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Sermon Study on 1 John 4, 9-11

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God will not give His Spirit except through the Word, *i. e.*, through the Gospel and the Sacraments, or the "visible" Word. (Cf. *Trigl.*, 494, 4; 606, 91; 732, 7. 8; 1084, 71; etc.) Word and Sacraments are the means whereby both the soul *and the body* are saved; for whenever the soul is saved, there the body, too, which can and does apprehend the elements, will live forever. (*Trigl.*, 742, 44 ff.; 768, 68. Luther's Works, St. L., XX, 831.)

Rome and Calvin approach the Scriptures with a material principle which is not found in the Scriptures, but which is superimposed on them. Because the Lutheran's formal principle is *sola Scriptura*, his material principle must be the doctrine of justification, *sola gratia*. This article permeates Scripture and therefore directs and controls all true theological thinking. Every teaching which is not brought into proper relation with the article of justification is *eo ipso* false. The true theological perspective can be maintained only if theology centers in justification.¹¹⁾ According to the Lutheran Confessions the Gospel is God's gracious revelation to man, offering, containing, conveying to, and working in, him the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. (*Trigl.*, 995, 62; 792, 6; etc.) Luther had been taught to read the Bible in such a manner as to find in the word *righteousness* nothing but his own righteousness, which must be procured through strict observance of his monastic order's regulations. At last the Holy Spirit removed these "Roman" glasses through the Gospel, and Luther learned that only *aliena iustitia* avails in the sight of God. "And now," says Luther (in the preface to the 1545 edition of his works), "I knew that I was born anew and that I had found a wide and open door to paradise itself. Now the dear Holy Scriptures appeared entirely differently to me." (St. L., XIV, 446 f.)

Springfield, Ill.

F. E. MAYER

Sermon Study on 1 John 4, 9-11

Two facts must strike every careful reader of the First Epistle of John. The one is that, in appealing to his readers to practise Christian love, he is not satisfied with a bare demand, a simple exhortation. Each of the three admonitions (chap. 3, 9-11; 3, 10-18; 4, 7-5, 2), as they grow in length, is in increasing measure saturated with indoctrination in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, the doctrines of the Trinity, of the deity of Christ, of the vicarious atonement. Moreover, each one is preceded by, and the

11) Luther: "In meinem Herzen herrscht allein dieser Artikel, naemlich der Glaube an Christum, aus welchem, durch welchen zu welchem bei Tag und bei Nacht alle meine theologischen Gedanken fluessen und zurueckfluessen." (St. L., IX, 8; Vorrede zum Galaterbrief.)

entire epistle closes with, rather lengthy discussions of these basic truths of the Christian religion. The other fact is that the apostle of love does not hesitate to make use of polemics, and unsparing polemics, against all denials and deniers of Christian doctrines. Read chap. 1, 6. 8. 10; 2, 18. 19. 22. 23. 26; 3, 7; 4, 1—6; 5, 10—12. 21. The three urgent exhortations to love are surrounded, enfolded, as it were, buttressed from within and without, by dogmatics and polemics. It is necessary to keep these two facts in mind especially in our day, when so many self-styled exponents of love and charity, who claim to follow in the footsteps of the apostle of love, positively and determinedly refuse to follow him in his insistence on clarity and purity of doctrine and in his use of polemics against every error and every errorist. Theirs is a charity, a love, which overlooks doctrinal differences as minor matters, which clamors for external union without internal unity of faith and doctrine, which is ready to shout with Schiller, *Seid umschlungen, Millionen! Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!*" at the same time being altogether unwilling to grant the kiss of brotherhood to such as have the audacity to stand up for purity of doctrine. Right there their charity, their love, comes to a sudden and abrupt end. Such love is *toto caelo* different from that of the apostle, as we shall see with increasing clarity in studying our text.

