The Research Side of Sermon Prep: A Plan with Resources
Full credit to Dr. Tom Long for this excellent framework, which can be found in the chapter “Biblical Exegesis for Preaching” from *The Witness of Preaching*, pp. 69-98.

1. **Get the Text in View**
   - What text?
     - Lectionary: [http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu](http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu)
     - Topical: Search [http://bible.oremus.org](http://bible.oremus.org) or [http://www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org) for words or phrases
   - What translation?
     - Look at several at once! Try using Biblehub.com and their “parallel” feature to compare single verses or whole chapters

2. **Get an Introduction to the Text**
   - What’s going on in this text? Are there any words I should define?
     - Blueletterbible.org for the Hebrew/Greek terms, then go to the Theological Dictionaries of the Old and New Testament
     - Ministry Matters (through Databases@Emory) includes New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (Legacy Library)
   - What’s the larger context?
     - Note the boundaries of your text (story may not conform to translator’s sections), and use gospel parallels if applicable

3. **Listen to the Text**
   - Given material from steps one and two, create a series of questions, identifying themes, characters, motifs, and conflicts. What is the text doing?
   - Are there any intra-scriptural references?
   - Try re-writing the text in your own words without referencing the text—see what stands out!

4. **Testing What You Heard in the Text**
   - Armed with your list of questions, approach secondary sources with an eye to historical, literary, and theological elements in your text.
     - Commentary series:
       - **Feasting on the Word**: breaks text into theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical elements. Keyed to the lectionary.
       - **Anchor Bible** and **Interpretation**: both are solid theological and pastoral commentaries
       - **Hermeneia**: Deep dive into the textual (grammar, redaction, etc).
     - Oxford Biblical Studies (Databases @ Emory), *available to Alums*
     - ATLA: Scripture search combined with search terms, *available to Alums*
   - Interpretive Inspiration (and worship planning resources!)
     - UMC Worship Resources: Lectionary Calendar, [https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/lectionary-calendar](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/lectionary-calendar)
     - Ministry Matters: Preaching Tab
     - The Text This Week, [http://www.textweek.com](http://www.textweek.com)
     - Painted Prayerbook, [http://www.paintedprayerbook.com](http://www.paintedprayerbook.com)

5. **Move to the Sermon**: Which of your questions, using commentaries as part of the weeding process, is the most productive? What does your congregation need to hear? What are you feeling called to say?

Sarah Bogue, sbogue@emory.edu, 404-727-1221