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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

Paul F. Koehneke

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Jonah and the whale (Matt. 12:40); to all of these Christ refers as to indisputable facts. To Christ the $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha$ $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$ was a unit, and all of it was the Word of God.

And how much of the Scriptures is to be the source of doctrine and the rule of life? Only those portions which modern critics decide to be the Word of God or all Scripture? Paul answers that question, saying: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. 3:16, and: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," Rom. 15:4.

Hence, we may not discard any part of the Bible as irrelevant, outmoded, erroneous, and false, but all Scripture must be to us the Word of God by inspiration given. For it is inconceivable that the Holy Ghost, who moved the holy men, should have permitted them to say or to write anything that was not true. It is, therefore, a serious matter for any one to assume a critical attitude towards the Word of God. To do so reveals a proud and overbearing spirit, which is puffed up in its own little learning. Let us rather bear in mind: "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word," Is. 66, 2.

River Forest, Ill.

ED. KOEHLER

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

New Year's Eve

Ps. 102:26-28

Again we write December 31. This day brings us to the end of another year. Within a few hours, according to our accepted calendar, there will be a change of time, a change of years. The year 1940 will come to an end, the year 1941 will begin.

At a time such as this serious thoughts fill the minds of many people, particularly this year, when things are so upset and disturbed throughout the world. We think of the terrible war conditions in Europe and Asia, with millions disturbed, homeless, hungry, wounded, dead. We think of the end of all existing orders, all existing governments, even of all time. As we view disturbed world conditions, as we see so many things we have cherished upset and disturbed and destroyed, our hearts may be filled with fear. Compare Luke 21:25b, 26.

At a time like this it is well for us to turn to a text such as the one chosen for tonight. This text emphasizes

The Everlasting Sameness of the Eternal God

1. *As contrasted with a changing world*
2. *As considered in connection with our hope of heaven*

1

A) The context, v. 25, points to the creation of the world. It shows us that of old God laid the foundation of the earth and prepared the heavens, Gen. 1:1; Ps. 104:5. Viewing the great wonders of God's creation, we like to look upon them as lasting and enduring. We like to speak of the solid ground, the everlasting mountains, and this old world. We all acknowledge that there is a certain sense of solidity, stability, in the great things of God's creation, such as the heaven and the earth, the mountains and the hills.

B) Yet these great wonders of God's creation, hoary with age, apparently sound, apparently lasting, will not remain forever, v. 26. This verse emphasizes that they shall perish, that they shall wax old, that they shall be laid aside as one lays aside worn-out garments. This same truth of the mutability of the earth is stressed in many other passages of the Bible. Compare Is. 34:4; 51:6; Heb. 1:11, 12. The heavens shall dissolve, they shall be rolled together as a scroll, the stars shall fall as leaves fall from the vine, as figs fall from the fig-tree. All the things of this world, the mightiest wonders of God's creation, shall some day be laid aside like an old garment, for which there is no further use.

C) Our text as such does not point to the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, but the psalm as such certainly does this, vv. 3, 11, 23. Compare Job 14:1, 2. We know, of course, that people are apt to look upon their life in a very different way, according to the portion of it which has been spent. In youth, life seems long, and we are eager to go on farther, we anticipate the coming years; but in old age, life seems short indeed, and we wish we were younger than we are. Many, immersed in cares and pleasure, have no time to measure the life they are fast spending, but to the thoughtful human life seems a very short time in which to sustain its pure and holy relationships, in which to gather its fruit of learning and wisdom, and in which to do its work and achieve some solid and enduring result. Thoughtful people are not only impressed by the brevity of life but also by its uncertainty, Jas. 4:14; Is. 38:12, 13. Sudden sickness comes, and the strong man in his prime is laid on his bed of death. A fatal accident occurs, and men and women are removed in an hour from the scene of their activity, the home of their affections. The land mourns its prince and statesman; the church deploras the loss of its minister and

counselor; the home laments the departure of its head, its mistress, its ornament, the one that, the family thought, should have stayed long and been its strength and joy.

