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## Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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## Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

### Third Sunday after Easter

Matt. 10:16-20

Jesus never failed to prepare His disciples for events that would cut deeply into their lives, *e. g.*, Luke 18:31-33; John 16; Luke 22:31-34, *et al.* He not only foretold what would happen but also gave them directions and imparted comfort. In our text we find

#### Jesus Preparing His Disciples for the Dark Days Ahead of Them

1. *He tells them that persecutions will surely come*
2. *He gives them directions for their conduct in time of persecution*
3. *He supplies them with precious comfort for the days of persecution*

#### 1

V. 16—18. Why? V. 16: "I send you forth," not for the purpose of being maltreated and torn asunder. They are His emissaries, who proclaim Him as the only Savior from sin. Their message will be unpopular. They will be hated for His name's sake, vv. 18, 22. Since their enemies cannot reach Jesus with their animosity, they will turn it against His messengers of salvation. — Has this prediction been fulfilled? Indeed! Acts 4:1-3, 17-21a; 5:17, 18, 40; 6:8-15; 7:54, 57-59; 12:1-5; 13:50; 14:19; 16:19-23; 17:5-9, *et al.* Nearly all apostles suffered death by violence. The persecutions of the early Christians.

Have you never suffered the taunts of worldlings? If not, it is time to take stock of your Christianity. As long as you merely go to church and confess a colorless religion, speak of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, of Christ as the greatest Teacher of morality and the outstanding example of righteous living, you may enjoy even the acclaim of the world. (*Witness*, 1941, 36: "Newspaper Religion.") But Christians are to be fearless witnesses for the Christ of the Bible. Tell an individual that he is lost in sin and can find salvation only in Christ; refuse to unite in worship with other religionists. What will be the result? Raillery, opposition. (*Witness*, 1941, 36: "The Unfairness of the Unbeliever.")

How did Christ's prediction prepare the disciples, and how does it prepare us? Neither they nor we should be overtaken unawares, 1 Pet. 4:12. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. And Christ forearms us by giving directions for proper conduct in times of persecution.

## 2

V. 16. "Wise as serpents." A serpent is wary, on the alert against danger, silently glides away at the approach of danger. In what way are Christians to take the serpents as an example? Refrain from witnessing for Christ if there is only a possibility of opposition or even persecution? No. Matt. 10:32, 33. The apostles so understood it and went into the very lairs of the wolves. They would not be silenced, Acts 4:20.—Then, how is the wisdom of serpents to be our guide? The Lord tells us v. 23a. We should not needlessly expose ourselves in times of persecution, much less court danger. When really violent persecutions are in evidence, we may escape from danger if it can be done without denial of the truth, and seek safety and a place for bearing witness elsewhere. Thus Christ Himself, Mark 3:6, 7. The disciples, Acts 12:19b; 9:23-25; 2 Cor. 11:33. The first Christians, Acts 8:1-4. If thrown into the company of men and women who delight in reviling our Lord and all that is sacred, then remember Matt. 7:6 and depart.

V. 16. "Harmless as doves," without admixture of evil, free from guile, innocent. Disciples of Christ should so conduct themselves, especially in times of opposition and persecution, as not to give just cause for accusation, 1 Pet. 4:15; Matt. 5:11. Besides, they should not return like for like, 1 Pet. 3:9, 15, 16; Matt. 5:44-47, yet not enter into compromise with error. The Savior is our best example. Observe Him in dealing with His enemies, especially from Gethsemane to Calvary. Also 1 Pet. 2:23. Such an attitude may not avert suffering, but it gives the satisfaction that we are following Christ's directions. And the Lord does not leave us without comfort.

## 3

V. 18. "For My sake." Suffering for His sake is the Christian's badge of honor. The disciple must not expect a better lot than was his Master's, vv. 24, 25, 38. What an honor to be permitted to share it with Him! Acts 5:41; Matt. 5:11, 12. John the Baptist, Mark 6:27. Stephen, Acts 7:58.

