

The Ethnography of Speaking: An Appraisal of Two Selected Nigerian Christian Sermons

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Abstract

Certainly speech as communication act involves much more than conversations. Uttering a meaningful sentence (a speech) with a particular force in order to achieve an aim is what is involved in every speech event. Modern philosophers and linguists have therefore turned speech analysis to include structure of utterances, what utterances do, how they can be used, and how they are used. The achievement of analysis in this direction is dependent on cultural, linguistic, and neurological variables of the content and context of the speech participants. Ethnography of communication is a tool and analytical framework for an investigation of patterns into language use with SPEAKING as the yardstick. This paper as an ethnographic study sets out to examine the trend of discourse in the sermons of two preachers, their common characteristics. This gives an insight into the language of the environment and the competence of preachers. Communication is an act that demands an act by revealing the attitudes and beliefs of the speech participants. For this study, two sermons from an Igbo speaking area (Gariki) were used for the analysis. It was discovered that certain features were dominant in the sermons. With some suggestions, the paper concludes that appropriateness in language use can help in the achievement of communication goals for some positive effects.

Introduction

Presently, speech analysis is not ended with studies on structures of expressions. It extends to what speeches are used for, what they do, and their effects on the receivers. In effect, contemporary studies of speech analysis deal with language as linguistics out of the classrooms - language in use. This use of language takes different perspectives according to context. But this paper looks at language use in the social institutions with the Christian sermon as a case study.

There exist some opinions on the failure of the church sermons as people believe that the message of sermons is not well delivered. Rice (1983:84) would state “for in all Bible ages Christ has not failed, but the church failed, Christianity has not failed, but the preachers, the Christians, the teachers have failed”. Mazzella (2010) would add that “American public life is profoundly secular when 85% of the population professes to be Christians”. Chidili (2010) categorically adds:

Members of the established indigenous African churches in particular, invoke nothing more than images of emotionalism, fanaticism, religious mania... prosperity maniac, credulity and panting for the miracles... it appears as if all her efforts to impact the right way to living in the society [sic] are only yielding fruits of violent crimes, and for the others it appears the church leaders are doing nothing but increasing churches and amassing wealth.

All these point to the fact that there is failure somewhere in the duty of the church as a social institution. Is language the reason for this? This article would like to see the failure from the linguistic perspective. An online article by Cowan (2011) provided some reasons for this failure which can be summed up as “lack of contextual integrity”, “lack of grammatical integrity”, lack of historical and cultural integrity”, and lack of topical integrity”. These reasons are language and communication based. They are the entailments of Grice’s (1967) cooperative principles and their felicity conditions as Wardhaugh (2006:285) would call them which are those speaker-receiver dependent conditions that must be there for effective communication to take place.

A look at the church sermon is a look at a pattern of communication. This paper would like to have communication here to mean the management and manipulation of words and expressions for meaning as well as the extension of such meaning. Though many philosophers would define communication from different perspectives according to their philosophies, theories or models, all accept that there are three basic phenomena in communication - the sender, message and receiver. Such varied definitions may have their roots from the purposes of communication which Hesselgrave (1991:86) sums in the following words:

One purpose was to inform, and this was achieved by rational, logical appeals to the mind. A second purpose was to persuade, and it was thought that this was accomplished mainly by emotional appeals to the soul. A third purpose was to entertain.

These purposes determine the pattern or style of communication as either interpersonal, group, mass, organization, or public communication, even though they complement each other. The last pattern on this list is public communication which does not allow for feedbacks except for non-verbal expressions, and that is where speech/events like public lectures, conventions, sermons e.t.c. fall into.

