



Tips for Sermonizing on Food Waste

Scripture Selection

Positivity / Hope / Optimism

Stay Attuned to WII-FM ("What's In It For Me?")

Stay Relatable / Memorable

Bring it Home

1. Standing on Scripture

- Choose one that speaks to your heart. Some better than others.
- In all Four Gospels, Jesus Feeds the 5,000. In all four, they collected the table scraps. Waste not. But in John, Jesus is the one directing the disciples to collect the scraps and in Matthew, women and children are noted. In all four, the disciples at first wanted to send the hungry people away so they could go eat, and Jesus' response was to "feed them." All four may be superior to where Jesus feeds 4000 men with 7 loaves and some fish, which appears in two gospel accounts, or the exhortation to "feed my sheep" which can raise questions in listeners' ears about what Jesus meant, what sort of feeding, and not living by bread alone.
- Multiple sources can add emphasis, e.g., Matt. 25:34-40 (whatever you did for the least of these), Isaiah 58 (share your bread with the hungry), etc.

2. Positivity / Hope / Optimism

Take care not to assume everyone has abundance to share, while also taking care not to close ears.

Some congregants may be experiencing food insecurity. For others, hearing their neighbors are hungry can take an emotional toll, raising people's defenses against moral injury.

Suggestion: turn harsh facts to opportunities. This is winnable! E.g., "If we did what Jesus did, then..."

- X tons of wasted food would feed the hungry
- Y million people who are hungry daily might be fed
- Z amount of water and energy could be saved, helping with climate change
- Etc.

3. Keep Attuned to WII-FM (What's in it for me?) There's something in it for everyone!

- It helps with climate change. 40% of food is never eaten. With better food husbandry, fuel and water could be saved. And climate change leads to greater food insecurity worldwide.
- You're offering a way to be an authentic follower. God cares... it's the thing to do.
- We all benefit from a healthier community. Less hunger means children focus better, and after all, they're the ones growing up to be the caretakers of the future. It makes sense to invest in them. Also a healthier community is more enjoyable to live in now.
- Compassion is the healthy choice. Compassionate people live longer. They heal faster and so on. It's been studied, but I promised no studies.
- It's a route to happiness. The Dalai Lama has said "*If you want to be happy, practice compassion. If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.*"
- It's also a route to less despair. *According to a CDC study, 3 in 5 teen girls feel persistent sadness (about double the rate of boys), and 1 in 3 have contemplated suicide... By addressing hunger, there's less despair for food-insecure families (including parents and teens), and less despair for happier families who are being compassionate sharing food.*



4. Offer Memorable Takeaways

We are moved by stories, not statistics. Help people see the enormity. Be vivid. E.g.,

- Do you have a personal story of hunger or hope you can share? People are moved by personal stories.
- We throw enough food out daily to fill the Rose Bowl. People can visualize the size of the Rose Bowl.
- Confession of failings is a way to embed suggestions subtly. For example, one can confess to not always choosing the spotless apple or failing to always eat the leftovers, but wanting to try harder.

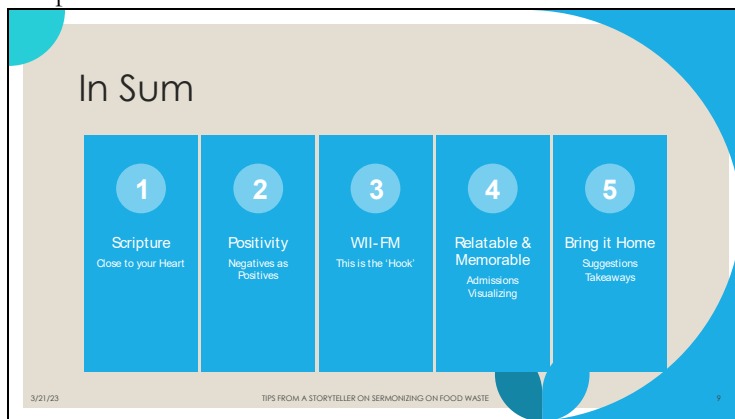
5. Bring it Home

People are busy. If the key takeaway is sharing the harvest, tell them how. Be specific. And be accurate!

Pantry hours and policies change. A lot changed after Covid-19. Check before pointing your congregants somewhere. Are you sure they're accepting fresh or canned food from the public at this time? Are you sure? What are the current drop-off hours?

Other possibilities can include adding a top-10 list of easy food-saving suggestions to the flyer or handout, e.g.,:

- Bringing home or freezing leftovers
- Checking the fridge before hitting the store
- Picking a weird piece of fruit that otherwise might go unpurchased
- Recipes for stale bread or brown bananas



*This could be one great big wave of hope for the hungry,
following the example of Jesus and His disciples all those centuries ago.*

God Speed!

References: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/p0213-yrbs.html>