D) In contrast with this changing world, with this fleeting life, with the uncertainty of life, we read: vv. 26, 27. The text brings to our attention a tremendous contrast between a changing world, a short human life, and the everlasting sameness, the eternal, lasting qualities of God. So great is the contrast that the human mind can hardly grasp the thought that God is really "from everlasting," that even before the creation of the world He was there, that He has always existed, always lived, always endured. The human mind cannot really grasp the fact that "to everlasting" God will be God, Ps. 90:2. Eternity has been compared with the time it would take a bird to wear down a mountain by whetting its bill. And still that is the lesson that our text would teach us, the everlasting sameness of God, whose years shall have no end.

2

A) V. 28. The Church of God will continue. We personally may not remain here in this world, but the Church, the children of God, will continue. Certainly this is a comforting thought at a time like this, when things are going to pieces, when whole nations have been destroyed, when the Church is definitely in danger. Refer here to the assaults upon Christianity by its enemies within and without visible Christendom. But: Matt. 16:18; 1 Kings 19:8-18.

B) The everlasting sameness of God is also for us as individuals a wonderful source of comfort and consolation. It assures us as individuals of the same love, the same devotion, the same faithfulness, enjoyed by the saints of old, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. God will treat us just as He treated them, with patience, with love, and with forgiving grace, because He is the same, Is. 54:10; 55:3. What a comfort to us in 1941 to be dealing with a God always loving, always patient, always ready to save those who trust in Him!

C) Hence, at a time like this, when the closing year brings us a serious reminder of our sins and shortcomings of the past, our own human fickleness and instability; at a time like this, when the opening year under existing world conditions may bring to our hearts many doubts and fears, we as Christians can be calm and at ease, sure of the everlasting sameness of our God, v. 27. Jesus, our eternal Savior (Heb. 13:8), tells us: "Lo, I am with you alway." Therefore: Hymn 276:3.

E. L. ROSCHKE

New Year's Day**Acts 4:12**

We are entering a new year. The outlook is gloomy for the world and for the individual, in temporal and in the far more important spiritual matters. The Church has reason to pray: Acts 4: 24-30, and the individual to exclaim: Matt. 6:13. Can we face the future with assurance?

Peter and John were in a dangerous situation. The leaders, who had succeeded in crucifying the Master a short time ago, had seized them and haled them before the court of the Jews. Well might their hearts have been filled with fear. Yet the members of the court marveled at their boldness, v. 13. What was the source of the apostles' confidence? Peter revealed it in the words of our text. In the name of Jesus they faced a world of enemies boldly.

New Year's Day is also the Festival of the Circumcision. At His circumcision our Savior was publicly given the name of Jesus; cp. Luke 1:31; Matt. 1:21. Accordingly our thoughts today should be directed to this blessed, God-given name of Jesus.

Let Us Face the New Year in the Name of Jesus

1. *Then the new year will be a year of salvation to us*
2. *It will be a year of zealous activity for our Lord*

1

The new year is bringing us a year closer to the day when we must render an accounting to God. This is the important thought for every man on this day, whether he likes it or not. We cannot face God relying on ourselves, Ps. 130:3; Is. 64:6. Nor can we depend on any other person whom man would substitute for Christ. Text. But in the name of Jesus we have the password that admits us to heaven. In this name we *must* be saved. He is the Savior sent by God, the Savior from sins, Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:11; John 1:29; Heb. 7:27. Cities may be destroyed, nations be ruined, civilizations disappear, but nothing can overthrow God's eternal, unchangeable counsel and decree for the salvation of mankind. Though we have sinned grievously during the past year and shall do so again, still God's plan is not upset, 1 John 2:1 f. Many changes will occur, but Acts 16:31 will remain true also in the new year, yes, to the end of days. Believing in Him, we cannot perish, we must be saved.

