

7-1-1932

Sermon Study on Acts 20, 17-38

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Recommended Citation

Engelder, Th. (1932) "Sermon Study on Acts 20, 17-38," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 3 , Article 72.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol3/iss1/72>

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proper pedagogy, with painstaking effort, with an evangelical approach, with tireless patience. It should be made a regular part of the program or of the order of business in every meeting of the voters, of the ladies' aids, of the young people's societies, of the men's clubs, and of whatever other organizations there may be in the congregation. In addition, the needs of the work of the Lord ought to be discussed by every pastor with every member as occasion may offer. If this is done *regularly, systematically, with patient application*, results are bound to show, possibly not in a noticeable degree in one or two years, but eventually and with lasting effect. If the information now offered in our various church-papers is not sufficient, it would be an easy matter to organize the present forms of dispensing information into a news service with regular topics, so that every pastor would have the material at hand in a convenient form.

A necessary concomitant of this plan is faithful Gospel-preaching along the lines which have stood the test of time. We must have less topical and more expository preaching; we must have less striving for oratorical effect and more heart-searching application; we must have less generalizing and more specific presentation; we must have less using of sermonic pabulum and more sermons that have been made on the basis of importunate wrestling with God.

And for this reason there must be more prayer. We need prayer for the men whom we have chosen to lead us in the larger work of our church-body. We need prayer for the individual missionary at home and abroad, who is acting as our representative in bringing the Gospel to the heathen and to the unchurched. We need prayer for the pastor who is trying faithfully to carry out the program outlined above. We need prayer for every individual member of our Church. We need prayer for ourselves,—prayer that will rouse us from the lethargy of our spiritual depression; prayer that will make us willing workers in the kingdom of our Lord. We need prayer to overcome our sluggishness in working and giving for the Lord. And the Lord's promise still stands: "Ask, and it shall be given you."

P. E. KRETZMANN.

Sermon Study on Acts 20, 17—38.

Paul had celebrated the Passover festival of the year 58 at Philippi, Acts 20, 6. His intention was to spend Pentecost at Jerusalem, although we are not told the reason for this wish. Time pressed, and hence Paul decided not to stop at Ephesus since he feared that the trip to this city might unduly delay him. At Miletus, however, his ship lay over for several days, perhaps to unload, or take on, cargo. This apparently unforeseen delay gave him an occasion to send for the elders of Ephesus. In this important city of Asia Minor he had

labored for two years and three months, Acts 19, 8, 10, perhaps even longer, v. 31, so that the Gospel had penetrated throughout the province of Asia. The seven congregations mentioned in Rev. 1—3 all lie within this territory and may have been founded during these three years. Paul knew that he would never again be enabled personally to speak to the elders of Ephesus. And in order to do all in his power to hold this strategic point in the battle-line against Satan's forces, to forestall, if possible, the attacks of the old evil Foe, he determined to send word to Ephesus, which lay only thirty-one miles to the north of Miletus and was connected with this city by a good military road. The term elders is not used here in the wider sense of 1 Tim. 5, 17, including both laymen and pastors. In our chapter the word is used as a synonym of *ἐπίσκοπος*, bishop, such as labored in the Word and doctrine, 1 Tim. 5, 17, whose duty it was to feed the flock of God, Acts 20, 28. There is no difference of rank among the clergy. Such a distinction is unbiblical and originated only after the apostolic times. (On the identity of these two offices, elder and bishop, see Pieper, *Dogmatik*, Vol. III, p. 526; *L. u. W.* 73, 1927, pp. 175 ff.)

Note that Paul "sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church." They were the pastors of the local congregation, the presbyters of the church at Ephesus. They were not presbyters of Miletus or Rome or Corinth. No, to each presbyter a special charge had been given. Presbyters, according to Acts 14, 23, were ordained in every church, *κατ' ἐκκλησίαν*. Paul charged Titus to ordain elders in every city of Crete, *κατὰ πόλιν*, Titus 1, 7.

