



**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.

2022

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Published 2022 by Inštitút teológie, misie a sociálnej práce, n.o.

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

Tajov 216

976 34 Tajov

Slovakia

ISBNs:

978-80-89492-37-4 Print

978-80-89492-38-1 PDF

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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

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.”