proclamatory section of the funeral sermon and so on.

differentiation will dominate during periods of the liturgical calendar without major festivals and that during periods with religious festivals we can assume that there will be a preference for a text choice which takes the relevant feasts into consideration. Regarding this, we concur with Seitz who states that “the case influences the choice but it is the text and not the case that is expounded.”⁸ Fendt makes a similar comment when he presents two principles in one sentence: (1) in the funeral sermon, the text is proclaimed and not the case, and (2) the text is proclaimed in the context of the case.”⁹

3.1 Choice of the sermon text taking the differentiation into account

When choosing a sermon text that takes the differentiation into account, Kišš uses a two-fold approach. He chooses the text:

- (1) in keeping with the differentiation or
- (2) in contrast to the differentiation.

3.1.1 The choice of a sermon text in keeping with the differentiation

In text choices in keeping with the differentiation in Kišš's work, we find choices based on:

- (1) similar situations in scripture
- (2) similarity in thought
- (3) Scripture used as a descriptor.

⁸ M.Seitz, Die Predigt, p.35, in: J. SMOLÍK: *Radost ze slova*, p.149, note no.433.

⁹ L. Fendt, Die Kasualrede v MPTh 1936, p.250 in: J. SMOLÍK: *Radost ze slova*, p.149, note no.433.

3.1.1.1 *Similar situations in Scripture*

He chooses a sermon text in keeping with differentiation when he finds a Bible text that has similar features to the funeral case. Kišš used this option in the following sermons:

In S12, the preacher takes note of how the deceased woman's life ended, by which she, "a widow, had eventually needed her children to care for her." Naturally, when looking for a similar situation in Scripture, he can start out from the concept of a widow (which he elaborates on in the differentiation with indications of dependence due to ill health). Therefore, he chooses a New Testament text that directs children to care of their mother – a widow (1 Timothy 5.4): "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practise piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God." The homiletic goal grows out of the exegetic emphasis of the text, a fact that we can only commend. We can evaluate just as positively the way the preacher uses this text to instruct his church at a funeral where rebuke in the family is unnecessary and where he can draw attention to the way this task was carried out.

In S17¹⁰ Kišš finds features of the relevant case in the Biblical account of David's grief over Absalom's tragic death. We can evaluate the text choice in two ways: (1) it corresponds to some extent¹¹ with the case and facilitates the expression of pain and

¹⁰ S17 Differentiation: The tragic death of a young son. Sermon text: 2 Samuel 18:33 "And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

¹¹ The difference is pointed out by the preacher in the wording of S17: "Thus David wept over his failure of a son. How much greater reason do you have for

sadness excellently. (2) The inadequacy of the choice becomes apparent if we expect to find a cue for proclamation in the sermon text. In fact, David's grief for Absalom does not provide a starting point for a textual realisation of the homiletic goals the preacher set out for himself in this sermon. The same applies to subsequent sermons, for example, S8: Differentiation: a young man, a car accident not caused by him; text: Ecclesiastes 9:12 "For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.", where in our assessment the sermon text facilitates a description of the situation of loss but does not provide a starting point for proclamation.

S25 was preached at the funeral of an old woman who had lived and died peacefully. The preacher finds similar circumstances (old age and peaceful death) in the promise the Lord gives in Genesis 15:15 (LXX: Kyrios) to Abram: 'As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.'¹² With this choice of text, we can observe the preacher's ability to encapsulate the case with words of Scripture and thus in his own way teach the funeral congregation to adopt a Biblical point of view when parting with the deceased woman. On the other hand, we wonder if the text is only useful in helping us grasp the case or whether it will also serve effectively in the goals of the textual fulfillment of the funeral sermon.

grief today, dear grieving family. After all you are not burying some failure of an Absalom, but a beloved and good son, who was your joy and firm support."

¹² We could relevantly and justifiably include this text in Chapter 1.1.3. Text choice as a message from the involved subjects (in the subchapter 1.1.3.1 message in God's mouth).

Summary. By observing text choices that are based on finding features of the differentiation in the biblical texts, we may state that this method of choice offers an excellent opportunity for grasping the case from a Biblical view point. In some cases, it may help to express pain and sorrow or in a description of the tasks and their context. However, though it may encapsulate the case admirably, we must consider a definite flaw of this method's often limited textual points of departure, which do not provide a basis for fulfilling the tasks of the funeral sermon. The preacher must then reach for additional biblical texts or he will try to resolve the tasks of the funeral sermon without connecting it to the text of the sermon.

3.1.1.2 *Similarity of Thought*

In this part, we will observe the relationship between differentiation and the sermon text where the preacher did not look for similarity between the case and the text on the level of formal parallels but on the level of (1) a transfer of the meaning of ideas or (2) a Biblical evaluation of the dominant characteristics of the deceased person.

(1) *Transfer of the meaning of ideas.* In S14, we find an ingenious method of choosing a text. After the sudden death of a bus driver (heart attack) Kišš opts for a Bible text choice based on a typical concept (journey) for the deceased, which, however, he transfers onto a kerygmatic level in the form of the sermon text. He chooses the text John 14:4 based on the concept of the journey to eternity: 'And you know the way to where I am going', thus excellently opening up the possibility of Christ-centred proclamation.

(2) *Biblical evaluation of the deceased's dominant features.* S32 was preached at the funeral of a man who had used what he was gifted to serve

his fellow men. In his choice of text, the preacher analysed the attributes of the gift of the case and concluded that the deceased man was God-given and that by using it he had been a good steward of the valuable things (talents) given to him by God. Therefore, for his text, he chooses Matthew 25:20-21: ‘And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful to me a little; I will give you much. Enter into the joy of your master.’¹³

In this approach, he uses a biblical text to evaluate the case and obtain an abundance of textual impetuses to perform the tasks of the funeral sermon. However, the use of this text for the funeral sermon can also involve risks both (a) on a theological and (b) on a pastoral level.

Ad a) A theological risk (avoided by Kišš) occurs when strict adherence to the text without regard for the biblical context creates an impression that salvation is a reward for effectively stewarding the entrusted gifts and not a gift of grace.

Ad b) A pastoral risk occurs when the servant (deceased) is evaluated only positively. If the preacher does not handle this risk well, it can complicate the process of coming to terms with the loss of the widowed life partner. An idealisation of the deceased and a real perception of the flaws increase the bereaved person’s feelings of guilt, complicating the grief process. The

¹³ To an extent this kind of text choice resembles the process which we described in section “3.1.1.1 Similar situations in Scripture”, but a formal similarity is not involved here.

preacher must keep this in mind.

However, we 'assume that the preacher can handle these risks without any difficulty and that this method of text choice, which depends on differentiation, opens up space for him to fulfil the tasks of funeral sermon.

In S21 Kišš is burying a man who has died in a car accident, and for his sermon text he chooses Jeremiah 1:18 'And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls'. The stability of the images in the text contrasts with the reality of the fragility of the person who lost his life on the road. However, the preacher is not focussing on tragic death and is not setting the text against the fragility of the person dying. He is focusing on the dominant characteristics of the deceased, the stability of his personality and spiritual life. He takes note of his life and impact on the world around him. In this sense, he perceives him as 'a fortified city', "an iron pillar" or "bronze walls".

We can anticipate this kind of text choice by a preacher who has mature pastoral feeling, who does not wish to draw attention or shock by painting a tragic picture but wants to minister, to comfort the bereaved and instruct the funeral congregation Biblically. Therefore, we consider this a worthy choice to follow. However, this applies where the preacher knew the deceased well and knows that he is burying an exemplary Christian character. A more cautious approach is needed if he did not know the deceased well or at all.

In S22 he is burying a 'godly woman, blessed and strengthened in life by God' and he finds her to be characterized predominantly by having received strength from God. Therefore, he chooses the text of Isaiah 40:29 ("He gives power to the faint, and to him who has

no might he increases strength”). Thus, the preacher can speak about God, and the deceased can be a testimony of God’s help.

S24 was preached at the funeral of a good Christian, an exemplary father and a socially active person. The dominant feature— his goodness and good example, could tempt the preacher to lose perspective and turn the funeral sermon into a panegyric for the deceased instead of making appropriate Christian comments about him. From the outset, Kišš resisted this danger by his sermon text (and subsequently by establishing the objectives and structure). He does not observe the positive features in isolation but interprets them as an expression of his responsibility for the valuable things entrusted to him by God. Therefore, he chooses the text of 1 Corinthians 4:2 ‘Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.’ In the sermon, which he divides into three sections, he speaks of stewardship within the family, in society, and in a relationship with God. At the end of each section, he concludes by saying that the deceased proved to be a responsible steward in the particular area.

Summary. This approach shows that the preacher does not need to resort to formal Christocentrism at funerals of mature Christian characters but can point to Christ by examining the impact of His work on the life of the deceased person.

3.1.1.3 Descriptors from Scripture

In Kišš’s sermon preparation we also meet occasionally with a very specific kind of sermon text choice. He does not use emotionally pitched sentences to express his awareness of the pain of the dying person or the bereaved person’s pain but searches for a statement

or at least a fragment of a statement in Scripture that he can use as a descriptor to express the test situation. We find this approach in S36 (difficult cancer case) and S51 (a woman murdered by her husband).

In S36 the preacher is burying an exemplary godly woman of middle age who died of ‘a bad case of cancer’. With his choice of text, he wants to express the crushing difficulties that the deceased had to go through. He finds a reflection of her problems in the choice of sermon text: ‘the sun was obscured’. (Luke 23:45). With this type of choice, we cannot speak about a sermon text in the true sense of the word. It is merely a tool that helps him in his effort to describe the situation of the deceased woman and the bereaved individuals’ situation. It is not a sermon text because there is no message in it which would fulfil the tasks of the funeral sermon. Hence, we consider this an unsuitable text choice. If for some reason the preacher needed to quote this text, he could have used it as a base for a general introduction, but for his sermon text he should have chosen a text where he would find adequate cues for carrying out the funeral sermon’s tasks.

Similarly, also in S51, at the funeral of the mother murdered by her husband, he chooses as his sermon text John 13:30 ‘And it was night.’ A sermon text used in this way functions as a maxim and not as a sermon text. Hence, we also cannot evaluate this choice positively¹⁴.

¹⁴ In a private conversation Professor Kišš told me that this choice expresses the preacher’s horror that even things like this can happen in families. This instance suggests that observing the text choice in relation to the preacher’s personality and experience would also be appropriate, not only in relation to the differentiation and liturgical year and so on. However, we do not have objective evaluation tools for such an analysis yet.

3.1.2 Sermon text choice in contrast to differentiation

In Kišš's sermon text choice in contrast to the differentiation, we can observe that he chooses the text in two ways:

- (1) in apparent contrast to differentiation;
- (2) in genuine contrast.

3.1.2.1 *Apparent contrast*

The choice of sermon text in S13 gives the impression of contrast to reality. The preacher is burying a lonely old man – a widower. The situation suggests an impression of a lost future and an end to hope. But the preacher chooses a text from Proverbs 23:18: “Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” On superficial evaluation (or where homiletic execution has been one-sided), this approach may come across as religious speech with no reference to reality. But if it is properly developed, it provides an opportunity for a strong faith testimony: God gives hope even where, from a nonreligious point of view, it can no longer be expected.

We only recommend this approach to preachers who unite excellent Biblical exegesis and personal testimony as a servant of the Word. We do not recommend it to pastors who are experiencing a period of crisis in their own life of faith, as the whole communication process is very significantly influenced by non-verbal communication in the work of preaching, too.

Summary. We have only included one sermon in text choices ‘in apparent contrast to the differentiation’, hence we do not have much starting material in the observed sample. We presume that we cannot evaluate the suitability or unsuitability of a sermon text choice in apparent contrast to the differentiation solely on the basis

of the actual relationship between the differentiation and the sermon text. We must also keep in mind the homiletic application of the text and how its proclamatory emphases are linked to the situation of the bereaved individuals and that of the rest of the grieving congregation. We can recommend this method of text choice if the above conditions are met.

3.1.2.2 *Genuine contrast*

In his text choice for a middle-aged alcoholic who died under mysterious circumstances (S38) Kišš holds to his policy of not reproving directly. Here he might have looked for texts of reproof, but he chose instead a text which, in contrast to the situation, speaks of seeking good: Jeremiah 6:16: ‘where the good way is; ... walk in it and find rest for your souls.’”

It is obvious from the train of thought in the sermon that the preacher did not want to skirt the problems of the deceased man in life, but that he also did not feel the need to go into details. He speaks of human flaws and those present know that there is also a reference to the deceased man. However, the sermon text itself speaks about walking the good way. The admonition does not come from the moralising of the preacher but out of Scripture¹⁵. We observe something similar also in S23 (“a more or less apathetic man, mild alcoholic.”), where the preacher chooses the text from Romans 16:24: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” Therefore, this relationship between differentiation and text can be considered pastorally sensitive and suitable for achieving the objectives of the funeral sermon.

In the S48 funeral sermon, where he is burying a middle-aged man characterized by him in the differentiation as self-centred, his

¹⁵ We observe something similar also in S23 (“a more or less apathetic man, mild alcoholic.”), where the preacher chooses the text from Romans 16:24: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

approach is also similar. In contrast to genuineness, he chooses the text Genesis 12:2: ‘you will be a blessing.’ Due to the context of the sermon text, he has the opportunity to speak about Abraham and his impact on those around him. In this way, he uses the opportunity, on the graveside of a self-centred man, to point out a suitable model of behaviour, without the necessity of harming the deceased man’s reputation.

In S37, for the funeral of a ‘religiously apathetic’ man, Kišš chooses a text from Colossians 3:2-3: ‘Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.’² Not knowing the case of the deceased man, we are unable to judge what the preacher means by “religiously apathetic” and in what sense he states this about the deceased man. Does he only refer to the concluding period before death or does the deceased man’s entire life fall into this category? Is it a statement with a solid theological basis, or does it superficially handle the concept of ‘dying with Christ’? If the preacher’s starting point for his choice of text was not narrowly specified differentiation, but a view of the bereaved as a Christian fellowship, we can consider this text choice to be appropriate.

Summary. In regard to texts with genuine contrast in the differentiation-text relationship, we discovered that when dealing with the funerals of problematic people the preacher need not opt for direct reproof but can achieve the same outcome by opting for a text that contrasts with the differentiation. Observations from Kišš’s work show that this approach can be pastorally sensitive, culturally viable, and provide the conditions for an effective proclamation of the Word.

3.1.3 Choice of text as an act of communication between the subjects involved.

Forming a distinctive section of the sermon texts is a large group of texts in which the preacher finds a message for the funeral congregation:

- (1) the message in God's mouth;
- (2) the message in the deceased person's mouth;
- (3) the message in the mouth of the bereaved,

3.1.3.1 *The message in God's mouth*

We find a whole series of statements in this category, which are alike in having been spoken by God, but differ in that (a) he is speaking to the departing person; (b) he is speaking about the departing person; (c) to the bereaved; (d) to people in general.

a) God addresses the departing person. In S15, at the funeral of a man of about 60 years, Kišš chooses the text: 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you." Every person lives in the sight and He has something to say about the lives of us all. This is true for both the one departing and also of us in general. If the preacher makes use of the stimuli which result from this choice, he will have what he needs for effective proclamation.

b) The statement of God about the deceased. In S1 at the funeral of a godly old woman at Christmas, the preacher thus chooses a text from Revelation 14:13: 'And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!' The preacher wants to

reinforce awareness that the message he is bringing is from God. This allows those present to come to terms with the death, not based on the human experience of our existential finiteness, but based on a biblical theological eschatological perspective.

He proceeds similarly in S5, at the funeral of a middle-aged woman who was a godly and excellent woman who had died of a sudden stroke. He chooses as the sermon text the words from Revelation 2:19: 'The words of the Son of God, 'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance'.' This sermon is built on an interesting concept, where he analyses the words of the sermon text in regard to the deceased woman. Once again, a person stands before God. This can be used as a point of departure for pastoral support of mourners – a reference to the hope of faith, but also for evangelism – a reference to the fact that 'every knee will bow' one day before Christ.

In S44 (the death of a family patriarch and a churchwarden), he chooses the text: Jeremiah 6:27: "I have made you a tester of metals among my people, that you may know and test their ways." With this text choice the preacher opens up the possibility of speaking about the good received from the deceased by the bereaved family and church congregation - and that from a faith perspective: It is God who gives people gifts and assigns tasks to them. Therefore, we can express our thanks to Him for all the good things He gives us, including giving us people of calibre.

In S33, he bids farewell to an old woman, 'who embodied Mary and Martha in one person'. Therefore, he chooses the text from Luke 10:41-42: 'But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.' This choice of text offers an opportunity to teach the

funeral congregation and to point out essential realities, which, for those in attendance, dwindle in importance under the pressure of everyday tasks.

The preacher should make use of the fact that it is Jesus speaking these words of admonition and that the present company is hearing them in a funeral setting. On this basis he can steer them towards asking themselves constructive questions to re-evaluate the direction and quality of their lives.

c) God addresses the bereaved. S49 was preached at the funeral of a young man (49 years old), whose health had gradually faded and who would be missed by his wife. With his choice of text from Isaiah 41:13 (“For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you”) the preacher shows that he knows what practical difficulties the bereaved will face and the crisis of faith that comes with the loss of an emotionally significant person. He covers both of these facts with a reference to God’s goodness. With this text choice, it is noteworthy that he finds a text where God Himself speaks the words to communicate this fact.

In S47 (“Sudden death removed (her) from a serious impending illness. She will be missed”) the preacher chose a text from Ezekiel 24:15: ‘Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep.’

If the preacher builds the sermon on a good exegesis, this text choice will cause him problems (prohibiting grief as a symbolic prophetic act). If he uses the text only in its isolated literal sense, he can speak of loss as God’s intervention in the lives of bereaved individuals. The direct statement of the text “Yet you shall not mourn or weep”, could lead to a hindering of the grieving process,

which we must negatively evaluate. Thus, we encounter several risks in this text choice, which, in our view, make it unsuitable.

d) *God speaks to people in general.* In S45, at the funeral of a religiously apathetic old man, he chooses Jeremiah 9:23-24 as the sermon text: “Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practises steadfast love.”

Death raises doubts about a person’s many achievements, but knowledge of God and His goodness has constant value, for life and for departing into eternity.

As Kišš chose this text for the funeral of a “religiously apathetic old man”, it is impossible to overlook the admonition here. Young preachers can learn here how to warn listeners so that the experience is not primarily that of an overly self-assured preacher, but one that confronts the listener with God’s Word. In proclamation, the issue at stake is not primarily the preacher’s own confidence, but his faithfulness to God.

3.1.3.2 *The message in the mouth of the deceased person*

In this group, we include the sermon texts where the Biblical message is presented as a statement by the deceased person in the form of:

- (a) interpersonal communication spoken
 - (a1) to their life partner;
 - (a2) to the whole family; or as
 - (a3) addressing the funeral congregation;
 - (a4) a statement to God and about God;
 - (a5) a statement about themselves;

(b) intrapersonal communication (words to oneself).

a1) The deceased person addresses his/her life partner. In S39 (parting from a good wife and mother; the husband remains alone at home), Kišš chooses the text 1 Kings 2:2: ‘I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man’. These words are spoken by the dying King David to his son Solomon. Since a man is addressed in the text, the preacher is not obliged to make stylistic corrections, even using this text in the context of relationships on a different level (not parent – son, but wife – husband). If the preacher had simply left it as a message from a departing woman to a bereaved man, it would not have been a Christian funeral sermon. Therefore, developing faith themes in the sermon is necessary to provide the conditions for the widowed partner to be able to “be strong”.

a2) The deceased person addresses the whole family. S28 was preached at the funeral of a man who had been a key figure in the family and a guardian of family traditions. The preacher chose a sermon text from Genesis 48:21: ‘Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you.’

The preacher uses this choice of text to connect with the family that had been important to the deceased. The text can be used very effectively where the deceased has spoken often with his loved ones about God, and the preacher can build on this fact. If the deceased man was apathetic to religion or did not talk about God for different reasons, then we would consider this an inappropriate text choice (and he should choose an alternate suitable text for a reference to God’s care). The same applies to S46 (August funeral of a man in declining health), where the preacher chose the text 1 Corinthians

16:23-24: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.”

a3) *The deceased person addresses the funeral congregation.* In S40 the preacher starts with the case of a man - bell ringer - whose bell ringing had summoned people to the church. Therefore, the preacher opted for a text choice that would build on his service in the church and would be the last bell ringing: Isaiah 2:3: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, so that he may teach us his ways’. We consider this not only to be an original text choice but we can also underline its potential to perform the tasks of the funeral sermon’s tasks.

a4) *The deceased person speaking to and about God.* S35 is at the burial of a godly old man who had been a fervent believer his whole life. Therefore, he chooses Psalm 71: 5-6, 9, 14¹⁶ as his sermon text, through which he expresses the testimony of faith. We also find the same relationship between differentiation and sermon text in S50 (A quiet old man, a good man who had had a difficult life but remained committed to God’s will; sermon text: Psalm 71:5: ‘For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.’ This type of text choice enables us to perceive the deceased as a witness to the veracity of the biblical message. The usefulness of this approach is limited to cases where the preacher is burying people of unquestionable Christian character.

¹⁶ Psalm 71:5-6, 9, 14: “For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent. But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.”

a5) *The deceased's statement about himself.* In S16 (the tragic death of a young presbyter who had been an outstanding person), the preacher chooses the text Isaiah 38:12: “like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom”. This type of text choice captures the situation admirably, but provides less scope for a textual proclamation. It functions as a deep sigh over a sudden death. We suspect that the preacher might be praised by the attendees for a good text choice after a funeral like this, but we would think again about such an assessment. A text-based general introduction might be constructed on this text, but the main sermon text should speak to the funeral congregation about a person in the face of God.

In the category “the deceased’s statement about himself” one particular group consists of declarative texts that express who God was for the deceased person. Here, for example, we would include S29 (The Lord’s servant, a self-sacrificing, humble woman, obedient to God) where for the sermon text he chooses Luke 1:38: “I am the servant of the Lord”, a quote from Mary’s response to the angel. This short text might come across as a catchphrase, but it has its own breadth of meaning. Used homiletically at this funeral, it speaks about the deceased woman and it speaks about God. Hence, it speaks of a person in the face of God and a person prepared to serve God. Therefore, we can consider this text to be suitable where the preacher wants to connect an evangelistic or internally missional purpose with a homiletically descriptive use of the testimony of the deceased woman. The same applies to S3 (an elderly woman, godly, healthy), where the preacher chooses a text from Genesis 24:56c: ‘Send me away that I may go to my master’ or in S7 (a godly old woman), where he chooses the text from Psalm 118:14: ‘The Lord

is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.’ In S41, he is burying a wife whom God had helped overcome all the difficulties of life. Therefore, he chooses the text of Philippians 4:13: ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’. In S43 at the funeral of a lonely widow of deep faith, he chooses a text based on recognizing the strong side of his spiritual life - Psalm 73:28: “But for me it’s good to be near God”. In S20 the same thing also applies to how case and text are connected (an elderly woman, difficult life, deep faith). Here, the preacher chose the text from Psalm 18:35: ‘your right hand supported me’. We consider this an excellent text choice for funerals of people whose lives (in words and deeds) were also this kind of witness. However, a preacher who does not know his congregation yet or did not know the deceased should be careful in using this option so that he does not cause the authenticity of his message to be doubted by applying it to questionable people.

b) The deceased person’s message to themselves. In S6 (a man in his sixties, prematurely aged by illness), the preacher chooses a text from Psalm 42:5: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him”. In S53 the preacher mentions that this is the funeral of a suffering person. He chooses Isaiah 8:17 as his sermon text: “I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.” This type of text choice implies coming to terms with difficulties and doing it based on faith in God. Consequently, this type of text choice is useful where the preacher can talk about the significance of faith in difficult circumstances and can apply this statement convincingly to the lifestyle of the deceased person.

3.1.3.3 *The message in the mouth of the bereaved*

In this category, Kišš chooses texts which present the biblical message stylized as though spoken by the bereaved. We find examples of this type of choice in

- (a) statements by the bereaved
 - (a1) about the deceased;
 - (a2) about themselves;
- (b) statements about assurance of faith;
- (c) the prayers of the bereaved individuals
 - (c1) for spiritual wisdom and
 - (c2) for forgiveness and guidance towards forgiveness.

a) Statements from the bereaved about the deceased and about themselves are the key to the sermon text choice in several sermons.

(a1) The bereaved individuals' statement about the deceased. In S2, they are bidding farewell to a favourite godly old man. Therefore, he opts for the text Luke 2:25: 'Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel'. In this way, the biblical text serves not only to convey the message but also to make a statement about the deceased person. In S42 there is also a similar relationship between case and text, where a godly church cleaning woman is being buried and he chooses the sermon text Psalm 84: 3: "Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, ... at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God."

(a2) The statement of the bereaved individuals about themselves. For the funeral of an elderly woman who had been a good mother (S11), Kišš chooses the text Psalm 35:14: 'I went about ... as one who laments his mother'.

The Psalmist expresses his empathy for the suffering of others with

these words. Professor Kišš uses them to help the bereaved express their pain through them.

b) *Statement of assurance of faith.* In S34 he is burying a single mother and a small orphan girl is left. Thus, with his sermon text choice, he wants to teach her to adopt an attitude of faith: Psalm 27:10: 'For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.' This verse from the Psalm envisions the worst experience possible, and this has happened in the orphan's life. She has lost her mother and she has no father. Therefore, with his text choice, the preacher wants to teach her to adopt an attitude like the Psalmist David, of trust in God, and in faith to recognise that she is secure in God. (This faith statement does not mean that the responsibility of other Christians is excluded, on the contrary – their care for the dependent child becomes part of God's care. They become a tool for God in action.)

c) *The prayers of bereaved people to God* can also become the route to choose a sermon text. In terms of this possibility, Kišš chooses texts where the motif is:

(c1) *a prayer for spiritual wisdom.* In S26, he is burying a middle-aged person who died suddenly. Therefore, he chooses the sermon text: Psalm 90:12: 'So teach us to number our days that we may find a heart of wisdom.' This verse provides the preacher with an opportunity to expand on what it means to "get a heart of wisdom".

(c2) *Prayer for forgiveness and guidance towards forgiveness.* In S30 the preacher is burying a young girl who has committed suicide. In this kind of situation, the bereaved are dealing with feelings of guilt at the same time as with the need to forgive the deceased for hurting them. Therefore, opting for one of the requests in the Lord's Prayer: 'and forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors' (Matthew 6:12) seems to us to be a pastorally justifiable and suitable sermon text choice. Its structure A-B is not used in this case, as the text is not applied to the girl's life. The

preacher uses it in the closing section by placing it in the mouth of the bereaved.

3.2 The choice of the sermon text disregarding the differentiation

Texts reacting to other message cues, such as

- (1) the liturgical year or
- (2) Church dogmatic

are an example of choice without regard for differentiation.

3.2.1 Use of the liturgical year

The use of the liturgical year can be observed in the choice of funeral sermon text in S53, for example, where he uses the concept of advent, waiting on the Lord – at a funeral in the advent season and chooses a text from Isaiah 8:17: “I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.” Waiting for God adds a new dimension to suffering and brings new strength. He also uses the liturgical year in S18 at the funeral of an elderly man at Easter, where the preacher chooses the text Ezekiel 37:12: ‘Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people’. The preacher shows here that the stimulus provided by the liturgical year (Easter, death and resurrection) need not be reflected in the funeral sermon in a mechanical thematic undertone but can be processed from the perspective of its impact on the church, etc. Kišš does not use this category very often. The same also applies to S19 (a funeral during Lent – Easter week, Mother). His sermon text choice is Acts 14:22: ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’

3.2.2 Text choice based on dogmatic

In S27 (a godly old woman, a life without major crises), the preacher chooses a sermon text from 2 Timothy 1:10: 'Our Saviour Christ Jesus, abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'. His arrival on this theme is neither via the differentiation nor through the liturgical year. It is a dogmatically determined choice, the use of which I consider justified.

3.3 Summary of the observation results

We have found various approaches to sermon text choice for the funeral sermon in the Professor Kišš collection under analysis. We have observed that it can be essentially a choice (1) taking into account the differentiation or (2) disregarding the differentiation. In the first case we found three sub-possibilities: (1a) in harmony with differentiation, (1b) at contrast with the differentiation and (1c) as communication between the subjects.

Each of these possibilities has strengths and weaknesses; thus, it is desirable for the preacher to employ various approaches in choosing the sermon text.

In order to make a text choice from varied points of approach, he must first be familiar with these and be able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses from his own point of view. In so doing, he will avoid mistakes which might negatively influence his ministry, the fulfilment of which he cannot evade anyway. Thus, it makes sense to explore options to have the greatest possible kerygmatic impact on the whole funeral congregation and meaningfully supporting the grieving process of the bereaved parties.

4 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE FUNERAL SERMON

Professor Kišš's funeral sermons begin with a section that he himself calls a "certain emotional introduction"¹⁷. It seems more appropriate to us to entitle this section as "general introduction". This title expresses that Kišš begins first with a general fact that he then applies to the bereaved in the next step of the communication process (which in his model we entitle 'addressing the bereaved'). He uses in the general introduction (1) religious motifs; (2) general experience; (3) images and similes; (4) literary motifs; (5) psychological motifs; (6) sociological motifs and (7) spiritual motifs.

4.1 Religious motifs

Concerning religious motifs, he uses (1) the liturgical year; (2) Biblical text; (3) a hymn text.

4.1.1 The liturgical year

In Kišš's general introductions, we encounter the liturgical year six times. This means that it is found in more than 10% of his sermons. This statistic may be of little meaningful value as it may influence factors beyond the preacher's decision-making power in his sermon preparation, for example:

- a) Later selection of sermons for a printed collection
- b) Time of death in the year's framework.

¹⁷ So I. Kišš: *Nádej nad brobom I*, p1.

In the collection, we find the following motifs from the liturgical year:

4.1.1.1 *Advent*

We may observe this in the way that he makes the connection with Advent (S53), where he does not stop at merely identifying the period of the liturgical year but expands on this fact, using it to describe the entire Christian life as anticipating meeting God. In the end, the death of this kind of Christian seems to him to be the ‘fulfilment of this great hope’¹⁸

4.1.1.2 *Christmas*

Christmas is reflected in S1. The introductory sentences relate to the positive expectations for the Christmas season’s positive expectations¹⁹, in order to connect with the bereaved parties’ pain on the loss of their mother and grandmother. The preacher uses a motif from the liturgical year to demonstrate that Christ’s coming (Christmas) brings hope to the situation experienced by the bereaved²⁰. Thus, we may evaluate this method as an example of

¹⁸ S53/GI “It is an advent which begins with our birth and ends with our death. Throughout this lengthy period the believer turns his longing gaze towards the heavens and waits. He expects one day to meet God face to face, in whom he now merely believes. So then death is the fulfilment of this great hope. It is the completion of this great life-long advent. It is the moment when we leave and Christ arrives.”

¹⁹ S1/GI: “When Christmas is coming, we all look forward to it ahead of time. We get our homes ready for it. We get gifts ready to give to one another. Each one of us waits for it in joyful anticipation.”

²⁰ S1/GI: “And yet because of Christmas itself, which we have just experienced, parting with her need not be as sad and hopeless. It is because of Christmas itself that we may experience hope in death. Because of Christmas not only can a person’s life become a blessed life but even death itself can be blessed because of Christmas,” – and he goes on to quote the sermon text.

appropriate connection to the liturgical year and kerygmatic use of it.

4.1.1.3 *Easter*

The Easter period including its preparatory period (Lenten period) is included in four sermons (S31; S19; S33; S18). In S31 preached on Palm Sunday, he is already thinking of the events of “Holy Week”. It is in pain and sadness²¹ that he finds a point of connection between the liturgical year and the situation of the bereaved. That is why ‘this sad period of Lent is doubly sorrowful’ for the bereaved.²² In the case of the sermon quoted, where he is burying an 81-year-old lady, this approach may be considered appropriate. If he had been burying a younger person or someone whose departure had been more difficult, we would consider this kind of “lumping together of sorrow” inappropriate for both pastoral reasons (because it could needlessly burden the grieving) and theological reasons (because the sadness at losing a loved one is different from the sadness resulting from Christ’s death for our justification before God).

Lenten period. In S19 the preacher starts out from the sad events of the Easter period²³, which naturally he cannot develop

²¹ S31/GI: “Today with Palm Sunday we enter into Holy Week, which culminates in Christ’s suffering. And sorrow enters into Christian hearts for all of what we are reminded by the Lent passion. Just as we sing in our hymn: “time of sorrow, time of fasting, O man, take thought for it.”

²² S31, introductory sentence of section “addressing the bereaved”.

²³ S19 GI: “The Lenten period in which we find ourselves is a period of particular sorrow for us Christians. For the Christian Church is remembering the Lord Jesus Christ’s suffering and death for our salvation. This Holy Week, into which we have entered with Palm Sunday, is saddest of all. During it we will relive all the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Again, we will fully

kerygmatically in the introduction, and (as in S31) he connects the sadness of the bereaved to the sadness of the events of the liturgical period.

Holy Saturday In the introduction to S33 the preacher successfully crafts a broad kerygmatic outline in the space of a few lines, which corresponds with the funeral situation²⁴. In it, he has the reality of death and expectation of the resurrection, and he immediately comes to the theme in the very first sentences of the funeral sermon, without losing sensitivity to the specific situation. As this introduction makes way for the pastoral and kerygmatic tasks of the funeral sermon, we can regard it especially favourably.

Easter resurrection In S18, the preacher's starting point is Christ's Easter Sunday resurrection²⁵. Using the liturgical year, he creates tension regarding the experiences of the bereaved. This tension is expressed directly in the sermon text so that he can move from this starting point to the resurrection message (Ezekiel 37:12: "Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my

experience that Christ was betrayed and crucified. The Christian Church relives these events with sorrow and reverence."

²⁴ S33 GI: "Today is Easter Saturday itself. Christ's dead body is resting in the grave. His great suffering is over and peace has ensued. The years of work are over and rest has followed. And therefore, though Christ's friends weep over their beloved, dead Lord and in this weeping express their love for Him, we, as we look at Christ Himself and at His Good Friday suffering, must nevertheless say: it is well. The cross and suffering are done; they are now only a thing of the past. The Lord Jesus has been removed from it all by death. Now all that remains is to await the future: the Easter morning of resurrection. For Christ promised what it would be like: but on the third day I will rise from the dead."

²⁵ S18 GI: "It is Easter. The joyful message of the victory of life is being proclaimed during these days. The women who went to Christ's grave on Sunday morning found it empty. Instead of a dead Christ they found an angel sitting in the tomb, who proclaimed Christ's resurrection to them. Later these three women returned joyfully from Christ's tomb, recognizing that the power of death had already been broken and that Christ had become the death of Death."

people”). I also assess this approach positively because it devotes attention to the situation of the bereaved as well as to the biblical message.

4.1.1.4 Evaluation of the usability of liturgical year stimuli in the general introduction.

In his use of liturgical year stimuli, Kišš is striving for “kerygmatic interaction” between the liturgical year and the message he brings in his funeral sermon. On this basis, I conclude that the liturgical year motif provides an excellent impulse for connection with the situation if used intentionally by the preacher and used kerygmatically. (This is not applicable in cases where the preacher touches only formally on the liturgical year motif.) The use of the liturgical year motif allows the preacher:

- (1) to connect with the spiritual (or cultural) experience of the liturgical year in the funeral environment.
- (2) to connect the message of the situation of the liturgical period with the bereaved individuals.
- (3) through this connection to show the relevance of the Biblical message to people today in general and for processing the loss of a loved one. Therefore, we recommend the use of these motifs to preachers.

We do not recommend this approach in cases where the religious festivals of the preacher’s church tradition are not known in a particular environment. In that case, his references might sound unintelligible and would not result in the positive observations mentioned above.

4.1.2 Biblical text

We encounter the main motif of the use of a Bible text as the general

introduction in the following ways in Kišš's work: (1) human mortality as an unavoidable God-ordained law; (2) death and God's timing; (3) death and readiness to depart; (4) the necessity for Christians to also process grief.