Our lesson is part of the third and longest exhortation to love, extending from chap. 4, 7 to chap. 5, 3. In order to understand fully the import of this lesson, it will be well that the pastor, before preaching on this text, read the entire letter, paying special attention to those passages where phrases and expressions very similar to those used in this text occur. See, e. g., chap. 2, 1—6.

In the opening words of chap. 4, 1—6 the apostle had warned against error and errorists and had pointed to the vast difference between the children of the world and the children of God, the followers of error and the disciples of truth. Beginning with v. 7, he exhorts his readers to practise true love. They are of God, v. 6, and for that reason they must be followers of God, not only in opposing error and false doctrine, but just as truly in loving their fellow-followers of the truth, their brethren in faith. In order to make this admonition the more urgent, he adds a threefold reason, v. 7: 1) Love is of God; 2) every one that loveth is born of God; 3) every one that loveth knoweth God. These three reasons are elaborated in chap. 4, 8—5, 3. The third reason is the first one taken up by the apostle. He proves, v. 8, that every one loving knows God, "for God is Love." If God is Love, then, naturally, every one that does not love shows by this very lack of love that he knows not God, who is Love. Conversely, every one that loves shows by that very love that he knows God, who is Love, and from that

knowledge of God and His love he has learned, and learns ever better, to love his brethren. Before taking up his first and second reason, the apostle goes on to prove his last statement, that God indeed is Love, by pointing to that marvelous manifestation of God's love in the sending of His own Son, v. 8. Thus he paves the way for the substantiation of the first two reasons, viz., that love is of God, an outflow from that well-spring of divine love, vv. 10, 11, and that every one that loves is born of God, v. 12 to 5, 3. Throughout this entire passage John constantly reverts to, and unfolds, the thought that love and the lover owe their origin to the wondrous, unique, all-surpassing love of God, like an eagle soaring round and round about this central point and soaring ever higher and higher, without ever being able to scale the heights of this love which reaches to the very throne, the inmost heart, of Him whose being and whose love is beyond understanding.

After this brief survey let us study in detail the lesson for Jubilate Sunday. May our hearts and souls be filled with grateful jubilation and may our joy become manifest in our love toward God and the brethren!

V. 9: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him."

The apostle briefly, but convincingly proves his statement that God is Love. The greatness of God's love is seen already in the very fact that He manifested it. God's love is not merely an emotional mood, an inactive sentiment, quiescent, hidden in His heart. It is a love *toward* us.

The apostle does not use the preposition *εἰς*, His love did not merely reach out in a general direction toward us, only to flee horrified and disgusted upon seeing nothing but unloveliness, wickedness, foulness, in mankind. No, thank God, His love is more than that. It is a love *ἐν*, *on* us, a love that in spite of our utter unworthiness not merely approached and dealt with us as from a distance, but, like a heavenly dove, lighted upon us and found on us its resting-place.

In various ways God showed that His love rested upon man. The creation of the world, its preservation and government, God's appearing to the patriarchs and prophets of old, His speaking to Israel at sundry times and in divers manners, all were manifestations of His love. For John there is one manifestation of God's love overshadowing all others: "He sent His only-begotten Son." His Son He sent, not a creature, not a man, not an angel, but Him of whom He had said: Ps. 2, 7; who was very God of very God, Col. 1, 15-17; 2, 3, 9; Heb. 1, 2, 3. "Only-begotten." Note the repetition of the article in the original, whereby "both substantive