Sermons belong to a special style of speech event known as sermonic discourse (a religious talk, a long talk on moral subjects or on how to behave). Though people may see different intentions of sermonic discourse from different perspectives, this paper would map out as a working definition of the intention to be to persuade the audience towards the Christian belief which the speaker also believes in. This type of discourse is a non-reciprocal monologic speech event which can be of two types: the face to face speeches or sermons, and the radio or taped message or sermons. Whichever type, Mekiliuwa (2009) identifies four characteristics of sermonic discourse as informing, eliciting, declaring, and directing. Though characterized by these, sermons can take any text style as narrative, descriptive, expository, exhortative, but may not strictly adhere to any and may use more than one style in one sermon. This is determined by the preacher and his purpose.

Language is therefore the tool for sermons, as such, achievements in sermons as a means of evangelization are dependent on effective communication embellished with appropriate methodology and existential realities. It is therefore necessary that all the linguistic devices, including the metaphoric devices and other characteristics of language use, in its reality be recognized and made use of at sermons to avoid the context of misleading conclusions as Sefler (1974:188) has it.

This research is therefore based on this rationale to see if language use at sermons bring about any misleading conclusions through the devices used. This in effect will expose the communicative competence of the preachers who employ the speech act theory in their bid to

sermonize. Though they use this theory, some of them may be doing so without knowing anything about it. This notwithstanding, the theory is in use; it would not be odd therefore to analyze sermons from the linguistic perspective pragmatically through an appropriate tool.

Theoretical Background

The act of using language is referred to as speech act. The analysis of this act can be according to length of sentences, grammatical functions of entailed words or semantic and topical structure of the utterances. Many theories have come up in this regard to describe what happens during speech act in the form of speech act theories. Grice (1975:45) comes from the perspective of “Co-operative Principles”; Wardhaugh (2006:285) as referred to above regards that as “Felicity Conditions” while Hymes (1992:269) summed all up in the anagram –SPEAKING. Malmkjaer, (2002:485) refers to same issue by describing it as “a checklist of dimensions of sociolinguistic awareness involved when speakers communicate in particular speaking situations”. Though these theories in speech act come from different philosophers who come with different perspectives, all try to express the fact that it is not enough to transfer the rules of a language into sentences, but that the knowledge of when to use what to generate appropriate and acceptable expressions according to situations or contexts is an essential prerequisite of the rules. This is the competent determinant of any language. In support of this Bell (1987: 207) adds:

A specification of communicative competence can be recognized as an attempt to define not only how a user is able to judge grammatically, but also how he is able to recognize what is acceptable as a speech act in a social situation.

Hudson (1981) adds that the facts of a speech act depend on the society and culture of the speech background including some rich concepts involved in social interactions. In other words meanings of expressions depend on the meanings of the words of the speech act as well as some environmental ethnographic issues in speaking. Centeno, et al (2007) described ethnography of speaking as providing “a systematic investigation of patterns in language use in interaction...a descriptive analytical framework for communication context and for the participants, their social roles and their impact on the interaction”. In other words it is an empirical and qualitative approach to research into speech act to explore the social and cultural phenomena of the participants of the speech act. Wikipedia (2013) adds that it can be referred to as “case study” because it provides accounts of particular issues, and has the researcher as a participant observer. This type of study can take different styles like explanatory, where cause and effect relationship is studied; exploratory, where questions and hypothesis of other researches are studied; and descriptive, where phenomena are described with their contexts. Being a firsthand account of research, it uses the interview, participant observation, surveys and technical equipments as tools for getting information. These theoretical ideas are relevant and form the back bone for the analysis of this study.

This study being a discourse analysis examines the features and patterns of speech in two Nigerian sermons through the ethnographic yardstick - SPEAKING- the anagram as tool best considered as appropriate in accounting for the historical, social, and linguistic factors that must be operative for effective communication in this ethnographic research.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey type focusing on the assessment of two sermons through the felicity conditions of Wardhaugh as summed by Hymes anagram known as SPEAKING - an ethnographic research tool in sociolinguistic studies. The research design is deemed most appropriate as is focused by the title of this study, and because it appropriately aids the collection of the socio-linguistic and cultural phenomena that determine meaning aimed at effective communication.