The journey to Ephesus and the return would consume about two days. In the mean time, Paul had ample time to prepare for this meeting on which so much depended. Need we ask how Paul spent these days? If we bear in mind that Paul was a praying man from the very first moment after his conversion, Acts 9, 11, to his old age, 2 Tim. 1, 3, and that his prayers chiefly concerned themselves with the welfare of the Christian congregations, 1 Cor. 1, 4; Phil. 1, 3, 4; 2 Cor. 11, 28, we certainly are not far from the truth if we assume that these days of waiting for the elders from Ephesus were spent in sincere and fervent prayer. Such prayerful meditation and preparation is evident from every line of that truly masterly address contained in our text, Paul's farewell speech. Such modern critics as regard this address as an interpolation by later redactors or merely as the rhetorical record of what Paul actually spoke only prove their own prejudice and inability properly to grasp the situation. Every word bears the stamp of genuine and intense feeling. We feel, we seem to hear, the actual heart throbs of him whose very life was bound up with that of his beloved congregation. We cannot read these words without being deeply moved by the fervency of love, the truly fatherly solicitude, for his spiritual children, which speaks from every word, by his solemn con-

viction of the importance of the holy office of the ministry, by his holy indignation at the very thought that false prophets might endeavor to destroy the handiwork of God. Surely we have here no mere rhetorical effort, but the fervent eloquence of a man whose heart is moved by the deepest of emotions.

V. 18. "When they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." Paul's activity from the first day of his arrival at Ephesus to the very day on which he spoke to them lay before them like an open book. "Ye know." *Ἐπίστασθε* denotes a knowledge gained by close and intimate association and personal observation. We are struck by the remarkable frankness and openness which characterizes the apostle. He had nothing to conceal, nothing to be ashamed of, when he came. And so "at all seasons," the whole time, that entire period of two and a quarter years, that he spent in their midst he had committed nothing the memory of which might bring the blush of shame to his cheek. What a remarkable record! Yet how natural that children of God should begin to assume that stability of character, that firmness and continuity in good works which is one of the essential attributes of their heavenly Father and their Savior! Ps. 102, 28; Heb. 13, 8. Surely every pastor should strive for such uniformity and constancy in life and practise.

V. 19. The apostle now shows after what manner he had been with them. During all that time he was *δουλεύων τῷ κυρίῳ*, serving the Lord. His relation to Christ is that of a slave to his master, of a bond-servant, who has no will of his own, who must subordinate his own will to that of his master, whose property he is. That is the relation in which Paul stood to Jesus from the moment of his conversion. His very first word proves that: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9, 6. And so he served the Lord with all humility of mind. Humility is a virtue little regarded by natural man, but highly esteemed by God, 1 Pet. 5, 5, 6. Paul, once the proud Pharisee, boasting of his lineage and character, now exercised himself in true humbleness. The Lord had taken him into a hard school of discipline, 2 Cor. 12, 7—10. That was necessary not only because of the high honor bestowed upon him, but perhaps also that he might overcome that pride so characteristic of the Pharisee, Luk. 15, 2; 18, 9, 11; a fault to which perhaps Paul was by nature especially inclined; cp. Phil. 3, 7. In this school of his Master he had learned to serve the Lord with all, every kind of, humility, in word and deed, 1 Cor. 15, 8—10; 1 Tim. 1, 12—17. No work too difficult, no service too mean, no ingratitude too galling; at all times, in all humility, he served his Lord, whom on another occasion he presents as the ideal of true humility, Phil. 2, 5—8. The servant, the bond-slave, became like his Master in rendering humble, self-effacing service.

This humble service was a *loving* service. He served the Lord with many tears, not only tears of joy over every success which he gained for his Master, but also tears of sorrow and indignation over the impenitent, who would not bow in homage to the King of kings, who wilfully persisted in their enmity towards Him who died for them. Every true pastor does his work out of love to his wondrous Savior, not automatically, in a cold-blooded, disinterested fashion, making a business of his profession; no, the true pastor has made the Lord's cause his own. "Only to do Thy will my will shall be." And while not always weeping tears, as did the emotional Oriental Paul, yet his heart and soul are wrapped up in his work, as a bond-servant of Him whose will he has made his own — to seek and to save that which is lost.