V. 16. "I send you." That assures the disciples of His assistance and protection, vv. 29, 30. Oppressors, tormentors, and persecutors will not be able to go beyond what He permits, Ps. 91. Even if disciples should lose their lives for confessing Christ, they should rest assured that their Lord will confess them before His Father, vv. 32, 39b. What an honor; what a comfort!

Vv. 19, 20. The Lord is not forbidding His disciples to do any thinking about what they might say. He is rather comforting them. He does not want them to worry; it shall be given them how and what they shall speak. This is a very special promise to the dis-

ciples. They were to speak by divine inspiration also before councils, governors, and kings in times of persecution. What a comfort! The Lord does not forbid us to think about answers to be made to gainsayers. It might be the height of folly not to give some thought to them. Such thinking must, however, be done with prayer for guidance, Ps. 51:15. But prepared speeches may not fit the occasion or make the desired impression. Besides, there may be no time for reflection and preparation. In no case, however, should we worry; for the Lord will stand by us, so that we shall profess a good profession, 1 Tim. 6:12, in times of peril. Some of the finest and most impressive replies to opponents were unprepared. Cf. Dan. 3:16-18; Luther at Worms. Simple devout Christians have by the grace and guidance of God given replies that have discomfited the enemies. What a comfort to know that in the dark days that may lie before us we shall never be forsaken, but that the Holy Spirit within us will guide our hearts and lips for the proper defense!

Let us pray the Lord to avert in His mercy all opposition and persecution, especially to grant us faithfulness to the end in times of peace and peril, v. 22b. \_\_\_\_\_

R. NEITZEL

#### Fourth Sunday after Easter

Matt. 10:24-33

The Great Commission was not given to apostles alone but to all Christians. The early Christians took this commission seriously and were active in personal evangelism. (Cf. Acts 11:20; 1 Thess. 1:8; Eph. 6:15.) The church historian Latourette tells us that the chief agents in the expansion of Christianity were not the regularly called pastors, but the men and women who spoke of their Christian faith as occasion presented itself. The testimony for Christ will always arouse bitter opposition. Our text speaks of the dangers which the Twelve would face in their first mission journey through the land of Palestine, of the opposition which they would encounter prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the lot of all faithful witnesses until the end of time. Our text is an encouragement for personal evangelism. We need such encouragement. Are we as a Synod, as a congregation, as individuals, following the example of early Christians? How many adults have been gained? Why not more? Does the opposition to our testimony silence us?

#### Gaining Courage for Personal Evangelism

##### 1

*You must learn to spurn the ridicule of the world.* a) The Pharisees called Christ Beelzebub. Etymology of the word not established, probably, master of a temple with idolatrous sacrifices.

We must be prepared for the world's ridicule and slander. Slandorous charges against early Christians. Marxian Socialism: Religion is the opiate of the people. Churches and capitalism an unholy alliance to destroy the masses. Church has blocked scientific progress, interfered with attainment of social security. Modern Pharisees and Sadducees deny the deity, some even the historicity, of Christ and ridicule the followers of Christ as people who are out of step with the tempo of our modern enlightened age. b) Such slander is really our badge of honor. True, our Old Adam cannot endure the ridicule. He wants to be progressive, modern, enlightened. The Christian's highest honor in v. 25. Be courageous — not fanatical — in confessing Christ by word and deed. Spurn the resultant ridicule.

## 2

*You dare never forget the earnest command.* a) The preaching of the Gospel seems to be more popular today than in previous decades. Is there a religious revival? The Bible is the "best seller." Circulation of religious books has increased. Religious programs on the radio are heard every day. Former modernistic theologians are no longer so violent in their opposition to the Gospel. The natural man, however, does not love the Gospel of the Crucified, even though he may extol the Bible. His doctrine is work-righteousness. And he loves this naturalistic theology, defends it, clings to it, resents any interference. He opposes the Gospel. Shall we be silent? The Old Adam suggests it. Many Christians travel incognito from their homes to their places of business day after day. They seem to have read only the subordinate clauses in v. 27. When have you spoken to some one about the hopelessness of human systems of salvation and of the glories of the Christian religion? Lack of courage? b) Study the command in our text. You have learned the Law and the Gospel in school, in instruction, in Bible class, in the regular sermons. Preach it from the housetops. Both Law (cf. today's Gospel-lesson) and the Gospel. — The command will give us courage. Without a direct commission no one is willing to undertake an important task. With a direct command the most timid soul gains courage.