and adjective receive emphasis and the adjective is added as a sort of climax in apposition with a separate article." (Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 776.) There is no other Son of God, but this one and only-begotten, the Son whom He loved with all the fulness of His divine love, John 3, 35; 5, 20. This Son God hath sent, ἀπέσταλκεν, the perfect "implying the present, permanent, continuing effect of the mission of the Son of God." (*The Bible Commentary*.) This Son He sent off not to some heavenly region, there to confer with angels and archangels; no, into the world. Mark the emphatic position of the words in the original, which is to call to our attention once more who the Sender is, the true and only God, and to effect a sharp contrast between the Sender and the place whither He sent His Son. Picture to yourself the holy and righteous God, of "purer eyes than to behold evil," and then think of this world of sin, and vice, and crime, and hatred, and blasphemy. Is that a place into which the loving Father would gladly send His own Son? This world, the habitation of sorrow and lamentations and tears and heart-aches and sickness and death, is that an appropriate destination for Him whose home had been in the bosom of His Father, where joy and happiness alone are found and sorrow and sadness are not known? Yet the Father was willing to send His own beloved Son from the sinless purity and griefless joy of His presence into the world of wickedness and woe. Why? His only motive was love, love that was concerned about mankind, that turned in complete unselfishness toward those creatures that had turned from their loving Creator, had in basest ingratitude found their delight in a life of sin and shame, had of their own volition chosen death rather than life. To this mankind He, the God of love and life, in love ineffable sent His only-begotten Son, Life of Life, in order that they "might live through Him." Cp. John 10, 10. The life which Christ was to procure for us was indeed a life worthy of the name; it was not a life of bondage to sin and servitude to Satan and fear of death and finally everlasting damnation. The Son procured for us a life which is of God, which is lived by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2, 20), which grows more and more into the likeness of Him who loved us unto death; a life that finds its delight in grateful and willing service of God and the fellow-men (Luke 1, 74. 75; Matt. 20, 25—28); the happy, contented life of the child of God, who knows Rom. 8, 28—39; a life which does not end with temporal death, which even in the face of death exclaims: Luke 2, 29 f.; 2 Tim. 4, 7. 8. This life we have through Him, διὰ denoting mediate agency which comes "between" (διὰ) and causes the act or state. If we would live, we must obtain life through the agency of Him who alone caused, procured, life for

sinner doomed to death. Reject Him, and there is no life; accept Him, and life is yours.

God's love indeed transcends all understanding. What a sacrifice for a human parent to send his only son, reared in all the comforts of a loving home, into some distant country there to spend his lifetime among filth and dirt, fever and sickness, superstition and misunderstanding, hatred and persecution! Yet that father is a human being sending a human being to other human beings. Here is God sending His own Son to creatures far beneath Him, into conditions far more revolting to His holiness and purity than to human nature contaminated with sin. A father may overcome his natural reluctance to send his son into such conditions by selfish motives—the hope of gain, of wealth, of honor, for himself and for his son. In God's sending of His Son there was not the slightest trace of selfishness. The welfare, the spiritual and eternal life, of His enemies was the sole motive of His love. A human father may send his son because he is under obligation to some one, to his government, to his God; God is under obligation to no one. He owed it neither to man, who had deserved to die, nor to Himself, who would have remained the ever Holy One, the unchanging Love, the blessed and blissful God, even if He had permitted all men to die without the hope of salvation. And still, of His own volition, according to the good pleasure of His will, He loved us and sent His Son, His Only-begotten, into the world. Who can fathom, who can sufficiently praise, the manifestation of this love? It is a manifestation truly divine, which God alone can bring to pass, a manifestation which proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that God indeed is Love, v. 8.

By His eulogy on the love of God the apostle has proved his statement that God is Love, v. 8 b. He now proceeds to show that love is indeed "of God," ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 7.

V. 10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The apostle does not say, "This is love," but, "In this is love," emphasizing "is," ἐστίν. In this, love exists, has its being, its essence. For this use of εἰμί compare the phrase ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, Rev. 1, 4, 8; 4, 8; 11, 7; 16, 5, the ἐσμέν of Acts 17, 28; etc. The love of which the apostle speaks has its being, exists, "not in this, that we loved God." Such love is not of human origin. If the existence of this love depended on our love to God, there would be no such love and no possibility of such love. Christian love,—and that includes not only love toward God, but according to the entire context our love toward the brethren,—this love would be a *non ens*, a nonentity, if our love toward God were to be the cause or condition of it. The carnal mind is enmity against God, Rom. 8, 7;

7,18f. How can love toward God dwell in such a mind? No; such love is altogether, from its very first beginning, throughout its entire course, until its final glorious consummation yonder, "of God," ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 7, flowing out of God as its only well-spring; in Him our love lives, moves, and has its being, v. 9.