4.1.2.1 *Human mortality as an unavoidable, God-ordained law*

In S25, he begins with the words: The Holy Scripture says "it is appointed for man to die once (Hebrews 9:27)" ...Behind this passive form is the one who imparted this law, God." However, Kišš does not refer to him directly in the introduction, but continues with a description of how this law is carried out.²⁶

In S37, he presents human mortality as a law placed into nature and human life by God, on the basis of Psalm 90 (v2b-3)²⁷. The general introduction ends with the words: "There is no exception that proves the rule. There is only an inescapable iron rule of human transience."

4.1.2.2 *Death and God's timing*

In S41, he uses the statement of Psalm 90 (v.10: "The years of our

²⁶ S25 GI: Holy Scripture says "it is appointed for man to die once" and the truth of these words is proven in our lives time and time again. Time and time again different homes are clothed in mourning robes when one of their circles must be seen off on their final journey. Often a particular house may be protected from these kinds of sad circumstances for many years. But then all of a sudden someone in the family becomes ripe for eternity's harvest and must take his leave of this world."

²⁷ S37 GI: "Nature is governed according to laws placed into it by God. These laws cannot be changed by any of us. They apply inexorably and immutably. One of these laws placed into nature by God also concerns us humans. This law declares: we are transient. It is as Psalm 90 says: "You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" And as this is a law placed by God into nature and into our human life, none of us can change this fact. None of us can avoid it. Years pass, the body weakens and becomes feeble, our bodily organs deteriorate and we have to depart from this world."

life are 70, or even by reason of strength eighty; they are soon gone, and we fly away.’ He goes on to connect this motif²⁸ with the image of a bus at its terminus²⁹. He also uses these same motifs (Psalm 90 and the bus) in S13³⁰ but there the bus is not arriving at the terminus but is moving on from the bus stop. If S41 presents death as the end, then ‘moving from the bus stop’ makes room for an eschatological faith perspective.

In S39 he also refers to concepts from Psalm 90, where he attaches this quotation to a general introduction which he is constructing on a general experience image.³¹

²⁸ S41 GI: “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; they are soon gone, and we fly away.” Again, and again we are convinced of the truthfulness of these words of Holy Scripture. Sometimes, though, we might be prone to believe that these words of Scripture are not true and that it might be different for us when we reach that age. But the reality of life shows us time and time again that this is the case. “They are soon gone, and we fly away”.

²⁹ S41: image in the general textual introduction: “Just as the bus arrives at the terminus and does not go any further because it has reached the terminus, we might also say that people reach their last station one day, where their life’s pilgrimage ends. Usually our last station is somewhere in our early seventies or eighties. Infirmities multiply, the body grows weaker. Some people seem to arrive at their terminus somewhat earlier, at seventy already, and others somewhat later, in their eighties. However, no one in this age group is far from this moment any more, whether they like to admit it or not.

³⁰ S13 GI: “All of us are only temporary residents on this earth. The time for us to depart must arrive one day. Just as the bus must leave its bus stop at a given moment, just as the train must leave the station as its timetable indicates, so a person must leave this world when his time comes. As human beings we also have a timetable set out for us in Psalm 90: “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; they are soon gone, and we fly away.” The truth of these words of Scripture is something we experience again and again. The funeral today is another confirmation of our human mortality.”

³¹ S39 GI: “Some things take us by surprise. Though we may anticipate them, knowing that they are inevitably on the horizon someday, somehow, they come too soon after all, at a moment when we did not expect them or reckon with them yet. Such as when a person travelling by train gets deep in conversation and is suddenly surprised that his last stop is already here. So it is with our lives

4.1.2.3 *Death and readiness to depart*

In S2, the preacher begins by quoting a text from Hebrews 13:14: (“For here we have no lasting city.”)³². With it he presents death not only as an experiential but also a kerygmatic reality. However, the preacher uses only the first part of the Biblical quotation here, which points out our mortality. Although he does not use the literal language of the second section in S2, which speaks of seeking ‘the city that is to come’, this idea is incorporated into the sermon in many ways. The connection of sermon text³³ and the case of the deceased man’s case (a godly beloved 90-year-old man) gives the preacher what he needs to express Christian preparedness for the departure into eternity³⁴.

sometimes. As our hymn puts it “we have been cast down by death in the middle of our days”. And sometimes death comes unexpectedly when we have not reckoned with it yet. We all know that it is coming. For it is clearly stated in the Bible: “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty”. However, the surprise lies in death coming somewhat earlier at times. And it comes without the advance warning of a lengthy illness. And so it comes like a thief in the night about whom nobody knows when they may enter our dwelling.”

³² S2 GI: “For here we have no lasting city”. These words from Holy Scripture never strike us with greater clarity or insistence than when we are burying some of our oldest Simeons. When someone younger dies, it might seem that they were perhaps frailer and perhaps died as a consequence. But when one of these elderly people depart this life, one who had enjoyed relatively good health till he was old, and had not obviously aged, when one of these passes away, then that “we have no lasting city here” is clear to each one of us. Even if someone is exceptionally strong and healthy, even if someone outlives their entire generation and all their contemporaries, nevertheless, in the end, they must depart.” In S3 GI he also used this motif: “Our human life has its limits. And when we reach that limit, we must prepare to depart from this temporal life. As the apostle said “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come!”

³³ Luke 2:25: “And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel.”

³⁴ S2 GI (continued): “And yet even this Simeon of ours finally reached this point where he had to pray in Simeon’s words: “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word”.

4.1.2.4 *Death and the need to deal with it even among Christians*

In S44,³⁵ he starts with Paul's words of farewell to Christians in Miletus (Acts 20:25a): "none of you...will see my face again". In the context of this passage, at least two motifs are of use for the funeral.

- (1) *Never again* – the reality of the final parting;
- (2) *The grief of the parting*, though we are dealing with Christians. This motif is important for pastoral support in the grief process and counters the false idea that Christians do not cry at funerals.

4.1.2.5 *Evaluation of the usability of Bible text cues in the general introduction*

In the collection under analysis we came across the use of a Bible text as the basic motif five times in the general introduction. What these motifs have in common is that they are used to point out human mortality:

- (1) Human mortality as a God-ordained principle (S25), which is unavoidable (S37)
- (2) Death and God's timing (S41)
- (3) Death and preparation to depart (S2)
- (4) Death and the need to deal with it in Christian interpersonal relationships (S44).

We can also see these points as a description of potential problems

³⁵ S44 GI: "none of you ...will see my face again." Long ago the apostle Paul bid farewell to the Christians in Miletus with these words when he knew that his time to depart was approaching and that they were seeing his face for the last time in this world. And then, according to the book of Acts of the Apostles, when they realized that they were seeing the dear, precious face of the beloved apostle for the last time, there was much weeping among the Milesian Christians".

with which the bereaved have to deal:

- (1) the acceptability of mortality as a God-ordained, unavoidable principle;
- (2) acceptance of a length of life determined by God
- (3) the problem of our preparedness to depart,
- (4) mortality as a difficult reality, which we must deal with in the grief process.

The preacher may address these problems by looking for a central sermon text to support the message and subsequently by establishing the sermon goal. If the preacher only used the texts mentioned above as an expressive means of remarking on the situation, unconnected to a message, then we would consider this method to be of little kerygmatic effect.

4.1.3 A Hymn Text

We come across the use of a hymn text in two ways in the general introduction: (1) as the central motif; (2) as a supportive element.

4.1.3.1 *Hymn text as central motif*

Only in S38 do we encounter a general introduction in which the preacher's starting point is a hymn text. Use of the motif: realisation of human mortality and the uncertainty of when, where, and how they will die³⁶.

³⁶S38 GI: "A few moments ago our church was filled with the sound of the hymn: "My God, I know that I must die". The individual lines of this song go on to say that people have no certainty about when, how and where they will die. "My God, I do not know where I will die"; "I do not know how I will die". Just as we did not choose where we were born, so typically it is not up to us to choose the place of our death either. Just as we did not choose the hour of our birth, so also the hour of death is not in our power. But unlike our birth the manner in which we

4.1.3.2 *Hymn text as a supporting element*

To support an observation from general experience. In S39 we find an idea from a hymn used in this way, where it acts only as support for the primary motif of this sermon introduction, which is an observation from general experience³⁷.

As stylistic support for the expression of an idea. In S45 the preacher first introduces the image of a flowing river to make a link with this image via its use in a hymn³⁸. Thus, he connects the image and its application to the reality of human mortality.

To confirm what has already been stated. In S48 he quotes a hymn (after addressing the bereaved) and the hymn text serves to confirm what he has already said in the Introduction: ‘My God, I do not know when I will pass away’ ‘My God, I do not know how I will perish’ ‘My God I do not know where I will die’. With the help of the hymn text, Kišš develops the theme further here, for the reality reflected here is experienced *before God* (repetition 3x of: My God).

4.1.3.3 *Evaluation of the usability of hymn cues in the general introduction*

Kišš uses cues from hymns in the general introduction to connect

leave this world is also uncertain. Death comes in thousands of ways and each person will meet it differently at a different moment and in a different place.”

³⁷ S39 GI: “Such as when a person travelling by train gets deep in conversation and is suddenly surprised that his last stop is already here. So it is with our lives sometimes. As our hymn puts it “we have been cast down by death in the middle of our days”. And sometimes death comes unexpectedly when we have not reckoned with it yet. We all know that it is coming.

³⁸ S45 GI: “It is like never still, ever-flowing rivers. One of our hymns expresses this well, when it says: “the tide of time flows so quickly, like swift rivers, death and judgement come ever closer and the years of our life ebb ever more.”

thereby with the situation in which the bereaved find themselves, i.e., to express pain and sadness to be able later to guide them in the kerygmatic section towards a perspective of the hope of faith³⁹. Therefore, we are not surprised that an eschatological faith perspective does not filter through the quoted quotations. It would still be premature here. For this reason, his attitude is fully understandable, acceptable, and commendable.

4.2 General Experience

A general introduction based on general experience emerges from the motifs: (1) the necessity of departure; (2) the uncertainty of life; (3) coming to terms with the news.

4.2.1 The necessity of departure

To support the idea of the necessity of leaving, Kišš uses images of (1) a guest having to leave (2) a travel connection leaving at a specific time.

Ad 1) *A guest having to leave*. In S10 his starting point is the biblical observation that we are only sojourners here. He connects this reality with the general experience of a guest having to leave⁴⁰ and arrives via this chain of thought at the necessity of someone leaving

³⁹ He only arrives at a kerygmatic use of hymns in later sections of the funeral sermon, for example, in S36, as he transitions to the Biblical text and presents its kerygmatic content, he refers to a hymn: “But Jesus Christ Himself, dying at Golgotha, was not the only light of the world, the light of righteousness, as another of our hymns mentions also”.

⁴⁰ S10 GI: “... A guest is characterized by having to leave the place where they are. No guest stays in a particular place permanently. There is always an established time by which a guest must leave the place he is at. And the guest must leave when that time comes.”

this present life⁴¹, which corresponds with general experience: “In this way, one generation after another leaves this world.”⁴²

Ad 2) *A connection leaving at a determined time.* In S13 we can observe how a connection of text and image is used to support our perception of the same reality. The biblical text is Psalm 90⁴³ with the idea that human life has a time limit. He connects this reality to the image of our connection departing according to the timetable⁴⁴. This image allows us to consider the One who has determined the hour of our departure (and subsequently to process before Him the loss of our loved one).

4.2.2 The uncertainty of life

He uses the reality of uncertainty of life as the general introduction in two sermons - in S14 with the image of a driver on the road⁴⁵ and in S11 with the image of a soldier at the front⁴⁶. The use of these

⁴¹ S10 GI: one generation after another leaves this world like this. Scripture’s words apply: “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.”

⁴² S10 GI

⁴³ The preacher uses it in various sermons: S13, S37, and S41.

⁴⁴ S13 GI: “All of us are only temporary residents on this earth. The time for us to depart must arrive someday. Just as the bus must leave its bus stop at a given moment, just as the train must leave the station as its timetable indicates, so a person must leave this world when his time comes. As human beings we also have a timetable set out for us in Psalm 90: “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; they are soon gone, and we fly away.” The truth of these words of Scripture is something we experience again and again. The funeral today is another confirmation of our human mortality.”

⁴⁵ S14 GI: “All of us are well aware of the insecurity of drivers on the road. They must be extremely alert never knowing what they may encounter on the road. A moment may suddenly come which may prove fateful.”

⁴⁶ S11 GI: “Just as soldiers fall every day on the frontlines of war and something bad happens every day, so it is in life too... Just as a soldier on the front line is

two images is different. While in the first he is commenting on a menacing possibility⁴⁷, in the second he proceeds to the certainty that our time of departure is drawing near.⁴⁸

4.2.3 Coming to terms with the news

In a number of sermons, he builds the general introduction on the idea of coming to terms with the news. Here, Kišš begins with the feelings of the person receiving the news. He notes (a) the reality of our reluctance to receive some news; (b) reactions on receiving the news, (c) the effort to avoid bad news, (d) being surprised by news which we know is to come someday, and (e) how the news is communicated (bells).

Ad a) *News that we are reluctant to hear*. The general introduction to S16 is based on the experience of those present that they would be happy to avoid some types of news. But reality confirms them, and we must accept them as a fact⁴⁹. This is a useful introduction when dealing with a funeral where death was sudden and unexpected (for example, a heart attack, a fatal injury, car accident, etc.).

not certain of his life or of when or from whence a bullet may come to hit him, so it is in life: people also do not know when their last day may come.”

⁴⁷ S14 GI: “... Midway through life’s journey we may encounter death suddenly and unexpectedly.”

⁴⁸ S11 GI: “...we only know one thing, that the older we get, the more likely it is that our final hour is drawing near. The older we are, the nearer we move towards the frontlines of the battle field where we will meet our deaths. And at last death finds us too and we depart from this world.”

⁴⁹ S16 GI: Some news we are reluctant to hear. We would prefer not to hear it. We wish that it was not true at all and that others would come and say that the bearers of the news were mistaken, that nothing bad happened and that everything is alright. We are very sad when others come and, on the contrary, have to assure us of the truth and irreversibility of it all.”

Ad b) *Reactions to receiving the news*. His starting point in S17 is the listener's feelings after receiving important news of which he was unaware⁵⁰, which can result in a reversal of fortune in his life. If the value of this type of general introduction is not to be diminished, the preacher must only use it when it corresponds to the differentiation.

Ad c) *An effort to avoid bad news*. In S21, he is aware of a desire to avoid bad news⁵¹. This type of general introduction may be suitable for cases where the efforts of the preacher knows of the bereaved parties to evade reality and that this evasion has pathological symptoms.

Ad d) *Surprised by the news that we knew was coming someday*. S39 begins with the idea of things which we know are to come, but even so they take us by surprise⁵². He uses the news motif again, but now

⁵⁰ S17 GI: "Perhaps at some time you may have experienced someone coming to you with what you knew to be an important piece of news. At such times we are always apprehensive of what the news will be. It may be sad or not, serious or less serious. After you hear it you may breathe a sigh of relief, or it may be news such as will bring about a great and negative change in your lives."

⁵¹ S21 GI: "There are steps we would much rather not take. With what reluctance we sometimes enter a doctor's surgery, fearing the discovery of a serious illness there. How unwillingly we open the door to enter in where sorrowful ill tidings await us. This is like when we go to take a test we would rather avoid, simply because we must."

⁵² S39 GI: "Some things take us by surprise. Though we may anticipate them, knowing that they are inevitably on the horizon someday, somehow, they come too soon after all, at a moment when we did not yet expect them or reckon with them yet. Such as when a person travelling by train gets deep in conversation and is suddenly surprised that his last stop is already here. So, it is with our lives sometimes. As our hymn puts it "we have been cast down by death in the middle of our days". And sometimes death comes unexpectedly when we have not

it is not unexpected news. It was expected, but only later. This motif is useful in cases of chronically ill people who passed away sooner than expected from the bereaved, despite their illness.

Ad e) *How the news is communicated (bells)*. In S40 several motifs overlap. The basic approach belongs in the category of dealing with difficult news (discovered here by the tolling of bells⁵³). The death announcement is only used here to point out a fact. Presumably the preacher chooses bells here as a tool for declaration for two reasons:

- (1) Because he likes to proceed from the general experience of those present,
- (2) Because the deceased was a bell ringer in the church. The preacher does not mention this fact in the general introduction, but he comes back to it as the sermon develops⁵⁴.

reckoned with it yet. We all know that it is coming. For it is clearly stated in the Bible: “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty”. However, the surprise lies in death coming somewhat earlier at times. And it comes without the advance warning of a lengthy illness. And so, it comes like a thief in the night about whom nobody knows when they may enter our dwelling.”⁵³ S40 GI: “We all know what it means when the bells toll in the middle of the week, in the morning or afternoon. Yet another person from among us has passed away and been called to eternity. These tolling bells are the first public announcement of their death. But in a way they are also our last farewell to the person. The bells sound out one last time to bid farewell to a person who has lived and worked among us till now. But the tolling bells also call us to take heed: fellow human, your path leads to eternity. This temporal life is fleeting, look to eternity. The tolling bells are a kind of heavenly calling for us to think not only of temporal things, but also to prepare ourselves and make ourselves ready for what is eternal.”

⁵⁴ S40 – remarks about the deceased: “This time the tolling bells are like a two-fold farewell: not only our farewell to the one who is leaving us, but now as if even the bells themselves were bidding farewell to one who, as our church bell ringer, had made them ring over many years.”

In S34 he also uses the bell motif where his starting point is various types of bell ringing⁵⁵, which we would rather silence when they announce sad news, but they are unavoidable⁵⁶. The bell motif is also found in S47, but they do not form the central motif (this is difficult to pinpoint in this sermon). The preacher remarks that the bells do not surprise us when they inform us of old people passing⁵⁷, but we are disinclined to believe their news when their departure is sudden⁵⁸. It appears that the author counts on the use of bells not only as a way to announce a death, but also to support an acceptance of this new reality⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ S34 GI: “Just as people sometimes sing joyful songs, in a major key, musically speaking, and other times they sing a plaintive and sad song, in a minor key, so it is with our bells. There are times when they gather us together in this place joyfully and times when they sound much more mournful and sad to us than on other occasions. At those times we sense that each toll of the bell echoes painfully in our soul. To us it sounds like something difficult and painful.”

⁵⁶ S34 GI: “At moments like these we would prefer to stop the bells’ plaintive song if it were possible. But the bells toll, because they must announce these sad tidings. And then sadness and grief creep into our souls over the news announced by them.”

⁵⁷ S47 GI: “We are especially not surprised by the passing of someone who has seen length of days in this world and in whose case, we have long seen the candle of his life gradually burning down.”

⁵⁸ S47 GI: “We are disinclined to believe the news of the death of someone who we recently saw walking among us and with whom we recently spoke. We are disinclined to believe news like this when death comes suddenly and surprisingly, and when someone suddenly departs from our midst, just as when a cloud in the sky suddenly disperses. At such times we find it hard to believe someone has gone from our midst.”

⁵⁹ S47 GI (continued): “But in a final salute the tolling bells prove it true beyond a doubt.”

4.2.4 Unforgettable events and unforgettable people

In S32, he proceeds from twin general experiences: everyone has experienced unforgettable events,⁶⁰ and there are also unforgettable people in everyone's life.⁶¹ The preacher pursues this thought and arrives at the formulation: "Many people who die physically in this world continue to live in people's hearts because of all the good they did." When he speaks of 'physical death', it is in a primary biological sense, but with the expression 'live for longer', he proceeds to a metaphorical meaning and, in so doing introduces the theoretical problem of the use of theologically relevant expressions. The statement we are observing is comprehensible in the context of the funeral situation. We find cause for critical theoretical reflexion in his application of theologically weighty concepts with a variety of meanings in a single sermon. Thus, we are left with the question of how much we should identify with a commonplace use of terminology in the funeral sermon's wording and how much important theological terms need to be reserved for use with Biblical content in the funeral sermon.

4.2.5 Mutual dependence of family members

Kišš's point of departure in S12 is the general experience of mutual dependence of family members: "God so arranged things in life that

⁶⁰ S32 GI: "In each of our lives unforgettable events have occurred. We will remember them for the rest of our lives and the memory of them will never leave us."

⁶¹ S23 GI: "Besides the unforgettable events in each of our lives there are also unforgettable people. These are people we meet in life who become indelibly imprinted in our hearts. People like this may die but they will always live on in our memories. It might be a mother or father, husband or wife, son or daughter, or some other person who was dear to us. At times it might be a good friend, or someone who achieved much in life. There are many people who in this temporal life die physically only but live on in people's hearts."

at first little children need⁶² their parents and later, when they are old, parents often need⁶³ their children.” Based on this observation of general experience, he paves the way for connecting with the specific situation as one who had been dependent on the help of her children. We may observe Kišš’s style in this: he speaks of enriching and burdensome experiences as commonly occurring circumstances and continues to say that this was also this specific family. The advantage of this approach may be that it contextualises an experience, but in certain circumstances it might also appear an ineffective approach based on stylization habits and in the case of a crematorium funeral even as sacrificing communication time that might be used by the preacher more effectively.

4.2.6 Evaluation of the usability of general experience stimuli in the general introduction

Whereas we noted that a more dynamic message results if liturgical year stimuli are used well, general experience stimuli relate not to the funeral sermon message but to the differentiation and homiletic situation.

Effective use can be made of them by preachers who wish to start off where the listeners find themselves, namely, in an awareness of vulnerability and mortality. We consider it appropriate for both communicative and theological reasons that the funeral sermon

⁶² S12 GI: “First it is always like this: an infant lies motionless in its cradle and would die were it not for parental love and care. Each piece of food, each bit of warmth a child receives is a result of the parents’ care for the child. How often parents must forfeit rest in order to keep their child alive.”

⁶³ S12 GI: “Parents’ health declines in old age and, as is so often the case, the situation of previous years is completely reversed. Now the parent is bedridden and dependent on others’ help and were it not for the children’s love and care, he now would perish.”

takes death seriously and not strike a too bold or victorious note at the start.

On the other hand, this type of introduction can become a trap for preachers if they include them in their sermon mechanically. The only impact then is the risk of an unnecessary quantity of images and a loss of communication space that should have been used to convey the message.

4.3 Images and comparisons

In general introductions we found (1) images of nature, (2) images from community life and (3) comparisons.

4.3.1 Images from nature

Among images from nature, we find (1) the seasons; (2) the clouds above; (3) a solar eclipse; (4) water; (5) ships and boats.

4.3.1.1 *Seasons*

Kišš compares human life to the seasons⁶⁴, but in his general introduction, he tends to refer only to autumn and winter because they allow him to thematically link with the parallel experience in people's lives.

Autumn. In S46 we do not only encounter Kišš's use of an image from the natural world, but he also connects with the current

⁶⁴ In S46 GI: "Our lives also have a spring, summer, autumn and winter." He develops this image in more detail in the general introduction to S15: "We could also compare human life to the year's four seasons. We could compare childhood to spring, adulthood to summer, old age to autumn and death itself to winter."

season: “All nature has seen the arrival of fall.”⁶⁵ With his description of autumn, he is laying the groundwork for describing a person’s physical decline⁶⁶.

In S43 he uses an image of autumn in the natural world so that after a literal use of it that hints at the ways autumn manifests itself⁶⁷, he might apply the use of this image to human life. Surprisingly, though, he does not use this image for the arrival in a person’s individual life, but he understands it as “humanity’s autumn”⁶⁸ This kind of image would reflect reality in a society that was dying off. At the time the preacher used it, the image was not an objective reflection of reality (a higher birth rate), but it could have subjectively corresponded to the feelings of the older generation, who had observed the departure of their peers. They certainly registered the arrival of these younger people, but from an emotional point of view did not include them in their own circle and consequently their “tree was increasingly barren.”

The preacher returns to this image in the next section (addressing the bereaved) and uses it on several semantic levels. He perceives

⁶⁵ S46 GI: “The natural world has seen autumn’s arrival. All the trees’ yellowing leaves are an unmistakable sign. One by one they are falling from the trees. One by one they will fall and when they have all fallen, winter will be here.”

⁶⁶ S46 GI: “Autumn is like our latter years. Slowly, like a yellowing leaf, we begin to lose our vitality. Suddenly we see that one by one the parts of our body – like the leaves on a tree – begin to fail in the job they have done till now. One by one they fail us. Illness begins to raise its head. And we are sure of one thing; all the difficulty and illness of advancing years confirm the fact that as people we are also in the process of deterioration and decline. And when our physical body is completely overcome by illness, we see the arrival of death’s winter in our lives.”

⁶⁷ S43 GI: “in the last few days the trees’ leaves have begun to fall. The trees are losing them one by one. The trees are emptier and emptier and more and more barren. This is the picture we see in the natural world at the moment.”

⁶⁸ S43 GI: “We could also compare humanity’s life in this world to this kind of tree”.

the individual as a leaf⁶⁹, at one moment on the family tree⁷⁰, then on the tree of life⁷¹. Such a rich variety of imagery used in a few short lines strikes me as impracticable and obscure. Therefore, it would be more convenient to streamline the statement to connect more emphatically to the sermon message along the more narrowly selected semantic line.

The premature arrival of winter. In S15, Kišš uses the motif of winter arriving early⁷², at the funeral of a 61-year-old man who had died shortly after retiring⁷³. He uses this image to elaborate on the reality of death's arrival in order to express that it came too soon, depriving the deceased man of an autumn of rest and preparation for departure.

⁶⁹ S43 AB: "Such is the law of life. There is a spring in our lives, when we are still young, there is a summer, when we are turning green and there is an autumn in our lives, when we age, our life's foliage begins to yellow, then it eventually falls off."

⁷⁰ S43 AB: "From now on another leaf will be permanently missing from your family's tree."

⁷¹ S43 AB: "However, even now another leaf is falling, to which it was granted to stay on the tree of life for over 84 years. It falls quietly, leaving behind only a memory of itself for us."

⁷² S15 AB: "Hardly had he begun to experience the autumn of life in retirement, when death was here."

⁷³ S15 GI: "In the natural world autumn and winter come early some years. It should still be summer according to the calendar but in fact autumn is already announcing itself. Or it should still be autumn according to the calendar but winter is obviously here. These unexpected and sudden changes in the seasons can be an unpleasant surprise for us. Usually we are not ready for them. However, it is not in our human capacity to change the natural laws in these things. We must merely acknowledge them."

4.3.1.2 *Dark clouds overhead*

In S23 the preacher begins with the concept of varied days in people's lives and expresses this reality with an image of varied weather (sunshine/storms, wind, dark clouds overhead). Presumably, he wants to convey in this way that even bad days are part of the human lifecycle.⁷⁴ However, by closer inspection we observe that a dynamic description (storms and winds) is followed by a less dynamic image of dark clouds ("dark clouds gather overhead and the Sun of joy is hidden from us") to describe the situation of the bereaved parties. His reason for proceeding in this way is debatable. Does he wish to express that the storm is over (in which case the image should sound more optimistic) or does he want to express "the sun's disappearance" (in which case the mention of storms and winds was unnecessary)? Owing to these questions I come to the conclusion that this type of imagery work, though it supports the strength of the figurative language, does not provide the prerequisites for elaborating on the preacher's statement. I have to humbly admit though that weak spots may be found in every preacher's work, including my own.

4.3.1.3 *A solar eclipse*

In S36 the image of a solar eclipse resulting in complete darkness is

⁷⁴ S23 GI: "Our lives are not marked by joys only but also by sorrows. Again, and again they intrude into our lives. No matter how much we endeavour to avoid them and no matter how much we endeavour to escape them, they are inevitable. Just as in the natural world the sun does not always shine but there are also storms and winds, so oftentimes in our human lives also dark clouds gather overhead and the sun of joy is hidden from us. And these are the saddest moments of our lives. More than anything else funeral occasions are moments like this, when we must part with those with whom our lives have been inextricably linked over long years, with those who were part of our lives. Always at moments like these are our hearts full of grief."

used very intelligibly by the preacher⁷⁵. However, this image allows listeners to feel that though total, the eclipse is a passing phenomenon⁷⁶. Therefore, it is an appropriate image to express not only the difficulty the bereaved are going through but also to provide them with a sense of a renewed ‘appearance of the sun’.

4.3.1.4 *Water*

S45 begins with three images which are intended to support our perception of the passage of time: a clock, a candle, and a flowing river. In our opinion, positioning these three images one after another is gratuitous and distracting. By omitting the first two, the preacher would have contributed to a greater clarity in the text⁷⁷. Like many other images in his general introductions, the preacher also uses this image to reinforce awareness of the mortality of those present,⁷⁸ but in the introduction he does not yet touch on man’s position before God.

⁷⁵ S36 GI: “At some time in your lives you may perhaps have already experienced a total solar eclipse. Suddenly it goes dark for several minutes in the middle of the day. The sun is completely covered by the moon and its light does not reach the earth.”

⁷⁶ S36 GI: “...Then we are gripped by a certain fear. What if it stays like this? But fortunately, after a few minutes this natural phenomenon passes and the bright light of a lovely day returns once more.”

⁷⁷ S45 GI: “Human life flows on relentlessly. Just as second by second passes ceaselessly on that clock, human life also passes. It is like a candle, gradually burning down. It is like a river current, ceaseless in its course, flowing on and on. One of our hymns expresses it well when it says: “The current of time rushes by like rapid river waters, death and judgement coming ever nearer with our ever-declining years”.

⁷⁸ S45 GI- closing words: “...It would be a great mistake to wish to turn a blind eye to these realities for a cast-iron law dictates that they will become a reality for each one of us.”

4.3.1.5 *Ships and Boats*

In sermons S7, S20, and S22 the pastor uses the image of a ship or boat sailing. He uses it as a literary device that helps him to express various realities: (1) in S7 and S20 the issue of the meaning of life; (2) the issue of strength that keeps us from drowning (S22).

Human life as a voyage into eternity's harbour

In S7⁷⁹ and S20 the preacher uses a boat image. Although the general introduction is based on the title of the novel “Pútníci idú žítím“ (Wayfarers on the journey of life)’, he uses the image of a boat ‘headed for harbour’ in order to develop a sense of spatial movement. We can observe the use of this image on two levels:

- (a) *The question of the meaning of life.* This image helps the preacher to deal with the fundamental question of the meaning of human life, and he expresses it in the S7 GI as follows: “We must also keep a single goal before us: to safely navigate the sea of temporal life and reach the harbour of peace in God and attain eternal life.” Similarly, also in S20: “likewise, our earthly pilgrimage also has its goal. This is eternity.”
- (b) *Applying the image to the deceased.* The preacher does not stop

⁷⁹ S7 GI: “Every seafaring vessel shares a single goal: to reach safe harbour. This is why the helmsman constantly watches at his helm, this is why the captain constantly monitors the direction of their journey from the navigation bridge. The main task facing the sailors is to reach safe harbour, to reach their destination. We Christians share a similar task. We sail the sea of this world. We must also overcome many difficulties on our journey and are in danger of becoming disoriented and straying from our desired eternal destination. We must keep a single goal before us: to safely navigate the sea of this temporary life and reach the harbour of peace in God and attain to eternal life. And in that moment when they are parted from us forever we may say of those who sailed the sea of this world well: they reached their journey’s goal. Like a boat which found its harbour, they have reached the harbour of peace where their soul may find eternal rest.”

at the image only, but relates it to the deceased woman: ‘And so another ship has sailed into the harbour of eternity’

A boat that does not sink

The introduction to S22 uses the childhood experience of children launching a small boat in a stream, which does not sink but is carried away by the current to a far-off place⁸⁰. Transferring this image to human life and the life of the deceased person, he asks what strength carries us through the hardships of life.⁸¹ He finds the life of the answer by considering the deceased woman: “Certainly if she was still alive and with us today and we asked her these questions, her answer would be unequivocal. With the Psalmist she would say: ‘The Lord was the strength of my life’. Or, as the Psalmist said elsewhere: ‘On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God’. We knew her to be the kind of woman who hoped in God throughout all the blows life dealt her.”⁸²

We also observe an image being applied on two levels here: a) as testimonial evidence; b) evangelistically. At the same time, it is worth

⁸⁰ S22 GI: “When we were children, we used to make little boats from wood or paper and we would release them downstream. We were glad that our little boat stayed afloat and sailed away. Unfortunately, we couldn’t follow our little boats very far. In the end the current carried them away from us. If we had been able to follow our little piece of wood further, we would see how a stream became a river, which later became an even bigger river and perhaps it would finally even reach the sea. Greater and greater waves would dash it around, more and more water would surround it, but our little boat would sail on. Something that did not let it sink was carrying it on the water.”

⁸¹ S22 GI: “Until one day the waves of life begin to crash around our boat. Wave after wave buffets our life. And yet we experience something strange happening in our life. None of it submerges us. We resist it all. As if something invisible were carrying us also on the waves of life’s sea, helping us to overcome it all.

⁸² S22: the deceased woman as a testimony to the Biblical text.

noting the order of these applications. Its evangelistic application grows out of its testimonial application. I consider this to be an excellent procedure, as the life of the deceased woman was well known in the village and the meaning of God-given stability is brought home to them through her life.

4.3.2 Images of village life

4.3.2.1 *Bells*

If our intention is to create a comprehensive overview of the area from which Kišš draws his sermon images, we must refer to bells as an element of village life. He uses it in a number of sermons.⁸³ We have already encountered this motif as a secondary motif in relation to dealing with the news.

4.3.2.2 *An unexpected and uninvited guest*

An unexpected guest. In S48 he perceives death as an unexpected guest, who takes us by surprise...as if someone had entered our home without knocking.⁸⁴ This image helps the preacher express the

⁸³ For example, S34: GI: “Whenever our bells are ringing, in our minds we ask: what song are they singing today...”

⁸⁴ S48 GI: “Occasionally someone happens to visit us unexpectedly. We are surprised in that moment, either pleasantly or unpleasantly. That depends on whether the one visiting is a guest who is welcome or unwelcome for us. There are funerals, which show us that not only people visit us unexpectedly. In some cases we see clearly that death may also arrive unexpectedly. There are certainly many cases when death approaches someone gradually. It announces its arrival through some difficult illness. We all know that it is no longer far off and that it may come at any time. And when it does finally come, we are not surprised by it. We were anticipating it. However, in some cases death’s arrival takes us by surprise. It arrives like someone who has entered our home without knocking. At moments like these we tend to be on tenterhooks as to who has actually come.”

death's startling arrival. This kind of introduction does not advance his theme but may be suitable as an expression of empathy with how those present are feeling, as a premise for high-quality communication and ultimately their acceptance of the Biblical message.

An uninvited guest. In S8 he speaks of death not only as an unexpected but also an uninvited guest⁸⁵. In this way, he expresses people's aversion to death, which is coming nevertheless and that people feel helpless in the face of its approaching.

4.3.3 Comparisons

Kišš based several general introductions on a comparison of life with a particular phenomenon. In this category, we find the comparisons: (1) life as a journey; (2) life as a piece of music; (3) life as a surprise.

4.3.3.1 *Life as a Journey*

In S6 he presents life as a long journey and based on this image he can then describe death as the approach to the end of the journey's end⁸⁶. He also uses the same image (life as a journey) in S27. He

⁸⁵ S8 GI: "Occasionally an uninvited guest comes to you. Nobody invited him. Nobody wants him to come and yet he intrudes on you."

⁸⁶ S6 GI: "Human life is like a long journey. We set out on it the day we are born and continue along it throughout our lives on earth. We experience good and bad things on this journey. On this journey we fall many a time and then rise again. We fall when we lack strength to overcome the difficulties of our journey of life; we get up when God grants that we experience renewed strength for life and step forth once more on our journey of life. But the longer we walk along on our journey of life, the shorter the road ahead becomes. All at once we see that the way behind us is longer, and the way ahead is shorter. Death is approaching. And death means the end of our life's journey."

speaks of a person's life as a journey through unfamiliar country and arrives at the question of whether death is the end of everything and there is nothing beyond it⁸⁷. He answers this question immediately: "And it is here that Holy Scripture speaks to us, like an initial signpost: "For it is appointed for man to die". Death waits at the end of our pilgrimage in this temporal world. We hear again and again the words of Psalm 90: "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, for soon it is gone and we fly away."

