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The Lutheran Pastor as Teacher

That every Lutheran pastor should be able to preach is a fundamental requirement. Every graduate of every theological seminary, whether this be a Lutheran institution or not, is expected to present the truths of salvation in the form of an address, speech, or oration, be it more or less formal or more or less technical and scientific. But many a person, in referring to this self-evident presupposition for graduation from a theological seminary, has in mind only the *person* of the preacher and the *form* of his message. That is to say, the emphasis is on the *art* of preaching or sermonizing, on the choice of the topic and the formulating of the theme, on the outline and logical development of the sermon and on the pertinency of its introduction. Quite frequently the fact is forgotten that the sermon, according to its chief objective, is to be a *medium of teaching*, that, in fact, the preaching function of the pastor is only one of his functions as *teacher* of the Church.

This point should be remembered first of all, that *also* in the pulpit or, shall we say *primarily* in the pulpit? the pastor should regard himself as the teacher of his people. Oratory as an art certainly has its place in the Church, but only in the measure in which it contributes to the fundamental objective of the Scriptures and of the entire ministry, namely, to make men wise unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, to make them disciples by expounding to them the great facts of salvation, to teach them to observe all things whatsoever the Savior Himself has commanded His apostles and all His disciples until the end of time. For that reason the laws of teaching apply in the pulpit also, all seven of them, as defined and interpreted by Gregory in his book entitled *The Seven Laws of Teaching*. The law of the teacher states that the instructor in any given situation must thoroughly know the subject which he is to present, and this certainly applies to the ambassador of Christ, the watchman of Jehovah, as he points out the way of salvation and sanctification. The law of the learner, although ostensibly addressed to the pupil or hearer, bidding him attend with interest the lesson which is before him, addresses its strongest admonition to the pastor, namely, that the latter make every effort to produce the highest degree of concentration and absorption on the part of his audience. The law of the language makes it incumbent upon the preacher to speak with simplicity and clearness, so that his sermon will really be a vehicle of thought to every hearer. The law of the lesson demands that the preacher or teacher proceed from the known to the unknown, by adding to what has already been discovered or learned by the majority of the audience, in many instances indeed presupposing little or nothing. Neither

urgency of manner nor flow of oratorical phraseology will take the place of conveying ideas to one's hearers. The law of the teaching process bids the teacher excite and direct the self-activities of his hearers; for the only real learning that will become functional is that which is done by self-activity, preferably motivated in such a way as to produce a pleasurable effect. The law of learning process demands that the hearer or pupil must reproduce in his own mind, and preferably in his own words, the truth which has been presented. This law is to be applied not only in the formal teaching situation of the children's catechumen class nor in the adult-membership class only, but also when the man in the pulpit wants real learning to be going on in the minds of the members of his audience. Every attendant at our church services should be urged to be a seeker after truth like the Bereans of old. And finally, the law of review and application calls for constant repetition to perfect knowledge, to confirm knowledge, and to render such knowledge ready and useful. Hence every pastor should strive to emphasize all the great truths of Christianity at least once every year, either in connection with the pericopal system or by means of a pulpit program carefully balanced or through the spiral or concentric system, which is built up around a series of nuclei. In any event there will be no mere dead repetition of facts, possibly in an uninteresting form, but there will always be a new approach, a definite challenge. We may have to travel the same streets every day, but that does not mean that we should do this in a mere mechanical fashion, since we make such changes at the intersections as will take away the deadening effect of a habit which has lost all semblance of deliberate motivation. All these considerations should make the pulpit a place of real teaching, in keeping with the example of our Lord in His public and private proclamation of the Word.