Paul's service was a *self-sacrificing* service, "with temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews," amidst sorrows and tribulations arising from the plotting and scheming Jews, who constantly dogged his footsteps, sought to hinder his work, and stopped at nothing in their fanatic efforts to silence this servant of the Lord. These efforts of the Jews are called temptations. They were that in their intention, and Paul felt them as such. Yet, though he might have escaped them by simply ceasing to serve Jesus, he continued, spite of it all, to serve his Lord in humble, loving, self-sacrificing service. What a noble example to every Christian pastor! This his example was known, v. 18, to the bishops at Ephesus. They knew more, v. 20. "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," vv. 20. 21. He had come to Ephesus, not to proclaim another mystery cult, not to organize some secret society, luring men into membership by promising them wondrous revelations, increasing in value as they were initiated into ever higher degrees; no, he had kept back, he had concealed, nothing. Rather, he had shown them all that was profitable unto them. That had been his main object, the welfare of his hearers; not vainglory, not self-aggrandizement, much less filthy lucre. He had desired no profit for himself. Next to faithful service of his Master, yea, identical with this service, had been the welfare of his hearers. He had shown them all that was profitable to them, whether such proclamation pleased his audience or roused their antagonism, whether it called forth applause or violent protest; his purpose had been not to please, but to profit. The temporal and eternal welfare and salvation of his people must be the first and ever supreme consideration of every faithful pastor, whether that makes him a popular pastor or whether that heaps upon him the enmity and reproach of the multitude. Paul was not satisfied with the mere proclamation of the

truth. He *taught* the Ephesians, thoroughly instructing, indoctrinating, training them. Thus he did his share in fulfilling the promise of Is. 11, 9b; 54, 13. Cp. his sound pedagogical principle, Phil. 3, 1b. Indoctrination is the sound and firm foundation on which the Church is built. And this foundation must be well laid. Hence Paul preached not only *δημοσίῳ*, but also *κατ' οἴκους*. The distinction is not between services in the synagogues and public halls of Ephesus on the one hand and private houses on the other, but between public worship and private *Seelsorge*; cp. v. 31. It is much easier to preach and thunder against sin and vice and wickedness from the comparative safety of the pulpit, — although even that demanded far more courage in Paul's time than it does in our day. This is much easier than speaking to, and admonishing, the individual in house-to-house visits. Yet the Savior had told him, Go and preach. He knew that man, dead in trespasses and sins, could not be expected to be interested in the Gospel, to come in large numbers to hear his sermons. Therefore he brought the Gospel to them, going from house to house, making the rounds time and again in his fervent efforts to win them and establish them in the saving faith.

What were the contents of his preaching? In keeping with the will of his Master, whose obedient servant he was (cp. Luke 24, 47; Acts 26, 15—18), he "testified both to the Jews and to the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance toward God, that change of mind which not only has God for its aim, but is actually the accomplishment of this aim, the arriving at its goal. This change implies, negatively a turning away from the service of sin because such sin is offensive to God and separates man from His presence, and positively a turning to God, becoming united with Him, whom we no longer regard only as a stern Judge, but as a Father reconciled by His own Son. Thus repentance toward God is practically identical with faith in Jesus Christ. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we come to God, Matt. 11, 27; John 14, 6. Only if the Father draws us, can we come to Christ, John 6, 44. Believing in Christ, we believe in God, Acts 16, 31. 34; believing in God we believe in Christ, John 14, 1. This repentance and faith Paul preached to Jews and Gentiles. He had the same message for both; for there is salvation in none other, Acts 4, 12. Though repentance and faith in Christ was unto the Greeks foolishness and unto the Jews a stumbling-block, yet, as in Corinth, so in Ephesus, he determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, 1 Cor. 2, 2. The reason is amply brought out 1 Cor. 1, 18—31.

What a lesson for our day! What the world needs to-day is this selfsame preaching, the preaching of Christ Crucified as the only means of salvation, preceded by the preaching of the Law for the purpose of rousing the consciousness of sin. Thus the world was gained

for Christ in the time of Paul. Shall we, the members of our Lutheran Church, adopt a different program?

Vv. 22—24: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Witness again the faithful servant of his Lord. He is "bound in the spirit." This phrase has been variously translated. It may mean that the apostle already in spirit regards himself as bound, in fetters; cp. the *δεσμέα* of v. 23. It may mean bound, constrained, by the Spirit, "who witnesseth," etc., v. 23, and hence binds him to obedience. It may mean bound in spirit, impelled by my spirit, the spirit of willing obedience, or conscience-bound. Be that as it may, the apostle gives utterance to his perfect willingness to continue the faithful service of Jesus, no matter what this service may demand. As in the past the plots of the scheming Jews did not keep him from preaching the Gospel, so he continues to this day in this glorious ministry, and so future trials cannot deter him from the course he has chosen.