4.3.3.2 *Life as a piece of music*

In S50, he compares life to a piece of music⁸⁸. He expresses life

⁸⁷ S27 GI: "Perhaps you have already experienced travelling on an unfamiliar road in unfamiliar country and have wondered in your mind: where does this road actually lead? What will be at the end of it, where will it come out in the end?"

We are faced with a similar question when we consider each person's journey of life and death. We are pilgrims in this temporal life. Every year we live through is another segment of our life journey. But where is it leading us? Is death at the end of it, and nothing beyond?

And it is here that the words of Holy Scripture speak to us, like an initial signpost: "For it is appointed for man to die". Death waits at the end of our pilgrimage in this temporal world. We hear again and again the words of Psalm 90: "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, for soon it is gone and we fly away."

⁸⁸ S50 GI: "We might compare a person's life to a piece of music. In the beginning it is playful and joyful. That is our childhood. Then the piece begins to strike a more serious tone and that is our adulthood. And finally, it is as if at the end of this piece the tone becomes sad and quiet, and this is our old age. But in the meantime, there are ever new musical variations. There are moments in our lives which are as though a happy pastoral symphony were playing. Those are our lives' most wonderful moments. But there are moments when stormy or even tragic tones ring out. Those are the times when some tragic and perhaps life-shattering event happens in our life. And just as every piece of music is different and not all compare in beauty and harmony, so each human life has its own destiny. Great opuses remain unforgettable and thus great, beautiful, and harmoniously lived human lives also become unforgettable."

changes with changes in the character of the piece and this (1) from an ontogenetic perspective⁸⁹ (2) and also from the viewpoint of the life dynamics of individual seasons⁹⁰.

However, the preacher does not continue with only these motifs and reconnects again with the image of a musical piece in the closing words of the general introduction, saying that human lives differ from each other, some being unforgettable and beautiful just like pieces of music⁹¹.

If we compare the image of a piece of music in S50 with the image of weather dynamics in S23 (sunshine/storms, dark clouds), we observe that he is using these images to express similar realities, but thanks to diversity in the images, they come across freshly in the same setting. Hence, we can recommend that a beginning preacher must not always necessarily look for a new content. Sometimes, it is appropriate to seek new ways of presenting an already familiar message.

4.3.3.3 *Life as a surprise*

In S26 (at the funeral of a middle-aged person who died suddenly),

⁸⁹ S50 GI: "...In the beginning it is playful and joyful. That is our childhood. Then the piece begins to strike a more serious tone and that is our adulthood. And finally, it is as if at the end of this piece the tone becomes sad and quiet, and this is our old age..."

⁹⁰ S50 GI: "...But in the meantime there are ever new musical variations. There are moments in our lives which are as though a happy pastoral symphony were playing. Those are our lives' most wonderful moments. But there are moments when stormy or even tragic tones ring out..."

⁹¹ S50 GI: "...And just as each piece of music is different and not all compare in beauty and harmony, so each human life has its own destiny. Great opuses remain unforgettable and thus great, beautiful, and harmoniously lived human lives also become unforgettable."

Kišš starts out from a perception of life as a surprise⁹² and uses this perception as a central motif in his general introduction. At the same time, he must point out that not all surprises are joyful and that some events impact families' lives deeply and painfully.⁹³

This kind of introduction can be considered suitable and in proportion for two reasons:

- a) corresponds to the unexpected loss in the family;
- b) It can be used kerygmatically, which was what the preacher also attempted to do in the sermon's kerygmatic section. Here he refers not only to death's startling arrival, but also to Christ's surprising coming. From these points he progresses to the sermon text (Psalm 90:12) 'So teach us to number our days, that we may present You a heart of wisdom.'

4.4 Literary motifs

Among literary motifs as the central image in General introduction we find: (1) the title of a literary work; (2) a quotation from poetry; (3) folklore; (4) motifs from Greek legends.

⁹² S26 GI: "Each day life brings us a never-ending supply of surprises. When we rise in the morning we do not know or even suspect all that the new day may bring. Then suddenly we get the news that this or that has happened. We are like travellers in unfamiliar country who must always look on in surprise at what the new section of the journey has brought them."

⁹³ S26 GI – continued: "Unfortunately there are not only joyful surprises. We also experience sad surprises. These are events which deeply and seriously impact some family's life and which suddenly fill our lives with sadness and grief. A family's life can be turned upside down in a single moment. Suddenly our life takes a new direction and takes us down a road along which we would rather never travel."

4.4.1 Titles of literary works

Kišš uses the title of a literary work as the central motif of his general introduction in two sermons⁹⁴. With the help of the novel title ‘Wayfarers on the journey of life’ he arrives at what he wants to say in S20⁹⁵: ‘And indeed, as people we are this kind of wayfarer in this world.’ His reference to literature is for aesthetic purposes – as a poetic summing up of a reality that both he and the listeners in attendance have experienced. He does not use the motif to expand on or advance the theme.

In S42, he makes use of the title of Smrek’s poetry collection ‘Gallopings days’. He uses it to refer to life galloping swiftly along⁹⁶. The image is dynamic and he deliberately contrasts the closing sentence with it: ‘Reaching its goal is the one thing that will stop it.’ It is obvious to the listener that they are meant to understand this as a reference to someone’s death.

⁹⁴ S20: *Pútnici idú žitím* (Wayfarers on the journey of life); S42: Poetry collection by Jan Smrek: *Cválajúce dni* (Gallopings days).

⁹⁵ S20 GI: “One of our Slovak authors wrote the novel “Wayfarers on the journey of life”. And indeed, as humans we are this kind of wayfarer in this world. Every moment of every hour of every day is one more step along in our journey of life. We are constantly moving forward. Time cannot be stopped. And where are we actually going and what will be the end of our life’s journey? All of us know this full well. Just as a boat heads towards its harbour, just as a train heads for its terminus, just as a traveller comes to the end of his journey in some place which had been his destination, so also our earthly journey has its goal. It is eternity.”

⁹⁶ S42 GI: “A Slovak poet wrote a collection of poems, which he called: “Gallopings days”. In it he compares the days of our life to an ever-advancing, galloping horse. Nobody can hold it back as it gallops. Reaching its goal is the one thing that will stop it.”

4.4.2 Quotation from poetry

In S49 he quotes a line from Martin Rázus: ‘How precarious we are, our Lord, how precarious in these turbulent seas.’ He used this quotation to express an observation which he immediately goes on to confirm in his own words⁹⁷. By this approach, he makes connection with Rázus, not in order to express a new reality in his words but he quotes him in order to express the feelings of all those present.

4.4.3 Folklore

We find an example of the use of folklore in S4: “It is said that lightning can strike from a clear sky. Granted, it does not happen often and not as a rule. And yet sometimes from a small dark cloud comes sudden destructive force.”⁹⁸ As in the poetry quotation, the

⁹⁷ S49 GI: “Our poet Martin Rázus says in one of his poems: “How precarious we are, our Lord, how precarious in these turbulent seas”. Indeed, as people we are unstable and fleeting in this world. Transience can be observed not only in the natural world but also in us humans. Funerals particularly bear witness to us of human transience. But more than anything else this is borne witness to by funerals of young people, who had still been in the midst of their youthful vitality. If death can already mow down someone young midway through life, how would it not mow down someone old and weary of life? And just as a particular leaf on a tree may yellow and fall sooner than the other leaves, so it is with people. Someone may suddenly become one of those yellowing leaves, ready midway through life to fall prematurely from the tree of life.”

⁹⁸ S4 GI: - and he continues: “But perhaps this is the case in human lives much more often than in the skies above. Here we suddenly and unexpectedly encounter some unpleasant surprise even more frequently. Suddenly what we had least expected becomes reality. Which of us has not experienced unexpected disagreeable news in their lives, or sudden surprising events which have shaken up our lives? And the strongest, the most destructive, the most shocking and the most unpleasant lightning strike is the lightning strike of death when sudden and unexpected death takes our loved ones. The loss which this lightning strike causes is far greater than that caused by lightning in the sky. And the more unexpected the lightning strike, the greater the shock for the bereaved.”

author's procedure here is to first present the quotation and then develop it in his reflexion. At the same time, he moves from a broad metaphorical statement to applying it on the level of the reality of death.

4.4.4 Motifs from Greek Mythology

In S9 the pastor offers us a cue that we must evaluate from the viewpoint of its potential and its risks. We should be grateful to him for it. He showed daring in using the richness of thought in ancient Greek mythology⁹⁹, to speak of the passage to the afterlife by using its imagery. He gains vehicles of expression that correspond to the funeral situation, from a religious and philosophical background foreign to Christianity. This gives greater dynamism to the proceedings, and we evaluate it positively.

On the other hand, this raises the question of whether people today are capable of differentiating between a Biblical kerygmatic emphasis and Greek mythological motifs, and therefore of differentiating between facilitative expressions and a fundamental

⁹⁹ S9 GI: "Ancient Greek mythology said that on the journey of life people arrive one day at a river called Styx. Allegedly this is a river separating this world from the world of the hereafter. All people are drawing closer to this river on their journey of life. And allegedly there awaits them a ferryman on the banks of this river. This is death. This ferryman carries people through the Styx River to the world of the hereafter. However, as a ferryman he only ferries people to one side: from the side of life to the side of the next world. He does not bring anyone back again. Those who have once crossed the Styx River will never return to the other side. The great river which is between the realm of life and the realm of the hereafter forbids it.

If we want to apply this image to this moment, we must say that another of life's wayfarers has come to that mysterious Styx River and the ferryman death has carried yet another one of us over to the realm of the hereafter. There is no return from there. You will never see his face again."

expression of the message. Wherever this is a risk, we would suggest a very sensitive consideration of the kerygmatic effectivity of this approach. If a preacher is unsure of his ability to handle such risks, he should preferably get around these stimuli rather than use them.

4.4.4.1 *Evaluation of the usability of literary cues in the general introduction*

Funerals should meet reasonable cultural standards. This is also true for funeral sermons. In general, we think that when using literary cues, we need to reject the use of quotations where they are added solely to enhance rhetorical performance.

Those occurrences where the mouthpiece of the preacher uses them to connect with the listeners or with the message are acceptable to us. The preacher becomes the funeral congregation in this way for expressing pain, making it possible for the same funeral congregation to accept him as the mouthpiece for expressing the Biblical message¹⁰⁰.

4.5 Psychological motifs

In general introductions based on psychological motifs, Kišš approaches the use of these motifs from the perspective of the broader funeral congregation. This is the case in those examples where the central motif is (1) induced sorrow and (2) helplessness.

4.5.1 Induced sorrow

In S52, he wants to express that the family is experiencing “a particularly great sorrow.”¹⁰¹ His words are not aimed at the

¹⁰⁰ In this sense, we mean communicational and not theological conditions.

¹⁰¹ S52 GI: “Whenever any family experience some great sadness, all of us are overcome with sadness too. As people we cannot pass by great sadness unobservant and indifferent but something of the sadness touches our own spirits

family¹⁰², but at the funeral congregation – and concern the experience of grief of the present company. By so doing he is showing that the bereaved parties' loss is not theirs alone and that it is shared in by other people (perhaps strangers).

- (1) We see the advantage of this in its support of awareness of participation in the pain of bereaved parties, which may lead to attitudes towards the bereaved that support genuine processing of the grief.
- (2) We see the danger in this of the community's need to return to its daily life before very long, though it can briefly identify with the bereaved. The bereaved may then experience a kind of disappointment in their lonely moments that those who had expressed such deep empathy withdrew so very quickly from their world of pain.

4.5.2 Helplessness

In S5 the preacher is taking note of the same thing that we noted in S52 – especially great sorrow. Whereas there he had spoken about induced grief transferred from person to person within the framework of interpersonal relationships, in S5 he speaks about the stressful impact of sadness even on those who are not affected as relatives by the event. He recognizes the impact of the stressful situation on someone losing the capacity to respond actively to the

too. We do not only express sympathy to the bereaved about the sadness they have encountered in life but truly experience it with them to a greater or lesser extent. The degree of our empathy differs at different funerals. But wherever there is particularly great grief, people are not left unmoved and even our own hearts are touched.”

¹⁰² It is different in S30, where he is directly addressing parents after their daughter's suicide: “...For all of us gathered here are deeply affected and shaken together with you. Certainly, there is not one of us who does not heartily regret what has happened nor sincerely wish that it never had happened.”

incident, an experience of helplessness and a desire to deal with the incident silently.¹⁰³

4.5.3 Loss and sadness

In S35, he starts with the general experience of loss and sorrow¹⁰⁴. He then applies this general experience to the loss of someone close to us¹⁰⁵ and to the resulting grief of the various circles that have experienced the loss of his departure¹⁰⁶.

4.6 Sociological motifs

We come across sociological motifs as a basis for the general introduction in the following ways: (1) change in the family's social structure; (2) the family's and collective experience of horror.

¹⁰³ S5 GI: "There are moments when it is hard to speak, hard to find the right words. After all, we should comfort, for it is the task of God's servants according to Scripture: "Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God", but how can we find truly uplifting and strengthening words that would alleviate pain and provide new perspective. At times it seems an impossible task. Such a great wound must hurt. Such a difficult and irretrievable loss must lead to tears. Our inclination is to say nothing, nothing at all and to go through it all in this way quietly and wordlessly."

¹⁰⁴ S35 GI: "When we lose something, we miss it. The more valuable the thing, the more we miss it, and the more irreplaceable for us, the more we regret it. We would be so very glad if it were returned to us again. But when we realize that we will never get it back and it is gone for good, our sadness is all the greater."

¹⁰⁵ S35 GI: "So it is with us as people when we escort our loved ones on their last journey. Every funeral means the loss of a human life, which also makes us very sad. The more precious the person we have lost, the greater our sadness."

¹⁰⁶ S35 GI – continued: "When some people die, their close family grieves but there are funerals where, besides the close family, the wider fellowship also grieves, where that person will be universally missed, where he made himself useful wherever he worked. He expended himself for many and many will therefore be grieving."

4.6.1 Reference to the change in social structure

In S28 the preacher not only notes the loss of a family member, but also notes his place and function in the family social structure. This is an interesting endeavour because, rather than expressing the loss in an emotional description, he describes it factually¹⁰⁷. We come across the concept of a change in the social structure in the general introduction of S24¹⁰⁸.

4.6.2 The Collective Experience of horror

In S51, a woman murdered by her husband is being buried. He is dealing with a dramatic event that has shaken all those present. Therefore, he begins with the words: “There are events that are capable of shaking every one of us. They are so painful, so deeply tragic, with such far-reaching consequences, their course so terrible

¹⁰⁷ S28 GI: “There are certainly funerals of the kind that something more than a mere family member has died; funerals after the death of the most pivotal family member as it were, its pillar and head, its centre and support, its navigator and leader. Just as some buildings have a central supporting pillar which is pivotal to the whole building, so some of our families have key individuals who set the tone in the family, determine its direction, guard its old traditions, and who are a particular family’s true nucleus and centre. Their death and departure from this temporal world is a real loss for the whole family. It is like the end of a certain era in the family’s history and the beginning of a new chapter in which the family must rediscover how to live in the new circumstances which have come about through the loss of the central family figure.”

¹⁰⁸ S24 GI: “Suddenly the old family community of which we have been part perhaps since childhood is falling apart. A totally new situation has arisen in the family’s life. Just as an earthquake leads to the formation of new mountains, so we are shaken when the contours of our families are changed through the loss of loved ones and we must slowly get used to our family’s new likeness. At such a time we are overcome with grief - grief over what has been lost irretrievably - and a certain insecurity ensues.”

that no one is left unshaken on hearing this news.¹⁰⁹

4.7 Spiritual motifs

The spiritual motif is very important as a central motif in the General introduction, and therefore we must devote attention to it, seeking other appropriate motifs for occasional practise from this group. We only find it used in S29 in the collection analysed: gratitude to God for the life of the deceased.¹¹⁰ We consider this motif to be important because the funeral sermon for exceptional people should not ignore the fact that this was the kind of person they were. However, if an awareness of their greatness is not mingled with thankfulness towards God, the positive comments sound like eulogising the deceased. However, this approach would fundamentally undermine the credibility of the Christian funeral

¹⁰⁹ S51 GI and he continues: “Just as lightning may penetrate deep into the tree it strikes, in the same way we are frequently affected by what happens. We feel like something dark has entered into human life at this point. That it was night, a moment of darkness, a black hour. And the consequences of such a dark moment and such a black hour remain irreparable and terrible.”

¹¹⁰ S29: “There are lives for which we should thank God. Certainly, this is not true of every life. Time and time again there may be no one to remember the departing person with gratitude. If someone has lived their life in mere selfishness and self-seeking, if their lives were self-indulgent or mercenary, if they were full of hypocrisy, hatred and malice, who, pray tell, would be thankful for that kind of life? Lives like these come to an end with hardly anyone remembering that such a person ever lived. But not so with a life that resembles a pearl necklace. In our eyes, the pearls are all the virtues which make someone truly human. The more of them we have, the more we resemble that precious pearl necklace. And then when we depart we are not easily forgotten. Just as the first Christians showed Peter objects which reminded them of the Biblical Tabitha in Joppa long ago, so where there are many of the things that make us unforgettable to others, people will remember us after our deaths all the more. It is as Holy Scripture says: “The memory of the righteous is blessed”.

sermon.

5 ADDRESSING THE BEREAVED

Kišš comments on this section: ‘I immediately apply the idea of introduction to the particular case.’¹¹¹ At the same time, he sets out several tasks:

- a) connect with the family’s sadness,
- b) briefly describe the loss suffered by the family,
- c) circumstances of death,
- d) a positive empathetic remark about the deceased.

The goal of this procedure, according to Kišš, is: “to engage the family through empathy with their situation and a positive and humane approach to the deceased person’.¹¹²

In the following analysis, we observe how he carries out the individual elements and how this approach may be of benefit for funeral sermon theory.

5.1 Kišš’s structure of the Addressing the Bereaved section

Our analysis shows that Kišš did not develop these four sections mechanically. In some sermons, we find them in the strictly observed order a-b-c-d where it is possible to clearly differentiate between them (e.g., AB in S24), but it is not at all unusual to find the sections arranged differently, and even for the whole “addressing the bereaved” section to be left out.

¹¹¹ I. Kišš: *Nádej nad hrobom I*, p.1

¹¹² *ibid*

5.1.1 Complete omission of the section ‘addressing the bereaved’
We find this kind of situation, for example, in S12, where the preacher chooses a different approach and places an independent section between the GI and the sermon proper. The section AB is missing from other sermons also, e.g. S20¹¹³, S22 and S34¹¹⁴.

5.1.2 Changed Order of sections

In S16 AB is solved as a-b/d-c. The description of the loss is overlapped by a positive remark about the deceased. It is followed by a reference to the circumstances of death (c). In S17, the order of the sections is a-c-b-d.

5.1.3 Changed order and absence of some sections

In S38 we find the order: a-c-b, section d is missing. In S39 AB we also find the same approach: a-c-b, section d is missing.

Taking a thorough inventory of the absence of some sections in “Addressing the Bereaved” in Kišš’s work would be a meaningful task in itself. However, the observation that his inclusion of these sections is not mechanical and that he omits them where he has

¹¹³ Note on Kišš’s customary sermon structure: In S20 the preacher did not include “addressing the bereaved”, which he normally includes after his general introduction. The question is why he changed his usual structure in this way. Evidently, he is not dealing with a lone individual for in the final section “farewell in the hope of eternal life” he turns to them: “You, his loved ones, the bereaved family, please accompany your dear mother, grandmother and relative on her final journey.”

¹¹⁴ It is notable that in the sermon which was preached at a parting with a mother where the father was absent, the preacher does not include his usual section “addressing the bereaved”, since to address a small, immature daughter directly would have given rise to distressing emotions. Therefore, he addresses the entire funeral congregation instead and the meaning of his words is clear to the listeners.

good reason to is of significance to homiletic work. I include the following table as an example.

Sermon no.	The missing section in “addressing the bereaved”:			
	a)_connecting with the family’s grief	b)_short description of the loss affecting the family	c)_circumstances of death	d)_positive empathetic remark about the deceased
S12		x		
S18 ¹¹⁵				x
S19			x	
S21	x			
S23 ¹¹⁶			x	x
S26				x
S27	x	x		
S32		x	x	
S25 ¹¹⁷		x		x
S37		x		x
S38				x ¹¹⁸
S39				x ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ The existing sections are arranged in the order a-b-c

¹¹⁶ In AB S23, in which sections c) and d) are missing, he finally adds an independent section (e) to the usual framework of this section, in which he reminds us of human transience: “Yet once again we must be reminded that our human life is fleeting. Though we may so often forget that we are only sojourners in this world and that we don’t have a permanent place here, it remains the case nevertheless. Sometimes the measure of our days is filled up before time, sooner than we expected, before we have lived the days of our life to the full, and we must leave this world. Time and time again life is shorter than we would like it to be.”

¹¹⁷ It is as if the preacher did not reckon with the fact that even though death in old age is natural, the family is affected by the loss. Equally baffling is the lack of section d) (a positive empathetic comment about the deceased).

¹¹⁸ He is dealing with the funeral of an alcoholic, who died in mysterious circumstances. The absence of section d) seems to be understandable.

¹¹⁹ S39 AB does not have independently worded remarks in d) (positive statement about the deceased person). But we cannot speak of its absence in a complete

5.1.4 Repeated overlapping of motifs

In S15 AB section c) (circumstances of death) is interpolated by section b) (short description of the loss affecting the family). Therefore, the final outline of the procedure is as follows: a-c1-b-c2-d. The order of the sections in S19 AB is as follows: a-b1-d-b2.

Section 'c' is missing. Section 'b' is interpolated with section 'd'. Therefore, section 'b' forms two sections b1 and b2.

In S21 we come across the sections arranged in reverse¹²⁰, from d)

sense as in the text we find positive echoes of relationships within the family: "It is certainly also difficult for all you remaining close relatives, who have lost this dear departed woman, to whom you were bound by so many relationship ties and by so many cherished memories."

¹²⁰ AB S21: "(d1) The steps required of us all in this moment as we are obliged to walk this final stretch of the road with someone dear and beloved for us, a strong, a still relatively young and active man who potentially had many years of life and productive work in front of him, (c1) your tragically deceased husband, father, grandfather, brother and relative, (b1), these are steps undertaken most unwillingly for you, dear grieving family. The sad fact that has left each of us shaken as if after a major earthquake, now obliges us to gather in this place. Just as David once wept over Jonathan, so our hearts are now grieved over the departed.

How regrettable that life is not like a cassette tape that can be rewound, from which we can erase the poor, incorrect recordings to replace them with new and better recordings. But now none of these tragic events can be reversed, corrected or changed. (c2) The fateful moment has come, the fateful bad decision made and the results are irreversible: (b2) you have all lost someone dear to you, who not only his close family but many of us will miss."

(d2) Just as trees in a forest do not all grow to the same height, but some tower above others, so it is with us people as well. There are people among us in this world, whose roots grow down particularly deep in the soil of life. The influence of their activities is so great in every direction that they are like trees spreading their crowns on all sides. They are of such significance among us that we might compare them to a tree growing to a lofty height. Such was the life of the one with whom we are now parting. He was also like that kind of towering tree. We

to b)¹²¹. AB begins with section d) (remark about the deceased), moving into section c) (circumstances of death); followed by an expression of the loss experienced by the family. An explicit section a) is missing. After the thoughts in b(1), he returns to c(2), he continues again in b(2) and finishes with a longer d(2) section.

Similar observations can also be made in other sermons concerning the AB section, such as in S26 AB, for example (sequence: a1-c-a2-b-/section d-abs. /) or in S27 AB (sequence: c1-d-c2-/sections a+b abs/; S28 AB (sequence: a-b1-d-c-b2).

5.1.5 Special Procedures

In S30 AB (a girl's suicide), in addition to the usual sections a-d, we also find a special procedure within which he speaks initially against judging the deceased¹²² and links this to a doctrinal rejection of suicide, pointing out the encroachment on God's prerogative and the consequences for the bereaved¹²³. Finally, he attempts to

could express it differently: he was a firm pillar, a firmly fortified bastion, a firm support and our refuge.”

¹²¹ In S21 section a) is missing. We express the procedure in this section with the pattern: d(1) – c(1)- b(1)- c(2)- b(2)- d(2).

¹²² S30 AB – development: “And here on the occasion of this sad and difficult funeral, we neither desire nor can we set ourselves up as judges to condemn this unhappy girl who despaired over her own life. The Lord Jesus Christ said: “Do not judge and you will not be judged”. Therefore, we also will not judge. We will leave judgement up to the One who judges justly. For who knows why it happened, whether it was because she was not in her right senses, or because of youthful impulsiveness when, still a young girl, she was unaware of the enormous grief she would cause her parents and of the enormous consequences of her actions? In simple terms, the very thing happened that should not have happened.

¹²³ S30 AB – special procedure: “First I want to say this to you, young people in this place that, even when life is very difficult for you, you should never inflict such grief on your families. Indeed, life holds many problems. But we must overcome them by faith in God and through our hope in Him. Christ said it like this: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his

cultivate a positive attitude to life even in its difficulties.

5.2 ABa) Connection with family grief.

Kišš uses the following approaches to express a connection with family grief: (1) connecting through observation of facts; (2) connection through observations about the deceased; (3) connection through observations about the bereaved; (4) the conflict between expectations and outcome; (5) connection through a funeral hymn; (6) connection through the redefinition of roles; (7) absence of connection with the family's grief.

5.2.1 Connection through observation of the facts

In Kišš's work we find observation of the facts in ABa) in two variations: (1) without direct expression of the pain of the bereaved parties' pain; (2) with direct expression of the pain of the bereaved parties.

5.2.1.1 *Without direct expression of the pain of the bereaved parties,*

In Kišš's work, connection with the family's grief (section ABa) is usually expressed in the context of the general introduction (GI). In several sermons, we may observe that the preacher initially speaks about what loss usually entails in the general introduction. He does not connect it yet to the bereaved and as a result gains an opportunity to speak with emotional detachment.

cross and follow Me.” Despite the life God gave us often being difficult, it is beautiful nevertheless. It is God’s great gift in which we may rejoice. Why would we reject this beautiful gift given to us by God? We must consent to the gift of life and struggle with, overcome and conquer its difficulties. Never flee from life. It is not the one who flees the fight who is the hero. The hero is the one who stays faithfully even when the battle is difficult and demanding.”

This kind of procedure gives the preacher greater freedom to discuss the pain experienced by people and the losses they go through. Only after expressing it on this level does he go on in Section ABa) to relate the earlier observations to the bereaved, whereby he may express the facts

- (1) with reference to their experience (e.g., with the words: “Dear grieving family, in these moments you are experiencing something like this,”¹²⁴;
- (2) in reference to the event in which they are participating (eg, in S2/ABa); “In this way, dear grieving family, we are today escorting one such Simeon from among us, your dear father, grandfather, and relative, on his last journey.”¹²⁵)

A procedure like this may create the impression that ‘observation of the facts’ creates an austere approach lacking empathy. However,

¹²⁴ S24 ABa) ... S28 ABa): “Dear grieving family, this is the situation in which you now also find yourselves.” We also find a similar procedure in S4 and S5, for example.

¹²⁵ Similarly, also in other sermons, e.g. S37 ABa): “In this way today, dear grieving family, we are also escorting our deceased brother, your dear deceased father and relative on his last journey.” S10 ABa): “In this way today, dear grieving family, your dear deceased mother, grandmother, sister and relative is also leaving us.” S11 ABa): “In this way, dear grieving family, our deceased sister, your dear mother, grandmother and relative is leaving us today.” S15 ABa): “Today it is as though at this funeral we were encountering exactly this type of situation. Dear grieving family, we are burying our brother, your dear husband, father and relative in whose life we can say that winter came early.” S25 ABa): “Today, dear grieving family, you are also escorting your dear deceased mother on her last journey. You escort her now after the blessings of old age and longevity were granted her. But now the moment has come when her body, weakened through sickness, has ended its lifespan and activity. Just like a machine after long use stops working and can no longer be repaired, so people leave this world and there is no possibility of return.” S32 ABa): “In this way you, dear grieving family and we, the church family, this community and we might even say the whole county are taking leave today of a person who will certainly be unforgettable for each one of us.”

as we have shown in the above text, Kišš uses it in order to connect to pain without an emotionally worded text. We see it clearly in S4 in the interconnection between sections GI (general introduction) and AB (addressing the bereaved). In the GI the preacher starts out from the image of lightning that inflicts damage.

Then he relates this image to the reality of death, in order to describe its impact in general on the bereaved who had not expected anything of the kind.¹²⁶ He says later in S4 ABa): ‘Dear grieving family, it is exactly the unexpected lightning strike that has now struck the heart of your family, as it were from a clear sky’, thus stating that the bereaved were subjected to devastating shock with which they need to come to terms.

The preacher wants to express the depth of pain in S5 also, but does not want to express it directly in relation to the bereaved. In the GI he speaks about situations of irrecoverable loss that lead to weeping and silence¹²⁷. He turns to the bereaved later in ABa) and comments: “Today, all of us are also experiencing a moment like this. You, dear grieving family, are experiencing it more than anyone, you as a bereaved husband, daughter, parents and the entire family.”¹²⁸ Section ABa), thus outlined, is built on observation of reality.

¹²⁶ S4 GI: “And the most difficult, the most destructive, the most surprising and the most unpleasant lightning strike is the lightning strike of death, when our loved ones depart from us in a sudden and unexpected death. The loss that the lightning strike of death causes is so much greater than lightning from the sky. And the more unexpected that lightning strike, the greater the shock for the bereaved.”

¹²⁷ S5 GI: (the necessity of comforting) “At times it seems an impossible task. Such a great wound must hurt. Such a difficult and irretrievable loss must lead to tears. Our inclination is to say nothing, nothing at all and to go through it all in this way quietly and wordlessly.”

¹²⁸ S5 ABa)

However, by taking the GI into account, we can observe, at the same time, sensitivity to the loss experienced by the bereaved. In this way Kišš is expressing two things: both grief with which it is hard to come to terms and also that this is the experience of the bereaved. Thus, he can speak about grief without subjecting the bereaved to public consideration in pointed personal terms of the strain they are experiencing. Therefore, we consider this procedure as a suitable possibility, especially in cases where the loss is being processed dynamically by the bereaved and help in expressing grief is not required¹²⁹.

5.2.1.2 *With direct expression of the pain of the bereaved*

Having observed in the preceding text that Kišš does not mention the pain of the bereaved in some sermons, in other sermons then we find direct references to their pain and grief. For example, S9 ABa),¹³⁰, S18 ABa)¹³¹, S19 ABa)¹³², S35 ABa)¹³³ or S36 ABa)¹³⁴ belong

¹²⁹ At the same time this introduces the question to us of whether this procedure is also suitable in cases where the bereaved cannot express their pain. (One bereaved person said to me after a funeral: “I feel suffocated. If only I could have a good cry...”).

¹³⁰ In this sermon the usual “addressing the bereaved” section is fitted into the space of a single sentence: “And now at this moment sadness and grief for the one you are losing remain in the hearts of those of you who were closest to him.

¹³¹ S18 ABa): “And even now when we are celebrating life’s victory over death, you, dear grieving family, are experiencing among yourselves something that seems to contradict all of this. In your family, life has been conquered by death.”

¹³² S19 ABa): “But it is in these days, dear grieving family that you have another reason for grief. You may not only be calling to mind Christ’s cross, but something of the cross, something of suffering has now impacted your whole family.”

¹³³ S35 ABa): Such great grief is now being experienced by us in our deceased brother’s departure for eternity.”

¹³⁴ S36 ABa): “Dear grieving family, you have also now experienced something like this. In the middle of a bright period of her life, at the age of only 54, this sun

in this group, where he expresses the grief experience via the image of a solar eclipse and darkness.

5.2.2 Connection through observations about the deceased

Kišš finds a possibility for connecting with the family's grief in observations about the deceased, when he speaks of him as an unforgettable person in S32 ABa¹³⁵, refers to the end of his life's journey in S6 ABa¹³⁶, and refers to the arrival of death as an enemy in S8 ABa¹³⁷.

5.2.3 Connection through observations about the bereaved

In this approach, the connection with family grief is focused on facts about the bereaved. He expresses these as (a) acceptance of the sad

has been obscured in death, and darkness has ensued: darkness for her bereaved husband, darkness for her bereaved old parents, darkness for her siblings, friends, acquaintances, for everyone who has been affected in some way by her death and who is grieving for her.”

¹³⁵ S32 ABa): “In this way you, dear grieving family, and we the church congregation, this community and we might even say the whole county are taking leave today of a person who will certainly be unforgettable for each one of us (life events).”

¹³⁶ S6 ABa): “In this way, dear grieving family, the journey of life is now over for our departed brother, your dear husband, father and grandfather.” This sermon was preached at the funeral of a 67 year old man, whose final days were particularly difficult. However, the preacher does not speak about the difficulty of attending to the dying man but simply states the words quoted above. – His approach is similar in S3 ABa) also, where he makes connection with the family's grief with the statement: “In this way, dear grieving family, the time has now come for your dear departed mother, grandmother and relative to depart also.”

¹³⁷ S8 ABa): “Now, dear grieving family, death, like that wicked enemy, has come to you also. You experience sadness and grief.” Similarly, also S14 ABa): “In this way, suddenly and unexpectedly, death has entered the life of your dear departed husband, father, grandfather and relative.”

news¹³⁸; (b) sadness entering their life¹³⁹; (c) deep impact on an internal level¹⁴⁰; (d) parting with the deceased¹⁴¹; (e) the onset of radical change¹⁴².

¹³⁸ S16 ABa): “Dear grieving family, it was indeed in this way that with reluctance and great sadness we received the sad message spread among us a few days ago about the death of your dear departed husband and father.” S17 ABa): “In this way, dear grieving family, you also received the sad messenger, who visited you several nights ago. You knew his coming to you meant something. And indeed, it did mean something.”

¹³⁹ S23 ABa): “In this way, dear grieving family, sadness has also entered your life.”

¹⁴⁰ In S30 ABa) we already find connection with the family’s grief after a few introductory sentences in the general introduction: “Today’s funeral is certainly a sad funeral of this kind. For your spirits have been deeply affected by what has happened, dear parents, - and not only yours. For all of us gathered here are deeply affected and shaken together with you. Certainly, there is not one of us who does not heartily regret what has happened nor sincerely wish that it had never happened.”

¹⁴¹ S13 ABa) “And thus, dear grieving family, we take leave today of our dear father, grandfather and relative.” S39 ABa): “In this way, dear grieving family, you are also standing here at the coffin of your dear wife and relative, suddenly, surprisingly, and unexpectedly.”

In the case of the deceased old woman he sees the difficulty of the parting in their beholding their dear mother’s face for the last time: “Dear grieving family this Lenten period is doubly sad for you. For in these moments you must escort your dear departed mother and grandmother on her last journey. Even though she had reached the age of 81 years of life, an age at which death is no longer a great surprise and when you had probably begun to reckon on its likelihood, still the thought that you are beholding your dear mother’s face for the last time grieves your hearts.”

¹⁴² S26 AB due to interpolation with section c) consists of parts a1 and a2. Section a1): “In this way, dear grieving family, a single surprising moment has brought huge change to your lives.” Part a2): “Suddenly you stand amazed at everything that has actually happened. You are surprised and saddened by the unexpected direction your life has taken.”

5.2.4 Connection with the conflict between expectation and outcome

In S1 ABa)¹⁴³ the preacher's starting point is the conflict between expectation and outcome. Instead of the joyful Christmas expected by those he is addressing came the loss of their mother / grandmother. He does not describe this loss by expressing their pain but by means of a poetic image: "You neither knew nor even guessed that your house would be covered in black veil this year and that you would have to accompany your dear mother on her final journey."

5.2.5 Connection to grief via a funeral hymn

We find this in S38 ABa): "Singing this hymn at this funeral today is certainly especially appropriate. Dear grieving family, you are losing your dear father, grandfather, brother and relative today. '

5.2.6 Connection via a redefinition of tasks

When addressing the bereaved in S2 ABa) Kišš links up with the Biblical text he had mentioned in the introduction. He calls the deceased "Simeon". This is his reference to a Simeon-like mind set: 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples.' (Luke 2:29-32). This approach means that apparently, we can apply an experience of inner fulfilment, a departure in peace, and inner (spiritual) riches to the departing man.