Salvation is assured us in the name of Jesus, salvation from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This God promises to us unconditionally because this is the one gift of God that is absolutely necessary for us, Matt. 16:26. Without this gift we cannot be truly

happy; but having obtained it in Jesus, we may be content even if many another gift is denied us, Ps. 73:25 f. Other gifts may be desirable, but salvation is the only one that is vital. May our hearts not become so engrossed in the things of this world as to cause us to lose sight of this essential truth!

Though the name of Jesus assures us of our eternal salvation as the only absolutely necessary gift, nevertheless we are also to realize that He does not overlook our other needs. This very name restored the use of his limbs to a man lame from birth, v. 10. He who went about doing good, Acts 10:38, will take care of our bodily needs in so far as considerations for our spiritual welfare are not more important. Let us bring all our troubles to our Savior with the assurance that He cares for us, 1 Pet. 5:7.

2

The two apostles were facing a momentous decision. Their proclamation of the name of Jesus had brought upon them the bitter enmity of the powerful leaders of the Church, and they realized that sooner or later they must be ready to face the fate of their Master if they continued their work. Why did they not apologize or promise to abstain from teaching in this name? 5:28. Our text gives the explanation. Jesus is the only Savior from the terrible scourge of sin, the only Door to heaven and eternal happiness. Without Him mankind is lost in the full sense of the word; through Him and in Him true happiness is restored to sinful men, even though at present they do not realize it. The most important message for the entire world is the Gospel of Jesus.

When Peter spoke the words of our text, he did not express a mere academic truth, but he professed the profound conviction of his own heart and that of John. They lived by Jesus. John had learned the meaning of this name in the long, unforgettable hours under the cross. Peter had experienced the forgiving grace of the Savior for the sinner who had denied his Savior. Therefore they lived unto Jesus. They were convinced of the truth they were preaching, and this God-given conviction filled them with zeal to proclaim His name. Being human, they were not indifferent to the fate that might await them, but all personal considerations were secondary to the preaching of this name. Though they die, Jesus must be proclaimed to the sinful world.

We, too, are convinced of the truth of our text. May it be the star to guide us also in our activities during the new year, to show us which of our many activities is the most important! Let us work while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.

PAUL F. KOEHNEKE

Sunday after New Year**John 12:44-50**

In a solemn ceremony in Washington, D. C., on the 29th of October, 1940, serial numbers were drawn from a glass bowl to determine the order in which registrants were to be called for military training. In these days our thoughts are occupied more than ordinarily with the future and what all it holds in store for us, and we thank God that our life is not determined by the accident of a lottery but by Him, our all-wise and merciful Father in heaven, who has provided for all, and ever seeks to impart to all, genuine happiness, aye, an eternity of heavenly bliss and glory, through Jesus Christ, our Life and Salvation. This, in essence, is

The Message of Jesus

1. *It is a warning against unbelief*
2. *A plea to believe on Him*

1

On the whole, the Jews had rejected Jesus and brought on themselves the fearful judgment of hardening, vv. 37-40. The testimony of Jesus, however, had not been fruitless, v. 42. But because of the weakness of their faith they did not come out openly for Christ. Today, too, the complaint "Lord, who hath believed our report?" is in order. To many (also among professing Christians) the Word of Jesus is not a matter of vital importance. With them the question is, What do I think? What suits me? What is popular? the line of least resistance? agreeable to the flesh? This they do without paying attention to what Jesus says.

Against such unbelief Jesus warns. He is the Father's Ambassador and Mouthpiece, vv. 44, 49, 50. More, He is Himself true God, one with the Father, v. 45; 14:9; Heb. 1:1-3. Not to receive His words is disobedience, rebellion, against God. It is giving the lie to God, 1 John 5:10.

V. 46. Hence every unbeliever continues in darkness, a lost and condemned creature, spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God.