## 3

*You must learn the only correct world-view.* What keeps us from testifying? Fear that we might lose our position, our money, our friends, our life. (Yes, martyrdom is possible in the twentieth century. Consider the prophecies!) These tangible things seem very important, yes, essential. If choice is between them and the Gospel, what shall we choose? The Savior uses the extreme case of losing our life to show us the proper evaluation of all temporal

things. b) The most important thing in life is to keep a clear conscience by obeying God's will. No compromise is possible. Joseph. Trust in the providence of God. If you really and fully believe Christ's promise, then you will have the courage to confess your Savior before men.

## 4

*You must constantly keep the Judgment in mind.* Confess and deny not. Disregard your convenience. Seek glory of your Savior by word and deed. (Cf. *Luth. Wit.*, LX, 86.) Acts 4:20; Luke 9:26; 2 Tim. 2:12. Whenever tempted to deny, i. e., to keep silent when opportunity to confess is offered, think of the final Judgment. A denial now may mean loss of faith, and continued denial may mean eternal rejection. Every confession is evidence of your faith. He that believes and confesses here: Christ is my Savior, shall hear Christ say: Father, this is My brother.

NOTE.—This sermon may be presented in a negative form. Why Do We So Often Lack the Courage for Personal Evangelism? We fear the ridicule of the world; we forget Christ's command; we lack the correct world-view; we forget the Judgment of the Last Day.

F. E. MAYER

### Fifth Sunday after Easter

Luke 11:9-13

The world is prone to minimize the wonderful Christian privilege of prayer. The world with its philosophy of materialism, with its spirit of fatalism, and its rampant unbelief is apt to call prayer "mere wishful thinking" or "an escape mechanism." The unbelieving world, without faith in God, does not hesitate to say that he who prays merely talks to himself and not to God. They do not hesitate to call the Christian on his knees a praying fool.

The world's attitude towards prayer is not the attitude of the Bible. The Word of God emphasizes prayer in many different ways. The Bible speaks of the various types of prayer, Ps. 19:14. It tells us of the reasons for praying, Ps. 50:15. It directs us to the proper object of prayer, Matt. 4:10; Ps. 65:2. It gives us the scope of prayer, Phil. 4:6; Mark 11:24; 1 Tim. 2:1. It tells us that all prayers are to come before the throne of God in the name of Jesus, John 16:23.

Our text for the Fifth Sunday after Easter (Rogate) speaks of prayer. It emphasizes, in the words of the Savior, the intensity of Christian prayer. It gives wonderful prayer promises and shows that the Lord is ready to give to His praying children even the greatest of all gifts, the gift of His Holy Spirit. On the basis

of this text, permit me to speak to you this morning on the subject

### Precious Prayer Promises

1. *The threefold promise to hear God-pleasing prayers*
2. *The definite promise to give particularly spiritual gifts*

#### 1

a) In order to be able to understand our text, it is well to study the context. Our text chapter opens with the request of one of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples," Luke 11:1. In answer to this request the Savior had given His disciples the glorious words of the Lord's Prayer. He had followed His instruction on prayer with an illustration showing the need of persistence in prayer, Luke 11:5-8. He had ended this story by saying: "Yet, because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth"; and then followed the words of our text.

b) Our text contains Christ's wonderful counsel to pray. He says: Text, v. 9: "And I say unto you." He makes to His own disciples this most positive and assured declaration, v. 9 b. Three imperatives urge prayer upon us, "Ask, seek, knock." Today, tomorrow, every time, you have need; you cannot come too often. The counsel of the Savior is counsel for extended, prolonged, prayer action. He warns against mere repetition and much speaking, Matt. 6:7, but urges prayer very, very definitely by repeating the imperatives. He does not wish to indicate that, if we ask and do not receive, we should then seek. Nor does He mean that, if we have sought God in prayer and have not found Him, we then should begin to knock. In spite of the fact that the three terms seem to indicate an increasing intensity of prayer, the Savior merely heaps expressions to show the importance of continuing in prayer.