The data (two sermons) were randomly drawn from two Christian churches in Gariki area of Enugu Metropolis of Enugu state, Nigeria. The sermons were tape-recorded orally delivered speeches collected by the participant observer researcher, which were later transcribed. The transcribed sermons are attached as appendixes “A” and “B” at the end of this paper. In discussing the content of the sermons, the entailments of the anagram discussed above under setting, participants, end/goal, act sequence, etc with the intent of the speech events were considered.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The distinction between sociolinguistics and ethnography may not be easily drawn according to the views of Salzman (1993). But, Wikipedia (2013) clearly gives a distinction by defining “ethnography as a qualitative research design aimed at exploring cultural phenomena”, while sociolinguistics is the scientific study of the theoretical and practical accounts of the ways language is used in society. Ethnography is therefore a tool in sociolinguistic research, as this one, aimed at describing the social factors relevant in understanding sermons (the data of this research) to show how the speech event has achieved the goal. The letters of the anagram referred to above would be taken one by one as the nodes for the analysis of the sermons as follows:

Analysis of Recorded Sermon A:

S = Setting: This letter stands for speech setting and scene of time and place. The setting of this sermon is in a church and on a Sunday, as such accepted to be appropriate.

P = Participants: Every speech act involves some participants, at least two. Sermons, as non-reciprocal and monologic speech acts, are characterized by just two participants –the preacher and the audience where only the preacher talked all through in the cases of our study. Even when several questions are asked, as in the first paragraph of this first sermon of our analysis, no answer was given nor expected.

E = End: This stands for the achievement of the speaker’s goal as the outcome of a speech act. The outcomes of sermons are not all realized at the end of a sermon. They can be grouped into two- the short term and the long term. The short-term goal may include the fulfillment of obligations on the part of both the preacher and the Christians to attend church on a Sunday. It is the duty of a preacher to preach on a Sunday, and so did the preacher of our sermon. Also, it is the intent of the preacher to persuade the congregation to accept and believe his views, changing their own belief to reflect such in their behaviour and attitude. This as a long-term end cannot be determined by this research.

A = Act Sequence: At this node, the content of the speech act is exposed. This sermon is based on a Bible reading from Genesis 42:1-22 which is an account of Joseph’s relationship with his brothers which lead to his being sold into slavery. He became favoured in his new place and was made in-charge of the kingdom’s food store at a period of very serious famine. Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the sermon account for the visit of his brothers (who could not recognize him) to his new home. The preacher drew an analogy on the evils of jealousy from the Nigerian situation, but added that Joseph’s behaviour is emulative. He added that the contrary is the case in Nigeria where people

treat others the way they would not want to be treated which he linked to what Nigerian “governors” do.

In paragraph 3, there came a swift deviation from the ideas of the reading to the admonitions of Jesus, even when no such ideas came up in the reading. This deviation can be regarded as a type of linguistic device of inference which is used to clearly depict the possible meaning of an utterance. This communication is a narrative style with a lot of questions in the first paragraph, which never got any answer or reaction from the congregation, as is common with sermons.

K = Key: As a semi formal monologic interaction, the tone and manner is in the light mood. Though this mood dominated, it changed to sarcastic ‘raised voice’ at the juncture where the preacher linked the Bible story to the Nigerian situation.

I = Instrument: The mode of communication here is both written and oral - the Bible reading and the oral speech of the preacher. The sermon was a monologic one-way communication style in a high level of code mixing and code switching.

N = Norm: This node has to do with the behavioural properties (rules of speech and behaviour) attached to the speech act. The narrative style of the sermon does not allow for much addition of speech behavioural properties like gestures, demonstrations, use of literary devices to reflect the cultural memories of the congregation. The only reference is the analogy dram from the political situation of Nigeria.