V. 47. Man should both hear the Word of God and keep it safe and unimpaired, Luke 11:28; 8:12-14. Our life depends on the Word. "His commandment is life everlasting," v. 50. If we do not hold fast the Word, we let eternal life slip away from us. Is there not much carelessness also in this respect? Do we not know of such as have cast aside the Word of Jesus, or by indifference and unwillingness to grow in knowledge are abandoning the Word?

Unbelievers have one who judges them. It is the Word Christ has spoken, v. 48. They will be made to answer for their unbelief.

Did not the Father send Jesus? Did they not in Jesus behold the Father? Did He not offer salvation to them, which they so sorely needed? Why, then, did they reject His Word and salvation? What will they have to say to justify their unbelief? Matt. 22:12, 13.

Unbelief is quite generally regarded as a mere bagatelle, even as a mark of superior wisdom and intelligence. But what are the facts? All sins God forgives for Jesus' sake, Ps. 103:3; but whoever disbelieves the word of forgiveness, to him all his sins are retained. Unbelief is a terrible sin, the one damning sin, Mark 16:16.

Is it a matter of concern to you that your son or daughter, father or mother, your friend, acquaintance, or neighbor, does not believe in Jesus? My friend, if you do not see in unbelief a shocking sin, take care lest next you be indifferent to unbelief in yourself.

2

Jesus speaks of Himself as sent by the Father, as the Father's Prophet, as being one with the Father, vv. 44, 45, 49, 50. Why this stress on the divine authority with which He speaks? Evidently to remove every vestige of doubt as to the utter trustworthiness of His message. It is a strong plea to believe on Him and so at the same time to believe on Him that sent Him, John 14:6.

Ought not the unimpeachable authority and reliability of the Word of Jesus bring gladness to every heart? For what is the substance of His preaching? vv. 46, 47. What must a sinner do to get this light, this salvation? Fulfil all kinds of conditions? qualify himself for it? earn it? He need but trust in Jesus as his Light, his Savior, and salvation is his. By faith he comes out of darkness into God's marvelous light, is no longer darkness but a light in the Lord, a child of light, walks in the light, and is meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, the blessedness of true believers! And Jesus points this out to incite to faith or to perseverance in faith, as the case may be.

Any sinner may take courage to come to Jesus, v. 47. Jesus is not the Judge of any sinner. He is the Justifier, the Savior, only. We know that Jesus judges or condemns, too; but when He does, He discharges an office that is foreign to Him as Savior. To judge and condemn is properly the office of Moses, or the Law, John 6:45; 1:17; and this office is used by Christ in order to prepare the ground for exercising His own office, which is to justify, to save. He is full of grace and truth, 1:14, love and mercy, pardon and justification. He comes with salvation for every one, with condemnation for none. His grace is universal. He came not to condemn but to save the world, 3:17. Is not this a most gracious and earnest appeal to you to believe in Him? He condemns nobody, therefore neither you; justifies, saves, everybody, therefore also you. Oh, believe it!

In order to become converted, a sinner must first be led to Moses, who convicts and dooms him, and then that same doomed, stricken sinner should be brought to Jesus, and Jesus does not judge him but forgives him.

Jesus will not hold your past unbelief and sin against you. As He atoned for everything, so He forgives everything. However, if you reject this Gospel, back to Moses you will go, and Moses will accuse, condemn, and curse you until you either repent or are swallowed up by hell.

Let us, then, beware of unbelief and accept the sweet grace and mercy the loving Savior and Justifier of sinners extends to us. So shall we have light, no matter how dark the days, and rest for our souls, no matter how turbulent the times. PAUL G. BIRKMANN

Epiphany

Matt. 2:1-12

The star appeared twice to the Wise Men, in the East and on the journey from king to King. Their dream is of equal importance as a divine miracle. Many meditations on this text are lost in speculative and fantastic mysticism. Star and dream not the product of the Magi's wisdom, but works of God; for their guidance, not for our speculation; not for spiritual guidance, but physical; not a means of grace to convert them to faith and Christ, but a means of local direction; not the objective of their search in wisdom for Wisdom but a divine phenomenon accepted gratefully by the sober-minded Wise Men.

