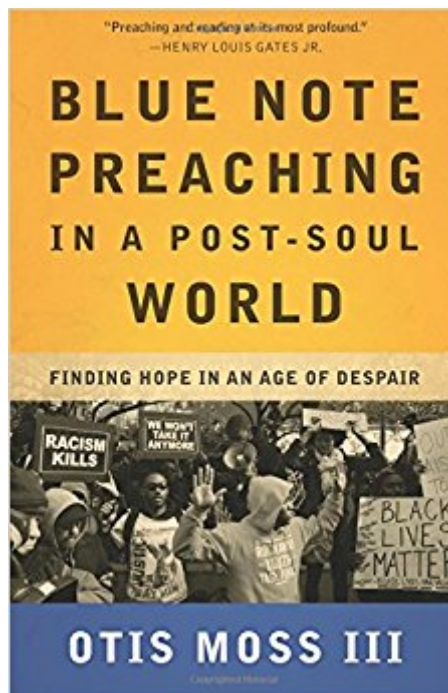




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# Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World: Finding Hope In An Age Of Despair



## Synopsis

"Can preaching recover a Blues sensibility and dare speak with authority in the midst of tragedy? America is living stormy Monday, but the pulpit is preaching happy Sunday. The world is experiencing the Blues, and pulpiteers are dispensing excessive doses of non-prescribed prosaic sermons with severe ecclesiastical and theological side effects."—from chapter 1

Uniquely gifted preacher Otis Moss III helps preachers effectively communicate hope in a desperate and difficult world in this new work based on his 2014 Yale Lyman Beecher Lectures. Moss challenges preachers to preach with a "Blue Note sensibility," which speaks directly to the tragedies faced by their congregants without falling into despair. He then offers four powerful sermons that illustrate his Blue Note preaching style. In them, Moss beautifully and passionately brings to life biblical characters that speak to today's pressing issues, including race discrimination and police brutality, while maintaining a strong message of hope. Moss shows how preachers can teach their congregations to resist letting the darkness find its way into them and, instead, learn to dance in the dark.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The son of a great preacher called to lead Chicago's historic Trinity United Church of Christ, the Reverend Dr. Otis Moss III has long had the homiletic arts coursing through his veins. With the publication of his Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale, he brings his full imaginative gifts to bear in calling on the world to reject the easy, self-satisfied pietism of Sunday morning for a 'Blues

sensibility,' steeped in the history of a Blues people, viewing life from 'the underside' as a struggle all week long. Urging us to meet children of the Hip-Hop generation where they are, Moss draws on a rich cultural legacy, from the griots of West Africa to the poets, playwrights, and performers of the Diaspora, to teach us that transformation can be found only in courageously encountering the suffering that has marked our journey from Calvary through the Middle Passage, to the cotton fields, to the troubled city streets of today. Blue Note Preaching is preaching and reading at its most profound, reconnecting us to those lights of the past who led movements out of the wilderness not by talking down but by lifting up every voice heard between the 'blues moan' and the 'gospel shout.'" --Henry Louis Gates Jr., Director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University

Otis Moss III is Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois. An ordained minister in the Progressive National Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ, he is the author of *The Gospel according to The Wiz: And Other Sermons from Cinema* and coauthor, with his father Otis Moss Jr., of *Preach! The Power and Purpose behind Our Praise*. His sermons and writings have appeared in numerous publications.

Now don't let the title prompt you to think that this book is only for those that either like music, particularly blues or soul, or even those that are preachers or in ministry. There is a broad-reaching audience that this book has the potential to impact. In these ominous times of community and police shootings, the school to prison pipeline, the inequality and failing performance of our education system, the financial struggles of cities, communities and families, and much more, *Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World: Finding Hope In An Age Of Despair* by Otis Moss, III, addresses not only what is needed in our communities and the current state of our world, but also in Moss's own words "rescues us from acceptance and dares us to move from the couch of apathy to the position of work." (1) Whether or not you understand, like, or even really listen to it, many people have a sense of the soul-stirring sound of blues music, created out of the African-American tradition in the 19th century, which incorporates a call-and-response pattern, specific chord progression, notes typically flatter in pitch, as well as spirituals, shouts, and chants. Moss initially discusses the connection of other music forms like jazz, soul, and Hip-Hop, as well as, preaching, our history, and even our current state of the world, to the blues or blue note. As we know, there are many who can and do speak to the problems and challenges of the world today. We can talk about it, complain about it, cry about it, shake our heads,