G = Genre: To expose the appropriate genre of this sermon would just be to say that the preacher sermonized. But the node would go further to demand for other particular types of utterances of the speech act. As Wardhaugh (2006:248) would say, one can be told to stop “sermonizing” because the genre of sermons can be recognized in one’s speech. Such genres include that of information, persuasion, declaration and direction which could be found mainly in the last paragraph of this sermon where Igbo words of persuasion were used in most of the concluding sentences. The genres of information and declaration dominated the first two chapters.

The code of this sermon is best classified as code mixing/switching which is a common phenomenon among bilinguals. But the extent of its use here queries the content of the sermon as ambiguity results from the mixture at even the word levels. This equally posed a serious challenge to the transcription of the sermon. Example:

Asị m ka njuo unu otu ajuju soso. Suppose in your community, may be you did nothing, just because *na i na* aprogress, and *umunna gi abia* hatie *gi*, may be *i bu* the first person *bidoro ruwa uno* and *uno-enu* for that matter, even though *na i na emere ndi mmadu ebere* at least *enyere ndi ogbenye aka, anokata umunna gi asị na ibu* an armrobber [sic], *cho ka ha gbuo gi*, just like that.

Other four sentences following this are in the same style and without any question as the opening sentence suggests. Wittgenstein (1953) would say that the best communication is that done in ordinary language, adding that language should always be reformed to be unambiguous.

Though code-mixing and switching as euphemism and as a therapy for achieving specific goal is a necessity in multilingual setting, it should be borne in mind that communicating ambiguous expressions is not effective communication.

Analysis of Recorded Sermon B

S = Setting: No setting could be more appropriate for this second sermon than was obtainable as it is also delivered in a church.

P = Participants: The participants of this speech event are the preacher, members of the congregation, and the researcher as a participant observer.

E = End: The expected outcome of a speech event like ours here are of two kinds - the short-term and the long-term, and as said earlier, the long-term cannot be fully accounted for by this research. The short-term outcome can be inferred as the members of the congregation listened as their Sunday obligation demands. The preacher/pastor equally preached as his Sunday obligation demands too.

A = Act Sequence: The preacher of this sermon started by highlighting four characteristics of one who gets favour from God as the subthemes of his discussion. The sermon is transcribed into four paragraphs as the researcher deemed appropriate. A look at the first paragraph would reveal that it was not an introduction as should be expected, but a mix-up of ideas on need for prayer, what the people owe the church, how sin puts the people out of God's presence, and seeking the easy way out through prophecies. The second paragraph is a stress on the importance of the priests as the people's helper who should not be remembered only at the point of need (when God is needed). Paragraph three emphasized trusting God as Hezekiah and Joshua did. The last paragraph stressed serving God from the pocket as the alter "is a place of exchange, *iluo ebe anwa*, you exchange physical things". It concluded with admonitions to the people as follows: "*Qbxrꝑgodì na aka g [ad [rꝑ ꝑcha*, there is atonement *ya gbahara g [first*." This was followed by "Praise the Lord! Alleluia!" as the end of the sermon.

Throughout the sermon, there was no reference to the subtitles listed at the beginning of the sermon, nor any precise discussion of any of them, not even at the conclusion. As was observed in 'Sermon A', this sermon also infers known Biblical ideas of the evil of 'sin' to also expose the importance of inference in sermonic discourse.

K = Key: The language of this sermon is semi-formal and mild, but the preacher turned sarcastic as he talked about the people's inability to give to priests, about sacrifice and about living in sin.

I = Instrument: The mode of this communication was fully oral delivery as no reading was done from any written document (not even from the Bible).

N = Norms: This sermon was presented in a semi-formal style. Its norm was the "frozen" form of interaction since only the preacher talked. No use of any specific literary device was noticed except for code mixing and switching.