The Wisdom of the Wise Men

1. *Undaunted faith in Christ*
2. *Willing service to Christ*

1

A) Their earthly, scientific, philosophical wisdom moves into the shadow. a) The wisdom of the Wise Men is the incarnate Christ. Their knowledge of (a) His person, (b) His work, is revealed by their question, v. 2, and their worship, v. 11; Matt. 27:37. The wisdom manifested in Christ they received as their own by their personal faith in Christ, which had its source in the inspired words that made them wise unto salvation. The star is God's announcement to them of the fulfilment of the Gospel, not the Gospel itself. b) In the wisdom of faith they remained undaunted in the face of (a) the apathy of the Jews, (b) the enmity of the mighty, (c) the poverty and humility of the Christ-child.

B) Are we Christians fools? Yes, in the sight of the world. Are we Christians wise? Yes, by the mercy of God. a) Christ is the incarnate Wisdom, Prov. 2-4; He is made unto us Wisdom,

1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:2, 3. b) Not a star, dream, trance, but Scripture is the proclamation and the source of true wisdom, knowledge, guidance, 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 1:21, 24; 2:6, 7. c) Faith appropriates Christ, His person and His work, and seeks to understand ever better, and penetrate ever deeper into, the wisdom revealed in Him, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, etc., 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 3:17-19; Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10. d) This wisdom must be maintained against the foolishness of the worldly-wise and mighty, 1 Cor. 1:19, 20, against the modern Jerusalem and its apathy, against the modern Herods and their fear and cunning, against the offense of the Cross, against all trials and temptations. e) Do you want to be wise? God's will to the Wise Men is His will to you. Hymn 55:1; 83:1, 5; 1:1; 2:2.

2

A) The Wise Men's worship of the Christ, the presentation of their gifts, which represented their costliest possessions, the time expended for this visit, the hardships encountered, — all this service was their tribute to Christ, their Savior and King, as His subjects and the expression of their allegiance to Him. This willing service is wisdom acceptable to God, acknowledged and protected by Him.

B) The adoration of Christ, the presentation of our treasures, as willing service to Him, is wisdom actively practiced in this life, Rom. 12:1; Col. 1:9, 10; Deut. 4:6; Eph. 5:14-17; yields unflinching advantages for time and eternity, Hos. 14:8, 9; Prov. 3:35; glorifies the incarnate Wisdom. Serving Christ willingly is wisdom; serving sin is folly. Be not too late in accepting and living wisdom.

C) To disperse foolishness, to save us all from its curse, God in mercy promised the incarnate Wisdom to the Gentiles also, Ps. 72; Is. 60; Rom. 15:8-14, and charged His Church to disseminate the eternal wisdom. Hymn 474:3; 472:2. G. H. SMUKAL

First Sunday after Epiphany

Mark 10:13-16

Children belong to "all nations" which should be taught and baptized and so be made disciples of Christ, Matt. 28:19. We have special reason to consider this truth on the first Sunday in the Epiphany season, which again reminds us of our paramount mission obligation, Is. 60:1 ff. Christ is the Savior of young and old; all therefore should be brought to Him that He may bless them with forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Our Solemn Duty of Bringing Children to Jesus

1. *Why we should cheerfully fulfil this solemn duty*
2. *How we may fulfil it today*

1

In the verses preceding our text Jesus speaks of marriage; in the text, of bringing children to His blessings. In Christian homes there should be children, and children should be brought to Jesus. Why?