and the like, however, what Moss does is dare us not to continue to hem and haw in a blues moan, but to envision and focus on the gospel shout. For those that are pastors, ministers, people who seek to touch and inspire others in the world, Moss challenges us not to simply talk and preach. As he states, "We are called to place a word in people." (2) And yet, this book challenges a variety of different people; from those who have been wearing pain and abuse while allowing that to define them; to being able to listen, discern and learn how others receive things and consider how to communicate, in order to relate to them and still be authentic; to those who have been given a gift and have yet to give it over to God and allow it to be used for greater things. In *Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World*, Moss beautifully connects styles, generations, messaging and mediums, allowing us to see how all can relate and come together in a profound way. The inclusion of sermons depicts and give us a further understanding of blue note preaching while giving what I feel is desperately needed to uplift our communities and this world. You might expect references to scandals in the Bible, however, references to Grey's Anatomy and Scandal, as well as a breakdown of dating versus courting from the sermon entitled, "Loving You Is Killing Me" in the book, is exactly what's needed to address the shift in our culture and its relation to relationships, our family unit, and our values that further diminish our communities and feed our current struggles. And yet in that same sermon, an epiphany that despite our mistakes, often God can do more with us and we can greatly impact the communities and world around us after those pitfalls. (A gospel shout for those of us: such as individuals who have been incarcerated, homeless, or otherwise failed in some way.) Moss even speaks to those who feel that the church has not been there for our communities, particularly with recent events. To those who question and doubt that the church has not been fighting or leading the fight in the issues our communities have been dealing with, he eloquently explains 2 key points that really hit home. The first is that rather than waiting for anyone to lead, we all have in us the capacity to start, contribute, and lead in the work that we see needs to be done. And the other key point is that, it is not that the church has not been doing many things, but that their work is not often what you see in the paper, hear on the radio, see on the news. This is such a redeeming point for many that continue to criticize and attack the biggest and most enduring historically foundation the Black community has ever had. I hope that Moss' clarification of this can serve to once and for all silence the attackers of the church and help them focus on working together. You have to love how Moss connects and uses the depictions of current media and social references, especially in the book's section and sermon entitled "How To Get Away With Murder". The link between scripture and the story of Herod and Mary & Joseph to the

slavery and peonage systems and our current justice system demonstrates the gift that Moss has not only connecting history, but our relationship to it. The details that he breaks down serve to depict various things we see in our communities, how people like Dr. King and W.E.B. Dubois served to liberate our communities, and how we can use those examples to charge ahead. When he states, "We've got to be some point in our moment and in our lives where some brothers stand up and adopt some children who are not your own, if we are to change this situation in our community" (3), Moss sets before us a challenge on things we must all start to do and things we have to look at differently if we want to see that beautiful world of which we dream. As we are living in what can be considered desperate and disheartening times, *Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World: Finding Hope In An Age Of Despair* serves to relate our history and spiritual roots, to our current state, while meeting us where we are in an effort to plant seeds of possibility, renew dreams and hope, and insight into what we can do individually and collectively to create and work towards that world we envision. (1). Page 7. *Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World: Finding Hope In An Age Of Despair* (2). Page 25. *Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World: Finding Hope In An Age Of Despair* (3). Page 120. *Blue Note Preaching In A Post-Soul World: Finding Hope In An Age Of Despair*

There is a lot going on in the world today. There are bombs going off and people are being killed. There is racial tension in America at an all time high. There are individuals walking onto college campuses and killing students while they are trying to learn. There are people that are unemployed and underemployed. The world right now is in despair, but Dr. Moss tells us that there is hope in the midst of despair. It is difficult to preach in times like these. However, Dr. Moss tells us that there has to be Blues before there can be Soul/R & B. Dr. Moss not only looks back to the Blues and R & B. He also looks back to the beginning of Hip Hop. We have to know the past in order to understand the future. Dr. Moss' book is timely because he teaches us how to live with hope, even when things appear hopeless. Preachers need to know how to "bring" a sound buoyant message in troubled times. Otis Moss includes several sermons in his book that demonstrate how to preach when things are topsy turvy. Every preacher should have this book in his/her preaching library.

I add my thanks to OMIII to those already offered. I have read and reread "Blue Note Preaching..." What a wonderful contribution to this old retired preacher (as someone said earlier a "son of the Mayflower" ) who is called on regularly to supply preach. Having known Fred Craddock as I did, I can almost hear the conversations as Otis and Fred shared their stories and discussed the art and

craft of preaching. Blue Note Preaching in a Post Soul World introduced me to a rich peaching heritage that I thought I knew something about but I really didn't. With Moss's insights and illustrations, I now have new ways of reading the text and crafting the message. You have given me such wonderful new insights. Thank you!

Rev. Moss has written a wonderful book. It's part philosophical exposition of the Blues, part theological reflection on the Blues' relationship with the Gospel, and part sermons of conviction and uplift. I know I'll return to this one many times.

Otis Moss, III, has given us "fire to burn" in our bones to move from stagnation to implementation and activation! These sermons are relevant, empowering, and liberating to anyone who reads them, digest them, and lives them out! Dr. Moss has allowed the Spirit of God to be creative with insight that's revolutionary, radical, and "REAL" with his preaching that's prolifically prophetic!

Great book appreciated the sermons and their insight.

Incredibly insightful and inspiring! Otis Moss III has an amazing command of language and content. Have recommended this book to musicians and writers who have felt disconnected from organized religion but who hunger for spiritual connection. A wonderful read!

I have read many books and articles on preaching but this stands out as one of the best! It's a must read.

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