It is regarded as self-evident by all writers in the field that the Lutheran pastor must act in the capacity of a real teacher in the classroom, that is, in the direct teaching agencies in which he himself holds the position of teacher. Here we mention the *parish-school* first, because we still regard the statement of Walther as fundamental for the proper indoctrination of the children of the Church, namely, that there should be a Christian school next to every Lutheran church. By the same token it has always been accepted as self-evident, unless prohibited by insurmountable obstacles, that a Lutheran pastor will be instrumental in starting such a school or in having it established and that he will personally take over the task of teaching if he can at all obtain the credits required in the respective State. And if the pastor does teach in his own parish-school, it means that he will not be satisfied

with merely going through the motions of conducting the school but that he will give it the full time and energy needed to make it successful in every way. Regardless of the work involved, he ought to have enough of the spirit of adventure in his make-up to set up the highest ideals in his work and then to strive for their attainment. The same demands should be observed with regard to the *Sunday-school*, in which most pastors will be teaching in person, if arrangements can be made, also the *Saturday-school*, whose possibilities have evidently not yet been sufficiently appreciated, and the *summer-school* (vacation Bible-school). As for week-day religious instruction by arrangement with the public-school authorities, it will be possible, especially in rural and semirural communities, for the pastor to do some very satisfactory work in teaching if he keeps in mind the teaching situation, the curriculum and the course of study, and the objectives. In the cities it has been found possible to gain student vicars and parish-school teachers for the actual work in religious classes held during the week, and many communities report satisfactory progress. A word should be added with regard to *Sunday-school teachers' meetings and institutes*, since these are often conducted in a make-shift manner, with stereotyped printed helps taking the place of personal guidance. Certainly a pastor who has been imbued with the responsibility of a *personal* ministry will make every effort, in the teaching situations which present themselves to him in the congregation where the Lord has placed him, to be a real teacher to his people. While subject-matter may and should be garnered everywhere, it is incumbent upon the pastor to adapt this subject-matter to the particular time and place where it is to be used and not to be cramped by the vise of standardized teaching helps.

The Lutheran pastor should be conscious of his position as teacher also in other situations in which he is supposed to direct the thinking of members of his own flock or of others with whom he comes in contact in a professional capacity. We are thinking here in particular of the entire *youth department of the Church*, in the young people's societies, the junior and senior divisions of the Walther League, and related organizations. If a pastor is at all conscious of his responsibilities over against his young people after confirmation, he is bound to take his work with them very seriously. Certainly no one will deny that there is an obligation resting upon the pastor after he has seen his catechumens safely through the period of their fundamental or preliminary training, to wit, that of superintending the building of the superstructure. The teaching of the junior Bible class, as has been shown elsewhere (*CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, XI, 514), is not a mere matter of repetition of Catechism-teaching nor of lecturing at the young

people on the basis of some chapter or paragraph of the Bible, but such teaching taxes all the abilities of the pastor in the matter of selection of subject-matter, thorough exposition of the text, methods used in inducing thinking on the part of his pupils, and applications to be made without resorting to haranguing or preaching. The temptation to rely, somewhat blindly, upon printed orthodox Bible leaflets is especially great in the case of the busy pastor, but it is right here that he should prove his appreciation of the task laid upon him by his call, by his personal ministry. If he does not select his own material from the Bible and make his own lesson plans, he must by all means adapt and adjust the standardized lessons to fit the needs of his young people's group. The same holds true with regard to the so-called topic meetings, in which the Bible indeed is the background also, but which move along more general and somewhat more informal lines. The *teaching function* of the pastor must be in evidence, preferably with a strong emphasis upon teaching as guidance. What holds true for Bible classes and topic meetings in the youth department of the Church finds its application also in similar groups, such as ladies' aid societies, men's clubs, voters' meetings, altar guilds, Cotta guilds, Dorcas societies, mission societies, and all other organizations in which the pastor will be regarded as the teacher and leader.

But even this does not exhaust the work of the pastor as a teacher, since, in fact, also the indirect agencies call for the highest pedagogical skill. He is to function also over against the detrimental influences of modern antichristian agencies, as they are active in the propaganda of evolutionism, Communism, Modernism, and other dangerous movements and philosophies. A Lutheran pastor must be in a position to counteract the malicious and soul-wrecking endeavors of such movements and philosophies, not by superficial generalities but by counter-arguments based upon a sufficiently exhaustive study to give his conclusions and judgment some definite weight. He may come in contact with these negative influences in various ways, and they may even surprise him in teaching situations in the very midst of his own flock; but he must at all times show himself the teacher, quiet, effective, sympathetic, convincing. This attitude must be maintained also over against other modern educational agencies which may and should, under favorable circumstances, serve constructive purposes, but all too often are abused in the interest of anti-Biblical propaganda, namely, the press and the radio. Of these "first aids to reality evasion," as they have been called, a recent writer says: "Among these vehicles of propaganda the newspaper and the radio are in the van. Both are powerful and may be very dangerous. It is