He goes toward Jerusalem, knowing not just what will happen to him there, knowing only one thing, that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide, wait for, him. But as Jesus, twenty-five years earlier, had set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, though imprisonment and death awaited Him, Luke 9, 51, so Paul, undaunted by the prospects of similar afflictions, is determined to go to Jerusalem in obedience to the Spirit's calling. What splendid obedience he learned from his King and Lord Jesus Christ! Yea, none of these things move him. The readings vary here. Some manuscripts read: I regard my soul as worthy of no account, as not worth mentioning to me. Others: I make account of, I care for nothing, nor do I regard my soul as precious to me, so that I might finish my course. No matter what reading we adopt, the meaning is practically the same. "So that," *ὥς*, is translated by some as a final conjunction, "so that"; by others, as the comparative particle, "in comparison." The sense is hardly changed, no matter which translation we adopt. His ultimate goal is to finish his course with joy, to be able to end his life's journey with that joyous assurance that it was a life spent in humble obedience and service to his Lord. Cp. his song of triumphant rejoicing when the end of his course had actually been reached, 2 Tim. 4, 7. 8. And another object he has in mind, to finish with joy his *ministry*, that *διακονία*, that special office, which the selfsame Lord Jesus who had in conversion made him His bond-servant had given to him as a special privilege and mark of

honor. It is the ministry of testifying the glad tidings of the grace of God, that grace which saves mankind, saves me. Surely, to finish with joy such a course and such a service is worth more than all the riches and treasures of this world, yea, more than physical life itself. He that becomes unfaithful to Jesus in the hope of saving his life shall lose it, while he who serves the Lord in humility, who died to himself and to his own will and inclinations, need not fear the end. Such a life of service ends in joy. What is called death is but reaching the end of the course, to be crowned with the garland of victory and to be introduced into the life of everlasting glory.

V. 25: "And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more." Jesus has a kingdom; and as the King Himself who prepared this kingdom preached it to the people, Mark 1, 14, 15, so He sends His heralds to proclaim the selfsame Gospel of the Kingdom to all the world. Such a herald Paul had been, and he was now about to bid them farewell, as they would see his face no more.

V. 26: "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men." Paul had done all he could to establish them in the kingdom of God. He had preached to them the Gospel of the grace of God, v. 24, repentance and faith, v. 21, all that was profitable unto them, keeping back nothing, v. 20. Indeed, he had declared unto them all the counsel of God, v. 27. If nevertheless they would be lost, the fault would be theirs alone. He would be clear of their blood. Cp. Acts 18, 6; Matt. 27, 25. Every pastor who has faithfully preached Christ and Him crucified, proclaiming the whole counsel of God, may have a clear conscience, whether he meets with great outward success or has seemingly been a failure. What a comfort for the faithful pastor! And what an urge to preach without fear or favor all that is profitable unto mankind!

V. 28. After having told the elders that he was pure from the blood of all those who had been under his care, the apostle places the entire responsibility for their own salvation and that of their congregations into their hands. They are to continue the work he has begun by faithfully feeding the flock entrusted to their care, v. 28, in undaunted opposition to false prophets and errorists, vv. 29—31, firmly trusting in God and His Word, v. 32, and performing unselfish service, vv. 33—35.

V. 28: "Take heed therefore," etc. Before admonishing the elders to take heed of their congregations, Paul requires that they take heed unto themselves. The pastor should above all work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Cp. 2 Cor. 6, 1—10, where the apostle has himself and his fellow-pastors in mind. Cp. also 1 Cor. 9, 26, 27. Take heed unto yourselves that ye be full of faith and fruitful in good works, that ye be faithful pastors, making full proof of your ministry.

Then self-evidently you will take heed unto the flock over which, rather, among which, the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. The elders of v. 17 are here called bishops, *ἐπίσκοποι*, overseers. Both terms designate one and the same office, the term *bishops* denoting their chief duty, the term *elders* stressing especially the dignity of the ministry. God's Word demands that we honor old people, Lev. 19, 32. Similar honor and respect is due to these men, whether they be old, as in many instances older and experienced Christians may have been chosen, or whether, like Timothy, they were young, 1 Tim. 4, 12; 5, 17.