¹⁴³ S1_ABa): "Dear grieving family, you were certainly looking forward to Christmas in this way. You were expecting it to restore joyful experiences to you. While last Christmas was sad for you because of a family funeral, you were hoping there were no sadness and tears in store for you this Christmas."

After a bold statement like this (if it can be applied to the deceased man), the task is actually being redefined and expanded specifically, which requires a sensitive awareness of tasks (1) on a spiritual level; and (2) on a psychological level.

Ad 1) on the spiritual level: Commenting extensively on the deceased man results in us being able, in place of mourning, to speak about reasons for gratitude for the values mentioned and to help the bereaved accept the loss on a spiritual basis.

Ad 2) on a psychological level: Even if the bereaved are able to express to God that they accept his sovereign will in the departure of someone close to them from a faith perspective, they need to come to terms with the loss on a personal level. Therefore, we need to support the openness for grief to follow its normal course.

We also encounter the same problem in S7 where the preacher states in the GI: “We also must have a single goal before us: to successfully navigate the sea of this temporal life into the harbour of peace in God and to attain eternal life.” The words through which he wants to connect with the family’s grief¹⁴⁴ in S7 actually express the achievement of this goal. However, here the preacher does not distinguish between spiritual realities to which the bereaved can say ‘amen’ and the psychological reality of loss, which is true even if the deceased and the bereaved live trusting in God.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ S7 ABa): “Today, dear grieving family, this applies to your dear departed also.”

¹⁴⁵ In our opinion, two deliberately differentiated levels should be developed in such cases: on a spiritual level to connect with the fact that the bereaved respect God’s will but on a psychological level to support a conscious experience and expression of grief that does not mean faith is being questioned but simply that the loss is being processed.

5.2.7 Absence of connection with family grief

AB sections where Section_a) is absent and sermons where the entire AB section is absent are both included under this title. Therefore, we can observe that in the analysed collection we do not see section ABa) in sermons S27¹⁴⁶; S29; S33¹⁴⁷ or S34¹⁴⁸, for example.

5.3 ABb) Short description of the loss that affects the family

As the title already indicates, this section is short. Its scope is variable and usually consists of a few words or sentences¹⁴⁹. A synthesis of the extracted sections of ABb) led us to the conclusion that we can speak of (1) tools for expressing the loss; (2) absence of expression of the loss, and (3) modified approaches.

5.3.1 Tools to express the loss

In Kišš's work we find the following tools to express loss: (1) family relationship; (2) age of the deceased person's age; (3) duration of the marriage relationship; (4) effects on the family; (5) impact on the wider social circle; (6) finality of separation and loss; (7) the relationship between current and previous loss; (8) surprising loss

¹⁴⁶ He is burying an 80-year-old woman in S27. No connection with the grief is developed in AB.

¹⁴⁷ S33 ABa) "Dear grieving family, today on this Easter Saturday, we also want to escort the body of our deceased sister, your dear mother and grandmother on its way to the grave. Now her life's struggle is also over. And she certainly bore many crosses. What marks our human life after all, besides crosses and cares?"

¹⁴⁸ It is notable that in the sermon at the parting with a mother where the father was absent, the preacher does not include his usual section "addressing the bereaved". For if he had addressed the orphan directly he would have given rise to excessive pain. Therefore, he addresses the entire funeral congregation instead and the meaning of his words is clear to the listeners.

¹⁴⁹ See the footnotes with the text quoted from section ABb).

and (9)a combination of factors.

5.3.1.1 *Family relationship*

We find family relationships as a tool to express loss in two forms in Kišš's work; (a) specified family relationships; (b) unspecified family relationships.

a) Specified family relationships.

In Kišš's work, although we may also come across isolated references to a family relationship¹⁵⁰, he tends to use this framework to express what this loss means for the individual members of a family at the same time as mentioning the family relationships. We see an example of this approach in S11 ABb)¹⁵¹, S25 ABb)¹⁵², S26

¹⁵⁰ E.g. S18 ABb) he only notes: "You lost your husband, father and grandfather..."

¹⁵¹ S11 ABb): "For people who did not know her, this is just one of many thousands of daily deaths. Every day in their thousands people are born and die. But it is somewhat different for you who were close to her. In this moment your hearts are grieved. After all, the one departing in death is not someone unknown to you, someone you can be indifferent about. It is your dear mother who is parting from you and that is no indifferent matter to a child. We only have one mother. Thanks to her we have been granted a life to live. Therefore, when a mother beloved by her child departs, a profound grief settles on the child's spirit."

¹⁵² S15 ABb): "Above all this is certainly a severe blow to the now bereaved wife, who had so greatly needed his help. It is also a severe blow for the bereaved daughter, whose life had been so bound up with his."

ABb)¹⁵³, S17 ABb)¹⁵⁴, S19 ABb)¹⁵⁵, S24 ABb)¹⁵⁶, S39 ABb)¹⁵⁷.

b) Unspecified family relationships

The loss the family is dealing with is also alternatively expressed by making reference to family relationships without specifying the level of relationship more precisely. We find this approach in S26 ABb)¹⁵⁸ or in S28 ABb1)¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵³ S16 ABb): “Which of us does not heartily wish that you did not have to walk this path? As the Lord Jesus Christ cried long ago over the death of his friend Lazarus, our hearts are also all weeping with you, his loved ones. A wife is losing her good husband, children their beloved and caring father. His life was not easy (add specifics).”

¹⁵⁴ S17 ABb): “At this moment your lives have undergone profound change. After all, you have lost what was most precious to you, a beloved child, and a fine son.”

¹⁵⁵ S19 ABb1): “You have lost your dear departed mother, grandmother and relative from your midst. The years of life still before you will be years without her. Then saddest of all for you might be this Easter week.”

¹⁵⁶ S24 ABb): “And you have also lost one of your principal members from your midst. Till now you had all been together: parents and children. You had enjoyed one another. But now a profound change has come into your life. You have lost the very one on whom it was your habit to lean the most in life, who was always the key link in your family. It is as if the chain has suddenly lost its most important link. How could this moment not be hard for you? It will be hard for the wife left behind, who has lost her faithful companion in life, and it will be hard for you, his offspring who have lost your dear father.”

¹⁵⁷ S39 ABb): “Your hearts are saddened. It is hard when a wife who loses her husband is left a lonely widow. But people say that it is even harder when a husband loses his wife and is left a lonely widower. Certainly, it is difficult for all you remaining close relatives also, who have lost this dear departed woman, to whom you were bound by so many relationship ties and so many cherished memories.”

¹⁵⁸ S26 ABb): “You would still like to have the one leaving you in his prime among you.”

¹⁵⁹ S28 ABb1): “The one leaving you now is one such central, pivotal figure in your family.”

5.3.1.2 *The age of the deceased*

When Kišš expresses the age of the deceased in Section ABb), he is using it as a tool to express the loss. Someone who was here for many years for his relatives is gone. This is the case in S7 ABb)¹⁶⁰ and also in S18 ABb)¹⁶¹.

5.3.1.3 *Length of time lived in marriage*

In S7 the length of time experienced by the deceased woman in marriage¹⁶² becomes a tool to express the loss (to death). The length of their mutual lives is also introduced in connection with ABb) in sermons S23¹⁶³ and S35¹⁶⁴.

5.3.1.4 *Effects on the Family*

A family in shock and psychological impact. In S8 ABb) he expresses the loss by its impact on the deceased person's family, taking it for granted that they will have been shaken by this loss¹⁶⁵. Therefore, he speaks of their 'extreme pain and loss'¹⁶⁶. In S30 ABb), he points

¹⁶⁰ S7 ABb): "The voyage of her life is over now. The ship of her life has put down anchor in eternity's harbour. The voyage of her life was a long one. It lasted for more than 78 years. 45 years of that she journeyed with her now bereaved husband."

¹⁶¹ S18 ABb): "You have lost your husband, father and grandfather in his 74th year of life."

¹⁶² S7 ABb): "The voyage of her life is now over. The ship of her life has put down anchor in eternity's harbour. The voyage of her life was a long one. It lasted for more than 78 years. 45 years of that she journeyed with her now bereaved husband."

¹⁶³ S23 ABb): "After 51 years of mutual married life he has lost..."

¹⁶⁴ S35 ABb1): "...they lived life together for 49 years and he was her support."

¹⁶⁵ S8 ABb): "(Two days ago we were all shaken by news of a devastating blow.) How could it then not shake you, whose lives and very selves are affected by it more than anyone else?"

¹⁶⁶ S8 ABb- continuation): "Your pain and your loss are immense, dear grieving family. We deliberately avoid great and forceful words in an attempt to express

out the serious consequences for the social circle of someone departing in this way¹⁶⁷. According to S28 ABb2)¹⁶⁸ the loss of someone close means ‘the end of an era’ in the bereaved person.

5.3.1.5 *Impact on the wider social sphere*

In S8 ABb) he expresses the loss by its impact on the wider social sphere¹⁶⁹. This is similar in S35 ABb1) also¹⁷⁰.

5.3.1.6 *The finality of the parting and loss*

In S14 he includes a description of the loss as the final element in section AB and expresses it by a reference to the finality of the parting¹⁷¹. He also proceeds in a similar way in S35 ABb2), though

ourselves, so that we do not add to your pain and your grief. However, you may see by our tear-stained faces that all of us are going through and feeling deeply this pain with you”

¹⁶⁷ S30 ABb): “But not only this: it causes immense grief to the parents and relatives. After all, we people are not alone in this world. We all have families bound up with us. Therefore, we cannot simply take our own lives and leave the ones we love to grieve.”

¹⁶⁸ S28 AB – procedure: a-b1-d-c-b2

¹⁶⁹ S8 ABb): “Two days ago we were all shaken by news of the devastating blow. How could it then not shake you, whose lives and very selves are affected by it, more than anyone else?”

¹⁷⁰ S35 ABb1): “But you are not alone in your grief today. Today the church is grieving also, having lost its longstanding presbyter, its former sexton, regular attendee of the chapel and a man zealous for the affairs of God in this world; the whole community is also grieving.”

¹⁷¹ S14 ABb): “But this is a much more difficult goodbye today awaiting you, his loved ones. He is leaving you for a journey from which there is no return in this temporal life. Now the words of Holy Scripture apply: “You will no longer see my face”. It is the last journey he will take this side of eternity. Just as every driver one day drives for the last time and afterwards never returns to his car again, so also each of us will one day set out on our life’s last journey from which there will be no going home again. One day each of us will come to the final one-way street of death. It only goes one way and there is no return from it. Whoever sets out on this one-way road will never be seen again on his native soil.”

he speaks here of the finality of the loss.¹⁷²

5.3.1.7 *A family's present and previous loss*

In S1¹⁷³ the preacher observes not only the present loss of the deceased man but also the loss of the previous year. That is to say, their pain has come at a time when they were dealing with the previous loss of someone close to them¹⁷⁴. He proceeds in a similar way in other sermons (e.g. S23 ABb)¹⁷⁵, S31 ABb)¹⁷⁶ and S38 ABb)¹⁷⁷ even though in the last case it concerns a two-year interval.

5.3.1.8 *Surprising loss*

His method for describing the loss impacting the family is also similar in S4 and S5: in S4 ABb) he interprets it as destructive damage-inflicting lightning. He does not present the loss itself from

¹⁷² S35 ABb2): "Losses to death are irrecoverable. They are never to return. And therefore, it is with reluctance that we release him from our midst and at this moment grief envelops our hearts."

¹⁷³ S1 ABb): "A sad Christmas for a second time now. This has been your family's lot for the past two years. And now in this way your dear departed mother and grandmother leaves you. After 72 years her industrious life has ended."

¹⁷⁴ The anniversary of a death marks a time when the grieving process may already be complete in healthy individuals. But the anniversary brings to mind the same season of the year..., which may bring a renewal of the pain of the loss. For this reason, they provide the bereaved with support not for 12 but 13 months in the Hospice du Page (USA).

¹⁷⁵ S23 ABb): "... This is not the first time recently that your family has gathered to escort someone from your circle on their last journey. Only recently you gathered together for a similar occasion. And yet now death's black cloud has darkened your family's skies again ..."

¹⁷⁶ S31 ABb): "The sorrow is all the greater for you because it is not yet even a year since you had to escort your dear father on his final journey. One wound is not yet completely healed and already a fresh wound is here."

¹⁷⁷ S38 ABb): "After losing your mother to an untimely death two years ago, your father is also now leaving you too soon."

a reporter's viewpoint (how it happened) or from the viewpoint of the extent of the loss (the relational significance of the deceased person). He simply states: 'you have lost your husband, father, grandfather, and relative, suddenly and without warning'. In S5 ABb), he perceives the loss¹⁷⁸ as a sudden destructive event with devastating consequences. Therefore, he uses the image of an earthquake that "significantly changes the fate of entire towns and villages..." then relates this image to the bereaved family: "Dear grieving family, you have suddenly and unexpectedly lost someone precious, a precious wife, mother, daughter and relative in her best years, with no opportunity to say goodbye."⁴

5.3.1.9 *A combination of factors*

Kišš's use of the tools mentioned above to express loss is not isolated because we find loss expressed on multiple levels in S23, for example, ABb) when he uses as an expressive tool (a) the length of mutual life¹⁷⁹; (b) the family relationship¹⁸⁰; and (c) repeated loss¹⁸¹. We find a similar case in S35 ABb1), where the loss is expressed (a) through relationships¹⁸²; (b) through the length of their mutual

¹⁷⁸ In this sermon the division between a description of the loss/ circumstances of death cannot be clearly defined.

¹⁷⁹ S23 ABb): "After 51 years of married life she is losing..."

¹⁸⁰ S23 ABb): "...a wife is losing her husband. Children are losing their father. Relatives and siblings must bid farewell to their brother and relative... .You are losing your dear husband, father, grandfather and relative."

¹⁸¹ S23 ABb): "This is not the first time recently that your family has gathered to escort someone from your circle on their last journey. Only recently you gathered together for a similar occasion. And yet now death's black cloud has darkened your family's skies again ..."

¹⁸² S35 ABb1): "You who were closest to him are grieving. A wife who is losing her dear husband is grieving A daughter is grieving for her dear father to whom she is bound by the strongest bonds of mutual love ..."

lives¹⁸³; (c) through a wider social and religious context¹⁸⁴.

5.3.2 Absence of a description of the loss

In several sermons (e.g. S2, S3, S6, S20¹⁸⁵, S22¹⁸⁶; S25; S27¹⁸⁷; S32; S33; S34; S37) the preacher does not describe the loss. Although in some cases we may deduce the reasons for this approach¹⁸⁸, we will not perform a complex analysis of it as the observation that individual elements are used freely in part in AB suffices for this study's purposes.

5.3.2.1 *Modified approaches*

We have identified modified approaches to move from the family's current experience of the family to (1) the deceased person's experience of the deceased person and (2) the use of positive remarks about the deceased as a tool to express the loss.

5.3.2.2 *Loss suffered by the deceased*

In S13 where a husband dies within about a year of his wife's death,

¹⁸³ S35 ABb1): "...They lived together for 49 years and he was her support."

¹⁸⁴ S35 ABb1): "But you are not alone in your grief today. Today the church is grieving also, having lost its longstanding presbyter, its former sexton, regular attendee of the chapel and a man zealous for the affairs of God in this world; the whole community is also grieving."

¹⁸⁵ The whole AB section is missing.

¹⁸⁶ The whole AB section is missing.

¹⁸⁷ In S27 he is burying an 80-year-old woman. He does not develop a description of the loss in AB.

¹⁸⁸ In S2 this is presumably because the preacher is reconciled to the death of the old woman, a Christian woman who has lived to 90. He leaves out this section because of her great age and spiritual stability. This is also true in S3 where the preacher knows that the "time of departure" had come for the deceased woman, but he does not deal with the issue of difficulties caused by her departure for the bereaved.

Kišš does not describe the loss suffered by the family who must once again bid farewell to one of their members. Instead, he describes the impact on the widower of his wife's death, which robbed life of its charm.¹⁸⁹

5.3.2.3 *Positive remark about the deceased as an interpretation of the loss*

In some sermons that could be included in the group where Section ABb) is absent we observe that a positive remark about the deceased (section ABd) serves a combined function. From a formal perspective, it can be expressed as a positive remark about the deceased, also serving the function of ABb) and at the same time also a description of the family's loss.

We find this approach in S10 ABb), for example, where he does not develop a description of the loss, but describes the deceased woman as a relationally mature and steady character, anchored in her faith. He is indirectly expressing the loss the bereaved face by this. S12¹⁹⁰ is also a similar example of the preacher expressing the loss without

¹⁸⁹ S13 ABb): "It was about a year ago when you escorted your dear mother on her final journey. At the time he seemed strong enough to remain among you for some time. But the wife's departure meant the husband's sudden decline, loss of strength and vitality - as though this fleeting life had lost its charm. It was as though once his wife had departed nothing held him in this world. It was as though he saw a better future before him somewhere other than in this transitory world in which he was left alone. He began to be like the Psalmist who says: "When will I depart and see God's face?""

¹⁹⁰ S12 ABb): "Dear grieving family, your case was something like this as well. First you were children dependent on the love and care of your parents. It was mainly your deceased mother who cared for you. How many nights she had to watch at your side, how much rest she had to forfeit in order to raise you well. No child understands the effort it costs a mother to raise her child and especially in cases where the father has died before any of the children can yet stand on their own two feet. In such cases a mother-widow is obliged to take care of both nourishing and training her children. In her maternal affection, however, your mother coped with it all and took good care of you in all respects."

speaking about it. In this case, he describes the care of the deceased woman for her children (...) and for the bereaved her departure actually meant losing someone who had taken care (of me). In the case of S12 AB), it is worth noting that the deceased woman had not only shown love to the bereaved but also been on the receiving end of their care when she was old.¹⁹¹

We also find an expression of the loss with a positive remark about the deceased in S21 ABd/b)¹⁹² and S29 ABd/b)¹⁹³. In S36 AB we find the family's loss expressed through combined expressions of loss: (a) through family relationships¹⁹⁴; and (b) through a positive

¹⁹¹ S12 ABb- part 2): "However, the years passed and you children were suddenly placed in the position of caring for her. Her physical condition did not allow her to take care of herself anymore. She began to be dependent on you. God now placed on your shoulders the task of caring, denying yourselves, demonstrating love and serving. You were given the job of beginning to repay your mother for all that she had done for you. To repay at least in part. After all, what she had done for all of you long ago, now all of you had to do for only one of her. You carried out this task as well as you could and we can only speak highly of this."

¹⁹² S21 ABd/b): "...you have all lost someone dear to you, who will be missed not only by his close family but by many of us."

¹⁹³ S29 ABd/b): "Thus we also have a reason today to thank God for the life with which we are now parting. You, the bereaved children, grandchildren and relatives especially, may be thankful for this life. The one parting from you today was immensely significant in your life. Not only did she once give you, her children, life. She gave you herself. Her whole life was a life of service, self-sacrifice and love for you, her loved ones."

And so today, along with you her loved ones, the rest of us can also cry out the words of our hymn: "God, for the life you have given us, we thank you!"

¹⁹⁴ S36 ABb1): "She was like sunshine among you: kind, quiet, godly, diligent, friendly and optimistic. Her husband had in her a true and faithful helper such as Holy Scripture describes concerning women. Her parents had in her a good daughter and the joy of their life. Her siblings had in her a beloved sister. And all you, her friends and acquaintances, had in her a good and dear friend, with whom it was a joy to meet, who spread warmth and light all around her. She really was such a bright sun among you with her good character and excellent virtues."

remark about the deceased¹⁹⁵.

5.4 ABc) Circumstances of Death

We will observe the circumstances of death, which are reflected in Section ABc) of the analysed collection, divided up into the following subsections: (1) living to a God-ordained age, departure in quietness and peace; (2) death after illness in old age; (3) death after a chronic illness at an active age; (4) consecutive deaths; (5) tragic events; (6) sudden deaths; (7) secondary impulses; (8) absence of circumstances of death.

5.4.1 Living to a God-ordained age, departure in quietness and peace

In S3, he perceives the departure of the deceased woman as life's natural conclusion, a fulfilment of the prerequisites given bestowed on humankind by the Creator. He expresses this reality with the image of an aircraft landing¹⁹⁶. He does not, therefore, describe the

¹⁹⁵ S36 ABd/b) expression of the loss (her positive features) and as an expression of her courageous attitude in illness: "In situations in which others might have despaired, she remained steadfast and patient. She bore her illness downright courageously. And in her illness and the wonderful way she bore it, her light shone even more brightly. Knowing that the time was coming when her life's sun would no longer shine, it seemed that she shone even more intensively, so that she might give away all her remaining light to those around her, albeit too soon. And now that she has gone away for good, Holy Scripture's words say to us justifiably: "the sun was darkened".

¹⁹⁶ S3 ABc): "However, no matter how reliably the machines in an aeroplane may work, it cannot go beyond the boundaries of where it should land. The aeroplane must land after a certain number of kilometres because it does not have fuel to go on flying. And in the same way we will also in the end come to the final

circumstances of death from a medical perspective in this situation, but rather as attaining an age determined by God¹⁹⁷, after which a parting must come. In the same sermon, he notes the persistent good health of the deceased woman, perceiving it as an expression of God's grace¹⁹⁸.

In S25 ABc), he also expressed acceptance of the departure of the deceased woman with the words: "In quietness and peace, your deceased mother has also left us to cross over to those who preceded her on this journey some time before. The words of today's text are also fulfilled in her: "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried in a good old age."

5.4.2 Death after illness in old age

Illness signalling departure. In S1¹⁹⁹ he indicates that the family had a series of signals about emerging health problems²⁰⁰, which he does not describe from a medical perspective (by indicating a specific illness), but once again poetically. "For some time, her weak body had been announcing that her physical strength was failing. But the

boundary, however healthy our lives have been. The strength of our lives will have been spent and we will have to leave this world.

¹⁹⁷ S2 ABc) does not note circumstances of death and instead of describing possible problems, he notes the deceased man's age: "He lived to the unusual age of 90!"

¹⁹⁸ S3 ABc): "God's grace allowed our sister to always enjoy relatively good health. Difficult and dangerous illnesses were not her lot in life. And perhaps this was the very thing that contributed to her remaining among you comparatively evergreen and youthful even in old age."

¹⁹⁹ S1 ABb): "It is an age at which many others remain quite youthful and relatively healthy. But in her case, her life's strength was already at its limit, exhausted by the struggles and troubles of life. For some time her weak body had been announcing that her physical strength was failing. But the moment has now come and brought you grief."

²⁰⁰ S1 ABb): "For some time her weak body had been announcing that her physical strength was failing."

moment has come and brought you grief.” He does not describe the actual circumstances of death. He has a similar approach in S10 ABc)²⁰¹ also and in S11 ABc), where he emphasises a premonition of the imminent parting²⁰².

We find the central motif for expressing the circumstances of death of old people who had suffered ill health in S33 ABc): “The older we become, the heavier and harsher the cross we bear. Illness and weakness increase. Until death comes at once.” However, in individual sermons, he presents this description of a worsening condition with a more evident regard for the particularities of the case, as we may observe, for example, in S25 ABc),²⁰³ S27 ABc)²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ S10 ABc): “She also reached the ripe old age of 80. And so you were already sensing that you would soon have to bid her farewell. Her worsening health also hinted this to you. And now today she is really departing.”

²⁰² S11 ABc): “For 75 years her life’s struggle has continued. For 75 years she resisted death but her last days showed clearly that in the life and death struggle she would now be the one to succumb. Death’s arrows began to rain down on her, as it says in one of our hymns, until ultimately one of them ended her life and you must bid her farewell.” In quietness and peace your deceased mother has also departed from us to cross over to those who preceded her on this journey sometime before. The words of today’s text are fulfilled in her also: “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.”

²⁰³ S25 ABc): “But now the moment has come when her body, weakened through sickness, has ended its lifespan and activity. Just like a machine after long use stops working and can no longer be repaired, so people leave this world and there is no possibility of return. In quietness and peace your deceased mother has also departed from us to cross over to those who preceded her on this journey sometime before. The words of today’s text are fulfilled in her also: “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.”

²⁰⁴ In S27 AB section c) is interpolated by section d. Kišš observes: “our deceased sister, your dear mother, grandmother and relative has come to the end of her life’s journey in this way. The journey of her life lasted 80 years. Section C2 continues: “And now her life’s struggle has been fought to the finish. Her journey of life has ended. Death is here. Just as countless generations before her departed from this world, so now her time has also come to wish this world a final farewell.”

or in S37 ABc)²⁰⁵.

The possibility of combining impulses is shown by S10 ABc) for example, where he expresses the circumstances of death with the help of a reference to advanced age²⁰⁶ and worsening health²⁰⁷. This approach can also be found in other sermons, which we have mentioned above.

5.4.3 Death after a long illness while of an active age

We find in S36 ABc) the funeral of a 53-year-old woman – an expression of circumstances of death after a prolonged process of dealing with illness: “But suddenly 13 years ago this sun began to be veiled ominously. A month of serious, lengthy, and in the long run deadly illness threatened to obscure this sun’s light. Thus, a lengthy 13-year battle between sunshine and darkness ensued for this young 40-year-old woman suffering from a grave and incurable illness. In this struggle, she had to undergo several serious operations. Many times, her quest for health had to be carried out in hospitals. At times it appeared that she would win the battle. But again, and again the illness returned unrelentingly. She fought her difficult fight courageously. ‘

²⁰⁵ S37 ABc): “There was a time when he was also young, strong and healthy, but those years are long since gone. Only old age remained, attended now by its many illnesses, weaknesses and difficulties. His life was no exception to this. Now that his time has come and the measure of his days is filled up, he is leaving you. His body, worn out by life’s toil is no longer fit to serve him. And so, the passing of this fleeting earthly life makes way for eternity.”

²⁰⁶ S10: “She also reached the ripe old age of 80. And therefore, you were already sensing that you would soon have to bid her farewell.”

²⁰⁷ S10: “Her worsening health also hinted this to you. And now today she is really departing.”

5.4.4 Consecutive death of partners

Although by the consecutive death of partners, we may understand the bereaved partner to follow the preceding funeral within a shorter time period (sometimes with a gap of a few days or weeks), Kišš observes that the funeral of the widowed person takes place about one year after the death of the life partner in two sermons (S13 and S31).²⁰⁸ In S13, the circumstances of death are described as a loss of quality of life after the death²⁰⁹ and a similar observation is also made in S31.²¹⁰

5.4.5 Tragic events

Expressing the circumstances of death when dealing with tragic events. For unnatural deaths, Kišš tends to use the summarizing descriptor ‘tragic event’. He abstains from a visualisation of events in order to protect the bereaved. They know how it happened and often have even more detailed information available to them. In such situations, every preacher needs to be aware of his task, which is not to describe events, but to help in dealing with its consequences.

²⁰⁸ This fact should be taken into serious consideration by the preacher (particularly if it is a question of a briefer period and the bereaved have not yet come to terms with the previous loss), as signalling the need for greater pastoral care.

²⁰⁹ S13 ABC): “It was about a year ago when you escorted your dear mother on her final journey. At the time he seemed strong enough to remain among you for some time. But the wife’s departure meant the husband’s sudden decline, loss of strength and vitality - as though this fleeting life had lost its charm. It was as though once his wife had departed nothing held him in this world. It was as though he saw a better future before him somewhere other than in this transitory world in which he was left alone. He began to be like the Psalmist who says: “When will I depart and see God’s face?”

²¹⁰ S31 ABC): “You have lost both of your parents in less than a year. It is as if the passing of one meant that the other could not go on living and is following them into eternity.”

Therefore, he should opt for a sensitive style and focus on offering hope, especially with difficult losses. A detailed look at Kišš's style of describing the circumstances of death shows that they are expressed in two ways: (a) without mentioning details; (b) with the mention of some details.

5.4.5.1 Reference to tragic events without mentioning details

The circumstances of death are expressed very succinctly in S16 ABc): "Now, through a tragic event, he is suddenly leaving us." All present know what is meant by "tragic event". The preacher's task is not to present how this event unfolded. His tasks are defined differently. Therefore, we consider Kišš's approach to be a worthy model.

In S17 (the tragic death of a young son), we do not discover anything more about the way he died. Here the preacher expresses the tragic event in Section ABc) referring to the news received by the bereaved: "They brought you the terrible, sad, and most difficult for you, news that your dear beloved son is no longer among the living."

5.4.5.2 Reference to the tragic events with some mention of details

In this group, we find funeral sermons after (1) a car accident; (2) suicide; (3) murder, and (4) unclarified circumstances of death.

Car accident

The sections of AB overlap in S21 therefore we have the circumstances of death expressed here in two statements (c1 and c2). In c1, he calls the deceased a "tragically deceased husband"²¹¹,

²¹¹ S21 ABc1): "...your tragically deceased husband, father, grandfather, brother and relative"

thus he does not mention the circumstances of the tragic event. He comes back to them in c2, where he does not note the details of the car accident, but only the situation which led up to it: “That fateful moment came, the fateful wrong decision and the result was decisive: we have all lost someone precious.”

In S8 ABc), he also handles the circumstances of a car accident very briefly and sparingly. Here he deliberately does not use the words: car, accident... but expresses: “No matter how unbelievable, it is still true. At once a tragic moment has extinguished the life of a good and caring family breadwinner, a beloved friend, and a courageous worker at the age of 31.”

Suicide

Neither after suicide does he note technical details of how the deceased woman took her own life in the framework of the circumstances of death, instead speaking of her internal state. S30 ABc1): ‘What happened actually?’ I suspect that none of us can give a clear answer to this question. Only an omniscient God knows what really happened. It is not clear to any of us and we are left looking on in amazement.’ In a later statement in the same sermon, he continues with this view on the event: S30 ABc2): ‘Who knows why it happened, whether it was because she was not in her right senses or because of youthful impulsiveness when, still a young woman, she was unaware of the enormous grief she would cause her parents and of the enormous consequences of her actions?’

Murder

In the collection Hope at the graveside we find only one sermon from the funeral of a murder victim. The funeral took place after a seven-month gap and Kišš describes this situation as a “terrible

event” (S51 ABc): “Dear grieving family, it was also a night of deep darkness on that day of the terrible event seven months ago, which cost our dear sister, mother to two small children and your dear relative, her life. At the age of thirty, a human life was violently extinguished. At once, two children lost their mother. How very tragic and dreadful! And even afterward, the terrible darkness continued in the attempt to cover it all up”.

5.4.5.3 *Unexplained circumstances of death*

In S38 ABc), in the case of an alcoholic’s unexplained death, he speaks more directly about open questions and uncertainty: “However, there has been a veil of mystery over his death until now. There are questions here that none of us have been able to answer yet. When did it actually happen, what happened? And how did it actually happen? For two and a half weeks, we were not even able to answer the question of where it actually happened. For those two and half weeks, you, especially, who were closest to him, have undergone difficult and tormenting moments of uncertainty. So the news that his dead body had been found, though immensely sad for those close to him, was at the same time liberating because it removed the tormenting uncertainty. Today it is clear that at the age of 56 years, he has left you for good”.

5.4.6 Sudden Deaths

With sudden natural deaths, Kišš expresses the circumstances of death (1) with a statement about the rapid departure; (2) with a reference to the swift consequences of health problems; (3) secondary impulses.

5.4.6.1 *Statement about the Rapid Exit*

We find this (a) in S28 ABc), where he says that the deceased departed unexpectedly²¹²; (b) in S18 ABc) the deceased departed suddenly without saying goodbye²¹³; and (c) in S24 ABc) the deceased departed quickly at a God-ordained age²¹⁴.

5.4.6.2 *Reference to the swift consequence of health problems*

Sometimes he is specific about health problems, for example, in S14 ABc), he links the circumstances of death with ‘the stopping of a diseased heart²¹⁵). But as it is not the job of the funeral sermon to publicise the medical data about the primary cause of death, Kišš tends to stick to expressing the illness in general terms (see for example S26 ABc²¹⁶ - that the illness came suddenly and nothing could be done for the deceased²¹⁷ or S39 ABc, where the sick person

²¹² S28 ABc): “And thus his departure from this temporal life, which came slightly unexpectedly for you...”

²¹³ S18 ABc): “He departed suddenly before you were even able to say goodbye to him. And now when we are rejoicing that Christ’s tomb has been opened, his tomb now closes upon receiving his dead body.”

²¹⁴ S24 ABc) “Again we see how clearly Holy Scripture says this: “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labour and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away.” As quickly as a bird flies away to warmer climes in autumn, he has also now flown away in death.”

²¹⁵ S14 ABc): “He was still working a few hours before his death. And suddenly, like a driver on the road surprised by a fateful hour, he was also met by his life’s fateful hour. Like a broken motor, an ailing and sick heart suddenly stopped working. And just like a breakdown in the engine can cause the car driver a fateful accident, so his earthly, temporal life also now ended.”

²¹⁶ S26 ABc): “Someone who was healthy and youthful and in the prime of his physical strength a few days ago, must unexpectedly leave his family, wife, children and siblings. A desire to live does not help, a previously healthy body does not help nor do our efforts to heal him help at all.”

²¹⁷ Similarly, also S15 (Premature arrival of old age), part ABc1): “He had hardly enjoyed his life’s brief autumn beginning with his retirement, when death was

died suddenly and unexpectedly²¹⁸).

5.4.7 Secondary impulses

In S4 he offers several details about the circumstances of death: ‘It was in the very morning after a night of repose, at a time least to come.’ The preacher uses only one detail (“in the morning after night rest”) with this description to express the departure of the surprising nature of the deceased man. As this detail is not related in a cause and effect way to the death of the deceased man, we describe it as a secondary impulse.

5.4.8 The absence of circumstances of death

Section c) of the circumstances of death is missing from a whole series of sermons (S5; S6; S7; S9; S12²¹⁹; S19; in S20²²⁰, S22²²¹; S23;

suddenly here. He is leaving us now at the age of 61 years”; S15 ABc2): “This premature arrival of death’s winter in his life has been a profound and tragic surprise for you. And it is and was impossible for you to do anything to change this situation.”

²¹⁸ S39 ABc): “As yet there were no indications that the candle of her life would soon be snuffed out. Not because she was not also troubled by illnesses. It is not long since she also bore her own cross of illness. But it was not yet a life-threatening illness. And so you, the bereaved husband, were hopeful that she would remain with you for a number of years still. And suddenly, without being able to bid you farewell, without you even remotely suspecting what was coming, she is departing from you in death at the age of 67.

²¹⁹ Granted section ABc) is not missing here, but the remaining text of the AB section where details are not included hints that death happened at a time when she was dependent on her children’s help (see S12 ABd) “...However, the years passed and you children were suddenly placed in the position of caring for her. Her physical condition did not allow her to take care of herself anymore. She began to be dependent on you....”

²²⁰ The whole AB section is missing in S20.

²²¹ The whole AB section is missing in S22.

S29; S32; S34²²²; S35). This observation shows us that Kišš does not simply conform to mechanically determined tasks, but he chooses which of them he wants to use and deliberately leaves out others in specific funeral sermons. In our view, an approach of this kind shows a proficiency in handling the task where the preacher is not working with a technical perception of homiletic criteria (which might be a problem for starting-out preachers), but uses them at will to carry out his ministry.

5.5 ABd) Remarks about the deceased from a positive human point of view

Kišš expresses the task of this section (which for technical reasons I have labelled with the code ABd) in these words:

‘Here I tend to talk about the deceased from a positive human point of view. Therefore, I have named this section ‘captatio benevolentiae’ for my own purposes. The goal is to capture the family by empathising with their situation and with a positive personal approach to the death case.’²²³

As an example of the rich scope of this section, we can include S32 ABd):

“As though the words of Christ were fulfilled in him: “Whoever wants to be the greatest among you, let him be your servant”. And at the same time, he was faithful to the last to

²²² It is notable that in a sermon which was preached at a parting with a mother where the father was absent, the preacher does not include his usual section “addressing the bereaved”, since to address a small, immature daughter directly would have given rise to distressing emotions. Therefore, he addresses the entire funeral congregation instead and the meaning of his words is clear to the listeners.

²²³ KIŠŠ, I.: *Nádej nad brobom* I, p.1

his Lutheran Christian faith, taught primarily by his mother. He attended church regularly for as long as he lived, as though intending to show in his service that he desired to be a humble follower of the servant Christ ‘.