Moreover, the origin, continuance, and consummation of this love is due to that selfsame love of God whose glorious manifestation the apostle has described in v. 9: for he continues, God "loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Note that the apostle here changes from the perfect (v. 9) to the aorist, "because the Incarnation is regarded as a distinct event, a historic landmark." (*Expositor's Greek Testament.*) As in the preceding verse, the apostle again is not satisfied with the bare statement that God loved us. Again he refers to the manifestation of this love in the sending of His Son and adds another detail in connection with the commissioning, which not merely brings out in a fuller measure what God's sending of the Son for our life involved, but at the same time proves that and why this commission was the only, but sure means of engendering love in our hearts. We read: "God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." God sent His Son not to be merely the perfect example of love toward God and man nor only to be a teacher of ethics, to warn against the wickedness of sin, to point out its baneful consequences. That would not have helped the situation. Man, the slave of sin, Rom. 3, 23, knows all that by nature. His conscience rebukes him time and again; and if he succeeds in silencing its accusing voice, his own experience and the fate of his fellow-men ceaselessly and continuously din into his unwilling ears that sin is indeed a reproach to any people, that bodily sickness and mental diseases and sorrow and self-contempt and despair and death are the dread consequences of sin. And in spite of all the slave of sin "goeth after his sin straightway, as an ox goeth to his slaughter." Cp. Prov. 7, 22 ff. God knew that a mere teacher of morals, a mere example of ethical perfection, would not remedy man's ailment. What man needed was *propitiation* for his sins, and for the purpose of accomplishing a *propitiation* did God send His Son into the world.

Just what is meant by the word "propitiation"? Ἰλασμός means an appeasing of another person, a reconciling of a person to oneself. In this sense the term and related words are found quite frequently in profane Greek. In the New Testament it occurs only here and in chap. 2, 2.* It is found a number of times in the Septuagint in such contexts, or in translation of such terms, as cast an illuminating light upon the meaning of the Greek word as used in the

* Ἰλαστήριον is found Rom. 3, 25; Heb. 9, 5; ἰλάσκομαι, Luke 18, 13; Heb. 2, 17; ἄεως, Matt. 16, 22; Heb. 8, 12.

religious terminology of the Jews. Ezek. 44, 27 *λασμός* is the translation of *חַטָּאת*, sin-offering. The ritual of the sin-offering, according to Lev. 4, consisted in laying the hand upon the sacrificial animal, thus transferring one's sins to the victim, which then was slain in place of the guilty sinner, who had deserved death. The purpose of the sin-offering was "to make an atonement" for him (Hebrew *kipper*, LXX *ἐξιλάσκεσθαι*), "and it shall be forgiven them" (*nislach*), Lev. 4, 20. 26. 31. 35. Though the word for *chattat* used by the translator of Leviticus is not *λασμός*, but varies between *ὁ τῆς ἁμαρτίας*, *ὁ περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας*, *ἁμαρτία*, etc., the translator of Ezek. 44, 27, uses the word *λασμός*, as giving the exact meaning conferred to the believing Israelite by the term *chattat*, viz., that of an appeasing of God's wrath, a reconciliation of God to the sinner (*ἐξιλάσκεσθαι*), by means of a vicarious sacrifice, the sacrifice becoming "sin" (*chattat*) because of the transfer of the guilty one's sin to the guiltless animal. Cp. for literal fulfilment of this ritual 2 Cor. 5, 21. In Lev. 25, 9, "the day of atonement"; Num. 5, 8, "the ram of atonement," the word *λασμός* is the translation of *kippurim*. The ritual for the Day of Atonement is found in Lev. 16, teaching in every one of its symbols the vicarious atonement. Mark especially the transfer of sin by the laying on of the hands, the slaying of the one goat as a substitute for the people, the complete removal of sin by leading the scapegoat out of the camp into the desert. The blood of the "ram of atonement," literally, the ram of coverings, was to "make an atonement," literally, to place a covering upon him, *yekapper alaw*, the Septuagint translating "atonement," *λασμός*, and "make atonement," *ἐξιλάσσειν*. Hence the Septuagint very properly translates the *חַטָּאת*, the "forgiveness," of Ps. 130, 4, *λασμός*; for forgiveness consists in the covering of sin by sacrificial blood vicariously shed.