The Holy Ghost has made them overseers. Undoubtedly they had been chosen in like manner as other elders in Asia Minor, Acts 14, 23, by vote of the congregation. The apostles taught the Christians their privileges and duties, 1 Cor. 3, 21—23, described the qualifications of men to be chosen, 1 Tim. 3, 1 ff.; Titus 1, 5 ff., perhaps suggesting names, proposing candidates, and the congregation then called its own elder, or bishop. But these men were not only humanly called. Through the call extended by human agencies the Holy Spirit Himself had called them, had *made* them overseers, rather *ἔθετο*, placed them, the middle form bringing out His own interest in the matter. The Holy Spirit is indeed vitally interested in the growth of the Church, for the foundation of which He descended on the day of Pentecost. The pastor who faithfully attends to his ministerial duties is doing a work in which not only the congregation nor only he himself, but the Holy Ghost, God Himself, is interested. For the purpose of furthering the welfare of the congregation, the Holy Ghost had placed these elders as overseers, had given to each one a special charge. They were to take heed unto the flock over which they had been made overseers, unto the charge divinely committed to them. This was not the world, nor were they elders of Rome or of Corinth; they were elders of Ephesus, v. 17. And the congregation of Ephesus was the flock in which the Holy Ghost had placed them as bishops, to which therefore they should direct their careful and prayerful attention. And they should take heed unto *all* the flock, just as Paul had taught from house to house, v. 20, and had warned every one, v. 31. So the eternal welfare of every individual member of the congregation should be to every pastor a matter of personal interest. Faithfulness in the performance of his duties will keep the Christian pastor busy among his own flock, and he will have no desire whatsoever to become a busy-body in other men's matters, to meddle in another pastor's sphere.

"Take heed." This duty is defined as *ποιμαίνειν*, a pasturing, shepherding; not merely feeding, but lovingly, tenderly providing for the welfare of the flock, Cp. Ezek. 34, 1—31. Though the pastor is the overseer, he is not the lord of the flock. It is the congregation of God, God's own, which He has purchased with His own blood. The word purchased here, *περιποιήσατο*, reminds us of the *λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν*

of 1 Pet. 2, 9, the peculiar treasure, of Ex. 19, 5, God's own peculiar people, not merely by creation, but by purchase with His own blood. (Note how clearly the *communicatio idiomatum* is here taught.) What an honor to be entrusted with the shepherding of a congregation that is peculiarly God's own, so beloved of God that He gave Himself for it, shed His own blood for it on the cross of Calvary. How carefully the pastor ought to guard this congregation against all dangers! How scrupulously faithful to his trust he ought to be, how untiring in his efforts and unwearied in his endeavors to keep every soul in close contact with Christ, its Savior and Redeemer. Such unremitting care is necessary, for Satan is not idle.

V. 29. Paul knows that after his departure grievous wolves shall enter in, who will not spare the flock. He does not mince words. Like the Savior he realizes the true nature of false prophets. They are indeed grievous, ravening wolves, depriving the Christians of their self-respect, 1 Cor. 11, 19, 20, of their liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, Gal. 5, 1, of Christ, Gal. 5, 4, of their eternal salvation. Grievous wolves indeed, sparing not the flock!

V. 30. The apostle had urged the elders to take heed unto themselves, v. 28. One reason for such self-heed is shown in v. 30. Not only from Jewish circles, but out of their own midst men would arise who would speak perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. These men would no longer speak as once they had done, "as the oracles of God." No, they would speak perverse things, turning aside from the infallible Word of God and following their own reason, which inevitably leads one astray. Their motive in doing so would be a mean one, personal aggrandizement, personal glory, because they wish to be leaders, or organizers, of new movements, to draw disciples after them, away from Jesus. Can meaner, more detestable motives be imagined? Yet history tells of innumerable instances of just such occurrences.

A gloomy outlook it was indeed which the apostle had presented to the elders. What shall they do? Therefore, v. 31, watch, be on your guard. For that very purpose you have been made overseers; cp. Ezek. 33, 1 ff. Is that asking too much of the pastor? Paul did it. Remember, he says, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Here we have the picture of a *Seelsorger* after God's own heart. The apostle makes it his business to *νοουθετεῖν*, to put into the heart and mind what is needed. He does not say here what that is, since he had time and again stated it, and he states it again, v. 32. In the performance of this duty of his he was untiring, ready to do it day and night. Be the body ever so tired, the soul ever so weary, be sleep ever so sweet and rest ever so necessary, he could truthfully say: 2 Cor. 11, 28, 29. He admonished every one; there was no distinction of class, or age, or wealth, or