5.5.1 The deceased and close family relationships

Positive remarks about the deceased man that we include in this group refer to his (1) care for the family; (2) love for the family; (3) significance for close family relationships.

5.5.1.1 *Care for the family*

In S10 ABd), the preacher describes the loss in the light of the deceased woman personality. He does it in an unusually comprehensive text in which he notes, among other emphases, her relationship to work as an expression of her care for the family²²⁴. He chooses this approach also in S11 ABd)²²⁵. In S12 ABd), where he is burying a widow who had already required her children’s care²²⁶, he expresses a positive remark about her, referring to her care for the family. He presents the deceased woman as a caring mother and widow who devoted her attention to her children²²⁷.

²²⁴ S10 ABd): “...work and yet more work – that was her lot in life. As the Psalmist says somewhere else, our lives contain only labour and sorrow. When the small fields could not support the family, they were forced in hard times of poverty to seek their living in the world also.”

²²⁵ S11 ABd): “Your mother was also such a person. She was from a poor family. But she worked for you so that you would have everything you needed.”

²²⁶ S12: Differentiation: widow, eventually needing her children’s care, one religiously apathetic son.

²²⁷ S12 ABd): “First you were children dependent on the love and care of your parents. It was mainly your deceased mother who cared for you. How many nights she had to watch at your side, how much rest she had to forfeit in order to raise you well. No child understands the effort it costs a mother to raise her child and especially in cases where the father has died before any of the children can stand

Here, general experiences of parenting rather than specific knowledge of the deceased woman's life are the source of positive personal comments about the deceased woman. However, the preacher takes general experience and applies it specifically to the deceased woman. In S13 ABd), Kišš refers to responsible attitude of the deceased man to life by mentioning his diligence²²⁸ and care for his family²²⁹. In S27 ABd)²³⁰ a reference to the diligence of the deceased woman also belongs in this group indirectly, and in S29 ABd) a reference to serving her neighbour, according to which the deceased woman was someone precious. 'Her entire life was a life of service, self-sacrifice, and love for... her neighbour.'

5.5.1.2 *Love for the family*

The preacher fulfils the task of this section in S1 ABd)²³¹ by observing the close family relationships. The deceased woman loved

on their own two feet yet. In such cases a mother-widow is obliged to take care of both nourishing and training her children. In her maternal affection, however, your mother overcame it all and took good care of you in all respects."

²²⁸ S13 ABd): "... For his life was simply a hard struggle and a battle from his childhood up. Work was not to be had at home and so he had to look for it in far-away France..."

²²⁹ S13 ABd): "...And then again there was work to do in order to care for the family's needs. Still it was a good thing that the Lord gave him relatively good health throughout his life ..."

²³⁰ S27 ABd): "How much did she have to overcome during this long period of her life? She came from a large family. She was born during an era when there was still much poverty in the world. And thus, from her youth she had to work and seek a living."

²³¹ S1 AB/d): "This moment is all the harder for you because in the same way that she loved you and lived her entire life for you, so you also loved her and were firmly attached to her. And the stronger the family ties, the more painfully they are rendered asunder later. Therefore, you are certainly reluctant to let her go from your midst."

the bereaved²³² and the bereaved loved her²³³. In S11 ABd)²³⁴ and S29 ABd)²³⁵ positive comments about the deceased woman are expressed with a reference to her love for the family.

5.5.1.3 *Significance for Close Family Relationships*

Kišš makes a positive remark about the deceased in a relatively long passage in S28 ABd) through which he refers to the man's significance for his wife and children, albeit not in terms of material provision, but rather as a central figure in the family structure, caring for its spiritual life and providing a positive example.²³⁶ We find this

²³² S1 ABd): "in the same way that she loved you and lived her entire life for you, ..."

²³³ S1 ABd): "so you also loved her and were firmly attached to her."

²³⁴ S11 ABd): "...she was the one who rejoiced in your successes and suffered your sorrows together with you. Therefore, today the words of the Psalmist apply to you: "I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother"."

²³⁵ S29 ABd): "...Not only did she once give you, her children, life. She gave you herself. Her whole life was a life of service, self-sacrifice and love for you, her loved ones".

²³⁶ S28 ABd): "He was a real support especially to his wife. For you his wife, he always proved to be a true help in life. But he also continued to be a spiritual support for you his children up until his death. It is often the case that children are scattered far and wide and the parental home no longer plays such a key role in the family's life. But your bond with your elderly parents remained strong. It was as though he was a kind of Biblical patriarch among you in his old age. Just as the Biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or Joseph were patriarchs for the very reason that they continued to be key figures in their families until their deaths, so he was also a key figure for you. Previously his father had been this kind of key figure in your family. He had been a guide in religious and family traditions in your midst. After his death he became the patriarch among your family members. He made sure that his family kept up a traditional spirit fitting to evangelical families. Not only did he encourage and admonish over and over again. Not only did he lead and guide the family, unite and bring it together. Certainly, you treasured him for providing you with an example of a good, godly, and virtuous life from his own life above all."

approach in S19 ABd)²³⁷ and in S29 ABd)²³⁸ also.

5.5.2 The deceased and the wider social circle

In S35 ABd) at the funeral of a godly old man who had been a sincere believer his whole life, he introduces his positive characteristics not only with a reference to close family relationships (dear husband and dear father), but also to his activity as a longstanding presbyter, a former church sacristan, and a regular church attender.²³⁹

5.5.2.1 *The social circle of mourning as an expression of the positive qualities*

In S5 ABd), he conveys a positive evaluation of the deceased without saying a single word about her: “There are funerals in which only the closest members of the family weep. There are funerals at which no one weeps, because there is nothing to weep about. But there are funerals where everyone weeps. And this is exactly that kind of funeral that affects each of us in some way.’

He does not offer partial positive remarks about the deceased woman in this section, as he presents more detailed remarks about her in the whole section “funeral sermon in the narrower sense’, as a backdrop for presenting the message of the biblical text.

²³⁷ S19 ABd): “For you are bidding farewell to your dear mother with whom your lives were inextricably bound until now. If anyone has played a key role in your life, then she more than anyone. And now she is the very one who is leaving you for good.”

²³⁸ S29 ABd): “...The one departing from you today is of immeasurable significance in your life...”.

²³⁹ It is quite understandable from the context, therefore, when he adds at the end of ABd) in S35: “every community has its distinct figures. And he was surely one of these distinct figures in our community. Now that he is no longer here something will change in this community. Something will be missing. There will be someone we will not meet to talk and chat with.”

5.5.3 Spirituality

In S10 ABd), we also find another element with which he expresses a positive comment about the deceased woman, her spirituality (notably faith in God²⁴⁰ and her spiritual motivation²⁴¹ for life attitudes.) Although we do not find a positive statement about the deceased woman in S7 ABd), the preacher reveals his positive evaluation of her personality when he asks about the deceased woman's source of strength²⁴².

In S32 ABd) a positive comment about the deceased man is made concerning his faithfulness to the church and a life of faith²⁴³. This perspective is also developed by mentioning his willingness to serve his neighbour²⁴⁴.

The positive statement about a deceased woman in S33 ABd) is

²⁴⁰ S10 ABd): "And yet she overcame all of this with God's help. She thoroughly equipped you, her children for life. She handled all difficulties and cares firmly trusting in God, waiting on Him and His help. Faith in God helped her to live her life in this world sacrificially, courageously, diligently and quietly."

²⁴¹ S10 ABd): "She believed that none of the sacrifices she made for you, none of her faithfulness in marriage, none of her adherence to God's commandments, and none of her love for her neighbour was in vain, that someone saw it all and that someday someone would reward it all. It will never be rewarded in this world. Children can never adequately repay their parents for all they have done for them. No matter how children try to be good to their parents, it is all so inadequate to repay all that their parents did for them when they set them up in life. And love for one's neighbour also does not tend to be rewarded in this world..."

²⁴² S7 ABd): "And we ask ourselves in this moment, from whence came her strength to safely navigate the sea of this life? What was it that lifted her up in life and strengthened her?"

²⁴³ S32 ABd): "And at the same time he was faithful to the last to his Lutheran Christian faith, taught him primarily by his mother. He attended church regularly for as long as he lived, as though intending to show in his service that he desired to be a humble follower of the servant Christ."

²⁴⁴ S32 ABd): "As though the words of Christ were fulfilled in him: "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant".

noteworthy from a theological point of view, where Kišš uses the terminology of identification with Christ, when the deceased woman is buried ‘with him’²⁴⁵ and “only one thing remains: to anticipate the resurrection on Easter Sunday morning for her also.” Here, the expression about being placed in the grave with Christ is meant literally and not as a statement about living Christians and their identification with Christ’s death in baptism.

5.5.4 Combined possibilities Reference to the deceased person’s physical, mental and spiritual characteristics

In S2 ABd) he makes a positive comment about the deceased man by first noticing his (a) haleness and sprightliness²⁴⁶, (b) good nature²⁴⁷ and connects them with (c) his spiritual profile – his identification with the New Testament Simeon and by placing “Simeon’s prayer” into his mouth: ‘Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word.’ This observation shows that he is making positive references to the deceased man in the areas of (a) physical, (b) mental, and (c) spiritual characteristics.

5.5.5 Other possibilities

We discover in the analysed collection that in order to make positive comments about the deceased person Kišš also uses constructions by (1) negating the reverse; (2) adjectives and (3) allegory.

²⁴⁵ S33 ABd): “Together with Christ, whom we place in the tomb today, she, His faithful follower throughout her life, will also be placed in the grave.”

²⁴⁶ S2 ABd): “And in appearance he seemed to us to be perhaps 15 years younger.”

²⁴⁷ S2 ABd): “Even when old and worn out by life and yet always with a smile on his face, and this is how we will remember him.”

5.5.5.1 *Negating the reverse*

In S17 ABd), he is burying a young son after a tragic event. He presents a positive statement about him by negating a negative reality: “If perhaps some parents are grieved by their children, you did not have to grieve. He blossomed like a healthy plant, and now like a flower he suddenly withered. ‘

5.5.5.2 *Adjectives*

In S8 ABd)²⁴⁸ we can see that he affixes to nouns which state a reality without evaluating it (for example: husband, father, family breadwinner, friend, worker) adjectives which make positive comments about the deceased man: dear (husband), beloved (father), good and caring (family breadwinner), well-liked (friend); conscientious (worker). He proceeds in a similar way also in S16 ABd)²⁴⁹, S21 ABd1)²⁵⁰, S24 ABd)²⁵¹ and S30 ABd)²⁵², S36 ABd)²⁵³.

²⁴⁸ S8 ABd): “A moment changed such a lot in your lives. It took a dear husband from his wife, a beloved father from his small children, a son from his parents and a brother from his siblings... All at once a tragic moment snuffed out at the age of 31 the life of a family’s good and caring breadwinner, a beloved friend, and a conscientious worker.”

²⁴⁹ S16 ABb/d) – the positive comment about the deceased man is connected with section b) a description of the loss: “A wife is losing a good husband, children their beloved and caring father. His life was not easy (add specifics).”

²⁵⁰ S21 ABd1): “(d1) The steps required of us all in this moment as we are obliged to walk this final stretch of the road with someone who was dear to us and beloved, a strong, still relatively young and active man who had potentially many years of life and productive work in front of him ...”

²⁵¹ S24 ABd): “...Though he remained full of the optimism of life and interested in everything up until his death, his time has now come...”

²⁵² S30 ABd): “A good girl, previously obedient to her parents, suddenly took her life. We cannot understand it and do not want to believe it, but unfortunately this is how it is.”

²⁵³ In S36 AB we find remarks about the deceased woman in two ways:

- (1) “She was like sunshine among you: kind, quiet, godly, diligent, friendly and optimistic. Her husband had in her a true and faithful helper such

5.5.5.3 *Allegory*

In S21 ABd2), he develops an image of massive trees, in order to apply this image to the deceased man – he was also such a mighty tree. Later he refers to the size of the deceased man with two more images (firm pillar, well-protected fortress), and in the end he characterizes him as a “sure support and our refuge”²⁵⁴.

5.5.5.4 *Indifferent mentions*

In S4 ABd) he introduces the deceased man as someone who carried

as Holy Scripture portrays about women. Her parents had in her a good daughter and the joy of their lives. Her siblings had in her a beloved sister. And all you, her friends and acquaintances, had in her a good and dear friend, with whom it was a joy to meet, who spread warmth and light all around her. With her good character and excellent virtues, she really was such a bright sun among you.”

- (2) Expression of the loss (her positive characteristics) and as an expression of her courageous attitude in illness: “In situations in which others might have despaired, she remained steadfast and patient. She bore her illness downright courageously. And in her illness and the wonderful way she bore it, her light shone even more brightly. Knowing that the time was coming when her life’s sun would no longer shine, it seemed that she shone even more intensively, so that she might give away to those around her all her remaining light, albeit too soon. And now that she has gone away for good, Holy Scripture’s words say to us justifiably: “the sun was darkened”.

²⁵⁴ S21 ABd2): “Just as trees in a forest do not all grow to the same height, but some tower above others, so it is with us people as well. There are people among us in this world, whose roots grow down particularly deep in the soil of life. The influence of their activities is so great in every direction that they are like trees spreading their crowns on all sides. They are of such significance among us that we might compare them to a tree growing to a lofty height. Such was the life of the one with whom we are now parting. He was also like that kind of towering tree. We could express it differently: he was a firm pillar, a firmly fortified bastion, a firm support and our refuge.”

out a specific service (grave digger²⁵⁵), with an (unfulfilled) expectation that he would continue to carry out this service for some time as he was still only 51 years old. However, the remark itself is not explicitly positive and only becomes positive when the present company can evaluate it as such based on their personal experience. In S14 ABd) we also find a formulation, which we evaluate similarly²⁵⁶, where he talks about how the family had to part with the deceased man repeatedly because of his work. Where there are healthy family relationships, this remark can, in fact, express a loving husband and father's care. Otherwise (where there is mutual alienation), it might bring to mind the years of someone coming home whose absence was always deeply desired.²⁵⁷

5.5.6 Absence of a positive remark about the deceased person in AB

In a whole series of sermons, we do not find a positive remark about the deceased in the AB section. Examples of this are sermons S3²⁵⁸;

²⁵⁵ S4 ABd): "He, who as a grave digger buried others, suddenly himself in need of his own grave. As a grave digger he frequently encountered death. But this time he has encountered it in a way none of us expected."

²⁵⁶ S4 ABd): "How often in your lives because of his job you have parted with him at the door of your home. During those periods when he was a driver on the roads, he left home and you bid farewell to him daily. You bid him farewell also when he left to work in Germany and Austria when there was no work at home. In later years in his home country you also bid him farewell daily when he left for work. All of these farewells were easier than today's because of your hope that at the end of work he would return home to you again."

²⁵⁷ This remark results from current observation of the effect of travelling abroad for work on relationship quality between partners and on family relationships.

²⁵⁸ In S3 a positive remark about the deceased woman is nicely expressed in the section "sermon in the narrow sense": "And for you who were closest to her, the one you are parting with now really meant much; from childhood your entire lives have been bound up with her. Throughout your lives she was a good and caring mother for you four children. She really was like a guardian angel for your whole

S6; S9²⁵⁹; S15²⁶⁰; S18; S20²⁶¹; S22²⁶²; S23; S25; S31; S34²⁶³; S37; S39.

family. Everywhere you sensed her care and loving touch. It was as though her watchful and caring eyes were present everywhere. Till her life's end she worked to serve you. She cared for everything and for all of you."

²⁵⁹ In S9 AB the absence of section ABd) can be explained by the differentiation of this sermon: "An unfaithful husband, who left his family and prior to death returned to his first wife."

²⁶⁰ In S15 there is no real comment about the deceased man; though the actual text speaks of the deceased man, it is a statement with which he simply notes the death: "The words of Scripture have become true for him; "People die in an instant in the middle of the night." All that remains is to submit to what has befallen and to seek a new beginning in it all."

²⁶¹ Note on Kišš's usual funeral sermon structure: In S20 the preacher did not include an address of the bereaved, which he usually includes after the general introduction. The question is why he changed his usual structure in this way. Apparently, it is not because of an isolated individual because in the final section "farewell in the hope of everlasting life" he turns to them: "Now you who were closest to her, her bereaved family, escort your dear mother, grandmother and relative on her final journey."

²⁶² The whole AB section is missing.

²⁶³ It is noteworthy that in a sermon where a mother is departing and there is no father, the preacher does not include the usual "addressing the bereaved" section. For if he had addressed the small, immature daughter directly he would have called forth distressing emotions. Therefore, he prefers to address the whole funeral congregation and the listeners understand his words.

6 THE DIVISIONS OF THE KERYGMATIC PART

In the theoretical part of his collected sermons, Professor Kišš notes²⁶⁴ that, in the proclamation part of the funeral sermon, he utilises a model of a main idea and three sub-points that, in other words a main idea which is elaborated in three separate sections, the last of which should have an eschatological focus. For this small investigation, I have chosen 6 sermons, (S2; S3; S4; S5; S6 and S7) from Kišš's analysed collection - Hope over the Grave I. I will identify the homiletical structure of this small selection of funeral sermons, and as a part of this analysis, I will also pay attention to the question of the relationship between the biblical text and the message of the funeral sermon.

The results of my analysis. Based on my study of the selected funeral sermons, I have come to the conclusion that Kišš uses a model of (1) a main idea with three sub-points, but he does not use it exclusively. I have also found (2) a main idea and two sub points as well as (3) two sub points without a main idea.

6.1 Main idea and three sub-points

In this selection of sermons this model is found in the following sermons: S2, S4, and S5. I will examine them in the following examples.

²⁶⁴ KIŠŠ, I.: *Nádej nad hrobom I*, p.2 : “4th Only after that is there the actual funeral sermon, which typically consists of three sub points. This means three ideas which follow from the funeral text. 5th The third sub point must always be related to eternal life and hope over the grave.”

6.1.1 Example S2

Sermon No. 2 is from the funeral of a pious and popular older man. Based on the text Luke 2,25: *“Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel”*, Kizš constructed his sermon with the following structure:

If you want to be worthy of honour like Simeon in your old age, then:

- 1st sub-point: be righteous²⁶⁵
- 2nd sub-point: be devout (God-fearing)²⁶⁶
- 3rd sub-point: put your hope in God

In my opinion, all three sub-points are based on his text, even though the main idea addresses those present at the funeral in a

²⁶⁵ in S2 Kerygmatic Part (KP), as the main idea he defines a righteous person on the basis of Psalm 15 and at the end he includes the challenge: “We too, if we want to be Simeons in our old age, let us fill our lives with righteousness - living our lives courageously and honestly. And then we will be like Simeon. People will look at us in our old age with respect like they had towards Simeon, which can only be gained by living a righteous life. May we all strive to live like that.”

²⁶⁶ in S2 KP, in the second message he characterises Simeon’s devotion or God-fearing that, “his life is turned towards the world of eternity, following God’s commandments and he has hope in God. He views God as the centre and the purpose of his life. In the conclusion to the second message he adds the challenge: “May people see that like Simeon you also glorify the Lord God and remain in his temple. May it be that at your death, people will say that here lived a person like Simeon. However, if this will be missing from your life, even if you live to an old age you will not be respected like Simeon. May devotion also be a feature of your old age and respect like towards Simeon will belong to you.”

manner that is unusual for a funeral sermon²⁶⁷. In the third sub-point Kišš usually focuses on eschatological questions of eternal life, hope in the resurrection, etc., which in this sermon he achieves by looking at Simeon's hope in God. He clarifies his content²⁶⁸ and continues with the words from the Psalm: *'Because you, O LORD will restore me again and will raise me from the depths of the grave.'* Then he moves to the concluding section of the funeral sermon (Ca-d).

6.1.2 Example S4

In Funeral Sermon No. 4 he also divides the kerygmatic section of the funeral sermon into a main idea with three sub-points. S4 is at the funeral of a middle-aged man. The deceased had a tendency to drink alcohol and died suddenly. Precisely due to his sudden departure the preacher chose the text James 4,14: *'... you do not even know what will happen tomorrow'*. The sermon has the structure:

²⁶⁷ This opens up the risk that the preacher forgets that the funeral is a way of saying farewell and the message remains on the same level as a regular church service.

²⁶⁸ S2 KP 3s): Simeon is a man whose hope was in the LORD for his whole life and has placed his future into God's hands. When the bitter blows of life came, he did not despair but waited on God. He goes on to wait on the LORD also in his death. And when such a person leaves this world, he leaves quietly and with the hope of eternal life. "You may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation."

We don't know what tomorrow will bring with our lives²⁶⁹, therefore:

1st sub_point: we should experience it with gratitude toward the Lord God²⁷⁰

2nd sub_point: we should use it to do good²⁷¹

3rd sub_point: we should prepare for the eternal world²⁷²

²⁶⁹ S4 KP: “Truly our human life is uncertain. We are merely temporary guests in this world. We know what is today but none of us know what will be tomorrow. The surprises that lay in store for us tomorrow are hidden from us all. Indeed, we often don't even know what awaits us in the day we currently find ourselves in. Our hymn expresses it well: “Before the evening things can be so different to what they were in the morning.” All the more it is true: “We do not know what will happen in our lives tomorrow”. Since it is true that we do not know whether we will be here at all tomorrow, as today's funeral so urgently reminds us, three important lessons for us follow from this...”

²⁷⁰ S4 KP/1s) In this message, he compared life to a crystal glass which is beautiful and fragile. He then states: “What is more beautiful than to rejoice that our mouths can speak, that our hands can work, that our legs can walk. If we have then received large gifts that the greatest gift that we've received is the gift of life itself. It's a gift we have received from God's creative hands. God who created the whole world also called us into life. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures call us to continuously give thanks to our creator this precious gift: “Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits!”

²⁷¹ S4 KP/2s): “The second thing that follows from our existence being so fleeting is that our short lives we should try and use for doing as much good as possible. The apostle Paul in one place in scripture says: “make the most of every opportunity.” It is therefore our duty to live our lives in the most blessed way possible, both for ourselves and for our loved ones. “Whoever is able to sacrifice a lot for his family, whoever is able to do much good for others, whoever is able to sharpen those most beautiful human traits, then that person is a truly special person. Then after our passing, in our families will remain grateful memories that we did something for them and left something for them. A grateful memory remains in human hearts that we did not live in vain but through our work and efforts in our lives we were useful.”

²⁷² S4 KP/3s): “But there is also a third lesson which follows on from the idea that in this world we are merely temporary guest. If this is the case then it is clear that we should be preparing for the world of eternity. Our being bound by time is something temporary. Eternity is waiting for us. We will leave here but in that

A note on sermon evaluation.

The main idea builds on the wording of his text, but the sub-points do not come from the sermon text because the immediate context of the text speaks against boasting and not of the things emphasised in the sub points. Therefore, here Kišš is also using the text to understand the topic, but when going into greater detail, he does not limit himself to this text and freely draws emphases that are significant for his homiletical context from the entire NT.

If attention is not paid to the problem of the function of a sermon text, then it is possible to positively evaluate the logic of how he has divided the sub-points and the content of the separate parts of the sermon. The question still remains of whether a funeral sermon should be based on the read Biblical text or whether it should only relate to it in parts of its message and in other parts it can be based on other (but not quoted) secondary Biblical texts. However, if Kišš's principle about the structure of the funeral sermon was strictly applied, in a narrower sense as the kerygmatic part of the Lutheran funeral sermon (see note No. 1), then we would have to make a critical evaluation.

6.1.3 Example S5

Sermon No. 5 is from the funeral of a religious and exemplary middle-aged woman who died suddenly from a stroke. The preacher knew the deceased well and regarded her as a good Christian, which is why he based his sermon on the Biblical text Revelation 2,19:

very moment we will be born for eternity. This is why it is necessary for us to prepare for eternity. "You don't know what will be tomorrow with our lives", says our text. Then we do not think of our current limitation in time which is passing away but we're also thinking of eternity, which awaits us."

“These are the words of the Son of God: I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance.”

He constructed the sermon by linking the message of the sermon texts to the deceased. The sermon is structured as follows.

I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance. This says:

1st sub-point: the grieving family²⁷³

2nd sub-point: all of us²⁷⁴

3rd sub-point: God’s son²⁷⁵

Evaluation

The main idea comes from his text. The individual sub-points are constructed from the key words of the text (deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance) and are linked to the deceased in order that these words about the deceased may be declared to her closest family and can be confirmed by all those present. Finally, however,

²⁷³ “Above all you, dear grieving family, you would be able to testify about her precious deeds. They were for her primarily deeds of love. She dearly loved you all, and if your household was united with a bond of love, you can be certain that to a strong degree it was her doing. She knew how to approach everyone with love. Truly we can repeat the words of the text: I know your deeds, your love and faith”.

²⁷⁴ “But we all also know about her faith. The love in her was nourished by the love of God, which she always heard afresh at church. She was the image and reflection of the love of Christ which she believed in. Her life was a demonstration that the word of God is not preached in vain but it is able to change the person and fill their heart with love.”

²⁷⁵ “How precious it is when we can say about a person: *“I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance.”* But it is even more precious that God himself knows about our deeds. God’s son, Jesus Christ knows about them and the Bible states that he will one day judge the living and the dead. And this reassurance is the most important. After all, one day we will all walk the way of death. Can I go on that walk with hope? Yes, we have a reason to go that way with hope. Just as people won’t forget what we’ve done, also God himself won’t forget.”

he moves to a part of the sermon where he goes into detail about interpersonal relationships and what God's son could say about the deceased.

The sermon has a very personal tone, but it is not just praising the person because the person is shown to be before God, so ultimately, he is attempting to demonstrate the reality that the person will be judged by Him alone.

This approach leads to a clear expression of hope, which at the end of the third sub-point he formulates this way: "These are the words of the Son of God", we read in our text. 'I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance.' And He promised that one day he will reward our faithfulness. 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance.' It is not in vain that the apostle Paul writes in one place: 'Whoever sows generously will also reap generously.'

This approach is attractive from a number of perspectives, but the theological starting point of the Protestant church forces us to question whether, along with this positive evaluation of the deceased, he was also able to successfully express the significant theological reality of "sola gratia". It leads to the question of whether this approach clearly demonstrates to the listener the uniqueness of Christ's redemptive work and whether it was able to avoid the risk of redefining the meaning of good deeds.

6.2 Main idea and two sub-points

In this limited selection, this structure is only found in funeral sermon S3, which is from the funeral of a healthy, pious older lady. The sermon text was just a part of one verse from Genesis 24,56c: '*so I may go to my master.*'" The sermon has a natural and easily followed chain of thought which can be expressed as follows:

Saying farewell means:

- 1st sub_point: grief and tears²⁷⁶
- 2nd sub_point: but also hope because they are going to the Lord²⁷⁷,
 - a. For whom the deceased lived²⁷⁸
 - b. Who gives his faithful servants a reward²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ S3 KP: “Only with grief and tears in your eyes do you hear these words, dear grieving family, when to you these words don’t just come from the mouth of the Biblical Rebekah, but when in this moment these words sound from the mouth of your dear deceased, mother, grandma and relative “I’m going”, “I’m leaving!” The more a certain person meant for us, the harder it is to accept their departure from us.”

²⁷⁷ S3 KP: “And yet, even though this word is so extremely sad, there are though cases when it doesn’t sound as if it’s without hope. On the contrary there are cases when new hope is hidden in these words.”

“So I may go to my master”, are the words of today’s Biblical text. Hopelessness is only there when a person does not know where he is actually going. You know from the Bible how the Biblical Hagar cried in the desert when she left Abraham. She cried because she did know where she was going. There are certainly departures that are without hope, when people are transported during a war and none of them know where they are being taken. That is a hopeless departure. And when someone is departing to death and also doesn’t know where he is actually going, he doesn’t know of the hope of eternal life, there is something hopeless in his departure. But the Biblical Rebekah, whose today’s text is about, knows where she is going. “I’m going to my master” - therefore in these words there is hidden a level of hope.”

²⁷⁸ S3 KP: “And even though to you, dear grieving family, the words “I’m going now,” “I’m leaving!” from the mouth of your dear deceased mother sound very sad, you must know that she is also going to her Lord. To the Lord who was her strength all of her life, who she ran to as a refuge, when life was hard, to this Lord whom she always again and again sought out, she felt blissful in conversation with him while praying. She viewed herself as a servant of this Lord. She tried to live her life according to His will. For those who have lived their temporary existence with the Lord, why should they be afraid to follow their Lord into eternity?”

²⁷⁹ S3 KP: “After all, He does not call us to himself in eternity to make our portion even worse. He calls us there to give his faithful servants their heavenly reward. The apostle Paul says about it: “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to me.” God’s child knows that in death he’s going back to the arms of his heavenly Father.

Therefore, blessed is each of us who knows where they are going at their death. Blessed is everyone, who doesn’t have to say to his loved ones: “I’m leaving to

This division of ideas leads to the eschatological perspective of the believer. Then we move on to the conclusion of the sermon.

In regard to the communication approach chosen for this part, the preacher has very sensitively placed the words about saying farewell into various contexts of saying farewell²⁸⁰, in order to relate to both the saying farewell at the death of a loved one²⁸¹ and finally, by transposing the OT meaning of the quotation, he refers to the hope of faith.

A note on the choice of sermon text

This funeral sermon is based on a fragment of a Biblical text in *Genesis 24,56c*, which is about farewells: *'so I may go to my master!'*. The

somewhere unknown", who perhaps says, "I'm afraid of this departure or I'm terrified". Blessed is everyone, who at death does not feel like a prisoner of war, who doesn't know where he is being taken and what will be done to him. Blessed is everyone who knows that he is going to his Lord and joyfully confesses it. And blessed is the one who is not filled with grief and hopelessness at the death of their loved ones but who with hope accompanies them in their death and knows they are going to their Lord."

²⁸⁰ S2 KP, introduction: "The words, "I'm going", "I'm leaving" are truly sad. How many times have we painfully already listened to them in our lives? How painful for example are these words to parents, when their son leaves for military service or their daughter leaves to an unknown world for her job. How painful were these words at one time for parents when they had to leave their families to earn money in a faraway country?"

²⁸¹ S2 KP, introduction: "How hard these words of farewell are when our most beloved leave us in death. You, dear grieving family, know how painful these words are. After all, you also 13 years ago accompanied your dear father on his final journey. And it was only recently that you all with much pain accompanied your son-in-law on his final journey. There are moments when we really don't like to hear or say the words "I'm going now", "I'm leaving". How many times has it happened at the station when we would have liked for the train to remain in the station a little bit longer, or that it won't leave just yet. We viewed the departing train with sadness, therefore it is all the more difficult when our loved ones in death say these words, "I'm going", "I'm leaving"."

original context is the departure of Rebekah to her future husband, to whom Abraham's servant takes her, and it is not a farewell after death. The actual words in the biblical text are not said by the one who is departing, but by the servant who has come to ask for her as a wife for Isaac, the son of his master Abraham. The preacher here shifts the circumstances in the text, whereas Abraham's servant says the words from v. 56, but Kišš quotes them as Rebekah's words²⁸². This kind of chosen text formally connects to the situation of a farewell (with someone departing / with a deceased person), but it does not provide stimuli for writing a textual and Biblical funeral sermon.

Homiletical use of the sermon text.

Therefore, the preacher does not use the text as his base nor does he exegete it but he only uses it as a formal starting point from which he is able to get to an expression of the New Testament Christian faith (which formally is not connected with the chosen Biblical text). The message of the text he transposes to a different perspective (from the departure to be with her husband that the texts talks of, to the level of departing to eternity). I assume that for some reason the preacher could not or did not want to mention in the sermon the shift he had made, which in my opinion is a shame. The chosen statement, which he selected as the sermon text, he uses as aid in order to insert this statement into the proclamation richness that he had received from the NT. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether such an approach is legitimate.

My evaluation.

282 S3 KP: "Biblical Rebekah says to her closest, whom she is leaving: "I'm going to my Lord!""

From the point of view of the relationship between the text and the sermon, this sermon must be evaluated as non-textual or biblical, as it is not based on the read text (or only formally), and he does not use the text for the development of his message.

On the other hand, it is a sermon that is anchored in the New Testament, which points to Christian hope and the expectation of an eternal reward. In doing so, he fulfils both his (1) pastoral role (he helps the bereaved to come to terms with their loss) and his (2) missionary role, when he gives witness to the hope of faith to religiously indifferent participants at the funeral. Therefore, it is a lost, that the preacher starts from an inappropriately chosen sermon text, even though his pastoral experience enables him to work well with the questions of certainty and uncertainty in someone's farewell, and he knows how to point to the decisive fact that fundamentally changes the situation: the awareness of the dying person that he is going to his Lord. This apparently 'seduced' him to try to make from the chosen OT quote an easily remembered statement, which can be filled in with New Testament content.

6.3 Main idea without sub-points

S6 is from the funeral of a man in his 60s, who had been transformed by illness into someone elderly before their time. The sermon text chosen was Psalm 42,5: *"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."*

This funeral sermon does not follow the typical Kišš's structure, of a main idea and 3 sub-points, nor any of its other modifications. Here there is only one main idea and this is developed in pastoral meditation. He clearly expressed the Christian hope that waiting on

God²⁸³ brings hope to whatever situation²⁸⁴ -while at the same time his approach is convincing and in a valuable way gives a testimony to Christian hope in life-threatening situations.²⁸⁵

My evaluation.

Similarly, to the previous case, here too it can also be observed that the funeral sermon in the part that is a “funeral sermon in the narrower sense”, i.e. the part which proclaims God’s word, does not

²⁸³ S6 KP: And yet the sons of Korah do not want to lose heart when they encounter everything that life brings to them. They are asking in today’s Psalm: “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?” No, a person should not lose heart even when life is at its hardest. Even in the hardest moments of life he should maintain hope. This hope is faith in the Lord God. As we sing in one of our hymns, “He knows the right time to help and knows what we need. This is why in the Psalm, the sons of Korah speak about a great hope, that a downcast and disturbed soul can have in the Lord God. “Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. “(Translator’s note – the Slovak translation Kišš used has thank God where the NIV has praise him.)

²⁸⁴ S6 KP: “No situation in life is hopeless, if the person hopes in the Lord God. The Lord God helps us to overcome the suffering we have in our lives and we can praise (thank) Him for this.”

²⁸⁵ S6 KP: “No, it is not hopeless when a person turns into a helpless old man, who has one foot in the grave. It is not hopeless, even when we can see how our health is leaving us, our bodily strength wasting away. We are heading towards death. And yet it is not hopeless, today’s Psalm from the Sons of Korah tells us. It would be hopeless if we only knew about this temporary existence. We would then have to be saddened by that fact that this temporary earthly existence can be so hard, that it can transform into a valley of suffering. But all of this is not hopeless when a person believes in the Lord God. Even in the hardest situations of life there is a way out. There is hope also in death. “Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him.” Allow ourselves to encouraged by these words whenever our lives are difficult. Let us be encouraged even when we must look face to face at our impending death. When we see that the tabernacle of our earthly body is crumbling and everything temporary is collapsing, then we wait on God, that he will fulfil the hope of eternal life also for us. “For I will yet praise him” There in the God’s heavenly kingdom, in our eternal home, there we will thank the Lord God that we have happily passed through the valley of this temporary existence.”

need to have complicated divisions. It needs to look for a significant link between the homiletical situation of the funeral (the bereaved) and the starting point of the text. In this case, the preacher achieved this and I evaluate it positively.

6.4 Two sub-points without a main idea

Sermon No. 7 is from the funeral of a pious elderly lady. The character of the sermon text is that it is a testimony about God. Psalm 118,14: *“The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”* The structure of the sermon grows out of the sermon text and it provides the content for the sermon.

1st sub-point: The LORD gives strength

2nd sub-point: Therefore, we should praise Him

1st sub point. In this sermon, the preacher asks a question about the source of strength in the life of a person (deliverance from difficulties) and the biblical text provides the answer. He relates his message to the deceased²⁸⁶ and continues on to the idea that human life does not depend only on human effort, which he supports through a set of pronouncements²⁸⁷.

²⁸⁶ S7 KP: “And our departed sister would certainly not answer this question differently. She would also confess that if she was given the opportunity to happily go through everything in life, then it was God’s grace that led her through everything. The Lord God gave her strength to be able to overcome and conquer everything.”