a) *Christ desires them in His kingdom*, vv. 13, 14. He approves the faith-born action of those who brought them, v. 13.—The "little children" (*paidia*) Luke calls *brephae*, which means *babes*, Luke 18:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; Luke 1:44 (the term being applied to *sucklings*, yes, even to *babes unborn*). "Being so tiny, it was, of course, impossible for them to understand what Jesus was doing for them." (*Lenski.*)—Those who brought these children to Jesus evidently were true believers, for they brought them that He might "touch" or "bless" them, and this in His capacity as the divine Savior, v. 1. The Jews well knew the significance of receiving the divine blessing, Num. 6:23 ff.; all the more they realized the importance of the blessing of Him whom they believed to be the Messiah, John 6:14.—Jesus connects this act of blessing with membership in the kingdom of God, v. 14. The expression "of such" refers to the "great class to which babes as such belong." Children have a claim to salvation, since Christ, their Redeemer, is willing to receive them, and therefore they should be brought to Him.—The kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Grace on earth, and the Kingdom of Glory in heaven. Infants enter into the kingdom of God just as do adults, namely, through faith in Christ Jesus, v. 15.

b) *Christ rebukes His disciples for trying to prevent the people from bringing children to Him*, vv. 13, 14. He was much displeased, indignant; it angered Him to see men interfere in a matter so important as the salvation of children. The common suggestion that they believed that the bringing of children to Christ interfered with His Messianic work is perhaps correct. But there may have been other reasons.

c) *Christ recognizes no other way for children to enter into the kingdom of God than by faith in Him*, v. 14. "If Jesus had meant that all children, merely as children, were already saved, then children would not need to come to Him; they would be His. But Jesus says nothing of the kind." (*Lenski.*) Compare John 3:5, 6; Gen. 5:3; Ps. 51:5; etc. Children, therefore, must be brought to Christ as their only Savior.

d) *Christ loves little children and actually blesses them with salvation if they are brought to Him*, v. 16. The busy Savior spending valuable time on infants, what a wondrous thing for us to contemplate! This action was a practical rebuke administered to the

disciples, who in unbelief had tried to keep them from the Lord. Christ's divine, matchless love of children should move us to bring them to Christ, our own and others. That is both a glorious and a necessary work.

2

How we may fulfil our solemn obligation of bringing children to Jesus today. Christ is no longer present with us in His former visible manner; but He is still present with us in His Word, Matt. 28:20. Through the divine Word we may fulfil our solemn obligation today to bring our children to Jesus.

That Word is in *Holy Baptism*, which because of this fact is a means of grace, Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Titus 3:5, 6; Gal. 3:26, 27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:20; etc. We therefore bring our children to Jesus when we bring them to Holy Baptism. Let the pastor quote and explain Luther's fine exposition of Holy Baptism in his Catechism.—We should therefore not delay the baptism of our children but hasten to have them baptized.

The Word, by which children are brought to Christ, should dwell in our *homes*, Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16. Our homes should be sanctuaries of Christ, where we bring children to Him through His saving Word. (Family devotion.) This Word prevails in our Christian day-schools (let us send our children there in due time), in our Sunday-schools, our confirmation instruction, our public worship, our Christian church-papers, our Walther League and other societies, in the Lord's Supper. Our parental duty is never finished, no matter how young or old our children may be, until God Himself releases us from it by death. We must not say, "Children cannot believe," for they *can*, Matt. 18:2-6. We must not say, "Let children grow up and then let them choose their own religion," for then they may choose wrongly, Prov. 22:6. We must not say, "There are more weighty things than bringing children to the Lord, such as a career, a well-paying position," etc.; for Christ's commanding cry still rings out today: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." Let us heed His call!

J. THEODORE MUELLER

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Luke 4:14-24

Church-members who travel or go away on vacations usually arrange their itinerary so that they may go to church somewhere on Sundays. They often tell interesting things about the visits they made at such and such churches; they tell about the preacher,

about the sermon, and about the congregation. I should like to ask you to do something like this today. Our text gives us an opportunity to attend