G = Genre: The adopted genre was like that of 'Sermon A', sermonic as well as narrative style. The language is difficult to classify as all the five levels of code mixing by *Iqbal* (2011) (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, word level, phrase level, and clause levels) were present in this single sermon. The Igbo language used had no dialectal focus and none of the rich linguistic devices of Igbo language was used. The ideas of the sermon are as mixed as the codes. The sermon lacked orderliness. What is demanded of a communicative event is not necessarily linguistic prowess but some competence for effective communication and for the realization of the intended goal. Such competence can only be displayed through a good manipulation of the genre of discourse.

Findings

The framework of this analysis is a good tool for the exposition of the extent of goal realization of any speech act like the two cases of our study. It aids a good look at the content and methodology of the sermons as the understanding of content is dependent on methodology. The goal of every communication is to extend an intended meaning. The intended meaning behind every Christian

religious sermon should be to persuade the audience (congregation) to change their attitudes and beliefs through “rational logical appeals to the mind” (Hesselgrave 1991:86) by the preacher; in effect, to bring right thinking and right living - a “transformation” as Kraft (1979:345) would add to the society. None of the two sermons of our analysis was able to target this intension as their methodologies could not aid the extension of intended meanings and goals.

Again, it was observed that these two sermons expose the level of linguistic incompetence of the preachers as are displayed in their use of language (as code switching/mixing is a sign of some incompetence in a single code); see Appendixes “A” & “B”. Just as no other thing can be achieved in the society without effective use of language, so it is with preaching: poor language, poor communication, is poor goal realization.

Another observation is that no proper use of the linguistic devices of the language of the environment as part of the culture of the people was used. A sermon reflecting the people’s cultural background, their linguistic and figurative devices would have involved and engaged the audience to the two sermons into more rapt attention.

Finally, the two sermons are characterized by a type of English that would go well for Nigerian English, as well as high code mixing and code switching. Though code switching/mixing is a common phenomenon in multilingual settings, its mismanagement can distort meaning.

Conclusion

This research analysis has tried to examine two Nigerian Christian sermons to expose the communicative and resultant roles of speech events like the sermon. It has revealed that sermon is a type of linguistic act with a lot of linguistic features and patterns that influences activities in the society; therefore needs more studies. Appropriate language use is therefore a necessity at speech events for effective communication.

Recommendation

To persuade and convince in other to make people change their views demands appropriate language which is environment dependent. Since code mixing/switching is a common phenomenon in multilingual settings, the researcher recommends a domestication and regularization of code mixing/switching according to environments to have a standard for effective communication.

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Appendix “A”

Transcribed Sermon A: Genesis 42: 1- 22

Achohụ m ikwu ogologo okwu n'ututu a. Onye obuna gere nti ga-aghota ihe mere ebe Joseph na umunne ya noo. Joseph siri ha, that is, umunne ya, na ha jee kpota their youngest brother if not, na o ma resi ha nri ozoo. Ihe Joseph ji na-eme ihe ndi a, bu maka na o na-achoo uzo o gae-esi ahụ nwanne ha nke obere. Ka Joseph batara na-aju umunne ya maka etu ha si di, ha na-ako, na-ako etu one of them siri nwuo. One of them nwuru anwu bu onye? Joseph na onwe ya. Ha atoola asi there: na otu onye n'ime ha nwuru anwu. O bja leecha ndi a anya, gbachi ha nkiti. Mana mgbe o matara na nna ya di ndu, o wee si ndi soja na ndi ozoo nnocha ebe ahxpuo. O were bido bewe akwa. Asi m ka m juo unu otu ajuju sooo: suppose in your community, may be you did nothing, just because na i na-aprogress, and umunna g[abia hatie gi, maybe i bu the first person bidoro ruwa unoo and unoo enu for that matter, even though na i na-emere ndi mmadu ebere at least enyere ndi ogbenye aka, anokata umunna gi asi na i bu an armrobber, cho ka ha gbuo gi, just like that. Ha bja dupu gi, ree gi to another place, may be to ala Hausa, a na-ata gi afufu there, and this people echee na e gbuola gi. But i biazie there, bja buru a big man, and something emekwa eba ahụ, may be a gbaa oso, gbaje ebe di