²⁸⁷ S7 KP: “In our lives not everything is a work of our human strengths, abilities and merits. There are many things in life where we must give thanks for God’s grace and it alone. “Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Yes, if the Lord God had not spread out his grace upon us, none of our strength would have helped. But the Lord God does help us in life. He is

2nd sub-point. Based on the reality of God's help and the words of the text, it is necessary to praise God. This is why he first states that Christians glorify God. Then he comes to a question which has a more internal and missional focus: "Tell me my brother or sister, must the Lord God look at you with sadness like an ungrateful child? Do you confess along with the psalmist: "*The Lord is my strength and my song*"? After all, He gives you multiple times. Do you thank Him through hymns, prayers of thanksgiving, all through your life? Our entire lives should be a beautiful song of thankfulness to the Lord God. Is yours?"

In the conclusion, in which he calls for those present to say farewell to the deceased, he relates to her eschatological hope and this hope he expresses through a combination of the sermon text and Psalm 23²⁸⁸.

My evaluation

This simple structured message in the kerygmatic part of this funeral sermon demonstrates that a preacher can communicate what is essential in this manner. Although I evaluate this sermon positively, listeners may feel that some expressions are old-fashioned, but the cultural appropriateness of the means of expressions are not the subject of investigation in this study.

our strength. Which is why a believer can confess about his life: "The LORD is my strength. He is my salvation"."

²⁸⁸ S7 KP: "And now, when we must for the last time say farewell to her, we can say farewell with the hope of eternity. The Lord God who was her salvation in her life, will be her salvation also now in death. Here the words of the Psalmist apply: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me"."

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I conducted a small investigation into the homiletical structure of Kišš's 'funeral sermons in the narrower sense' as part of his variable structural model of Lutheran funeral sermons. I discovered that he used a classical model of a main idea and three sub-points (see 6.1), but I also found a main idea and two sub points (6.2), main idea without sub points (6.3), and finally also two sub points without a main idea (6.4). This finding demonstrates that the kerygmatic part of a funeral sermon can have a varied structure, but the key thing is that it does not lose a theologically justified connection to the Biblical text.

Second, this now brings me to the more serious conclusion I have come to in my work, which is the observation that a preacher of a funeral sermon is exposed to the risk that, for pastoral reasons, he will handle the starting point of the biblical text too freely. This problem can more or less be observed across the entire breadth of ecumenical representation, and therefore it is necessary to pay adequate attention to it during the theological education of future ministers and also at pastoral conferences of individual churches.

7 SERMON CONCLUSION – FAREWELL IN THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

First, we need to look for (1) an expression of the conclusions' tasks, and subsequently we will (2) observe in an analytical section how the individual tasks are performed in specific sermons.

7.1 The tasks of the conclusion

While looking for the tasks of the funeral sermon conclusion, we could ask ourselves about the tasks which result:

- (1) from the funeral sermon as a sermon (that is, the sermon conclusion's general tasks);
- (2) from the specifics of a funeral sermon (that is, the specific tasks of a funeral sermon conclusion).

Although it would be interesting and useful to proceed according to the first point, in this analysis, I have not applied ideas on the conclusion to the whole of the funeral sermon. In this study my method has been to first seek (1) the conclusions tasks according to Kišš's description. Then I have tried to find (2) the conclusion's tasks resulting from an analysis of Kišš's approach, and finally I will observe (3) the structure of the basic sections and their variability in Kišš's funeral sermon conclusion.

7.1.1 The conclusions tasks according to Kišš's description

Kišš does not elaborate on starting points, tasks, and methods in his introduction. He offers only one sentence in connection with the conclusions of the theoretical discourse: "Finally, there is the

conclusion: comfort for the family.”²⁸⁹ Therefore, our task will be to observe the tools via which he offers this comfort and to attempt to evaluate which of the presented possibilities has more and which less potential for achieving this goal.

7.1.2 The conclusion’s tasks resulting from an analysis of Kišš’s approach

Through our analysis of the individual sections in Kišš’s sermons, we arrived at the observation that we encounter four sections here:

- a) an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased,
- b) an expression of the difficulty of bidding farewell,
- c) a Biblical-theological basis and an expression of hope,
- d) parenthetical impulses.

7.1.3 Basic sections and their variability in the conclusions of the funeral sermons of Kišš

As we have already observed elsewhere in our study, Kišš does not carry out the partial tasks which he sets for himself perfunctorily; therefore, we can also assume that here likewise individual sections of the above-named tasks of the conclusion will not always be fulfilled in the same order and that not always will we see all sections (a-b-c-d). In the same way, we can assume that we will also find here: (1) the full number of parts in the basic order; (2) the full number of parts in a restructured order; (3) the absence of individual parts; (4) the absence of a part and an overlapping of the existing sections²⁹⁰.

²⁸⁹ Kišš, I: *Nádej nad hrobom I*, p.1

²⁹⁰ E.g. S27: a-c1-d-c2

7.1.3.1 *The total number of parts in the basic order.*

We find this approach, for example, in S15 Ca)²⁹¹ – Cb)²⁹² – Cc)²⁹³ – Cd)²⁹⁴ (and exceptionally Ce)²⁹⁵). We find the full number of parts in

²⁹¹ S15 Ca) an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased: “And here are words of comfort for you also, dear grieving family, when you must bid a final farewell to your dear deceased husband, father and relative.”

²⁹² S15 Cb): “He was still so very necessary to you. The word which called him though could not be altered: “My grace is sufficient for you.” And all that remains for us all is to bow before this decision.”

²⁹³ S15 Cc): “And we also share the hope that God’s grace does not end with a person’s death. In Holy Scripture God promises us that He wants to give His eternal grace when we have passed from this temporal life, for Jesus Christ and for the forgiveness of sins, won by Him for those who believe in Him.”

²⁹⁴ S15 Zd): “And thus in the hope of God’s eternal grace accompany him now on his last journey.”

²⁹⁵ S15 Ze) (non-standard section of the conclusion): “May God’s grace accompany him there where this temporal life’s crosses and griefs are no more, but there is peace and joy, perfection and holiness before God’s face. Amen.”

the basic order in S17²⁹⁶ also or in S45: Ca)²⁹⁷ – Cb)²⁹⁸ – Cc)²⁹⁹ – Cd)³⁰⁰.

²⁹⁶ S17 Ca): “Dear grieving family, you also now, in the hope of that reward in eternal glory, escort your dear departed son, brother and relative on his last journey.”

S17 Cb): “He was glad that he would soon come home to you. Indeed, he came but not as you imagined. His help would be so necessary in all your work at home, you would have loved to see how he thrived, and he himself would have liked to reward you for all your love, but that will no longer happen either. Just as Abraham received the command to sacrifice to God his only son Isaac, so you must give up to God your beloved son. Just as David grieved for his good friend Jonathan when he died, so you his friends are grieving for him.”

S17 Cc): “Everything is finished. The one thing that remains for you is to also accept this difficult outcome with Christ’s words: “Not my will, but your will be done.” And all that remains for the rest of us is to say together with David: “I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful.”

S17 Cd): “Now that this fleeting life is over, only one thing really remains: to fix your eyes on eternity where he has now gone, and to believe what our hymn promises us, that “all our griefs will be changed there, into godly joy and security”. Dear grieving family, may this hope be your comfort in this sorrowful moment. Amen.”

²⁹⁷ S45 Ca): “And so, dear grieving family, bid farewell in this hope to your dear deceased husband, father, grandfather and relative.”

²⁹⁸ S45 Cb): “Your soul is grieved in this moment. All that is temporal has ended. You have lost your departed one. The invalid wife has lost her protector and carer.”

²⁹⁹ S45 Cc): And yet there is still hope. Only people die. God’s grace does not die.”

³⁰⁰ S45 Cd): “And if God’s grace does not die you can also have hope that even now in death God’s grace did not end for your departed one. Amen.”

7.1.3.2 *The full number of parts in a restructured order.*

In S19, the conclusion comes from a parenthetical observation (Cd)³⁰¹ that is based on Christ's words (Cc1)³⁰² and he expresses eschatological hope in view of those present and the one departed (Cc2)³⁰³. Following this is an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased man (Ca)³⁰⁴. The last section we find here is an articulation of the difficulty of bidding farewell (Cb), which is to be overcome theologically (the joy of hope)³⁰⁵.

In S35 C the statements are structured a-c-d. In it the Biblical-theological basis for hope (Section c) is expressed in connection with the deceased man and comes across as good wishes for his posthumous life. The appeal to the bereaved concerns the processing of their grief, by which he leads them via this appeal to wish the deceased man 'that glorious part in fellowshiping in the salvation of the chosen.'

³⁰¹ S19 Cd): "Therefore it is in hope that we can and should bid farewell to our loved ones because in that distant place to which our loved ones have betaken themselves and where we all will betake ourselves someday we do not see darkness and emptiness, but we see the light of eternity shining from there."

³⁰² S19 Cc1): "Christ says: "Know that your reward in heaven is great."

³⁰³ S19 Cc2): "And we are escorting our loved ones, who did so much for us during their lives in the Christian hope that their reward in heaven would also be great, that eternity awaits us after the tribulations of this temporal life, and that through this life's many tribulations, we come into the kingdom of God."

³⁰⁴ S19 Ca): "Therefore, dear grieving family, bid farewell to your dearly loved mother and grandmother in this Christian hope."

³⁰⁵ S19 Cb) "And may this joyful hope dry the tears from your eyes. Amen."

7.1.3.3 *The full number of parts and their mutual overlapping*

In S14, he moves from observation of the farewell (Ca)³⁰⁶ and indicating its difficulties (Cb1)³⁰⁷ to a Biblical expression of hope (Cc1)³⁰⁸. Then after a parenthetical appeal (Cd),³⁰⁹ he considers again the difficulty of the farewell and concludes with a Biblical interpretation of the situation (Cc2)³¹⁰, which he uses catechistically to instruct the bereaved how the loss may be processed in the application of Biblical reality to their own lives³¹¹.

We find all sections in S22, but section Cb overlaps with section

³⁰⁶ S14 Ca): “These words are also spoken to you now, dear grieving family. The one to whom you are now bidding farewell, has also set off now on his final journey.”

³⁰⁷ S14 Cb): “Perhaps you would have gladly continued to have him among you. But there is no return from the one-way road of death.”

³⁰⁸ S14 Cc): “And yet though you are now bidding him farewell for good, grief is not all that remains to you. The journey he has now set out on is one that as believers you know. It is a journey to eternal life’s bright land. God’s grace has prepared this new land for us. He wants to give us a share in it by the forgiveness of our sins through Christ.”

³⁰⁹ S14 Cd/b): “And therefore even though it is not easy for a wife to bid farewell to her dear husband and for little children to bid farewell to their dear father, do not continue in grief alone.”

³¹⁰ S14 Cc): “You know the way where he is going; all Scripture speaks of this journey. Let us together say in Christ’s words: “We are going to the Father”.”

³¹¹ S14 Conclusion – concluding words: “Dear grieving family, if this goal is clear to you, than this parting of death will be easier for you also. Amen”.

Ca)³¹². The remaining sections Cc)³¹³ and Cd)³¹⁴ are in a typical language for Kišš.

7.1.3.4 *Absence of individual sections*

S01 includes neither an articulation of the difficulties of leaving (Cb) nor parenthetical impulses (Cd). It consists of sections Ca)³¹⁵ and Cc)³¹⁶ only. In the S2₂ sections Ca) and Cb) are missing. We can divide the text of the conclusion into sections that belong to Cc)³¹⁷

³¹² S22 Cb)/S22 Ca): “And so in this hard moment of having to bid farewell to your dear mother who meant so very much to you, grant her now quiet rest in the harbour of peace. There would only have been new storms and tempests awaiting her in her difficult illness. And so, God has snatched her away and rescued her with a quiet death from the difficult things to come. Even if her life’s voyage was not lengthy, it was enough to exhaust her life strength.”

³¹³ S22 Cc): “Like a small boat she has already reached the quiet waters of eternity’s harbour, where there are neither storms nor waves, but eternal rest in God’s embrace.”

³¹⁴ S22 Cd): “Now, at the end of her difficult life journey, allow her to rest in the arms of the One she trusted and in whom she placed her hope. Amen.”

³¹⁵ S01 Ca): “Dear grieving family, you may bid farewell to your dear mother and grandmother in this hope. She too journeyed through life patiently, enduring its difficulties and suffering. There were plenty of them in her life. Following in Christ’s footsteps she bore them all patiently and her life was a life of faith, love and hope. It was shot through with the light of Christmas. Despite the struggles she had to wrestle with in life, her life was a blessed life for you also, dear grieving family.”

³¹⁶ S01 Cc): “And thus we can today escort her on her last journey in this hope that now even her death will be blessed, for: “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” Amen.”

³¹⁷ S02 Cc): “Thus, dear grieving family, God is releasing this Simeon, your dear father, grandfather and relative from this life. Now he is setting out after his wife whom he saw off into eternity a year ago. He is departing and we are taking our respectful leave of him as befits someone who has lived his life in righteousness and godly fear. He is leaving to go where a garland of God’s glory is prepared for those who have faithfully completed their life’s race. And so “Now Lord, You are releasing your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to your word”.

and Cd)³¹⁸. An appeal to bid farewell to the deceased woman (Ca) is missing in the conclusion of S03. This part begins with section Cb)³¹⁹, after which the preacher develops an uncharacteristically lengthy section Cc). He formulated it in terms of testimonial impact for the deceased woman and the bereaved³²⁰. He finishes the sermon with a short parenthetical impulse Cd)³²¹.

In S8 he leaves out section Ca), that is, an appeal to bid farewell to

³¹⁸ S02 Cd): “One Simeon is leaving, but all of us are expected to try to be like Simeon, so that when we also die one day, it might be said of us: And a person lived here who like Simeon was “righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel”. Amen.”

³¹⁹ S03 Cb): “And thus, dear grieving family, though the words from your dear deceased mother’s mouth “I am leaving already!”, “I am departing!” sound very sad to you also ...”

³²⁰ S03 Cc): “...know that she too has gone to her Lord: to the Lord who was always her life’s strength, to Him in whom she sought refuge at difficult times in her life, to Him whom she sought over and over again, with whom she conversed blissfully in prayer. She saw herself as a servant of this Lord. She tried to lead her life according to His will. Whoever lived his life with the Lord this side of eternity need not fear following Him into eternity. Indeed, it is not to exacerbate our lot that He calls us to Himself in eternity. He invites us there that He might give His faithful servants their heavenly reward. The Apostle Paul says of this: “there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.” God’s child knows that in death he returns to his heavenly Father’s embrace. Blessed, therefore, is each one of us who knows where he is going when he dies. Blessed is each one who need not say to his loved ones: “I am leaving to some unknown place”, who might say “I fear this departure and am terrified”. Blessed are all, who in death do not feel like prisoners of war who do not know where they are being taken in fact and what will be done with them there. Blessed are all who know and joyfully proclaim that they are going to their Lord. And blessed also is the one who escorts his loved one to death’s door, not in sadness and hopelessness, but in hope, knowing that he is departing to be with his Lord.”

³²¹ S03 Cd): “May you also be filled with this hope in these moments, dear grieving family, and then this farewell, which saddens you, will not be hopeless for you. Amen.”

the departed. The remaining sections follow in the standard order³²². Section Cc is missing in the conclusion to S9: the expression of eschatological hope as a source of comfort for the bereaved. The task of our further research will be to find the justification for this approach, based on the formulation of the sermon or the differentiation / homiletic situation of the funeral.

In S25 he leaves out sections Cb) and Cc). The bid farewell (Ca)³²³ is followed directly by Cd)³²⁴.

In S37 he leaves out Section Cb) (not expressing the difficulty of bidding farewell). Section Ca)³²⁵ is followed immediately by Cc),³²⁶

³²² S8 Cb): “It is an immensely sad moment that you experience today, dear grieving family. Just as the cross of Christ surpassed His strength, so also it is as though this cross surpassed your strength.

S8 Cc): “Only one hope remains to us in all of this sadness: God, who sent the angel to Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane that he might strengthen Him to bear the cross, can also help you to bear this great load that has now come into your lives. And the hope remains for us that, though death has had the victory now, Holy Scripture’s promises about life’s final victory over death are true. Your beloved one’s temporal life is now over.”

S8 Cd): “May our faith in something greater than this passing life lift us up in these sad moments. The final victory over death will be there, where God will wipe away all our tears and bestow His eternal peace and eternal bliss in His kingdom. Amen.”

³²³ S25 Ca): “And so in spirit, dear grieving family, commit your dear deceased mother to God’s hands now. Now her temporal life has also ended that eternity with God might begin. In prayer release her now from your midst and commit her to God’s hands. And also commit to God’s hands the lives of each one of you she leaves behind in this world.”

³²⁴ S25 Cd): “Beseech God that you might also walk through life in such a manner that one day you might join the assembly of the redeemed, that what was separated by temporality might be reunited by eternity. Amen.”

³²⁵ S37 Ca): “In this hope, dear grieving family, bid farewell now to your dear deceased father. His life has already ended. The law of human transience knows no exceptions. The ship has already reached its eternal destination.”

³²⁶ S37 Cc): “Dear grieving family, bid him farewell in this hope that he has already reached eternity’s harbour. A gracious God has already transferred him from this fleeting temporal life to the imperishability of eternal life.”

and the bereaved are invited to take a step which, as a decision made before God, should shape how they process the loss, in parenthetical section Cd).³²⁷ In S39 he leaves out an expression of the difficulties of the parting. He joins section Ca)³²⁸ with an appeal Cd1)³²⁹, to which in Cc)³³⁰ he connects Biblical statements applicable to those in attendance and again Cd2)³³¹. Going beyond his normal structure here in this section, he adds Ce) good wishes for God to reward the deceased woman³³². S40 leaves out sections Cb) and Cc). It contains an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased man Ca)³³³ and parenthetical impulses Cd)³³⁴. In S43 section, Cb) is absent. The

³²⁷ S37 Cd): “Commit his body now to mother earth and entrust his soul to God’s hands in the hope of the resurrection. Amen.”

³²⁸ S39 Ca): “And so dear grieving family, accompany your dear deceased wife and relative on her final journey in that hope that she has also now arrived at her eternal destination. We believe that she has already crossed over to her eternal home from this temporal home among you whom she has had to now leave.”

³²⁹ S39 Cd): “Entrust her body to mother earth, but commit her spirit to God’s hands in the hope of eternal life in God’s presence. And may this faith in eternity teach you to be strong.”

³³⁰ S39 Cc): “Our eternal homeland is there. The goal of our life is also there. There eternity will reunite what temporality separated.”

³³¹ S39 Cd): “Entrust her body to mother earth, but commit her spirit to God’s hands in the hope of eternal life in God’s presence. And may this faith in eternity teach you to be strong.”

³³² S39 Ce): Added element: (wish for the deceased woman to be rewarded): “May God richly reward her for all her service, all her love, all her work to serve you her family. Amen.”

³³³ S40 Ca): Dear grieving family, you must now escort your dear deceased father and grandfather on this journey. . . . And so entrust him now into God’s gracious hands in this hope that God will also show grace both to him and to the shortcomings in his life.”

³³⁴ S40 Cd): “May this be an opportunity for all of us to consider how to make our lives blessed and full; what to do in order to bring abundant light and blessing into our lives that we may also be able to carry out in our own lives all that God’s Word has taught us for the blessing and good of all who live with us. Amen.”

conclusion of the sermon therefore consists of Section Ca)³³⁵ an appeal to bid farewell, Cc)³³⁶ applying Biblical hope to the prospects of the deceased woman's prospects and Cd)³³⁷. S44 has the standard order of sections Ca³³⁸ - Cb³³⁹ - Cc),³⁴⁰ but section Cd is left out.

³³⁵ S43 Ca): "And thus, dear grieving family, in this hope, that even in death God remained close to her who had lived her entire life near to God, bid farewell now to your dear departed on your own behalf and on her far-off son's behalf, who was not able to take part in her funeral. "

³³⁶ S43 Cc): (bid farewell in hope...) "that even in death God remained close to her who had lived her entire life near to God. He will lead her from the valley of this temporal life to eternity's mountains where there is no longer "any death or affliction".

³³⁷ S43 Cd): "May the nearness of God comfort you also in your sorrow, the awareness that "in the evening we will all meet again in God's embrace from whence we came". And may this hope be your comfort also in this sad moment. Amen."

³³⁸ S44 Ca) instead of an appeal to bid farewell, an observation of the parting: "And today, therefore, we are all reluctant to part from him. As he loved everyone, so also, he was loved by us. If it had been possible, you, his closest family, would have happily continued to care for him in his old age.

³³⁹ S44 Cb): "We are very reluctant to release good people from our midst. But the decision was made. "You...will no longer see my face" are the words of Scripture we hear from his coffin."

³⁴⁰ S44 Cc): "And so we take our leave of him today in the Christian hope that the Lord whom he served faithfully in life will now say to him: "well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." We believe, according to the words of Scripture, that those who were pillars for us in this life will be pillars in the heavenly temple, which we are expecting, according to John's Revelation. We believe in eternal life. And may this hope be a comfort to us that those who die in Christ have passed from death into life. Amen."

In S46 the preacher leaves out sections Cb and Cd. The conclusion is built on the statements of Ca)³⁴¹, Cc),³⁴² and Ce)³⁴³ is added in a departure from the usual structure.

S47 leaves out an appeal to bid farewell (Ca) and parenthetical impulses (Cd). Modifies an expression of the difficulties of parting (Cb)³⁴⁴ into a challenge to ‘not grieve and not weep!’ Kišš introduces two realities as Biblical support for overcoming loss (Cc): (1) he

³⁴¹ S46 Ca): “His life is now at an end. His place in the family will now remain empty. Now there will only be memories that he was once upon a time among you. Escort him now to that other world which has now opened up before him. In this world we are all only temporary citizens. Our eternal homeland is in heaven, there in our heavenly Father’s embrace. There was no longer a place for him in this temporal life.”

³⁴² S46 Cc): “But a dwelling place is prepared for each of us there in eternity. God wants to give us rest there from all our work and struggles. Our crosses and infirmities will come to an end there.”

³⁴³ S46 Ce) Now may God’s grace also accompany him on his path to eternity. After the struggles of this temporal life may God grant him now eternal rest in a joyful eternity. Amen. The meaning of the statement about the deceased man being “on his way to eternity” remains ambiguous. Is the listener intended to think about the distance to heaven here or about purgatory, or about waiting for the resurrection...?

³⁴⁴ S47 Cb) (Instead of expressing the difficulty of parting – do not weep!): “And yet even now in this moment the words sound to us: “do not grieve and do not weep!” As the prophet Ezekiel was not to give way to grief at losing his beloved wife, you, dear grieving family, should also not give way to sadness on the loss of your dear husband, father, grandfather and brother.”

interprets the death of the deceased as God's protection against the suffering of worsening disease,³⁴⁵ and (2) he refers to eternal life³⁴⁶. In S49 he leaves out Section Cb). The conclusion of this sermon has the following structure: Ca³⁴⁷ - Cc)³⁴⁸ - Cd)³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁵ S47 Cc1) (section only:) As paradoxical as it may sound, we must say that in place of the cup of severe illness prepared for him came the redemption of death. God looked mercifully upon him and he has not had to carry his cross to the end. Even now, in the middle of your sadness, may this be the first reason for your comfort. Therefore, the words of Holy Scripture speak to you even now: "Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow; but you shall not mourn and you shall not weep!"

³⁴⁶ S47 Cc2) (concluding section of a longer passage:) "That is to say that as Christians we do not only believe in this perishable temporal life. We believe that life in eternity is awaiting us there after this temporal life. Our poet P.O. Hviezdoslav expressed it well when he wrote: "I am an atom, a mere spark, but everlasting at my core. If my light goes out on earth, above it I'll shine for ever more".

³⁴⁷ S49 Ca): "And just as you are not to lose hope for yourselves for the future, neither lose hope for your dear departed. You must now escort him on his last journey."

³⁴⁸ S49 Cc): "But even the last journey leads somewhere. It has a destination too. The destination of our life's final journey is eternity. This temporal life is perishable. But we believe that as people we are not perishable. As Christians we believe in eternal life. If this were not the case, our sadness at a human life prematurely ended would be all the greater. But faith in eternal life teaches us hope that though we received a meagre share in this temporal life, as Holy Scripture says, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us"."

³⁴⁹ S49 Cd): "Therefore, bury your dear departed in the hope of eternity. Amen."

In S51 Kišš is burying a wife and mother murdered by her husband. The funeral situation was made worse by the fact that the preacher knew he was burying a headless body,³⁵⁰ and this not until seven months after the murder³⁵¹. His procedure in the conclusion is to leave out Ca) and to arrange the remaining sections Cb)³⁵², Cc)³⁵³ and Cd)³⁵⁴ in the typical order.

7.1.3.5 *Absence of a section and rearrangement of the existing sections*

An expression of difficulty of the parting is missing in S42. In section Ca)³⁵⁵ the preacher invites the bereaved to bid farewell in the

³⁵⁰ Professor Kišš told me this in a personal conversation when I objected to the text choice.

³⁵¹ S51 – A nod to the grieving family – Expressing an awareness of the pain and a share in it: Dear grieving family, it was also a night of deep darkness the day of that terrible event seven months ago which cost our dear sister, mother to two small children and your dear relative, her life.

³⁵² S51 Cb): “And it was night”, reads our Bible text. It seems to us that in this moment when we must take these difficult steps to the graveside, it is also night. It is a moment of deep grief.”

³⁵³ S51 Cc): “And yet let us not remain with this night only. Let us look to Christ who also had his life forcefully taken from him on Good Friday, but rose from the dead, on Easter morning. As Christians we believe in eternal life. And so we believe that night and dark moments are only in this temporal life. But we are headed for eternal life’s day. If there have been moments of pain and tears in this temporal life, God wants to wipe away the tears from our faces in that place. After a temporal life full of suffering He wants to give us joy in His presence in His eternal kingdom. If darkness sometimes rules in this world, in that place there is light. If we sometimes meet with human hatred here, there God’s love is awaiting us.”

³⁵⁴ S51 Cd): “May you who have been deeply grieved by this extremely tragic event be lifted up in this moment by the light of the hope of eternal life. Amen.”

³⁵⁵ S42 Ca): “And so we take our leave of her now in this hope that there is already prepared for her an eternal heavenly home.”

hope of eternal life, after which Cd)³⁵⁶ is an appeal to them for faith in the truthfulness of Christ's words, and Cc)³⁵⁷ provides a Biblical basis for processing grief in the hope of faith.

7.1.3.6 The absence of a section and the overlapping of existing sections.

In S10 C sections a) and b) are absent. Sections 'c' and "d" overlap repeatedly (d1-c1-d2-c2-d3). Section b (an expression of difficulty of the parting) is absent from the conclusion of S24. Individual sections proceed in the following order: Ca³⁵⁸-Cc³⁵⁹- Ca/Cc³⁶⁰ -

³⁵⁶ S42 Cd): "Let us believe that Christ's words will become true of her: "I know of your service". And other words spoken by Christ will also become true: "if anyone serves me, the Father will honour him."

³⁵⁷ S42 Cc): "We believe that after years of service the Lord will give her also joy and salvation in the heavenly home. For we believe in the truth of the Apostle Paul's words that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Amen."

³⁵⁸ S24 Ca): "And thus now when we already bidding him farewell, dear grieving family, bid farewell to him in Christian hope."

³⁵⁹ S24 Cc): "Holy Scripture speaks of how the crown of victory is prepared for those who are found faithful. "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

³⁶⁰ S24 Ca/c): "Therefore let us bid him farewell in the hope that he will also hear the words: "well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." May this be of comfort to you who have been bereaved that you are not sending him into the unknown but to where God wants to reward our work, our love and service, our constancy and faithfulness."

Cd³⁶¹. In S41, the sections are ordered Cb1³⁶² - Cc³⁶³ - Cb2³⁶⁴ - Cc2³⁶⁵ - Ca³⁶⁶. In S28 section Ca) is absent. Cb) is expressed at length,³⁶⁷ and the last two sections (Cc and Cd) form an invitation to take

³⁶¹ S24 Cd): “Let us only learn how we may also be found as faithful stewards one day. May not only people testify to our faithfulness but may God Himself testify one day to our faithfulness to the tasks with which we were entrusted in our family, in society and in the church. Then we will leave behind us on earth the best memories but we will also gain an imperishable eternal hope for the hour of death. Amen.”

³⁶² S41 Cb1): “Therefore, dear grieving family, who are also bidding her a last farewell and something from your own lives is departing with her, you the bereaved, her bereaved husband and loving family members are also now all bearing this cross of death in Christ.”

³⁶³ S41 Cc): “(now all of you...loving family members, in Christ) are bearing this cross of death. To bear it in Christ means to know that human life does not end with our earthly death. However, death means our last stop. But the last stop only in this life. But just as we often transfer to another connection at a particular bus’s last stop, so at the last stop of death a connection is waiting in fact. From a Christian faith point of view death is just a stop where we change over for our journey into eternity.”

³⁶⁴ S41 Cb2): “(death from a Christian faith perspective): “And when we know this, then the cross of death becomes more bearable for us. Then we are able to release our loved ones from this temporal life in the hope that they have lost only this temporal life, full of crosses and tears, but have gained eternal life in God’s presence.”

³⁶⁵ S41 Cc2): “And as the apostle Paul says, the suffering of this present age are not worthy of comparison with that future glory which is to be revealed in us, and as the elderly apostle Paul says: “having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better”, so we believe that death has come now for your dear departed to deliver her from the increasing miseries of her temporal life.”

³⁶⁶ S41 Ca): “Now bid her a last farewell in this hope. Amen.”

³⁶⁷ S28 Cb): “I am dying but God remains with you.” The first half of these words saddens you today, dear grieving family. The one leaving you is one whom you are reluctant to see depart from your family circle. And you are not the only ones. The rest of us are also loath to bid him farewell. The church is loath to release its devoted presbyter, someone who did not only attend Sunday services but prayer meetings and Bible classes too. We are all very reluctant to let him go from our midst.”

comfort from the words of the sermon text.³⁶⁸ S31 contains all four sections, with considerable intersecting: Ca1)³⁶⁹- Cc1)³⁷⁰ – Ca2)³⁷¹- Cc2)³⁷² – Ca3)³⁷³- Cb)³⁷⁴- Cd)³⁷⁵.

In S47 section Cc) is interpolated by section Ca); therefore, the final

³⁶⁸ S28 Cc/Cd): “But in this sadness, may the hope of Jacob’s words comfort us: “But God remains with you”. Amen.”

³⁶⁹ S31 Ca1): “But today, when you are losing your mother and grandmother forever, hold on to hope also.”

³⁷⁰ S31 Cc1): “Since we have a great priest over the house of God, hold on steadfastly to the confession of your hope.” Hope is what a Christian has when he is face to face with death. He has the hope of overcoming death through the power of the resurrection. Christ won this hope for us through his death. Because Christ sacrificed himself for us and won for us reconciliation with God, we can therefore have hope.”

³⁷¹ S31 Ca2): “and, dear grieving family, you may also release your dear deceased mother on her final journey with hope in eternal life.”

³⁷² S31 Cc2): “The temple curtain in Jerusalem, which hid the Holy of Holies, was torn asunder upon Christ’s death. Its symbolical meaning is that the way into the heavenly sanctuary is open again to humanity.”

³⁷³ S31 Ca3): “Therefore in hope commit your dear departed to God’s hands.”

³⁷⁴ S31Cb): “She is leaving where her husband preceded her not long ago. Your hearts are grieved. You are certainly reluctant to bid your mother farewell.”

³⁷⁵ S31 Cd): “But may the light of Christian faith that those who die in the Lord rest from their work, shine above your sorrow. And then this parting will also be easier for you and Christian hope will comfort you in this sorrow. Amen.”

model is as follows: Cc1)³⁷⁶ – Ca)³⁷⁷ – Cc2)³⁷⁸.

7.1.3.7 *Modified approach*

In S52 he adapts sections Ca, Cb and Cc into a single sentence, the meaning of which must be evaluated in relation to section Cc. He appeals to the bereaved to apply the implications of faith's reality (which he describes in Section Cc) to their new situation.³⁷⁹ As biblical support for this attitude he presents the reality of faith in God and the assurance that the God who allows such things does not utterly abandon us in them.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ S47 Sc1): "Therefore in his letter to the Thessalonians the apostle Paul exhorts the Christians also: "that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." This temporal life has ended. But it is only the end of the first act. This play which is our human life has more than one act. And therefore, if one act ends, it does not now mean the end of everything. On the contrary it is only now that we perceive the truth of the apostle's words in the epistle to the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, the words spoken long ago to the prophet Ezekiel apply at this funeral also: "Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down!"

³⁷⁷ S47 Ca): "And thus, dear grieving family, commit yourselves also in this difficult moment to God's hands. Say together with the high priest Eli the words he spoke when he lost both his sons simultaneously: "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him."

³⁷⁸ S47 Cc2): "May your tears over the loss of your deceased be wiped away by the Christian hope that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Amen."

³⁷⁹ S52 Ca) an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased: / S52 Cb) an expression of the difficulties of parting/ S52 Cd) parenthetical impulses: - modified: "And yet, dear grieving family, even when the night of death has come into his life do not continue in grief only.

³⁸⁰ S52 Cc): "Wherever Christian faith is found in human hearts, there hope's clear light also shines above death's night. Here is hope that even when God has allowed something, He will not utterly forsake. In these new circumstances He will surely continue to show you much grace in your lives."

7.1.3.8 *Specific approaches*

In S05 C, there is, in fact, only an appeal to a good life that should lead to gaining a “heavenly reward³⁸¹”. Then he turns his attention to the deceased woman again in the hope “that the door to eternity will be opened to her”.³⁸²

S09 does not include the comfort of eschatological hope in its conclusion. He calls for gratitude for the deceased man³⁸³, though he had abandoned his family and only returned to his wife prior to death, according to the differentiation. An approach like this only seems appropriate to us if we assume that in this way the preacher wants to steer the bereaved towards reconciliation and forgiveness, yet without expressing this outright. The parenthetical section (Cd) is based on an exhortation to live in accordance with the sermon text.

In S12 Kišš’s starting point is the fact that the bereaved ‘like good children had cared for their mother until her life’s end.’ He moves from this positive observation to a missional challenge: “also remember this other love, God’s condescending love for you, and repay this love in increasing measure also.”

³⁸¹ S5 Cd): “And so may this funeral be an exhortation to us all: may our lives also be like this kind of beautiful symphony. Though they may be short, may they at least be beautiful. May we leave people with the best memories. May a heavenly reward also await us for all our love, faith, service and patience in life.”

³⁸² S5: “Illness carried out its devastating work in her. This fleeting life ended. May eternity’s gates be opened for her also, and also for all who carried out their life’s struggle faithfully. Amen.”

³⁸³ S9 Cb) “In this moment those of you who remain are thinking of all that this dear deceased man did for you. Thank him in your hearts for the sacrifices he made on your behalf. Perhaps he did not always do it perfectly. God alone can be the judge of that.”

In S50 he is burying a 91-year-old man. With those who depart at such an age, he does not anticipate difficulties in the grief process; therefore, in the section “comforting the bereaved”, despite observing that: “you will all certainly miss him greatly”, he does not express the loss in dramatic terms (as in S51 – the murdered mother). It is a loss that was inevitable³⁸⁴. Nevertheless, he does not stop at merely observing the fact but expresses three realities which provide a reason for comfort.

- a) *death is a fact of nature* (but just as days must end, each human life must end one day. Death must come.)
- b) *the deceased lived longer than usual* (after 65 years of marriage – our life span is 70 years)
- c) *eschatological point of view* (However, may the hope of a new morning beyond the door of death, the morning of eternal life in God’s presence, abide in us Amen.)

The conclusion of S52³⁸⁵ is a complete departure from the normal scheme of steps Ca)-Cd). It is built on a general perception of human mortality, beyond which, however, “the world of eternity awaits us where we will stand before God to render account for our lives.”³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ S50: “But just as days must end, someday the day of each human life must end. Death must come. The span of our lives is 70 years.”

³⁸⁵ The title S52 is used twice by accident in the collection.

