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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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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?

2

a) He who has true faith is humble, acknowledges his sinfulness and utter unworthiness to receive anything good of the Lord. V. 8; Gen. 32:10; Matt. 3:11; 15:26, 27; 1 Tim. 1:15.

b) He who has faith believes that Jesus is willing to help; he puts his trust in Christ's Word. Vv. 6, 8, 9; John 20:29b; Matt. 15:21-28. Though faith may be weak; nevertheless it is true faith. Mark 9:17, 18, 23, 24, 27. But Jesus encourages us to grow strong in faith; as the centurion in our text, we should say, "Speak the word only." We should even under the most distressing circumstances put unreserved, complete confidence in the words and promises of our Savior. The Word of God says: 1 John 1:7b; 2:1, 2; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Rom. 4:25; John 3:16, 17; Ps. 50:15; Matt. 6:33, 34; Rom. 8:18, 28; Heb. 12:6, 11; Gen. 50:20; all this we should believe, Rom. 8:31-34. The believer will not be disappointed, v. 13.

c) He who has faith also gives evidence of his faith. Vv. 5, 6; Acts 16:33, 34; John 12:3.

Have you these characteristics of faith? Then you are a true believer. But must not we all join the very apostles, saying, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5)?

J. H. C. FRITZ

Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 10:38-42

At the home of Martha in Bethany the touching scene described in our text was enacted. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were special friends of Christ, John 11:5. When they became disciples, we do not know, but we know that they were exceptionally faithful. On the occasion of a visit to this home Jesus taught the important lesson:

One Thing Is Needful

1. *Which is that one thing?*
2. *Why does it take precedence over everything else?*

1

The one thing needful does not consist in mere outward service. Example: Martha. The service which she rendered must not be despised. Martha certainly meant well. It was no small matter. There was much work when Jesus and the Twelve came to visit, but He was always welcome. Again, there was much expense involved when Jesus and the Twelve came, but there was never a complaint. The service was cheerfully rendered. Note, too, that Jesus does not criticize nor condemn the service itself. He often

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visited this home and gladly accepted and appreciated the service rendered. However, He wanted to emphasize that such service is not the one thing needful.

The one thing needful consists in the hearing and learning of God's Word. Example: Mary. She sat at Jesus' feet even as a pupil sits at the feet of the teacher. She was intensely interested. She placed herself into a position which enabled her to follow Christ's teaching with rapt attention. Not a word did she want to miss. Nothing should disturb her or distract her attention. She wanted to hear Jesus.

Christ declared that not Martha, but Mary had chosen "that good part," the one thing needful. This definitely settles the matter and answers the question which we asked. We should remember, however, that this has a very positive meaning for us. This correct appraisal of values, correct because Christ says so, must not be overlooked by any of us when we must choose between hearing the Word and rendering outward service.

2

Mere outward service "cumbers," v. 40. It perplexes and distracts. It divides the attention upon "many things," v. 41, and does not permit us to focus upon the one thing needful. We pray in the hymn: "Distracting thoughts and cares remove." It causes us to lose our sense of real values, for it prevents the hearing of the Word. Anything that causes neglect of God's Word is too big a price to pay for mere outward service.

From the example of Martha we learn that, unless the one thing needful is given priority, we shall be apt to criticize others. Martha found fault with Mary. She even sought to criticize Jesus, v. 40. She uttered a direct complaint: "Carest Thou not?" and a direct demand: "Speak to her."

If we do not give proper prominence to hearing of the Word, we shall miss the comfort, support, strengthening, encouragement, for the soul offered in the Word.

All earthly things are merely temporal; God's Word is eternal.

Jesus says: "It shall not be taken away from her." The Savior wants us to keep "that good part." He will keep it for us, 2 Tim. 1:12. He will permit nothing to deprive us of it and nothing to separate us from it, Rom. 8:38, 39.

By God's grace let us follow Mary's example. Such as choose part with Christ here will have part with Christ yonder. John 17:27, 28; 1 John 3:2; John 17:24. Hymn 83. J. W. BEHNKEN

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

John 5:19-29

Jesus healed a man who had been sick 38 years, vv. 8, 9. Since this happened on the Sabbath, the Jews charged Jesus with sin. To this, Jesus replied: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," v. 17, and they correctly understood Him to mean by this that He is equal with God. In consequence they sought to kill Him. All this afforded Jesus a welcome occasion of bearing witness. In the testimony concerning Himself in our text He sets forth the truth that

The Son Does Whatever the Father Shows Him

This proves

1. *His deity*
2. *God's grace*
3. *The certainty of the resurrection of life and of damnation*

1

Jesus justifies His charitable work on the Sabbath by saying that His Father showed it to Him. By reproaching Him for His miracle, the Jews were accusing the Father. It is true of all the works of Jesus that the Father shows them to Him and that He does them in accordance with the Father's will. The Father will show Him even greater works than this miracle of healing. Vv. 20, 21, 25, 28, 29. These tremendous works the Father shows Him, and He does them. Is He not therefore the omnipotent Son of God?

Jesus names another divine work greater than the healing of the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, v. 22. This Judgment will extend over every human being that has ever lived on earth, an innumerable multitude. Every one of them will receive his due. 2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:31. Does not this presuppose omniscience? Indeed, He is God Incarnate, Man Divine, doing whatever the Father shows Him.

2

The Son does what the Father shows Him. That includes the words which Jesus spoke. In v. 24 Jesus identifies His words with the words of Him that sent Him. The Father's words are Jesus' words, and the message of Jesus is the Father's message. John 8:28, 38; 12:49, 50; 14:10.