This term, used in the Septuagint to translate various Hebrew words clearly denoting vicarious atonement, substitutionary reconciliation, by a transfer of sin to another, by the shedding of innocent blood in lieu of the blood of the guilty transgressor—this term, so familiar to the reader of the Greek Old Testament, the Bible of Greek-speaking Jews and Christians, was taken over in the fulness of its rich content as an adequate term to describe the purpose of the commissioning of the Son by the Father. So also the next phrase "for our sins," *περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν*, was a phrase well known to the readers of the Septuagint, and a more suitable word to express the underlying idea of *λασμός* could not have been found. According to Thayer, *περὶ* denotes originally "that around which an act or state revolves." The propitiation indeed revolves around the sin of man; the atoning blood of Jesus flows round about the sin and transgression of man. Only in this sense it

is a propitiation for, *concerning, on account of*, sin; it has the hiding, the covering up, of sin as its aim and object. And because it is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, it succeeds in accomplishing what all the blood of beasts could not effect, except as a divinely appointed symbol and foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. He is not only the propitiating Priest. He is at the same time Himself the Propitiation, Himself the Atonement, Himself our Reconciliation, the Son of God becoming the covering for our sin, hiding them with His perfect sacrifice. This is a divine atonement indeed, in which, as in His own beloved Son, God is well pleased, on account of which alone He is fully satisfied, appeased, reconciled, to sinful mankind. The Son of God the Propitiation for our sins! Who can fathom the depths of divine love, all love surpassing, that open before our eyes in these brief words? A love so all-comprehensive that it embraces all mankind, none excepted; a love so fervent that even the foreknowledge of that base ingratitude, that foul vituperation, that contemptuous rejection, wherewith the greater portion of mankind would meet this manifestation of love could not shake its determination to procure life for sinful, mortal man; a love so intense that God spared not His Son, the Only-begotten, in order to make atonement for our sin; a love withal so holy that it would consider nothing but a complete satisfaction of the justice of God, a full and adequate payment for the guilt of man, even though this payment would call for the death of the Son of God. O wondrous love, the love of God toward this world that man might live, yea, that he might love! We must not forget that the chief purpose of the apostle's reference to the propitiation for our sins was not merely to point out the magnitude of God's love nor its fundamental importance for our faith, but above all to show that this love is the life of our love, that our love could not exist without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the propitiation for our sins wrought by the love of God manifested in the sending of His Son into the world. It was by this propitiation alone that man's life, v. 9, and man's love, v. 10, both of which had been destroyed by sin, were again made possible. Without the love of God and the propitiation of Christ there would be no true love in this world. Unitarians, Modernists, Christian Scientists, though prating of love and charity, have not love and know not love; their love is a phantom of their imagination, a love which has no existence except in their own fancy.

The love of God is a *holy* love, as we have seen. So the love engendered in man by this holy love of God is a holy love, abhorring that which God abhors, errors of doctrine as well as errors of life; and as loving children beloved of their Father, men in whom this holy love has been engendered follow His command

to avoid such as create divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, Rom. 16, 17, and to put away from among themselves all wicked persons, 1 Cor. 5, 13. Such an attitude toward errorists and manifest sinners, far from being incompatible with true love, is rather a characteristic of that love which is patterned after the example of God's love and in obedience to His word and will.

V. 11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The apostle applies the precious truths of v. 10 in the form of an evangelical admonition. Every Christian needs to be admonished, and evangelical exhortations are all-powerful and efficacious with a Christian. Cp. Walther, *Pastorale*, 86-88; Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, p. 76-79.