³⁸⁶ S52: “Once again it has become evident: “How uncertain we are, O Lord, how uncertain in these surging waves”, as the poet says. We are like a flower of the field which despite its beauty and healthy growth is so easily mown down by the sickle. And suddenly, in the midst of life, “in the midst of his days”, in the words of another of our hymns, “he must embark for eternity and leave the world of desires”.

“We are only temporary guests in this world. In the distance, beyond our sight, beyond death’s boundaries, and where all is wreathed in mist, is where our way winds. Only our eyes of faith instruct us that at the end of this road the world of

7.2 Analytical section

I have already observed in Chapter 7.1.2 that by analysing Kišš's sermons we may arrive at a division of his conclusion into four basic sections:

- a) an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased,
- b) an expression of the difficulty of bidding farewell,
- c) a biblical-theological basis and an expression of hope,
- d) parenthetical impulses.

In the following sub-chapters, we will observe in detail his method of construction (and modification) of these parts.

7.2.1 Conclusions, section Ca) An appeal to bid the deceased farewell

Concerning an appeal to bid farewell (Section Ca), we find in Kišš's work (1) sermons where there is an appeal and (2) sermons where it is absent.

7.2.1.1 *Sermons with an appeal to bid the deceased person farewell.*

From a religious perspective we can divide occurrences of an appeal to bid the deceased person farewell into those which (1a) are specifically religious and those which (1b) are not specifically religious.

A specifically religious appeal to bid farewell

is found in Kišš's works as (1) an appeal to bid farewell in hope; (2) an appeal not to continue in sadness; (3) comment on the

eternity awaits us, where we will stand before God's face in order to render account for our lives."

separation.

An appeal to bid farewell in hope

We find the farewell in hope (a) without more specific details; (b) the hope of resurrection and eternal life; (c) the hope of God's nearness in death; (d) appeals to not lose hope and not to bid farewell in hopelessness.

a) *Hope without more specific details*

In S13 he appeals to the bereaved: 'And thus in hope escort ... on their final journey'³⁸⁷ Yet he does not provide more specific detail about this hope. He uses the construction 'in this hope' in a whole

³⁸⁷ S13 Ca): "And thus, dear grieving family, escort your dear deceased father, grandfather and relative on his final journey in hope. At his age this temporal life held nothing more for him. This temporal life held no future for him anymore. His body would have only continued to weaken and illnesses to increase."

series of sermons (S01³⁸⁸; S11³⁸⁹; S16³⁹⁰; S26³⁹¹; S27³⁹²; S37³⁹³; S41³⁹⁴; S45³⁹⁵). However, in these sermons he also does not provide more specific detail about hope in the immediate context. The conclusion is that the preacher is calculating on the listeners knowing this hope and understanding what he intends with his statement's content. The same applies also for S19 Ca), where he appeals to them to bid farewell in Christian hope.³⁹⁶

³⁸⁸ S01 Ca): "Dear grieving family, you may bid farewell to your dear mother and grandmother in this hope. She too journeyed through life patiently, enduring its difficulties and suffering. There were plenty of them in her life. Following in Christ's footsteps she bore them all patiently and her life was a life of faith, love and hope. It was shot through with the light of Christmas. Despite the struggles she had to wrestle with in life, her life was a blessed life for you also, dear grieving family."

³⁸⁹ In S11 Ca) he changes the formula to "in that hope"; "And so bid her farewell in that hope that she has gone whither she is even now enjoying God's eternal love."

³⁹⁰ S16 Ca): "You also, dear grieving family, bid farewell to your dear husband, father and relative in this hope."

³⁹¹ S26 Ca): "This hour has already come to you, dear grieving family. It came suddenly and unexpectedly and your hearts are sad. Suddenly you have to bid farewell to your dear husband, father and relative." "...Dismiss him now in this hope, dear grieving family, from among you. Amen." In S26 this appeal forms the frame for the entire C section, that is, it is at the beginning and at the very end. The conclusion's other sections are fitted into this framework.

³⁹² S27 Ca): Now you also, dear grieving family, bid your dear departed farewell in this hope. She has also departed on death's journey. Once again it is apparent that there is no lasting place for us as people in this world. Each succeeding generation leaves this world in turn."

³⁹³ S37 Ca): "In this hope, dear grieving family, bid farewell now to your dear deceased father. His life has already ended. The law of human transience knows no exceptions. The ship has already reached its eternal destination."

³⁹⁴ S41 Ca): "Now, in this hope, bid her a last farewell. Amen."

³⁹⁵ S45 Ca) He changes the wording to "with this hope": "And so, dear grieving family, bid farewell to your dear deceased husband, father, grandfather and relative with this hope."

³⁹⁶ S19 Ca) "You also then, dear grieving family, bid farewell to your truly beloved mother and grandmother, in this Christian hope."

b) The hope of resurrection and eternal life

Appeals to bid farewell in hope that refer to Christ's victory over death are expressed in Kišš's work in the following way:

Farewell in Easter hope. In S18 Ca) we may consider the clear wording kerygmatic: 'Hence, you also, dear grieving family, bid him farewell in the Easter hope given to those who believe: 'I will open your graves and cause you to rise out of your graves, My people''."

Farewell in hope of the resurrection. In S29 Ca), he describes the appeal to bid farewell as an appeal to commit the body of the deceased woman to mother earth. According to Kišš, this act should be performed "in the hope of resurrection with Jesus Christ our Lord."³⁹⁷

Farewell in the hope of eternal life is found in S23 Ca) 'Now you also, dear grieving family, bid farewell to your dear departed in this hope of eternal life'.³⁹⁸ He also formulates S07 Ca) similarly; however, here he condenses the hope of eternal life to 'the hope of eternity'³⁹⁹. He expresses the same reality, but words it differently in statements about the hope of arrival in the eternal home (so S39 Ca)⁴⁰⁰ or the

³⁹⁷ S29 Ca): "And thus a voice was heard from heaven "My grace is sufficient for you". May we who remain also humble ourselves before this voice. Let us commit her body to mother earth in the hope of the resurrection with Jesus Christ our Lord."

³⁹⁸ Similarly, also S31 Ca2): "And you, dear grieving family, with hope in eternal life, can release your dear departed mother to depart on her final journey."

³⁹⁹ S07 Ca): "And so now, when we must bid her a final farewell, we may bid her farewell in the hope of eternity." Faith in a heavenly country is expressed in S46 Ca) with the appeal: "Escort him now to the next world, which has now opened up before him. We are all only temporary citizens in this world. Our eternal homeland is in the heavens, there in our heavenly Father's embrace."

⁴⁰⁰ S39 Ca): "And so dear grieving family, accompany your dear deceased wife and relative on her final journey in that hope that she has also now arrived at her

hope of readiness for the eternal home (S42 Ca)⁴⁰¹ or the hope of a reward (S17 Ca⁴⁰², S24 Ca)⁴⁰³. Both elements, that is, the hope of eternal life and a reward in God's kingdom are linked in S21 Ca)⁴⁰⁴. The meaning of the wording in S50 Ca)⁴⁰⁵: "May this hope also be with you..." is determined by the context of the statement, which speaks of eternal life.

c) *The hope of God's nearness in death*

The starting point in S43 is the fact that the deceased woman having lived for God her entire life. Therefore, he expresses the hope that even in death God remained close to one who had lived her entire life near to God"⁴⁰⁶. *The hope of waiting on God (advent)* was expressed

eternal destination. We believe that she has already crossed over to her eternal home from this temporal home among you whom she has had to now leave."

⁴⁰¹ S42 Ca): "And so let us bid farewell to her now in that hope that there is already prepared for her an eternal heavenly home."

⁴⁰² S17 Ca): "And so, in this hope of the reward there in eternal glory, you also escort now your dear deceased son, brother and relative on his final journey, dear grieving family."

⁴⁰³ In S24 Ca) First of all Kišš calls for a parting with the deceased with Christian hope, which he does not specify more clearly. However, as the text continues he defines this hope more specifically as hope in a reward: "Let us, therefore, bid him farewell in the hope that he will also hear the words: "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." May this be of comfort to you who have been bereaved that you are not sending him into the unknown but whither God wants to reward our work, our love and service, our constancy and faithfulness.

⁴⁰⁴ S21 Ca): "How else than with the hope of eternal life would we part with him today? The hymn sung a while ago said quite justifiably: "I have valiantly fought the good fight in this world". And so we believe that God will give his faithful servant a reward in His kingdom."

⁴⁰⁵ S50 Ca): "May this hope also be with you, dear grieving family, when you must be parted from your dear deceased..."

⁴⁰⁶ S43 Ca) an appeal to bid farewell to the deceased woman: "And thus, dear grieving family, in this hope, that even in death God remained close to her who

in S53 Ca) during Advent. It speaks of waiting on God as well as of a hope which will not be put to shame⁴⁰⁷.

d) *An appeal to not lose hope and not bid farewell in despair*

The appeal for hope is expressed as an appeal not to lose hope in S49 Ca)⁴⁰⁸, as an appeal to hold on to hope in S31 Ca1),⁴⁰⁹ and as an appeal not to part with the deceased woman in despair in S36 Ca)⁴¹⁰.

An appeal to bid farewell as ‘commitment to God’s hands’. In Kišš’s work, this appeal is found with an emphasis on three meanings: (a) commit the deceased person to God’s hands; (b) commit the deceased and oneself to God’s hands; (c) commit oneself (the grieving) to God’s hands.

We find the first case in S31 Ca3)⁴¹¹ or in S40 Ca)⁴¹². A special

had lived her entire life near to God, bid farewell now to your dear departed on your own behalf and on her far-off son’s behalf, who was not able to take part in her funeral.”

⁴⁰⁷ S53 Ca): “Dear grieving family, now that you must part with your dear departed, hold on to this hope. Hold on to it first of all in regard to the departed. Believe that death was not the disappointment of her great hope but rather its fulfilment.”

⁴⁰⁸ S49 Ca): “And just as you yourselves are not to lose hope for the future, do not lose hope for your departed either. You must now escort him on his final journey.”

⁴⁰⁹ S31 Ca1): “But today also, when you are losing your mother and grandmother forever, hold on to hope.”

⁴¹⁰ S36 Ca): “Yet, dear grieving family, bereaved husband, parents, siblings, relatives and all others of us, though her life’s sun is eclipsed, let us not part with her in despair.”

⁴¹¹ S31 Ca3): “Therefore, commit your dear departed to God’s hands with hope.”

⁴¹² S40 Ca): “Dear grieving family, you must now escort your dear deceased father and grandfather on this journey. ... And so entrust him now into God’s gracious hands in this hope that God will also show grace both to him and to the shortcomings in his life.”

example of this approach is the appeal Kišš makes for “commitment to God’s hands’ in S30 Ca) at the funeral of a young girl who committed suicide⁴¹³. In S25 Ca) Kišš introduces it in the second group (that is, committing the deceased and oneself into the hands of God). Soon afterwards he repeats the idea of commitment⁴¹⁴. S47 Ca) belongs to the third group, where he calls the bereaved to commit themselves ‘in this difficult moment to God’s hands.’⁴¹⁵

An appeal to not remain in grief

In S52 Ca),⁴¹⁶ the appeal to bid farewell to the deceased is expressed as an appeal not to persist in grief alone. In terms of processing the crisis of loss, loss and grief are obviously connected, and processing the parting also leads to processing the grief.

Comment on the separation

In several sermon conclusions section Ca) is not worded as an

⁴¹³ S30 Ca): “And so what can be said now for your comfort, dear deeply grieving family? Perhaps what our beautiful hymn says: “Entrust your ways and all your woes to God and the Father’s grace will ease your pain. He, who orders and governs the whole world in wisdom, will extend His right hand to you and lead you out of misery”. . . . “Now in this hope that God is the best and righteous judge of our deeds commit her into the hands of a gracious and merciful God, who forgives our sins.”

⁴¹⁴ S25 Ca): “And so in spirit, dear grieving family, commit your dear deceased mother to God’s hands now. Now her temporal life has also ended that eternity with God might begin. In prayer release her now from your midst and commit her to God’s hands. And also commit to God’s hands the lives of each one of you she left behind in this world.”

⁴¹⁵ S47 Ca): “And thus, dear grieving family, commit yourselves also in this difficult moment to God’s hands. Say together with the high priest Eli the words he spoke when he lost both his sons simultaneously: “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.”

⁴¹⁶ S52 Ca): “And yet, dear grieving family, though the night of death has come into his life, do not persist in your grief.”

appeal to bid farewell but as an observation of the parting (S09 Ca⁴¹⁷; S11 Ca⁴¹⁸; S14 Ca⁴¹⁹; S15 Ca⁴²⁰; S34⁴²¹; S44 Ca⁴²²).

An appeal to bid farewell without specific religious comment.

In some sermons, Kišš does not make the farewell process a specifically religious one and simply appeals to those present to undertake this step. In S20 Ca) he appeals to the bereaved: “Now you, who were closest to your, her bereaved family, escort your dear mother, grandmother, and relative on her final journey.” In S32 Ca) also similarly: “And so let us bid farewell to our deceased brother...” We find this approach in S38 Ca)⁴²³: “And so, dear grieving family, bid farewell to your dear father, grandfather, brother, and relative...” We find identical content expressed differently in S33 Ca): “Commit her today to the grave....” or in S35 Ca) as an appeal to release the deceased from their midst⁴²⁴.

⁴¹⁷ S09 Ca): “Such a moment of final farewell has also come now to you, dear grieving family.”

⁴¹⁸ S11 Ca): “Therefore, her battle has finished. Her life’s struggle is over. All that now remains for you the bereaved is to follow her coffin to the graveside.”

⁴¹⁹ S14 Ca): “Even now, dear grieving family, these words are also spoken to you. The one with whom you are now parting has embarked on his final journey.”

⁴²⁰ S15 Ca): (“What I do now, you do not understand but later you will understand”.) “And these are comforting words for you also, dear grieving family, when you have to bid a final farewell to your dear deceased husband, father and relative.”

⁴²¹ S34 Ca): “And so there remains no other choice but to bid farewell to the one who is leaving us so unexpectedly today.”

⁴²² S44 Ca): “And therefore we are all reluctant to part from him today. As he loved everyone, so also, he was loved by us. If it had been possible you, his closest family, would have happily continued to care for him in his old age.”

⁴²³ In S38 – the death of a middle-aged alcoholic in mysterious circumstances.

⁴²⁴ S35 Ca): “And so now, dear grieving family, release your dear departed relative from your midst. This world no longer held a place for him in his illness, his weakness, and his old age.”

7.2.1.2 *Sermons where an appeal to bid the deceased farewell is absent*

An appeal to bid the deceased farewell is absent in the sermon conclusions of: S02; S03; S06; S08; S10; S28; S51.

7.2.2 Conclusion, Section Cb) Expressing the difficulty of the parting

Almost every element of the observed funeral sermon may but does not necessarily occur in individual sermons. This applies to section Cb) too, where the difficulty of the farewell is expressed. Therefore, we can divide this subchapter into (1) expressing the difficulty of the farewell; (2) non-expression of the difficulty of the farewell.

7.2.2.1 *Section Cb) with expressing the difficulty of the farewell.*

Kišš expresses the difficulty of farewell by (1) expressing the loss of the deceased person's specific contribution; (2) expressing observations about the difficulty of the situation; and (3) a description of the bereaved person.

The loss of the specific contribution

In several sermons Kišš built section Cb) on an articulation of the reality that the deceased person would be missed. In such cases, it is not so much a question of the loss of the material good contributed by the deceased but of the person themselves. This is nicely illustrated in S32 Cb), where he says of the deceased man: 'He was one of those whom God had gifted abundantly. It is with reluctance that we release him from our midst. We will miss his friendship, his smile, his counsel, and his company. "The difficulty of the parting lies in the fact that the deceased man will be missed by those bereaved as a spreader of goodness. Something similar also applies

at the funeral of a ‘quiet, good old man’ in S50 Cb), where the preacher expresses the difficulty of the split in the words: “it is certain that you will miss him greatly.” Since we are dealing with ‘an old man’, he will not be missed by the bereaved as the family breadwinner but, as comments about the deceased man in this particular sermon reveal, rather as a person who stood firm in life’s difficulties, who was able to come to terms with them and did not stumble even in difficult losses, because his faith in God anchored him.⁴²⁵ This kind of person steadies and enriches his community. Therefore, we advise the preacher not to assume that the death of an old person will not cause pain to the bereaved just because they are old.

Also, at another godly old man’s funeral S35 Cb) he remarks with a single sentence: ‘It will not be easy for you who remain, you will miss him greatly’⁴²⁶ The daily life will go on but the special thing this

⁴²⁵ See S50 – the application of a Biblical text to the life of the deceased man: “In life this man himself, to whom you are now bidding a final farewell, experienced the great shock of losing both his children and yet there was no trace of bitterness or confusion or even despair in his features. There was something in him of the Biblical Job, who, committing himself into God’s hands when he lost all his children, said: “The Lord gave, the Lord took away, blessed by the name of the Lord”. Even in the most difficult of moments, God’s praise never failed to be on his lips to the day of his death. And likewise, his hope in God never died. From his youth he placed his life in God’s hands and was led by Him.”

⁴²⁶ The deceased is characterized in S35 in the following way: “His wife is grieving.... But you are not alone in your grief today. Today the church is grieving also, having lost its longstanding presbyter, its former sexton, regular attendee of the chapel and a man zealous for the affairs of God in this world; the whole community is also grieving. Every community has its distinct figures. And he was surely one of these distinct figures in our community. Now that he is no longer here something will change in this community. Something will be missing. There will be someone we will not meet to talk and chat with. Losses to death are

person had contributed to their community has been lost forever. It is also similar in S15 Cb): “He was still so very necessary to you. However, the word that called him though could not be altered: ‘My grace is sufficient for you.’ And all that remains for us all is to bow before this decision. ‘

In S28 Cb)⁴²⁷ the difficulty of parting is expressed by the reluctance to part with the deceased on the part of (a) the grieving family; (b) “the rest of us”; (c) the church congregation. However, it is not clear from the statement whether ‘the rest of us’ and “church” means the same group or whether his statement about the total number of mourners remained incomplete.

The goodness of the deceased, which in this case leads to the difficulty of the parting, is, at the same time, a help in the grieving process, because the gradual articulation of grief for the good person will provide the bereaved with a common support in their grief. They would also grieve after the death of a bad person, but in that case, they might be exposed to direct or indirect manifestations of a negative assessment of the deceased.

In S14 Cb), he describes the difficulty of the parting as an inability to keep the deceased with them,⁴²⁸ and the preacher knows that this

irrecoverable. They are never to return. And therefore, it is with reluctance that we release him from our midst and at this moment grief envelops our hearts.”

⁴²⁷ S28 Cb): “I am dying but God remains with you:” The first half of these words saddens you today, dear grieving family. The one leaving you is one whom you are reluctant to see depart from your family circle. And you are not the only ones. The rest of us are also loath to bid him farewell. The church is loath to release its devoted presbyter, someone who did not only attend Sunday services but midweek services and Bible classes too. We are all very reluctant to let him go from our midst.”

⁴²⁸ S14 Cb): Perhaps you would have gladly continued to have him among you. But there is no return from the one-way road of death. Similarly, also in S38 Cb): “certainly you are reluctant to lose him from your circle and you would have gladly continued to keep him with you.”

is not easy for the bereaved⁴²⁹. He expresses this process in S29 Cb) with a reference to the necessity of coming to terms with the impossibility of having the deceased person with them.⁴³⁰ In S11 Cb) he expresses the loss with the impossibility of repaying the goodness of a mother.⁴³¹

With certain reservations, we can also include in this group the ‘specific contribution’ of the deceased woman to become a part of the bereaved parties’ lives. We find this kind of expression of loss in S41 Cb1): ‘Hence, dear grieving family, who are also bidding her a last farewell and something from your own lives is departing with her, you the bereaved, her bereaved husband, and loving family members are also now all bearing this cross of death in Christ.’

Descriptions of the condition of the bereaved

Kišš uses descriptions of the condition as another tool for expressing the difficulty of parting; (a) sad spirit; (b) tears in their eyes; (c) thoughts of gratitude.

Ad a) sad spirit. In S45 Cb) he expresses the difficulty of parting with the condition of the bereaved, whose ‘spirit is sad’ and for whom

⁴²⁹ S14 Cb): “.... even when it is not easy for a wife to bid her dear husband farewell and for children to bid their dear father farewell.”

⁴³⁰ In S29 Cb): “And so even now, when we are escorting her on her final journey, we are certainly very reluctant to do so. Especially you, dear grieving family, dear children, grandchildren and close family, you especially would have liked to have kept her among you if it were possible.”

⁴³¹ S11 Cb): “How you would have liked to still have her with you! How you would have liked to repay her love still by demonstrating your love! That is no longer possible. She has gone.”

“all temporal things have stopped”.⁴³² Pain has weakened them and, in this weakness, they need to bid farewell to the deceased. He expresses this same fact in S23 Cb) with the words: “It has grieved and saddened you, the bereaved relatives.” This same reality can also be expressed by looking at the process of dealing with the loss, as we find in S26 Cb): ‘It’s extremely difficult for you and we empathise with you.’⁴³³

Ad b) tears in their eyes. In S19 Cb) he knows about the pain of bereaved individuals, which brings tears to their eyes. However, he expresses his awareness of this pain via a reference to the hope that can dry these tears. In this sermon, the preacher not only bid the deceased farewell in eschatological hope, but immediately draws comfort from it for the bereaved.⁴³⁴

Ad c) Thoughts of gratitude. In S09 Cb) he expresses the difficulty of parting via the difficulty of the thoughts with which the bereaved must come to terms: “In this moment those of you who remain are thinking of all that this dear deceased man did for you. We thank him in your hearts for the sacrifices he made on your behalf. Perhaps he did not always do it perfectly. God alone can be the judge of that.”

Difficult situation

In some cases, Kišš expresses the difficulty of parting by expressing

⁴³² S45 Cb) “Your soul is grieved in this moment. All that is temporal has ended. You have lost your departed one. The invalid wife has lost her protector and carer.”

⁴³³ A middle-aged person’s sudden death.

⁴³⁴ In S19 Cb): And may this joyful hope dry the tears in your eyes. Amen.

observations about the situation of difficulty of the bereaved individuals. We find this kind of approach in S08 Cb) for example: “It is an extremely sad moment that you are experiencing today, dear grieving family. Just as the cross of Christ exceeded His strength, it seems that this cross also exceeds your strength²”.

The difficulty of sudden loss; he uses this to express the difficulty of the parting in S16 Cb): “Who would find it harder to take these steps to his final resting place than you? You lost him in an instant. Your eyes are filled with tears and your hearts with sadness. You have lost something that is very hard to replace. Like a weaver, he has finished weaving his life. He has been cut off from his loom, and suddenly his life is at an end. ‘

The difficulty of parting after a difficult illness. S22 Cb) expresses the difficulty of splitting without more detailed description: ‘And so now in this difficult moment of parting with your dear mother, who meant so much to you, grant her now quiet rest in the harbour of peace.’ In this case, according to the preacher, death is actually God’s protection from the difficulties of continuing a severe illness.⁴³⁵

The difficulty of listening to the words of farewell. In S03 Cb), he expresses the difficulty of the parting with the words of the parting: “And so, dear grieving family, though these words “I am leaving already!” ‘I am leaving!’ from the mouth of your dear departed mother sounds

⁴³⁵ S22 Cb): “There would only have been new storms and tempests awaiting her in her difficult illness. And so, God has snatched her away and rescued her with a quiet death from the difficult things to come. Even if her life’s voyage was not lengthy, it was enough to exhaust her life’s strength.”

very sad to you ...”

Especially difficult funerals

With funerals of this kind in Kišš’s work we find (1) reference to difficulty without more detailed description; (b) problematic dealing with the suicide of a daughter’s suicide; (c) perception of suffering as “night”; (d) disappointment, loss of help and relationship; (e) difficulty of repeated loss.

Reference to the difficulty without a more detailed description

In S21 Cb) the preacher is aware of the difficulty of parting after a tragic event, but evidently does not want to express what everyone is feeling. Therefore, in section Cb when he wishes to express the Christian hope of faith, he simply skirts the difficulty of the parting.⁴³⁶

Problematic reconciliation to a daughter’s suicide

In S30 Cb) the difficulty of parting lies in a variety of facts. The young girl committed suicide. Parents are in shock. Their daughter not only hurt herself but also others. The preacher responds to this part of the difficulty with an appeal for forgiveness⁴³⁷. He refers to questions of faith in connection with suicide in section Cc) where he commends the deceased to God’s gracious judgement.

Suffering as night

In S51 Cb) the difficulty of the parting consists of the fact that the

⁴³⁶ S21 Cb): “Even though this temporal life has ended tragically, eternity is our Christian hope.”

⁴³⁷ S30 Cb): “Bid farewell to your dear daughter, forgiving her though she has caused you a grief that will accompany you for the remainder of your lives.”

husband murdered his wife. Two orphans are left. It is a family tragedy that the preacher expressed in his sermon with the words of John 13:30: “And it was night.” In section Cb he returns to the sermon text, with which he reminds the listeners of the horrific situation in which the deceased lost her life and describes the moment of the funeral as a moment of deep grief.⁴³⁸

Disappointment, loss of help, and relationship

In S17 Cb), Kišš mentions the following difficulties *of* parting on the loss of a son to a tragic death (1) disappointment that the son did not come home alive⁴³⁹; (2) the absence of the deceased man’s help⁴⁴⁰; (3) the absence of the lost relationship and fulfilment⁴⁴¹.

The difficulty of repeated loss

The difficulty of the parting with which the bereaved are dealing in S31 Cb)⁴⁴² lies in the mother having died not long after they buried the father. There is a resultant accumulation of stress factors in the family, where people who had not yet come to terms with one loss must face another. Not to mention the fact that people who face a relational loss also face significant financial strain with two consecutive funerals.

⁴³⁸ S51 Cb): “And it was night”, reads our Bible text. It seems to us that in this moment when we must take these difficult steps to the graveside, it is also night. It is a moment of deep grief.”

⁴³⁹ S17 Cb): “He was glad that he would soon come home to you. Indeed, he came but not as you imagined.”

⁴⁴⁰ S17 Cb): “His help would be so necessary in all your work at home,

⁴⁴¹ S17 Cb): “you would have loved to see how he thrived, and he himself would have liked to reward you for all your love, but that will no longer happen either.”

⁴⁴² S31 Cb): “She is leaving where her husband preceded her not long ago. Your hearts are grieved. You are certainly loath to bid your mother farewell.”

Attention shifted to a less oppressive fact.

In S34 Cb),⁴⁴³ the preacher speaks of the instability and uncertainty of human life, where our security does not lie in either beauty or strength, because all may be lost in a short space of time.

The difficulty of this parting, however, lay elsewhere completely: the preacher is burying a single mother who leaves a small orphan behind her. Because of the unbearable oppressiveness of this fact, he moves to a truthful yet less emotive fact. In the continuation of the text, he also speaks more about the difficulties of the deceased woman's life than about the difficulties of the parting. Is this a failure on the preacher's part or should we rather see this an expression of his pastoral wisdom?

Indirect forms of expression

The appeal in S52 Cb⁴⁴⁴, for the bereaved to not remain in grief only despite "the night of death having also come into his life", can be viewed as an indirect expression of the difficulty of the parting. The preacher does not speak about the difficulty directly, but he is aware and communicates the stressful reality.

A combined approach

The cases in which Kišš touches on the difficulty of the parting but does not develop its content of it are a specific kind of crossover

⁴⁴³ S34 Cb) expression of the difficulty of the parting: in this moment we realize how unstable and unsure our human life is. Our security does not lie in either youth or beauty, or in strength or in anything else. All of this may be lost instantly or in a brief space of time. Truly "Futility is in the world, pure futility, because nothing certain is in it". All is fleeting. What we most look forward to is over before we know it.

⁴⁴⁴ S52 Cb): "And yet, dear grieving family, though the night of death has come into his life, do not persist in your grief."

between expressing the difficulty of the parting and not expressing its difficulty. He focusses more on the kerygmatic aspect: in the difficulty of the parting, we are comforted by the hope of faith. He proceeds in this way, for example, in S6 C⁴⁴⁵ or in S41 Cb2⁴⁴⁶.

7.2.2.2 *Section Cb) without expression of the difficulty of the parting*

We do not find section Cb), i.e. an expression of the difficulty of the parting in 44% sermons⁴⁴⁷.

7.2.3 Conclusion, Section Cc) Biblical-theological grounds for comfort and hope

In most of Kišš's conclusions to his sermons, we find the section Cc) Biblical-theological grounds for comfort and hope. (Only a few sermons are exceptions to this rule⁴⁴⁸.)

7.2.3.1 *Christological foundation*

In S31 Cc), Kišš presents the hope of eternal life as a perspective on our situation before God and anchors this statement in Christology:

⁴⁴⁵ S6 C: "The message of today's text for us is this: to allow ourselves to be comforted in this sad time in our lives by hope in God and to see the great light emanating from hope in God. The light of this hope in God can comfort even a person's sad spirit. Hope always succeeds in lifting and comforting people. But hope in God can comfort and lift us even in death. And we will praise God for this one day in eternity. Amen."

⁴⁴⁶ S41 Cb2): "(death from a Christian faith perspective): "And when we know this, then the cross of death becomes more bearable for us. Then we are able to release our loved ones from this temporal life in the hope that they have lost only this temporal life, full of crosses and tears, but have gained eternal life in God's presence."

⁴⁴⁷ S01; S02; S04; S05; S07; S10; S13; S18; S20; S24; S25; S27; S33; S36; S37; S39; S40; S42; S43; S46; S47; S48; S49; S53.

⁴⁴⁸ In only S09, S25; S40, S48 and S50 was Section Cc) not found in the conclusions of the analysed sermons.

“Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us hold fast to our confession of hope”. Hope is what a Christian has when faced with death. He has the hope of overcoming death through the power of resurrection. Christ won this hope for us through his own death. Because Christ sacrificed himself and obtained reconciliation with God for us, we can have hope. ‘ ... ‘Upon Christ’s death, the curtain in the Jerusalem temple, which veiled the Holy of Holies, was torn asunder. The symbolic meaning of this is that the way into the heavenly sanctuary has been opened again to humanity. ‘

In S15 Cc), he also mentions Christ’s redemptive work, saying that God gives his eternal grace “for Jesus Christ and for the forgiveness of sins gained by Him for those who believe in Him.”⁴⁴⁹

In S27 Cc1), he also expresses Christian hope in relation to Christ: “And yet we do not wish to bid farewell without hope. We know that there is something here that can bridge death and our sins. It is Christ’s righteousness, given to everyone who believes in Him. And in life, the sister from whom we are parting today held on to Christ by faith. When her life was difficult, she called on Him and sought refuge in Him. Her steps led her to this church many a time that she could sit at Christ’s feet and listen to His word.”⁴⁵⁰

Christ’s resurrection, the basis of hope for our resurrection. In S18 Cc) he anchors our Christian hope for the resurrection of the dead⁴⁵¹ in the

⁴⁴⁹ Similarly, also in S14 Cc1): “The journey he has now set out on is one that you as believers know. It is a journey to eternal life’s bright land. God’s grace has prepared this new land for us. He wants to give us a share in it via the forgiveness of our sins through Christ.”

⁴⁵⁰ In S27 Cc2) he continues: “May this hope also be a bright light for you, dear grieving family, when you must now walk behind her coffin to the graveside. May it now be engraved in clear letters in your spirit that “Christ Jesus has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light” Amen.”

⁴⁵¹ S18 Cc): “But hope that resurrection’s path continues on from the path of this temporal life.”

message about Christ's resurrection⁴⁵².

7.2.3.2 *Faith*

Christians receive the of Christ's work through faith. We find a reference to this in Kišš's work both (1) in an expression of the concept as well as (2) in an expression of the content.

Faith in the resurrection and eternal life – an expression of a concept
In the difficult case of a murder, he expresses faith in resurrection and eternal life through a reference to Christ's resurrection (S51 Cc),⁴⁵³ and he continues with an expression of Christian faith in life eternal⁴⁵⁴. Expressing faith in eternal life is also part of S44 Cc): "We believe in eternal life. We hope that those who die in Christ have passed over from death into life. Amen."

Faith in eternal life – expression of content

A preacher full of the reality that is being preached will not speak of it in basic conceptual terms only, but in his statements, the proclaimed reality will also be found worded in what could be described as 'expressions of content'. An example of expressing the content of faith in eternal life is S02 Cc), here, in addition to other

⁴⁵² S18 Cc): "Christ, whose tomb was open on Easter morning, will also open our tombs someday."

⁴⁵³ S51 Cc): "Let us look to Christ who also had his life forcefully taken from him on Good Friday, but rose from the dead, on Easter morning."

⁴⁵⁴ S51 Cc): "As Christians we believe in eternal life. And so we believe that night and dark moments are only in this temporal life. But we are headed for eternal life's day. If there have been moments of pain and tears in this temporal life, God wants to wipe away the tears from our faces in that place. After a temporal life full of suffering He wants to give us joy in His presence in His eternal kingdom."

emphases⁴⁵⁵, we also find an expression of faith in eternal life where he says of the deceased: “he is leaving to go where a crown of God’s glory is prepared for those who have faithfully completed their life’s race.” In S20 Cc) he also expresses this same reality, instead of saying ‘Now grant her heavenly rest after the work of life’. ‘And thank God in spirit for helping and supporting her in life.’ In S39 Cc) he expresses faith in eternal life as the faith of those gathered at the funeral: “Our eternal homeland is there. Our destination is there also. There eternity will reunite what temporality has separated.’ In S42 Cc) faith in eternal life is expressed as follows: “We believe that the Lord will also give her joy and salvation in the heavenly home after her years of service.” With the thought that follows, he anchors this attitude in Scripture⁴⁵⁶.

7.2.3.3 *Hope*

Sermons where section Cc is built on an eternal life motif generally speak about the hope of eternal life⁴⁵⁷, but in several cases he speaks

⁴⁵⁵ S02 Cc) – On the basis of this the bereaved should accept his departure as God’s dealings with a righteous person who is going to the Lord.

⁴⁵⁶ S42 Cc) he makes this reference to Scripture from the stance of one professing: “For we believe in the validity of the words of the Apostle Paul that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Amen.”

⁴⁵⁷ S41 Cc1) presents the hope of eternal life as a perspective on a person’s life and death: “...it means knowing that human life does not end with our physical death. However, death means our last stop. But the last stop in this life only. But just as we often transfer to another connection at a particular bus’s last stop, so at death’s last stop a connection is in fact waiting. From a Christian faith viewpoint death is just a stop where we change over for our journey into eternity.”

S16 Cc): “However, we are left with hope that it is only the end in this earthly life. But there is no end in eternity ...”

In S37 Cc) the hope of eternal life is expressed as hope that the deceased “has already reached eternity’s harbour. A gracious God has already transferred him from this fleeting temporal life to the imperishability of eternal life.” Similarly,

about faith in eternal life.⁴⁵⁸

Hope of resurrection and eternal life. We encounter an expression of the hope of the resurrection in Section Cc of several sermons. As examples, we might mention S47 Cc1)⁴⁵⁹ or S33 Cc) where this hope applies to the deceased woman: ‘Commit her to the grave today with the hope that since Christ did not remain in the tomb, she, who gladly sat at Christ’s feet in her lifetime, will also not remain in the tomb, but there will be a resurrection morn for her, as Christ promised His own.’⁴⁶⁰ In S52 Cc) he expresses this hope as follows: ‘But there is hope even here beyond the death limit...But we know and want to know about the new morning too. And the new morning is the morning of resurrection.’

also S22 Cc): ‘Like a small boat she has already reached the quiet waters of eternity’s harbour, where there are neither storms nor waves, but eternal rest in God’s embrace.’ Similarly, also S23 Cc): ‘Just as river waters flow into the ocean, he has also crossed over into eternity’s sea.’

⁴⁵⁸ For example, S49 Cc): ‘But even the last journey leads somewhere. It also has its destination. The destination of our life’s last journey is eternity. This temporal life is fleeting. But we believe that as people we are imperishable. As Christians we believe in eternal life.’