A Church Service at Nazareth

1. *Who was the preacher?*

It was on a Sabbath-day, when devout children of God in Nazareth went to the synagog. When the time came for the reading of a Scripture-lesson from the prophets, the servant of the synagog gave the Book of Isaiah (roll of parchment) to a young man who had arisen to indicate His desire to read the lesson and to speak about it. This man was Jesus. He had been in the desert forty days, where He was tempted by the devil, vv. 1-13. He was no stranger in the city, for He had been brought up there and had worked with his foster-father as a carpenter; now He was a Rabbi and could read and preach in the synagog. The preacher in the service at Nazareth was Jesus. He was the greatest of all preachers. There have been many great preachers: Chrysostom, Luther, Walther, Spurgeon. But Jesus was the greatest. Being the Son of God, He knew what should be preached about God, John 1:18; Matt. 11:27. He was a Prophet sent by God to teach, Deut. 18:18; John 6:14. He possessed all divine wisdom, Col. 2:3. He preached with authority, Matt. 7:29. He preached the truth, John 18:37. His preaching led men to believe, John 4:41; 8:30.

Jesus is the Preacher also in our services, Matt. 18:20; even in our days, Matt. 28:20. When pastors preach the truth of God's Word, it is Jesus who is preaching through them, Luke 10:16. It is a beautiful thought and a true one that Jesus is here with us in our services. We have the assurance that the message of the pulpit is really from God; that the absolution, or forgiveness, pronounced by the pastor really pardons our sins (Office of the Keys); that our children receive the grace of God in Holy Baptism and that we receive life and salvation in Holy Communion — all because Jesus is the Preacher in our services.

And if we believe this, it will have a great influence upon us. Our Church will be filled with people who want to hear Jesus; our demeanor in the services will be reverent, our prayers devout, our singing fervent, because Jesus is there.

2. *What was the sermon?*

The text was vv. 18, 19, a prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. Jesus not only read the text, but preached about it and explained its full meaning. He declared to His hearers that all these sayings of the prophet pointed to Christ, and that He, Jesus, was the Christ. He preached to them about the love of God, who sent a Savior into the world; about the poor, who have lost all

righteousness and hope; about the broken-hearted, the saddened sinners; about the captives, who are under the bondage of sin; about the blind who cannot know God and the way to heaven; and He declared that to all these He would preach the Gospel, to give them comfort and healing and liberty. He preached the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins, which He was about to procure for all men, v. 19; Lev. 25:10.

Such sermons are preached in the true Church today. The saving Gospel is preached to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind. And the Gospel satisfies their needs. What a wonderful thing that we may always hear this Gospel!

3. *What kind of congregation was it?*

Many of the people heard Jesus gladly, vv. 15, 20, 22. Others would not accept His teaching. They said: Is not this Joseph's son? What has *he* to say to us? They closed their hearts to the message, so that Jesus said: v. 24. We find the same thing today wherever the Word is preached. Many people believe God's Word and regulate their faith and life by it; others rebel against the authority of God's Word: why should we regulate our belief and our life by what this preacher, this church, says? Even many Christians are not as diligent as they ought to be to apply the demands of the Law or the blessed promises of the Gospel to themselves. Are you?

So we have been to church at Nazareth. And as we come back in our thoughts to our own congregation, let us keep these things in mind: Jesus is our Preacher; the Gospel is preached from this pulpit; and we must accept the words of Jesus in faith and glorify Him.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

Third Sunday after Epiphany

John 4:5-14

In the valley of Shechem, some thirty miles north of Jerusalem, to this day one of the most fertile and beautiful valleys in Palestine, there is shown one of the oldest wells existing, dating back to the time of the patriarchs, almost 4,000 years ago. About 100 feet deep, the well, for many years choked up with rubbish and at times a mere mud-hole, is now covered by a Greek Catholic church, has been thoroughly cleaned, and again furnishes an ample supply of clean, clear, refreshingly cool water. To this well 1900 years ago a tired wanderer came to rest and there proved Himself the Savior, seeking and saving that which was lost. In this Epiphany season, during which we consider Jesus manifesting forth His glory, let John point out to us

Jesus as the Model Missionary

1. *His eagerness to win souls*
2. *His friendly approach*
3. *His glorious message*

1

Wearied, hungry, thirsty, Jesus had sat down at Jacob's Well. But weariness and thirst were forgotten when the Seeker of sinners saw a lost soul approach. Cp. vv. 28-40. How often do we make our weariness after a hard day's work an excuse for our neglect of personal evangelism!