education, 1 Cor. 1, 10 ff.; Phil. 1, 15—21. In the same manner the presbyters should watch. You can do that, the apostle means to say, for I did it. I labored more abundantly than they all, 1 Cor. 15, 10, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. And to this selfsame grace he now commends the elders. I commend you, *παραινέμαί*, I set you for myself, as far as I am concerned, — and I am concerned about you with all my heart and mind, — I set you side by side with God and the Word of His grace. That selfsame God and Lord who had appeared to him in Corinth, Acts 18, 9, 10, who later appeared to him in Jerusalem, 23, 11 (cp. also 2 Tim. 4, 16—18), that selfsame God will guard and guide also the elders; for it is God the Holy Ghost who has in His own interest made them overseers, v. 28; and He that has begun this work in them will surely accomplish it. Pastors are not alone in their work. Next to them stands God, and they stand next to Him. God is invisible; we cannot see or feel Him. But we can see and read His Word. And to this Word the pastors are commended by Paul. By His Word, God will build them up and give them an inheritance “among all them which are sanctified.” Whenever the pastor needs strength, courage, wisdom, comfort, humility, charity, and whatever he may need to be a faithful pastor, there is God’s Word of grace, His Gospel, the living Word, 1 Pet. 1, 23, 25, the Word in and through which God comes to the pastor. And, says the apostle, “which is able to build you up.” To what does *τῷ δυναμένῳ* refer? Does it refer to God or to His Word or to both? Why, God and His Word are really one. The Word of God, in which God dwells, is God speaking through His Word. God and His Word of grace can and will build, edify, you on the rock of salvation, so that you also will become rock men, strong, courageous, unconquerable in the strength of the Lord. He will finally give you the inheritance of eternal life “among all them which are sanctified.” Together with all those who through this Word have been brought to the saving and sanctifying knowledge of your Savior you will enter into eternal joy and bliss.

V. 33. I have not only not taken, but not even coveted gold or silver nor apparel, says Paul. Yea, he appeals to the personal knowledge of the elders that his own hands have labored for the necessities of life, for himself and for those who were with him. Cp. Acts 18, 3; 2 Thess. 3, 8—10; Eph. 4, 28. From the apostle every pastor should learn to overcome covetousness, from which pastors are as little immune as other Christians. By their good example they should teach the lesson taught them by the apostle, that they should labor to support the weak, to give gladly of their own to the support of the poor and needy. In so doing, they will fulfil the word and will of Jesus, who has said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” While not recorded in the New Testament writings, this is one of the many words spoken by Jesus which undoubtedly impressed itself deeply on the minds of those who heard it.

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Having thus spoken, the apostle knelt down "and prayed with them all," all the elders. They all wept sore and, falling on Paul's neck, kissed him time and again, "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more." While the apostle had used the word *ἴψασθε*, v. 25, the evangelist here uses the word *θεωρεῖν*, inspect, gaze upon. How often had the elders, with rapt attention, gazed upon his face, watched every changed mien, watched that mouth from which the words of life flowed in a mighty stream, those eyes, now burning with indignation at sin and hypocrisy, now glowing with love divine and pity for the weary wayfarer on the way to eternity. No more will they see that face. And so, while they have opportunity to be with him, they accompany him to the ship, and as the ship finally weighs anchor, they wave to him from the shore. They watch it glide out of the harbor and enter the open sea until it is a speck on the horizon and finally lost to their sight. Slowly, with many a tear coursing down their cheeks, they wend their way back to their charge. Submitting to the will of God, Paul's farewell plea ringing in their ears, their hearts and souls are filled with fervent determination to continue the work of Paul in the spirit of Paul.

Pastors and teachers are given by the Lord as precious gifts and by Him removed. The Pauls, the Luthers, the Walthers, are sent by God to do His will, to build His Church; and after they have finished their course, they are called home to their eternal reward. Men come, and men go. Yet through all the centuries, through all the many changes in the Church and in the world, God and His Word and His grace remain the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. T. LAETSCH.

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Dispositionen über die zweite von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Evangelienreihe.

Sechster Sonntag nach Trinitatis.

Matth. 15, 1—9.

Die Geschichte wiederholt sich, auch die Kirchengeschichte. Besondere Mängel, Gefahren, Irrlehren lehren immer wieder. Manche Übelstände, gegen die Christus selbst zeugen und kämpfen mußte, bedrohen gerade in unsern Tagen das kirchliche Leben. Die Besehrung in unserm Texte ist zeitgemäß.

Gerade zu unserer Zeit muß in der Kirche scharf unterschieden werden zwischen den Auffäßen der Ältesten und Gottes Gebot.

1. Was dies bedeutet; 2. warum es so notwendig ist.