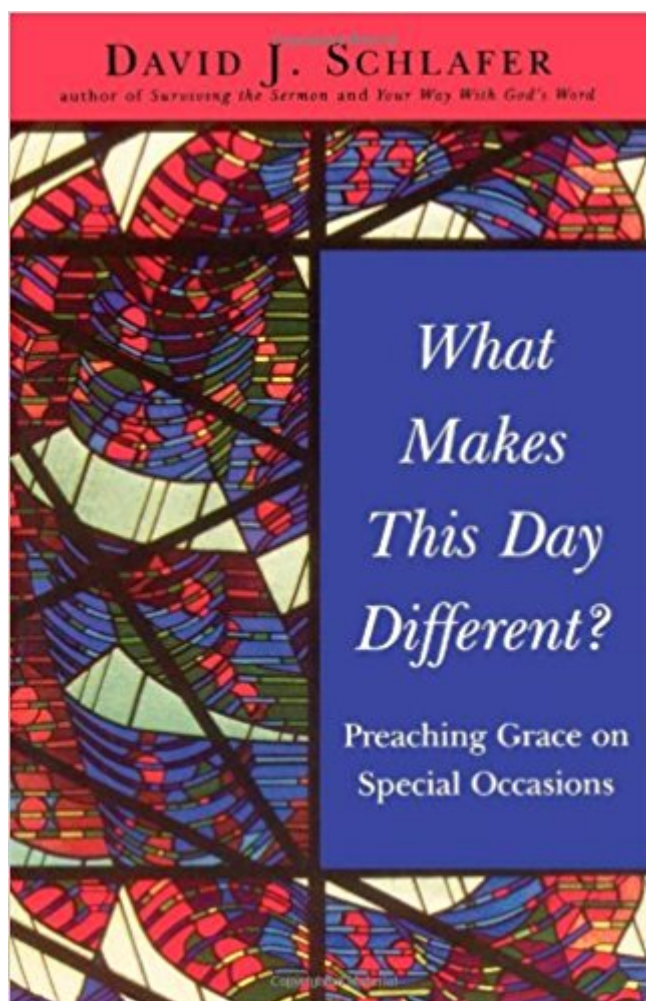




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# What Makes This Day Different?: Speaking Grace On Special Occasions



## Synopsis

Schlafer looks at the preacher's task at the "high times" of the church and the secular year, those occasions on which expectations run high and emotions can be intense. He explores the temptations and pitfalls of preaching at weddings and funerals; baptisms and ordinations; civic holidays like Memorial Day and Thanksgiving; and the high holy days of Christmas and Easter. He also discusses preaching at times of tension and conflict in the church, the responsibilities of a guest preacher, and how to handle preaching missions and retreats. Included in each chapter are helpful summaries of what to include and avoid in sermon preparation, as well as excerpts of sermons illustrating the principles he outlines.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the early pages of this insightful book, David Schlafer meditates on the image of "sun-catchers," those little glass prisms that take sunlight coming through a window and separate it into the colors of the spectrum. The function of an "occasional" sermon, he suggests, is similarly to select and focus the colors "from the spectrum of God's grace both through and for the particular special occasion," to be a "grace-catcher" (19-20). . . . Schlafer's analyses and suggestions focus on aspects of sermon preparation that are well within our control, offering approaches to letting those connections happen as well as hints for avoiding pitfalls. He helpfully distinguishes between different types of "special" days: those that focus on the life of the individual (such as weddings, baptisms, or the life of a saint), those that focus on the day itself (such as Palm Sunday or Thanksgiving), and those that

focus on circumstances (such as social crises or the particular situation of a congregation). Within those larger categories, he offers further distinctions between events that are, for instance, primarily theological in nature and those that carry a secular burden as well. The reader will probably get the point of the distinctions rapidly, but the categories are useful for bringing those resonances and shadings up into our consciousness so that we can get hold of them and use them as tools. . . . when he reaches the chapters on the church's great holy days, Schlafer really hits his stride. The chunks of sermons he quotes in this section (including a gem of his own for the Great Vigil of Easter) are particularly evocative, and his commentaries on what is needed at these focal points in the Christian year are rich and readable theological reflections. This section could well serve as an overview for a preacher looking ahead to a specific holy day or planning a preaching series for a whole season. A beginning preacher will do well to read this book from beginning to end, heeding the advice and using the book (Linda L. Clader, Professor of homiletics at the Church Divinity School in the Pacific)

DAVID SCHLAFER is an Episcopal priest who has taught preaching at Nashotah House, Seabury-Western, the University of the South, Virginia Theological Seminary, and the College of Preachers. His books include *Surviving the Sermon*, *Your Way with God's Word*, and *Playing with Fire*. Schlafer conducts seminars and workshops on homiletics in the United States, Canada, and England.

You might be tempted to skip the introductory theoretical material and go right to the "do's" and "don'ts". But this short, wonderful book needs to be fully digested. It's like having a preaching coach at your elbow. Schlafer will inspire you and save you from the unique pitfalls associated with preaching at weddings and funerals and other special days. Get this book and spend a rich hour with it before your next wedding or funeral. You owe it to the people you are serving! If you only use it for that, it's worth twice the price.

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