c) Christ's triple counsel to pray is followed by a threefold promise to hear. Yes, this threefold prayer promise is really duplicated, so that it becomes a double promise, vv. 9, 10. The promises seem to be given in reverse order to the counsel to pray. "It shall be given you" seems to be the strongest promise. But again, as in the counsel to pray, the Savior really means the same thing in every promise. Note that all three promises are categorical without an "if" or "but." God always hears believing prayer, and this is what the Savior wishes to emphasize. A little boy had prayed for a bicycle for Christmas. His poor mother could not supply this gift. She said to the boy, "Are you disappointed that God did not hear your prayer?" The little boy said, "God heard,

but His answer was 'No.'" Yes, God's answer to prayer is "No" at times, but usually it is "Not now" or "Yes."

d) Do we need the Savior's counsel to pray and His precious promises to hear? We only have to investigate our own prayer-life. Our prayers are often neglected, they are often languid, they often mean so little to us. Yes, frequently, the hammer of God's affliction has to strike us down before we are ready to look up, before we are ready to pray. But in the hour of need, in the hour of trouble, when everything else goes wrong, when our best friends forsake us, when the world seems to be toppling down upon us, what a wonderful thing to have ringing in our ears the precious prayer promise of the Savior, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find," etc., or Ps. 50:15!

## 2

a) The second part of our text shows us what the greatest of gifts really is which the believing soul can receive in answer to prayer. Even Christian people often forget what this gift is. The sick Christian who prays often thinks that health is the greatest gift. The Christian in poverty often thinks that wealth and plenty are the greatest gift. The Christian who is hungry may think that food is the most wonderful gift, the most wonderful blessing God can bestow in answer to prayer. But our text indicates that these blessings, great as they may appear in the moment of stress, are not the greatest blessing God can bestow in answer to prayer.

b) Our text, v. 13, indicates that the greatest gift our heavenly Father can give, is the gift of His Holy Spirit. This gift to the Christian means an increase in faith, means greater assurance of the fact of forgiveness through the atonement of Christ. The gift of the Spirit means a deepening of spiritual knowledge, a better grasp upon things divine, a more lively and more buoyant hope of heaven, John 14:26; 15:26. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the praying Christian means growth in sanctification and holiness, more readiness to serve God and our fellow-men. The gift of the Holy Spirit is indeed the greatest gift the praying Christian can receive.

c) Do we always recognize the greatness of this gift? Do we frequently pray just for this gift? How often have you during the past month really asked God to be a better Christian? How often have you prayed for an increase in faith? How often have you pleaded with God for growth in sanctification? 2 Pet. 3:18. We often pray for temporal, material, blessings, but how often for the gift of the Holy Spirit? We need just such instruction, such encouragement, as the Savior here gives, to pray more earnestly for this gift of the Holy Spirit.



d) In order to emphasize the readiness of God to hear our prayer, particularly prayers for spiritual gifts, the Savior in vv. 11 and 12 refers to the fact that even a sinful human father will not give his children evil gifts. No ordinary father will give a son who asks for bread for his breakfast a cold hard stone. No ordinary father will give to a son who asks for a fish for his dinner a slimy serpent instead. No ordinary father who has the welfare of his child at heart will give him a poisonous scorpion when he pleads for an egg for supper. Following up these examples, the Savior says: v. 13.

The Savior's words are plain and simple. They contain most precious prayer promises. They give us the necessary instruction, so that none of us dare say, "We did not know the goodness of our God. We did not know His willingness to hear." How often does it not happen that we have not because we asked not! Jas. 4:2. Our faith is often so small that we simply do not storm the citadel of heaven with our prayers. May this Rogate Sunday, the prayer Sunday of the church-year, encourage us anew to be constant in our prayer, to lay hold upon the glorious promises of our God, and through our prayers tap the dynamo of heaven for spiritual strength, for courage in the day of trouble, and especially for the wondrous gift of God's Holy Spirit! Hymn 247:1.