iche iche. So one day, *ị* *bia* lee anya, *bia* *fụ* one of those people *na-asị*, this man must die, this man must die. And ebe *ị* *hụrụ* this man emela *gị* chief *n'ebe* *ahụ*, when you see such person, what are you going to do to the person? What will be your position towards the person? *Ọ* *bụ* *ka* e *gbuo* *ya*? *Ka* a *ga-emere* *ya* *ebere*?

It is not easy oh, so that is what happened in Joseph's case. When his brothers came, they did not recognize him, *mana* Joseph *mechara* *mere* *ha* *ebere*. You see *Chineke* *sina* Joseph *na-akwado* *uzọ*, *ọ* *ga-eji* *zọpụta* *ndị* *nke* *ya*. *Chukwu* *chọrọ* *ka* *o* *si* *n'aka* *ya* *zọpụta* *ndị* *ya*. You see in the minds of his brothers, they wanted to eliminate him, to wicked him, not knowing that they were creating an avenue *ha* *ga-eji* *nweta* *ngọzi* *nke* *Chineke*. But that does not mean that they recognize it. *Oge* *ufọdụ* *anyị* *nwere* *ike* *fụ* *onye* *aka* *ya* *dị* *ọcha*, *mana* *a* *na-emegide* *ya*, *na-emegide* *ya*, without knowing that good will eventually come out of it. Many of us do it in our local communities. *A* *na-emegide* *onye* *aka* *ya* *dị* *ọcha*, in other to do what we want to do. *Ndị* *okenye* *na-aghọ* *aghughọ*, *na-eme* *mpu* *n'obodo*, *ha* *fụ* *onye* *okenye* *na-egbochi* *ya* *ime* *ihe* *ọjọọ* *ha* *chọrọ* *ime* *n'obodo*, they do everything possible to make sure, *na* *ha* *chụpụrụ* *ya* *from* *there*.