"Beloved." They are his beloved brethren, or children, as he often calls them. In the love bestowed upon them by the apostle they were experiencing that love which he was so highly commending to them, and which was engendered in John by the unspeakable love which he had just described.

The very fact that the apostle, in loving them, was practising what he preached, the fact that they were experiencing the joy of being loved by a disciple of the Lord, these facts were in themselves a powerful inducement to follow his example and to make others participants in the satisfaction of being beloved ones. That is not the only nor the chief motive for their love. "If in this manner," as described in v. 10, "God has loved us, also we are indebted, under obligation, to love one another." If His love as manifested in the sending of His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins supplied the possibility, yea, the very life of our love, then certainly we are under most urgent obligation, we owe it to God and to our brethren, to practise this love, make diligent use of this divine gift, love our brethren as we and they are being loved by our heavenly Father. 1 Cor. 13.

An outline following closely the argument of the apostle may be formulated in this manner: *Beloved, let Us Love One Another*. 1. For every one that loves, knows God's love, v. 9; 2. both love and he that loves are of God, vv. 10, 11. — *We Ought to Love One Another*. 1. For this purpose God loved us; 2. for this purpose He has given us a pattern of true love. — *The Matchless Love of God*, as manifested 1. in the sending of His Son; 2. in the creation of our love. — *Christian Science an Antichristian Doctrine*, in its conception of God, of the deity of Christ, of sin, of atonement, of love. — *The Love Proclaimed by Christian Scientists Is Not Love*. 1. Christian Science denies the deity of Christ; 2. Christian Science denies the vicarious atonement. In both parts show that these

truths are fundamental, not only for Christian faith, but for the life of our love. Only the propitiation makes our love possible, and only the deity of Christ makes this propitiation possible. — This text may be used to show *The Antichristian Character of Modernism*. 1. The Christ of the Modernists is not the Son of God; 2. their propitiation is not a vicarious atonement; 3. their love is not the love engendered by Christ.

T. L.

Outlines on the Eisenach Epistle Selections

First Sunday after Easter, Quasimodogeniti

1 PET. 1, 3—9

Easter is the festival of hope. Even the children of this world indulge in pleasant thoughts at Eastertide: A beautiful, though mythical, symbol of rejuvenescent nature; as such hope-inspiring, giving promise of better things after failure and disappointment.

If Easter had no deeper significance, its promise of hope were vain, even if it were based on (Modernism!) a Christ who, though not actually risen, lives in his lofty ideals. This world passes away and with it the hopes and happiness attached to it. Death and the grave remain the ultimate prospect, 1 Cor. 15, 19.

The Easter-message affords genuine hope, which reaches beyond this life and world.

The Christian's Blessed Hope

1. Its foundation 2. Its content 3. Its realization

1

V.3. Indeed, the foundation of our hope is not in ourselves, Eph. 2, 1; 2, 3; Rom. 6, 23. Not only temporal death, but eternal separation from God, the Source of life and bliss. That implies utter hopelessness, despair for time and eternity, Eph. 2, 12.

The foundation of our hope rests in God. He alone could bring life from the dead, v. 1. In regeneration He gave us a new, a spiritual, life, not dominated by sin nor subject to its curse. By the Word of Truth, Jas. 1, 18, and through Baptism, Titus 3, 6, God brought us to faith, unto obedience, etc., v. 2, 1 Pet. 1, 22. When we, sprinkled with His blood through the Gospel, first trusted in its atoning power, God wrought a miraculous change in us, Eph. 2, 5; Col. 2, 13 ("quickenened"). Then began the life of which St. Paul writes: Gal. 2, 20. — How different the prospect that now opens to us! In the life of faith the hope-destroyer, sin, has no part. We are freed from its guilt and power, alive unto God. Since it is life that is of God, Eph. 4, 18, should it be void of hope? "Begotten