something more than a mere impression that the press has failed to utilize its opportunities and to fulfil its functions. Probably the fourth estate reached the peak of its effectiveness and constructiveness just before the turn of the century, and now it is at a low ebb. . . . Newspaper propaganda is a massive, insidious, and inescapable method of artificial reality evasion. . . . The radio is more modern and even more potent as a reality-evading instrument than the press. It combines the awesome mystery with the authority of the voice from the unknown ether. It transmits not only the words of the maker of propaganda but also his personality. We are told that television will soon be an accomplished fact. We await it and its propaganda-making potentialities with justifiable trepidation." (Strecker, *Beyond the Clinical Frontiers*, 47-49.) These considerations will influence a faithful pastor in two directions, namely, to direct the use of these agencies in such a way, so far as in him lies, that their beneficial possibilities are realized in an increasing measure and to counteract the vicious tendencies and influences of the press and the radio by a well-chosen and constructive program of information and training, not by a mere wholesale and pointless denunciation.

And there are still other possibilities within the scope of the pastor's work as a teacher of his flock and others whom he has the opportunity to instruct and to guide. The so-called registration for the Lord's Supper, if properly utilized, can be made a vehicle for both information and direction for individuals and groups, provided the pastor has a program and an aim in speaking to his parishioners. The whole field of Christian doctrine, particularly that pertaining to the essence and the benefit of the Holy Communion, not to mention the domain of Christian ethics, is here open to the pastor. Needless to say, the teaching situation offered in the case of sick-calls, of missionary visits, and even of casual contacts cannot be overlooked. Naturally, every faithful pastor will refrain from empty and meaningless formulas in all cases which belong to this part of his work. But there is a possibility that many pastors have not yet regarded such contacts as definite opportunities for systematic instruction and guidance. The word of the apostle certainly finds its application in the work of the Christian pastor: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man," Col. 4:6. In this connection we must not overlook the pastor's duty, also as a teacher of his whole flock, to stimulate the interest of his parishioners in favor of home devotion, not only by praising its great blessings but also by demonstrating its possibilities as functions of the universal priesthood of the believers.

In conclusion it may not be amiss to state that a Lutheran

pastor, as opportunity offers in his contacts with those who are not yet members of the household of faith, to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear," 1 Pet. 3:15, and "earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," Jude 3. In short, the Lutheran pastor who is truly conscious of the scope of his calling will realize more and more that he is a teacher everywhere and always and will therefore make every effort to perfect himself more and more in the fulfilling of his great task.

P. E. KRETZMANN

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 8:5-13

"Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11:6. But says Jesus, "All things are possible to him that believeth," Mark 9:23. Our text invites each one to put to himself

The Searching Question, Have I True Faith?

1. *Why one should ask himself this question*
2. *How one can know that he has true faith*

1

a) There are those who say that they have faith but have it not. Such were "the children of the Kingdom" of whom Jesus said in our text, "They shall be cast out into outer darkness," v. 12. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, prided themselves in saying that God was their Father (John 8:41), that they were Abraham's seed (v. 33) and true Israelites. But Jesus said to them, "Ye are of your father, the devil" (v. 44), and Paul said, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, . . . but inwardly," Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6-8. Mere church-membership and the outward performance of "worship" does not make of man a believer, a child of God. Is. 1:10-17.

b) There are those who have faith but are troubled to know whether or not they have it. They may actually be among those who "come from the East and the West and shall sit down with Abraham," etc. (v. 11); but because of their sins, their own utter unworthiness, their lack of that sweet feeling of being a child of God, their crosses and trials and tribulations, they are harassed with doubt concerning their Christianity; they may be on the verge of despair. Is. 49:14-16; Ps. 73:2.

How, then, can one know whether he has true faith? What are its characteristics?