These things still happens now, for example now, our governors, some of them *na* *enwerọ* *ihe* *ha* *na* *arụ* *or* *even* *some* *other* *people* *na-achị*, you will see some people praising them saying, *nekwa* *ihe* *ha* *rurụ*, *na* *ha* *rurụ* *nke* *a*, *rụọ* *nke* *ọzọ*, because they have been paid to say such things. *Mana* *onye* *nke* *na-eme* *ezi* *ihe* *ọma* *o* *werọ* *onye* *ga-erecognize* *ya*. That is why Nigeria won't move forward, because when you see somebody doing bad things, you praise the person because of what the person gives you. *Ihe* *a* *na-eme* *n'obodo* *anyị*, too much. *Ndị* *ahụ* *nọ* *n'ọchịchị* *na-erotate* *from* *one* *person* *to* *another*, *maka* *na* *ị* *burụ* *onye* *ezi* *omume* *bata* *n'ebe* *ahụ*, *ha* *ga-eme* *ihe* *niile* *ka* *ha* *wepụ* *gị*, *ka* *ha* *wee* *na-achikwa* *na-agawanye*, *iri* *ego* *Nigeria*. *A* *bia* *n'ebe* *a* *agurụ* *ugbu* *a*, *Jesus* *na-asị* *anyị* *ka* *anyị* *gwọọ* *ndị* *ọria*. *Ị* *lee* *anya*, the word *Jesus* *used* *bụ* "the weak". *Ị* *gwọ* *ndị* *ọria* *q* *na-ekwu* *bụ* *igwọ* *ndị* *a*: the weak *n'ime* *mmụq*, *na* *weak* *na-enu* *arụ*. *Maka* *na* *onye* *ọria* *aburọ* *sosọ* *onye* *nọ* *n'bed*. *Ọ* *ya* *ka* *ọ* *na-agwa* *anyị*, *bụ* *ndị* *nwere* *strength*, *ndị* *nwere* *mmụq* *nsọ* *ka* *anyị* *bunyite* *mmụq* *ndị* *nke* *ha* *dara* *ada*, *ka* *ha* *nwee* *ike* *biakwute* *Chineke* *again*. *Ọ* *kwukwara* *ọzọ* *sị* *kponyitenu* *ndị* *nwuru* *anwụ*, *ndị* *nwuru* *anwụ* *a*, you see, *ndị* *nwuru* *anwụ* *a* *bụ* *ndị* *nwugoro* *na* *njọ*. *Ọ* *nwere* *ndị* *chere* *na* *njọ* *ha*, *na* *ha* *ama-esinwzi* *na* *ya* *pụta* *ọzọ*. *Ọ* *kwesiri* *ka* *anyị* *nyere* *ha* *aka* *gbaa* *ha* *ume*, *ka* *ha* *nwe* *ike* *imata* *na* *nchekwube* *ka* *dị*. *Even* *when* *they* *have* *rejected* *the* *word* *of* *God*, *we* *should* *make* *them* *to* *resurrect*; *to* *rise* *up* *from* *their* *evil* *doing*. *So* *this* *is* *what* *Jesus* *Christ* *is* *telling* *us*, *and* *we* *are* *going* *to* *stop* *here*. *Ka* *anyị* *jisienu* *ike*, *we* *are* *all* *missionaries*. *Ka* *anyị* *na-enyere* *mmadụ* *ibe* *anyị* *aka*. *Ka* *anyị* *na-enyere* *onye* *obuna* *anyị* *ka* *mma* *aka*, *starting* *from* *ourselves*. *That* *is* *what* *Jesus* *Christ* *is* *telling* *us* *today*, *ka* *anyị* *rapụ* *ikpagbu* *mmadụ* *ibe* *anyị* *wrongly*. *Praise* *the* *Lord*!

Appendix "B"

Transcribed Sermon B

Praise the Lord. *Taa* *we* *are* *going* *to* *talk* *about* *the* *characteristics* *of* *one* *that* *gets* *favour* *from* *God's* *presence*. *That* *is*:

Knowledge of God,

Spending time in God's presence,

Prayer,

You obey God.

God na-edemand ekpele from onye ọbuna. Ọ na-edemand ekpele n' aka onye ọbuna, na ụtutu na abani. When you are in the church somebody will tell you mgbe ọbuna a na-ekwu okwu ego na church. It's a problem. And what is its solution? You should do your own part for the church, for the church to move, not that the church depends on us. But you should do your part. What am trying to say physically is that the presence of God is holy, is like, is like abundant start. It is not like human being that changes. No! He does not change. Praise the Lord! Alleluia!! O nwere ebe a gwara anyi na Bible, a siru anyi na because of our iniquity, iniquity is the grandfather of sin, ọ bu iniquity anyi mere na-adivide anyi from God. What am trying to say is that the presence of God is steady. But, we have chosen to withdraw from that, not knowing that the place anyi ga-esi nwetakaricha solution bu ebe anwa i ga aga, e buoro gi amuma, yes! Amuma di, prophecy di, mana kedu the result of that amuma? But the major thing that you are told to do, to get that solution is here, because I have never seen any man that have come here and said Lord I want to travel, this is seed for journey mercy, and the person will have accident. It had never happened. Go and check it.