E. L. ROSCHKE

### Ascension Day

Luke 24:49-53

Ascension Day is being celebrated less than formerly. The celebration of a special day is not commanded, nor is it essential. But must we not fear that, at least in a measure, this decline is the result of a lack of appreciation of the event itself?

The Scriptures attach great importance to the Lord's ascension. It was predicted in the Old Testament, Ps. 68. Christ repeatedly refers to it as marking His return to the Father, John 6:62; 7:33. We have three accounts of the event in the gospels and many references to it in the epistles.

Our text briefly tells the story. Luke here mentions one feature not contained in other accounts. Twice in the few verses he calls attention to the fact that Jesus blessed His disciples. We may profitably direct our attention today to this statement of the evangelist and shall see that it sums up the meaning of the ascension of our Lord. Applying the statement of the Lord in Gen. 12:2 to our Savior, we shall meditate on this topic:

#### The Ascended Lord Blessing His Own

He says:

1. *I will bless thee*
2. *Thou shalt be a blessing*

## 1

Since that Thursday on which the ascension of Jesus occurred, His visible presence has been no longer enjoyed by His believers on the earth. But this separation did not fill the disciples with sadness; rather: v. 52b. For the Lord was parted from them while He blessed them. "Thus the disciples were to remember their dear Lord and Master; thus we are to picture our Savior to ourselves as a Savior who in heaven is lifting up His hands and blessing His own." (*Stoekhardt.*)

To bless, when used of God, means "to bestow divine favor and confer divine benefits." (*Davis.*) The Scriptures mention this bestowing of gifts upon us as the purpose of Christ's ascension, Ps. 68:18; Eph. 4:8. Sitting at the right hand of God, He is in a position to bless us, Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20 ff.

His gifts are truly divine benefits, of inestimable value to every Christian. The most important and most necessary gift, the promise of the Father, v. 49, or the Holy Spirit, John 16:7, shall be studied more closely at Pentecost. But our bountiful Head of the Church also blesses His own with other gifts. Paul mentions such gifts in Eph. 4:11 ff. To refer to only one blessing we are enjoying as a result of the gift of the apostles to the Church, thank God for the New Testament, the final revelation of God before Judgment Day. Who can properly evaluate the faithful pastors and teachers whom the Lord gives to His people? Try to estimate their importance for eternity in the light of the apostle's words Eph. 4:12 ff.

Another gift that should fill our hearts with gratitude is the assurance of His intercession, Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1 f. Our uncounted sins would drive us to despair without this Advocate; but now we are sure that we shall not lose the favor of God but remain His dear children, Rom. 8:31 ff.

After a short pilgrimage on earth we pass into eternity; but we may do so without fear, for He is preparing the last and lasting gift, John 14:2.

The hosts of heaven rejoiced at the return of the conquering Hero; how joyfully we should join in the praise of our ascended Lord, ascending with the gifts to bestow upon us!

## 2

The ascended Lord is now blessing His own also from this point of view, that He is now making a blessing of us.

How empty a life that is of no value to others! Pagan Titus realized this and considered a day lost on which he had not done a favor to somebody. But the Lord has privileged us to be the bearers of a blessing of inestimable value.

On their return to Jerusalem the disciples were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. This they did not only

as a private devotion, but, as Mark points out, they preached everywhere, Mark 16:20. In order that they might be able to become a blessing, the Lord promises them that they shall be endued with power from on high, v. 49. As long as the Lord was visibly present on the earth, it was He primarily who was to seek and to save that which was lost. Now His disciples were to bring this message of salvation to a world full of despair. And what a blessing these first disciples proved to be! Heaven alone will reveal the extent of this blessing.