In S39 Cc) he expresses faith in eternal life as the faith of those gathered at the funeral: ‘Our eternal homeland is there. Our life’s destination is also there. There eternity will reunite what temporality has separated.’

⁴⁵⁹S47 Cc1): ‘Therefore in his letter to the Thessalonians the apostle Paul exhorts the Christians also: “that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” This temporal life has ended. But it is only the end of the first act. This play which is our human life has more than one act. And therefore, if one act ends, it does not now mean the end of everything. On the contrary it is only now that we perceive the truth of the apostle’s words in the epistle to the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, the words spoken long ago by the prophet Ezekiel apply at this funeral also: “Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down!”

⁴⁶⁰ S33 Cc) and he continues: ‘It is Easter Saturday, a moment of which it is true that: “We await the resurrection”. Bid her farewell in this Easter expectancy. Let us await the resurrection! Amen.’

Hope of rest in God's presence. The basis for comfort in S34 Cc is the eschatological outlook of faith⁴⁶¹, which he contrasts with the now concluded hardships of the deceased woman's life⁴⁶².

Hope of reward. In some sermons, he expresses the hope of eternal life via a reference to a reward. S05 Cc) is one such sermon, for example: "Not only people remember what we have done. God Himself also remembers this. 'The words of the Son of God' we read in our text. 'I know your work, your love and faith and service and patient endurance'". And He has promised that He will reward our faithfulness one day. 'Come, you blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom'. The apostle Paul does not say in vain in one place: "whoever sows bountifully will also reap abundantly." We find the same motif in S44 Cc): "And so we are bidding farewell to him today in the Christian hope that the Lord whom He served faithfully in his lifetime will now say to him: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful to me a little; I will give you much. Enter into the joy of your master.' The reward is expressed through the concept of pillars in the heavenly temple in the continuation of

⁴⁶¹ S34 Cc): "And therefore let us now escort her on her journey to eternity in that hope that in that place there will no longer be any of the sorrows of this earthly pilgrimage but God will allow us forget our earthly sorrows and pain there. "Because" as the apostle says, "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." In this hope bid your final farewell to the one leaving us now. Amen."

⁴⁶² S34 Cc): "Her difficult life is now over. She went through so much in such a short life. At some point she lost her own parents and then life brought her serious disappointment when she found herself alone with her fatherless child and was obliged to do the difficult work of raising and nourishing her child and now this severe illness has called her from this world. This temporal life was more of a valley of tears than of joy for her.

this sermon's text⁴⁶³.

Hope for God. The faith of the bereaved tends to be tested by the loss of the loved one, and at the graveside it may all seem to be in vain. Therefore, in S53 Cc) Kišš attempts to assure those attending that the hope of waiting on God will not be put to shame⁴⁶⁴.

7.2.3.4 *Trust in God.*

We find an expression of trust in God applied to (1) the bereaved and (2) the deceased.

Trust in God – regarding the bereaved

In some cases, the bereaved feel abandoned and helpless. Therefore, it is significant that the preacher draws attention to (a) God's presence in their sorrow and (b) hope in God's help.

Ad a) God's presence. In S30 Cc) the basis for comfort and hope is trust in God, to which he exhorts them in the words of a hymn⁴⁶⁵ and which he also expresses with the idea: "In the midst of your great sorrow take comfort that God does not abandon us even

⁴⁶³ S44 Cc): "We believe Scripture's words apply that those who were pillars for their kin in this life will also, according to John's Revelation, be pillars in that heavenly temple which we await.

⁴⁶⁴ S53 Cc): "Testing in life should not be a reason to stop waiting on God and for thinking that hope in Him is in vain. On the contrary we need to say together with Isaiah: "I will wait for the Lord who hides His face and I will hope in Him." No, waiting on the Lord, consecrating our entire lives to an advent hope, is not hoping in vain. It is a hope that will be fulfilled. As Isaiah says in a different place, "Those who wait for the Lord shall not be put to shame."

⁴⁶⁵ In S30 Cc): "Entrust your ways and all your woes to God and the Father's grace will ease your pain. He, who orders and governs the whole world in wisdom, will extend His right hand to you and lead you out of misery."

though many times He allows heavy blows to fall. He will not forsake you either.”⁴⁶⁶ Similarly also in S52 Cc): “Wherever Christian faith is found in human hearts, there hope’s clear light also shines above death’s night⁴⁶⁷. Here is hope that even when God has allowed something, He will not utterly forsake. In these new circumstances, He will surely continue to show you much grace in your lives. ‘

Ad b) Hope in God’s help (that God will strengthen the bereaved) is expressed in S08 Cc) based on two motifs: (1) “The God who sent an angel to Christ in the garden of Gethsemane to strengthen Him to bear His cross will strengthen the bereaved also⁴⁶⁸; (2) Faith in Scripture’s promises about life’s victory over death ‘though death has triumphed for now’”.

Trust in God – regarding the deceased

The bereaved are also dealing with the afterlife of the question of the deceased man and his lot. Therefore, in S26 Cc) the preacher presents a theological basis for parting in the possibility of “commending the (deceased man’s) soul to God’s gracious and loving hands in the hope of eternal life”.⁴⁶⁹ He also expresses trust

⁴⁶⁶ In S28 Cc/Cd) a Biblical awareness is the basis of comfort: “But in this sadness, may we be comforted by the hope of Jacob’s words: “But God will be with you!” Amen.”

⁴⁶⁷ The sermon text holds both present and eschatological comfort.

⁴⁶⁸ S08 Cc): We are left with only one hope in all of this sadness, that God who sent Christ an angel in the garden of Gethsemane to strengthen Him to bear His cross will also help you to bear this excessive load which has come into your lives.”

⁴⁶⁹ In the continuation of section Cc) he mentions: “We believe that where this temporal life fell short, the joy of eternal life will compensate. There in place of things of perishable fleeting worth we will be made rich with eternal riches.”

in God in S38 Cc) (at the funeral of a middle-aged alcoholic who died in mysterious circumstances). Kišš expresses the wish here “for God to be gracious to him and grant him forgiveness of sins wherever he may have fallen short. May Christ Jesus, who said of himself that He did not come to condemn people but to save them, also open the gate of eternal life.”

Hope for God's nearness even in death. We may consider the statement in S43 Cc) of worth also, where he speaks about the closeness of God to the deceased woman in death: (bid farewell in hope...) “that even in death God remained close to one who had lived her entire life near God. He will lead her from the valley of this temporal life to the mountains where there is no longer “any death or affliction”.’ In S07 Cc) he also places this same emphasis on God’s nearness at the death of the dying person with the words of Psalm 23: ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me’.

God's grace does not die. In S45 Cc), he expresses trust in God with a reference to the infiniteness of His grace: “And yet there is still something to hope in. Only people die. God’s grace does not die.”⁴⁷⁰

7.2.3.5 *Content Emphasis*

Here we find such content emphases as (a) a heavenly reward; (b) content statements about eternal life.

⁴⁷⁰ Similarly, also in S15 Cc): “And we also share the hope that God’s grace does not end with a person’s death. In Holy Scripture God promises us that He wants to give His eternal grace when we have passed from this temporal life, for Jesus Christ and for the forgiveness of sins, won by Him for those who believe in Him.”

(a) A heavenly reward

In S19 Cc) he refers to Christ⁴⁷¹ to express in this manner the reality of an abundant reward in heaven. Then, he applies this reality to those being parted with⁴⁷². However, in this sermon, he does not describe in greater detail what this reward is. He presents it from the point of view of what it comprises in a series of his sermons as (a1) a crown of righteousness, life, God's glory; (a2) a dwelling place and rest in eternity; (a3) entering into the joy of one's Master.

a1) The crown of righteousness. In S03 Cc), the preacher says that the deceased woman is 'going to her Lord'. She lived for Him and He is "calling her to that place to give His faithful servant her heavenly reward". In this sermon, he also presents what this reward comprises – with a reference to Apostle Paul: "The apostle Paul says about this: "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day."

The crown of life. At first, he speaks non-specifically about the heavenly reward in S10 Cc), but eventually he elaborates on what it comprises with a reference to James's "crown of life"⁴⁷³. We also find a reference to the crown of life in S24 Cc).⁴⁷⁴

The crown of God's glory. In S02 Cc) we also find faith in eternal life

⁴⁷¹ S19 Cc): "Christ says: "Behold, your reward is great in heaven".

⁴⁷² S19 Cc): "And we are escorting our loved ones, who did so much for us during their lives in the Christian hope that their reward in heaven would also be great...."

⁴⁷³ S10 Cc2) "For the apostle James' words apply: "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him"

⁴⁷⁴ S24 Cc): "Holy Scripture speaks about the crown of life being prepared for those who are found faithful. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

among other emphases⁴⁷⁵, when he says of the deceased man: “He is departing where a crown of God’s glory is prepared for those who have faithfully completed their life race.”

a2) *A dwelling place and rest in eternity.* In S46 Cc) he expresses the heavenly reward as a “prepared dwelling place” and ‘rest from all our work and struggles.’⁴⁷⁶

In S35 Cc)⁴⁷⁷ it is also similar, though here he also includes an emphasis on an eternal celebration of God in the heavens.

a3) *Entering into the joy of one’s master.* In S21 Cc) he expresses the wish: ‘May he hear the words of Holy Scripture in God’s presence: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful to me a little; I will give you much. Enter into the joy of your master”. Amen.’ It is also similar in S32 Cc)⁴⁷⁸

(b) Statements about eternal life

A place without death, tears, and sorrow. In S16 Cc) he elaborates on what eternal life includes (in connection with the loss being processed): “There is no longer any death, nor tears, nor sadness in

⁴⁷⁵ S02 Cc) - On the basis of this the bereaved should accept his departure as God’s dealings with a righteous person going to the Lord.

⁴⁷⁶ S46 Cc) “But there in eternity a dwelling place has been prepared for us all. There God wants to give us rest from all our work and struggles. There our tribulations and diseases will end.”

⁴⁷⁷ S35 Cc): “Now may God grant eternal rest in His presence in heaven to his faithful servant who served him from birth until his old age. May he who praised Him in this world now praise Him ever more in the glorified Church in the heavens.”

⁴⁷⁸ S32 Cc): “But after a lifetime of hard and exhausting work, the moment of reward has now come. Given that he was able to serve, given that he did not bury his talents and abilities, given the great good he sowed in his life, given that he kept faith in Christ, may he now hear the Lord’s word: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. Amen.”

that place.”

The joy of eternal life and eternal wealth. In S26 Cc) he characterises eternal life through two groups of contrasts: “We believe that where this temporal life fell short, the joy of eternal life will compensate. There, in place of things of perishable fleeting worth, we will be made rich with eternal riches. ‘

The goodness of eternity: future glory and existence with Christ. In S41 Cc2), he cites the apostle Paul when he speaks of eternity as ‘the future glory that is to be revealed to us’ and “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is much better.’ In both of these statements he speaks about the goodness of eternity and yet he maintains a biblically anchored restraint of expression.

Eternal life as ‘the radiant light of the deceased in God’s presence in heaven’. In S36 Cc)⁴⁷⁹ Kišš’s starting point is the Easter message and he appeals to the bereaved to release the deceased woman “from her midst in the hope that only in this life has her light been extinguished. There in heaven it will shine in God’s presence in eternity.”⁴⁸⁰

7.2.3.6 Pastoral implications

In his sermon work Kišš shows that he counts on an unambiguous

⁴⁷⁹ The quoted text in the next comment is weighted down with too many impulses for the hearer to process and they merely become a matter of funeral poeticism for him.

⁴⁸⁰ S36 Cc) and he continues: “Holy Scripture says of those who live exemplary lives that they will shine like stars in the sky. Her memory will shine in our hearts. But if as humans we will remember her and will love and honour her memory, how much more will she be remembered by the One who says: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life”. After the darkness of this temporal life through which it was necessary for her to pass, He will give her a share in the heavenly light. He will grant her to live there, where He Himself is the sun. As John says in Revelation “the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” Therefore, may the eternal light shine for her, because she shone in this life.”

(a) relationship between faith in eternal life and the processing of grief. In this subchapter, we will go on to consider the possibilities of (b) supporting acceptance of loss and (c) supporting processing of loss.

(a) Faith in eternal life and processing grief

In S14 Cc2) Kišš indicates the significance of faith in the process of overcoming grief at the loss of a loved one: “Let us together say in Christ’s words: “We are going to the Father”. Dear grieving family, if this goal is clear to you, then this parting of death will be easier for you. Amen.”

In S49 Cc), Kišš also says that without faith in eternal life⁴⁸¹ we would surely be even sadder when contemplating a human life prematurely ended. In this way, he speaks indirectly of the significance of faith for processing grief.

He refers to the strength of faith in God in S06 Cc), when he juxtaposes hope in general and hope in God: “Hope always lifts and comforts people. But hope in God comforts us and lifts us even in death.” This statement connects to the sermon text and the sermon content hitherto⁴⁸².

| *Differentiated levels of processing (spiritual and mental).* In S17 Cc), the preacher uses two scriptural statements (1) Jesus’ words in the

⁴⁸¹ S49 Cc): “But even the last journey leads somewhere. It also has its destination. The destination of our life’s last journey is eternity. This temporal life is fleeting. But we believe that as people we are imperishable. As Christians we believe in eternal life.

⁴⁸² S06 Cc): “Therefore, even in the most difficult life situation there is a way out. And there is hope even in death. “Wait on God because you shall still thank Him!” (Psalm 42:5: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him”).

garden of Gethsemane: ‘Not my will, but yours, be done.’ and (2) David’s words: ‘I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me’. This combination of statements might create a contradictory impression because it is an expression of spiritual assent and of psychological tension in the face of reality. However, we can observe this very thing with losses in families with active spiritual lives. They respect God’s decision and therefore experience their grief as questioning their faith. Preaching at church services and funerals should create the conditions so that healthy starting points for faith are not a simplistic interpretation set up against a psychological processing of the loss. On this basis we might consider the above-mentioned observation in Kišš’s sermons as theologically justified.

(b) Supporting the acceptance of the loss

The Faith perspective. Reality, which appear unbearable from a faithless perspective, may appear differently when a faith perspective is considered. The death of a loved one is one such case, in which Kišš attempts to point to loss as God’s action⁴⁸³ or God’s decision⁴⁸⁴. Based on this altered perspective, an attempt is made to change the view of the deceased woman’s death in S01 Cc): “And thus we can accompany her today on her last journey in this hope that now even her death will be blessed, for ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on’ Amen.”

⁴⁸³ S19 Cc) “Now take comfort that God has now transferred His servant from this earthly life to a new future of eternal life. Grant him this new future because, as we read in our Holy Scripture text, “there is a future”.”

⁴⁸⁴ S29 Cc): “And thus a voice from heaven sounded: “My grace is sufficient for you.” May we, the bereaved, also humble ourselves before this voice.”

(c) Supporting the grief process

In S04 Cc), the preacher says ‘The hope of eternity will comfort us when we must part with our loved ones in death.’ May it provide us with the strength to release them from our earthly homes to the heavenly home.⁴⁸⁵ Coming to terms with the loss is a long-term process; therefore, we can apply Kišš’s words cited not only to the day of the funeral, but also to the whole process of dealing with the loss. In this very process that the ‘hope of eternity’ has a unique place, allowing the bereaved individual to come eventually accept the loss and have a renewed desire for life.

Statements about the deceased person. In S11 Cc) he supports the process of dealing with loss from a different angle, starting from two facts: (1) parting to enter God’s love⁴⁸⁶; (2) spiritual preparedness for death⁴⁸⁷.

Interdisciplinary approach. Kišš links the catechism in with S14 Cc1)⁴⁸⁸ and aims to use it pastorally by connecting the two statements: “do not remain in your grief only” – (because): The journey he has now set out on is one that you, as believers, know. Also, in S44 Cc)⁴⁸⁹ he proceeds from the catechistic content (“We believe in eternal life”)

⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, also S16 Cc): “And may this hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord also ease this difficult parting for us. Amen.”

⁴⁸⁶ S11 Cc): “She has not gone into the unknown but into the bosom of God’s eternal love. After all, she believed in this.”

⁴⁸⁷ S11 Cc): “She prepared for her death also by receiving Holy Communion.

⁴⁸⁸ S14 Cc1): “And yet even though you are now bidding him farewell forever, do not remain in your grief only. The journey he has now set out on is one that you as believers know. It is a journey to eternal life’s bright land. God’s grace has prepared this new land for us. He wants to give us a share in it through the forgiveness of our sins through Christ.”

⁴⁸⁹ S44 Cc): “We believe in eternal life. And may this hope be a comfort to us that those who die in Christ have crossed over from death to life. Amen.”

and applies it pastorally: “And may this hope be of comfort to us that those who die in Christ have crossed over from death to life.” We find the same approach also in S47 Cc2): “May your tears over the loss of your deceased be wiped away by the Christian hope that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Amen.”

7.2.4 Conclusion, Section Cd) parenthetical impulses

Parenthetical impulses are found in most of Kišš’s funeral sermon of Kišš (they are only absent in sermons S01; S21; S32; S33; S41; S44; S46; S47). In these, he appeals to those in attendance to apply the consequences of the reality of faith to the situation in which they find themselves. We can divide these impulses into two main sections: (1) processing grief; (2) appealing to live a Christian life.

7.2.4.1 *Processing the grief*

Parenthetical impulses that concern processing grief refer to the place in the grief process. (1) They comfort with a reference to God’s presence; (2) they lead to adopting a faith attitude in grief; (3) they lead to actions related to the funeral based on faith; (4) they comfort with a look at the value of expectation of faith.

Comfort by a reference to God’s presence

In S28 Cd),⁴⁹⁰ he expresses comfort by referring to God’s presence⁴⁹¹. In S30 Cd) he also has a similar approach, however, here he expresses trust straightforwardly that God will give them the

⁴⁹⁰ In S28 motifs Cc) and Cd) overlap.

⁴⁹¹ S28 Cc/Cd): “But in this sadness may we be comforted by the hope of Jacob’s words: “But God will be with you!” Amen.”

strength to overcome grief's difficulties⁴⁹². In S43 Cd) he links comfort to awareness of God's nearness with the view to meeting in God's embrace⁴⁹³.

A Faith attitudes

Kišš presents faith (a) as a help in grief; (b) as in interpretation of the situation; (c) as an expectation of eternity's goodness; (d) as protection from despair.

(a) Faith as a help in grief

In S04, the preacher says that they should also think "about the eternity awaiting us." It is in this very attitude of faith that people later find help in the loss of their loved ones.⁴⁹⁴ In S06 Cd) he appeals to listeners "to receive comfort in sorrowful moments through hope in God and to see the great light coming from hope in God."⁴⁹⁵ According to S31 Cd) faith is a help in grief when he says to the bereaved: "But may the light of Christian hope that those

⁴⁹² S30 Cd): "In your great grief take comfort that God does not abandon a person though he has allowed him to be afflicted with many blows. He will not abandon you either. And we remain together with you also, empathizing with you and bearing your grief with you. God will strengthen you to overcome this difficult tribulation which has come into your life. Amen."

⁴⁹³ S43 Cd): "In your grief may the nearness of God be a blessing to you, the awareness that "in the evening we will all be gathered again in God's embrace from whence we came." And even in this sad moment may this hope be your comfort. Amen."

⁴⁹⁴ S04 Cd): "Let us think not only of this earthly fleeting life but also about the eternity awaiting us. The hope of eternity will comfort us when we must part with our loved ones in death. May it strengthen us to release them from our earthly homes to the heavenly home. Amen."

⁴⁹⁵ S06 Cd) the text continues: "This light of hope in God can even comfort a person's grieving soul. Hope always lifts and comforts us. But hope in God lifts and comforts us even in death. And one day we will praise God in eternity for this. Amen."

who die in the Lord rest from their labours shine above your grief. And then this separation will also be easier for you, and Christian hope will comfort you in this sorrow. Amen.” He also refers to faith as a help in grief in S51 Cd) at the funeral of a mother who was murdered when he wishes the bereaved ‘the hope of eternal life lift’ them.⁴⁹⁶

(b) Faith as an interpretation of the situation

Faith opens up a new perspective to the Christian when it points him to ‘the light of eternity’ even in such a situation as bleak as the loss of a loved one. Kišš uses this motif to encourage the bereaved in a wide range of sermons where he teaches them to see that “something more than fleeting temporal life exists”⁴⁹⁷ and that “a new morning beyond the gateway of death”⁴⁹⁸, “the resurrection morning”⁴⁹⁹, comes after the night of death. Therefore, the Christian is able to bid farewell to his loved ones in the hope of faith⁵⁰⁰ and

⁴⁹⁶ S51 Cd): “May this light of the hope of eternal life lift you also in this moment, you who are so very grieved by this extremely tragic event. Amen.”

⁴⁹⁷ S08 Cd): “In these sad moments may we be lifted by faith in something greater than this passing life. Death will be finally conquered there where God will wipe away all tears from our faces and will give His eternal peace and eternal bliss in His kingdom. Amen.”

⁴⁹⁸ S50 Cd): “However, may the hope live in us that a new morning is also coming there beyond the gateway of death, a morning of eternal life before God’s face. Amen.”

⁴⁹⁹ S52 Cd) “However there is hope even there beyond death’s boundaries. Though night-time, the night-time of death has come into the life of your dear departed one, we know and want to know about the new morning also. And this new morning is the resurrection morning. And in view of this hope of eternity, do not give way to despair, dear grieving family. Look up to eternity where your dear deceased has also gone. And may this hope of eternity bring clear light into the darkness of this grief. Amen.”

⁵⁰⁰ S19 Cd): “Therefore it is in hope that we can and should bid farewell to our loved ones because in that distant place whither our loved ones have betaken

even ‘to wish them rest in God’s embrace.’⁵⁰¹

(c) Faith as an expectation of eternity’s goodness

Losing a loved one deprives the bereaved of positive expectations. Everything loses its meaning and value. They no longer have any expectations of good. In S17 Cd) Kišš applies the faith perspective to encourage the bereaved in their loss experience to think specifically of future good, when ‘all sorrows will be changed to divine joy and security’⁵⁰².

(d) Faith as a protection from despair

Deep loss leads people into despair. In S03 Cd) Kišš wishes for the bereaved to be filled with ‘this hope’ and under its influence the separation will not be “hope-less.”⁵⁰³ It is not merely a play on words in this approach, but a serious theological statement where the preacher counts on the protective function of faith in the processing of difficult losses.

themselves and whither we will all someday betake ourselves, we do not see darkness and emptiness but we see eternity’s light shining from there.”

⁵⁰¹ S22 Cd): “Grant her now, after her difficult life journey, to rest now in the arms of the One, whom she trusted and in whom she placed her hope. Amen.” He proceeds in a similar way in S35 Cd) also: “But grant him now this wonderful share in the salvation of the chosen. Amen.”

⁵⁰² S17 Cd): “Now that this temporal life is over, only one thing really remains: to fix your eyes on eternity whither he has now gone, and to believe what our hymn promises us, that “all our griefs will be changed there, into godly joy and security”. Dear grieving family, may this hope be your comfort in this sorrowful moment. Amen.”

⁵⁰³ In S03 Cd): “May you also be filled with this hope in these moments, dear grieving family, and then this farewell, which saddens you, will not be hopeless for you. Amen.”

Faith's actions

In several sermons we find parenthetical impulses in Section Cd), in which the preacher calls the bereaved to a certain faith-based behaviour, and this behaviour of faith involves bidding farewell to the deceased. In S49 Cd) the funeral itself is also supposed to be this kind of faith behaviour⁵⁰⁴, expressed in other sermons as an exhortation to 'escort him on the final journey'⁵⁰⁵ or 'committing the deceased's soul into God's hands'⁵⁰⁶.

The expectation of faith

In Kišš's work in this section we find (a) assurance that 'those who wait for the Lord will not be put to shame' and (b) expectation of meeting the deceased in eternity.

(a) 'Those who wait for the Lord will not be put to shame.'

In S26 Cd), he develops the concept of 'a heavenly reward' as eternal wealth outweighing things of perishable temporal value.⁵⁰⁷ In S10 Cd)⁵⁰⁸ he develops it in three parts, with the emphases: (1) doing

⁵⁰⁴ S49 Cd): "Therefore, in the hope of eternity, commit your dear deceased to the grave. Amen."

⁵⁰⁵ S15 Cd): "And therefore, in the hope of God's eternal grace, escort him on his last journey now." Similarly, also S13 Cd): "And since there is a future of eternal life, escort our dear departed on their last journey, full of hope and faith in God's future of eternal life. Amen."

⁵⁰⁶ S39 Cd2): "Entrust her body to mother earth, but commit her spirit to God's hands in the hope of eternal life in God's presence. And may this faith in eternity teach you to be strong."

⁵⁰⁷ S26 Cd): "There in place of things of perishable fleeting worth we will be made rich with eternal riches."

⁵⁰⁸ In S10 Section Cd) is interpolated twice with section Cc): Cd1-Cc1-Cd2-Cc2-Cd3

good will not be in vain⁵⁰⁹; (2) the heavenly reward encourages the doing of many good deeds⁵¹⁰; (3) this awareness should be reflected in the practical Christian life⁵¹¹.

He also expresses the stability and reliability of waiting on the Lord in S20 Cd)⁵¹². In S27 Cd) he expresses it without reference to the quotation in Isaiah: “No, this hope that God will grant us grace for Christ’s sake will certainly not be disappointed. Neither will our deceased be disappointed in death nor will we who lean upon this hope be disappointed. There, beyond death’s boundaries, Christ will be that bridge for us, which takes us from this fleeting life to a blessed eternity.’ In S53 Cd) he first applies the concept of hope that is not disgrace to the deceased woman when he says: ‘Believe that death was not a disappointment of her great hope but actually its fulfilment’. Then, he encourages those present to live waiting on

⁵⁰⁹ S10 Cd1): “Therefore let us all live our lives in this world in hope that “those who wait for the Lord will not be put to shame”. Nor will our many good deeds in this world be in vain.”

⁵¹⁰ S10 Cd2): “May this also encourage us then to not forget about the heavenly reward in this world and to endeavour to do much good.”

⁵¹¹S10 Cd3): “Therefore let us also live our lives according to God’s will, in obedience to God’s commandments, in love towards our neighbours, in well-ordered marriages, in self-sacrifice, in praise to God, knowing that those who wait for the Lord shall not be put to shame. Amen.”

⁵¹² S20 Cd): “May her life example also teach us all to lean on God in life. Holy Scripture says: “He is a shield of all those who take refuge in Him” ... “Therefore, may we all be able to declare that God’s right hand was our support in life and in death. Then we will also experience that our hope in the Lord will never disappoint us as the prophet Isaiah said: “Those who wait for the Lord shall not be put to shame”. God’s right hand will also guide us safely through this life, but it will also be our support in death. He gives us the hope of eternal life also. He teaches us to see death as the meaningful end of our life’s pilgrimage, where the longed-for harbour of peace in God’s embrace is reached after life’s storms. Amen.”

God and assures them that this hope will be fulfilled.⁵¹³ He also devotes his attention to the concept of a heavenly reward in S05 Cd), where he exhorts those in attendance to live lives that resemble a symphony: ‘Even if it is brief, at least let it be lovely.’ However, the words about a heavenly reward sound here like the merit of man and not like God’s gift of grace.⁵¹⁴

(b) Expectation of meeting the deceased in eternity

In S07 Cd), he simply observes that we are heading to eternity where we will meet with those who have died⁵¹⁵. In S18 Cd) he assumes that listeners need to be encouraged toward practical manifestations of the Christian life; therefore, he words his appeal: “Therefore, endeavour also to travel through this fleeting life in such a way that the promise of eternal life given to God’s people may also shine on you. And then what this temporal life has separated, eternity will reunite. Amen.” He uses the same approach in S25 Cd) also, where he encourages the bereaved to live a Christian life so that as redeemed people they may meet the deceased.⁵¹⁶

7.2.4.2 *An exhortation to live a Christian life*

In parenthetical section Cd) we find Kišš’s exhortations to live a

⁵¹³ S53 Cd): “If you wait on God in life, you will be able to meet the death awaiting you someday with hope also, with this great hope that your lifelong Advent hope will be fulfilled. Amen.”

⁵¹⁴ S05 Cd): “May a heavenly reward await us also for all our love, faith, service and patience in life.”

⁵¹⁵ S07 Cd): One day we will all go there “(to “the eternal harbour of peace where he is resting in God’s embrace”) in order to be reunited with those who have preceded us into eternity. Amen.”

⁵¹⁶ S25 Cd): “Pray to God that you might also live your lives in such a way that you might one day join the multitude of the redeemed, so that what this earthly life separated might be reunited by eternity. Amen.”

Christian life that he expresses as an appeal: (a) to lift your gaze to eternity; (b) to a righteous and God-fearing life; (c) to faithful stewardship; (d) to live for the blessing and welfare; (e) to live as God's servants; (f) to prepare for eternity. Kišš words these appeals as follows:

Ad a) Lifting one's gaze to eternity is a motif in S39 Cd1), where Kišš says: "And therefore, lift your gaze also to eternity." The context of the statement is clear. The sermon text deals with the matter of life heading towards eternity. Lifting your gaze to eternity then means living with an eternal perspective and an eternal focus. We find a similar thought in S11 Cd) also⁵¹⁷, but what the image of "lifting one's gaze to eternity" implies in this sermon is not obvious either from the statement's wording or from its context in the sermon (as it does not provide information on the Christian lives of the bereaved). We could understand this image (1) as an evangelistic appeal to bereaved who are not living a life of faith (lifting one's gaze to eternity as gaining faith), or we can also understand it as (2) processing grief from a faith perspective (lifting one's gaze to eternity when dealing with loss).

Both the first and the second interpretative possibilities would be objectively justifiable, and we assume that the listeners who were aware of the context understood it.

Ad b) A call to a righteous and God-fearing life. In S02 Cd) the preacher motivates the funeral congregation on the departure of a righteous and God-fearing man: "Let us also try and be Simeons, so that one day when we also die, it would be possible to say to us: "And here

⁵¹⁷ S11 Cd): "May her loving motherly gaze be engraved in your minds forever and may it lift your gaze towards eternity where she has now gone. Amen."

lived a person who resembled Simeon, “a righteous and God-fearing person, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel”.⁵¹⁸”

Ad c) A call to faithful stewardship. In S24 Cd) he calls on those in attendance to live as faithful stewards of whom God might give a good testimony⁵¹⁸.

Ad d) Christians living for others' blessing and welfare. This kind of life has its foundation in the teaching of God's Word⁵¹⁹. He expresses this same reality in S36 with reference to Christ's words about Christians being the light of the world⁵²⁰. A special area of Christian responsibility is family life⁵²¹.

Ad e) Christians as servants of God. In S29 Cd) he presents a Christian's highest personal goal as ‘not aspiring to anything beyond being

⁵¹⁸ S24 Cd): “Let us only learn how to be also found as faithful stewards one day. May not only people testify to our faithfulness but may God Himself testify one day to our faithfulness to the tasks with which we were entrusted in our family, in society and in the church. Then we will leave behind us on earth the best memories but we will also gain an imperishable eternal hope for the hour of death. Amen.”

⁵¹⁹ S40 Cd): “May this be an opportunity for all of us to consider how to make our lives blessed and full; what to do in order to bring abundant light and blessing into our lives, in order to successfully carry out in our own lives all that God's Word has taught us for the blessing and good of all who live with us. Amen.”

⁵²⁰ S36 Cd): “Let us also learn to shine in this life, so that Christ's eternal light may shine on us someday too. Amen.”

⁵²¹ At the funeral of an unfaithful husband, who left his wife and only returned to her prior to death: S09 Cd): “As far as it depends on us, let us try not to break up our family circles, but to work sacrificially for our families. Let us remember Scripture's words: “You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you” (Psalm 128:2). Amen.”

servants of God'.⁵²²

Ad f) Christians should be prepared for eternity, even if 'the moment also takes us by surprise'.⁵²³ In this way, the preacher shapes their awareness of mortality and the necessity of being ready to depart.

⁵²² S29 Cd): "Let us also learn from the example of Mary, Christ's mother, to not aspire to anything beyond simply being God's servants. In God's eyes this is the greatest thing, which opens the way to eternal life. Amen."

⁵²³ S34 Cd): "Only eternal things are enduring and constant. And therefore, our hymn's words apply: "Let us prepare for eternity while God's grace still endures," (ES 665, 1.4). And if this moment also takes us by surprise, may we be found ready and prepared to meet eternity.

8 CONCLUSION

The text of this book represents the structure-variable model of the funeral sermon, which was used by an evangelical priest and at the same time by the prof. of theology Igor Kišš.

First, I examine the basic data on the case that Kišš mentioned under the term "differentiation" - and I conclude that these data are not sufficient to determine the homiletic situation that the preacher will enter. Therefore, in Part 2.2 I pay attention to mourners as an element of differentiation, and in 2.3 also the liturgical year. Of course, there is also the wider funeral congregation to work with.

The benefit of this research can also be found in Chap. 3, where I followed the relationship between the choice of the biblical text and the homiletic differentiation. Here I found that the preacher can decide basically for:

(3.1) choice of the sermon text considering the differentiation, and here I identified 3 possibilities: (a) "in keeping with the differentiation" or (b) "in contrast to differentiation". The third option is (c) "choice of the text as an act of communication between the subjects involved. This offers the possibility of approaches to text choice.

(3.2) disregarding the differentiation, and reflecting the liturgical year or church dogmatic.

I assume that the knowledge of these possibilities will enrich the approach of preachers to the choice of the biblical text.

The presented funeral sermon model itself consists of the following parts:

General introduction to the funeral sermon (Chap. 4)

Addressing the bereaved (Chap. 5) With the following subsections:

ABa) Connection with family grief

ABb) Short description of the loss that affects the family

ABc) Circumstances of death

ABd) Remarks about the deceased and close family relationships

Kerygmatic part (Chap. 6) with different possible divisions:

Main idea and three sub-points

Main idea and two sub-points.

Main idea without sub-points

Two sub-points without a main idea

Sermon conclusion – Farewell in the hope of the resurrection (Chap. 7):

Ca) An appeal to bid the deceased farewell

Cb) Expressing the difficulty of parting

Cc) Biblical-theological grounds for comfort and hope

Cd) Parenthetical impulses

For each of these parts, alternative approaches to their solution are presented. For example, with the general introduction, Kišš enters the atmosphere of a funeral ceremony. He used to build it on motifs from different areas, and even within them we find variability of approaches. This provides the preacher with refreshing inspiration to seek new approaches of his own.

However, in the evaluation of individual approaches, I present both positive and negative evaluations, which are intended to inspire the reader to critically consider the intended approaches, to be comprehensible, culturally appropriate, and to support and not block the most important intentions of his/her service.

The section Addressing the Bereaved focusses on the case of the deceased person and the grieving family. It does this in a safe way that supports the tasks of the funeral ceremony (saying goodbye to the deceased person) and at the same time avoids the risk of inadequate positive remarks about the deceased person, even in cases where the preacher is burying a person whom he did not know personally. Therefore, I consider this part very important.

In the kerygmatic part, he then develops the message of the biblical text. The different structuring options of this part give the preacher freedom to organise the material he acquires and processes within his knowledge of exegesis and homiletic work.

I consider it important for the preacher to work with the idea of human mortality because this awareness can bring quality to interpersonal relationships and develop awareness of responsibility before God. At the same time, it is important that the sermon works within the Reformation *Sola gratia*, that is, so that even in the case of prominent Christian personalities, it does not imply that a good person, of course, goes to heaven. Salvation is a gift of grace as a result of Christ's sacrifice.

The final part of the funeral sermon also has 4 subtasks. In the footnotes, the reader will find illustrative expressions of their possible solutions, and in the main text, I also present seemingly confusing variants of combined solutions, where in specific funeral sermons, the motives of the individual subtasks intertwine with each other. In other cases, some of them are absent because the preacher did not need to formulate them in the concrete context.

I left these observations in the book, as I formulated them in the analysis of the texts. Its intention was that the reader, on the one hand, accepts these tasks and, on the other hand, implements them

according to the needs of the case and in a way, which suits him/her.

I hope that the presented work will be a tool for preachers that inspires them, draws attention to the risks of individual stages of the preparation process, and encourages them to make the service at funerals a valuable part of fulfilling the tasks to which the Lord has called them for the good of his people.

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