Praise the Lord! Alleluia!! In the Bible we are meant to understand that a priest is a helper. In any domain a priest is a helper, because a priest stands his faith. How many of us remember that na-ewelu alter at the time of problem, because most of us guilty conscience na-ejide anyi. When at the time e nwelu everything, you are told to do this in the church, do this, do this. i si mba. Mana o nweziri mgbe ọ ga-abu o lue doctor asi gi na gi fewezie Chukwu, that na i nwere 73hours to live. Mgbe anwa ka ana echeta na ndi ukochukwu nno. Mgbe anwa ka i na-afu onye ahu ka ọ na ekpe ekpere. i jee na Pslam 50, I think verse 14, o nwere ihe ọ si gi mee, ọ si gi pay your vow. I mara ihe i kwere na nkwa, gi mee ya. So that in the time of trouble, he will not do what? Forsake you! Mana ọ buru na i di good at doing your own work n'ebe Chukwu no, at the time of trouble, o mee gin? Ọ ga-ama na i no. He will show the trouble that he is God of gods; that other gods are made by human hands a kpulu akpu. Ufodu anaro ekwu okwu. These are all oru aka mmadu. Not that na ike adiro na ha, but na ike ahu di temporary.

Ọ buru na Hezekiah enwero relationship with God and with the prophet, ọ kaa atakutaya aja because, when he had problems he did not give up. One thing with Hezekiah is humility. Ọ mara Chukwu ọ na-efe, ọ mara na Chukwu ama rapu ya. Because he was able to read the history of his forefathers, mara na God did not in any way forsake them. Ọ nwere onye ọ ga-aburu n'ime anyi, anyi asi ka anyi jee juo ese, na ihe a akarigo Bible, na ike a akarigo igwe. Because of that, most times, I tell you that our conscience na-agwa anyi na ebe anyi na-ejee di wrong. But, because n' ebe anyi kwesiri ije na anyi emechigo the uzo, anyi asi mba ka anyi jebezie. Enwelu apostle inside the church that will tell you, don't worry. Ọ bu ihe ana-eme ebe a, gi bia na o nwere ebe ọ bu na a na-agwo agwo, ọ na-eme eme. Ikwuo okwotuolu gi n' a gworo onyea, gworo onyea. Onyiye mamu water bu, weta isi bia were isi. Ọ di, mana gin melu? Nwoke si mba, for the fact na ọ ma Chukwu ọ na efe. And one thing that surprise me, his subjects, that we are loyal to him to the core. O nwere onye ọ gabu ọ si "naa ka anyi chokwa uzo oh". Ka anyi cho way joinia ndia na okarigokwa. But, they did what? They obeyed Hezekiah. Just like oge Joshua na amatch the street of Jericho, he commanded his men not to utter a word. Okali ibu, ha gaa the first round, gaa the second round, ha si naa... ọ na step a ka anyi ga anọ, echerem na obu ogu ka-abjara i nu, oburu sosogwu ka anyi na agwu. But, they kept quiet. At the end of the day what happened? This is to show you that God's presence is forever, it's real; it does not change. It is just you that choose not to

have a relationship with God. Maka na anyị mara ihe Chineke gwara anyị mee, his laws keep it. “Obey my commandment”, that you will continue to be in his presence forever. It does not fade. But, anyị na-ewere ya that, mba, ime the first commandment bụ mgbe i jere kpọọ isi ala nye alụsị.

Most commandments most of us na-ada bụ pocket. Once okwu Chukwu gagidere wee ruo na pocket gị, i mara na ụkọchukwu ebido. It's not possible, once okwu Chukwu gagidere rute for you to sacrifice at the alter, i mara na ihe emego. Na i choosego mammon and not God. O di na Bible, that you must have only one God that we will serve. And God said, “is it the only true God, or the god made by wood; ndi nwelu anya mana ha adiro afu uzo”. What am I trying to say. Am trying to say that this alter, that you have a duty for it, just like Hezekiah. Alter is your place of worship, is a place of exchange, i luo ebe anwa, you exchange physical things to spiritual things. A place of judgment too, if you are being molested in your office, this is where you come so far your hand is clean. i bja i si God nekwe ihe m bjara. O burugodi na aka gi adiro ocha, there is atonement. Ya gbahara gi first. Praise the Lord! Alleluia!!