But the ascended Lord has the same message to you and me and all believers of our time: "Thou shalt be a blessing." 1 Pet. 2:9 commissions every one of us as witnesses of Christ to bring salvation to a sin-cursed mankind. Now we indeed have something to live for, a glorious objective for our life, to save sinners.

To be sure, of ourselves we are neither worthy nor able to accomplish this great task. But we, too, are endued with power from on high by the Lord of the Church, and in His strength we may cheerfully go out to save sinners.

Are you such a blessing? May the Lord fill us with increased zeal and devotion!

PAUL F. KOEHNKE

### Sixth Sunday after Easter

John 7:33-39

The text takes us to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles. In memory of God's loving care on the long journey of Israel in the wilderness, particularly of the waters of Meribah, Ex. 17, the priests drew water from the Pool of Siloam and poured it into a basin near the altar, while priests, choir, and people recited Is. 12:3 and Ps. 118. Christ took His topic for this sermon from that ceremony. St. Paul refers to this 1 Cor. 10:4 and says, "That Rock was Christ." Jesus Himself says to the woman at Jacob's Well: John 4:10.—Nothing is more terrible than thirst; nothing more essential for our physical life than water. Even more essential for us is the Water of Life, which can quench the thirst of our soul and preserve our life for eternity. How precious, then, the invitation of Christ in v. 37!—Let us note what the Lord says of

#### The True Water of Life

1. *Christ alone offers it*
2. *The thirsty receive it*
3. *They dispense it to others*

#### 1

The dread wilderness through which Israel traveled is a fair picture of this world; it has no springs of salvation, nor can we dig any wells. Christ is the only Source of salvation; not His moral teaching, though John 7:46; not His example, though John 8:46;

18:38; 1 Pet. 2:22; but Christ, the Rock that was smitten, Is. 53:5, by Moses, the Law, Gal. 3:13; Christ, crucified by man but by the counsel of God, Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28; John 3:16. Now He is the fountain of salvation, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 5:9. He alone, John 6:53.

## 2

All the Israelites drank of the Rock. All the world is invited to come and drink of this Rock; they all need it. One should expect that all would come running. Not so; only the thirsty will come, those who feel this need; those whom the Law has made hungry and thirsty after righteousness; who have learned that this world has only broken cisterns, that can hold no water, Jer. 2:13; whose souls are perishing with thirst after God and His peace, Ps. 42:2; 63:2.

To such Jesus promises the satisfying Water of Life, v. 37; Is. 44:3; 55:1; Ps. 23:2; 94:19. By His Spirit, v. 39, in His Word He offers them a never-failing fountain of comfort and strength as they travel under the hot sun over the burning sand of the desert world. And they who follow His invitation will find that He speaks the truth, John 4:14; 6:35. From this fountain flows peace of conscience, a sure defense against the Law's accusation, strength in temptation, comfort in affliction, and a calm trust in God when the world hates and doubts assail the heart.

What of the others? Christ invites them, too; but since they reject Him, they remain thirsty. More, Jesus issues a solemn warning, vv. 33, 34. Those who say, "I will not," too long, will finally say, "I cannot," because God says, "You shall not," Prov. 1:24-32; Amos 8:11-13. A few years later that became a bitter fact for the Jews. Luther's warning to Germany (St. L. Ed., VIII: 70 ff.) came true: Counter-Reformation, Thirty Years' War, Rationalism.

## 3

V. 38 (R. V.: "from within him"). To Abraham God said: Gen. 12:2. So ever; that is God's plan; Christ states it as a simple fact that will always happen as a matter of course; it is the very nature of faith, 2 Cor. 4:13. So the early Church, Acts 2; 5:28; 8:4; 1 Thess. 1:8. So the Church in all these centuries. After Luther had found the Water of Life in Scripture, he brought it to his students, to his congregation, to the world. Our fathers, a hundred years ago, at once set out on vast missionary projects. Our own church in this locality, etc.

What would have become of us if others had not brought us the Water of Life? Perished with thirst! Bring it to others, fathers, mothers, teachers in school and Sunday-school, Christians all, by greater missionary zeal.

2 Cor. 6:2.

THEO. HOYER