There was only one individual whom Christ saw, and that one a woman, and she a Samaritan, and one of no good reputation. Yet she was a lost soul whom the Lord had come to seek and to save. With the same eagerness with which He had made use of every opportunity to speak to huge crowds He grasped this occasion to speak to this lonely woman. This one individual became the means whereby many men were saved. How often do we underestimate the value of one soul! Let us remember that every human being was purchased by the blood of the Son of God and that every soul converted may become through God's grace a means of bringing many other souls to salvation.

Christ had only a few minutes for His conversation. Sychar was about a ten-minute walk from the well. His disciples would soon return. Yet He made use of every minute at His disposal. How often may we have had an opportunity to speak to others, if only for a few minutes, concerning their Savior! Did we do so?

Christ did not know whether the Samaritan woman would listen to Him, whether she would mock Him or perhaps call the Samaritans to expel Him. Cp. v. 9b; Luke 9:52, 53. Irrespective of success or non-success He spoke to her. Let not fear of ridicule or of failure silence our testimony.

2

V. 7. How tactful His approach to the Samaritan woman! He asks for a favor, a service in order to do her the greatest favor, render her the most blessed service. Humbly, politely, friendly, He asks for a drink of water. True missionary spirit is not that of aloofness, of racial or intellectual superiority, of pharisaic "better than this publican." If Jesus, the Son of God, condescended to speak to this lowly woman, who are we to look down upon our fellow-man, our fellow-sinner? Christianity is not boorishness. Love toward Christ breeds love to our fellow-men, and love is considerate, 1 Cor. 13:4-7. The true, sincere politeness of a Christian gentleman will gain the respect of all, will open the door to the

hearts of many, will often disarm hostility, will never hinder missionary work.

The unexpected, friendly request, so altogether different from Jewish custom, v. 9, roused the interest of this woman, made her willing to begin a conversation. What an advantage to have gained, by proper, tactful approach, an opportunity to speak to others!

Jesus calls the woman's attention to her ignorance and rouses her interest still further by offering her living water. Though she misunderstands Him, He does not throw up His hands in horror; He tries, and tries again, to make her understand, until she comes to the saving knowledge of both gift and Giver. His kindness and friendliness, His unaffected sincerity, His quiet dignity, impressed her, made her willing to listen to Him, paved the way to an unfolding of God's plan of salvation and a revelation of Himself, v. 26, which proved an important factor in winning this soul by the wonderful message He proclaimed.

3

V. 10. Jesus had something worth while to offer, God's gift to man, 2 Cor. 9:15, Himself as the Son of God and Savior of mankind, 2 Cor. 8:9; living water (text, v. 10), which quenches the thirst and springs up into eternal life, vv. 13. 14. Spiritual life, eternal life in Christ Jesus, is the gift of God. And this Jesus offers through His Word. We cannot separate life from Christ, in whom alone is life, John 3:36; nor can we separate Christ, the Life of the world, from His Word, which is spirit and life, John 6:63. In preaching the Word, Christ presents Himself and all He has procured for mankind. Through this Word He brought that woman to the saving faith and made her an effective missionary, vv. 28, 29, 39. Through this Word the Samaritans were strengthened in their faith and others gained, vv. 40-43.

Every Christian, young and old, can offer, present, appropriate, the same Christ, the same Living Water, the same Life, to his fellow-man. He has it in his power to give mankind a gift far greater than all the riches of this world if only he opens his mouth and tells his fellow-sinners the glad tidings of Jesus.

Have you done this? How often have we failed to do our duty, neglected our privilege to enrich people! Christ is not only our Model but above all our Savior. Ask Him for forgiveness and courage and wisdom to bring the living water to famishing souls.

TH. LAETSCH