And, oh, what a gracious message this is! This Word gives eternal life, not only after death but here and now, v. 24: "hath life"; John 3:36. Words of Jesus, being spirit and life (John 6:63), give life to man, so that we are no more walking corpses, physically alive, spiritually dead, but possess life abundantly, new thoughts, new outlooks, new works, new spiritual life. That is the grace of God given to sinful man, because the Son does whatever the Father showeth Him.

3

From the fact that the Son does what the Father shows Him is evident, finally, that unbelievers will rise unto condemnation, the believers unto life. The Father has committed all Judgment unto the Son, v. 22. Acts 10:42; Matt. 25:31-46. Just as faithfully as Jesus performed His office as Redeemer, He will execute the Judgment committed to Him. Let there be no mistake about this. Nothing can be more certain, wherefore Jesus says: "Marvel not at this," v. 28. Temporal death is no escape from this Judgment. Man's law does not prosecute the dead; but before Christ's tribunal all must appear, and the dead will be raised up and arraigned before the Judge of the world. He that believeth not will be damned. Mark 16:16; John 12:48. Their having done evil will be adduced as evidence of their unbelief. Contrariwise, v. 24; Rom. 8:1. The good they have done will prove them to have been believers.

These things being certain beyond a doubt, everybody had better adjust himself accordingly in time. Let unbelievers regard with terror their unbelief, which makes the Triune God a liar and leads to eternal torment. There still is hope even for the wicked if only they will hear and believe Christ's gracious testimony. And let all who believe take comfort in the sufferings of this life and in view of death in the Lord's assurance that they as believers, who do good, shall have part in the blessed resurrection of life. Hymn 527:7 ff.

PAUL G. BIRKMANN

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Luke 13:10-17

Among those who were affected at all by the teaching of Jesus during His ministry upon earth there stand out prominently two distinct groups. The first accepted His message in faith and believed in Him as the Messiah promised of God. Such were the disciples whose opinion of Jesus is summed up in Peter's declaration: Matt. 16:16. The second group consisted of those who were hostile to Jesus even to the extent of voicing blasphemous charges against Him, John 8:48.

A similar difference in attitude we find also in regard to Jesus' miracles. Some held what is stated John 20:30, 31, but others declared with the Pharisees: Matt. 12:24. Our Gospel lesson, too, illustrates the point. We shall dwell on

The Twofold Effect of Jesus' Manifestation of His Divine Power in the Synagog

1. *The believing woman was healed and glorified God*
2. *The unbelieving adversaries were offended and denounced Jesus*

1

Jesus was teaching in a synagog, v. 10. The evangelist omits details as to locality in order to let the important facts stand out in clear relief. Jesus followed the religious customs of the Jews of His day and regularly attended the services which were held on the Sabbath in their synagogs, or houses of worship. These synagogs, in the time after the Exile, existed along with the Temple and supplemented its worship. Since Jewish law required that, wherever ten Jews lived, a synagog had to be erected, every city in Palestine had at least one synagog. In the service two selections from the Old Testament, one from the Law of Moses, the other from the Prophets, were read and prayers spoken. On this Sabbath Jesus had been invited to address the congregation.

While Jesus was ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, a woman afflicted with a severe case of curvature of the spine entered. The unexpectedness of her appearance is indicated by "behold," v. 11. She could not walk erect, v. 11, and made her way with great difficulty. Jesus recognized her as a "daughter of Abraham," *i. e.*, as a believer, who was plagued by Satan, v. 16. Compassion filled Jesus' heart. Even without any request on her part He proceeded to help her, v. 12. A few words and a mere touch by His omnipotent hands effected the cure, v. 13.

What a great blessing this was for the woman. What she had suffered during the preceding eighteen years only one similarly afflicted can fully appreciate. But along with the physical relief she also enjoyed a spiritual gain. She recognized God's work in the cure. In the course of years she had tried whatever cures were available and found them ineffective. God alone could help her. Now that He had helped her, her faith was strengthened and her heart flowed over with gratitude toward Him. She "glorified God," illustrating Matt. 12:34 b. A blessed woman.

This woman is an example for us. The Jesus that helped her also helps us today. He is ever present with us, Matt. 28:20 b, and sees our needs and troubles. How often has His help become manifest in our lives. Are we always conscious of God's demand Ps. 50:15 b after experiencing His aid? Our sentiment should be Hymn 62:1.

2

The other person who particularly engages our attention in the Gospel-lesson is the ruler of the synagog, v. 14. This man was the chief one of the officials appointed to arrange the services in the synagog and to see to it that proper decorum was observed in them. His position was one of honor, and he was elected to it on the strength of his religious knowledge. He was therefore well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures. That he had a high

opinion of Jesus is evidenced by the fact that he invited Him to speak in the synagog of which he had charge. Perhaps he was impressed as were others, Luke 4:32; Matt. 7:29; John 7:46.

Whatever good opinion the ruler of the synagog may have had of Jesus was shattered by the healing of the woman. Jesus' compassionate act highly incensed him, so that he loudly denounced the people for coming on the Sabbath to be healed, v. 14. Although these words were directed to the audience, they were meant for Jesus. They charged Him with violating the Third Commandment by performing a forbidden task on the day set aside by God for rest. God's Law in the matter was very simple, but the scribes had added countless unauthorized restrictions to it, according to which Jesus was doing something unlawful when He healed on the Sabbath. Hence the offense that was taken. Unhappy man to be offended by the Savior!

It was not the first time that the question of the proper observance of the Sabbath had been in dispute between Jesus and His adversaries. Cf. Matt. 12:1-8. The ruler of the synagog likewise could have concluded from the miracle that he was dealing with one who was "Lord even of the Sabbath day." But Jesus deals with him on the basis of the Old Testament, whose authority he recognized, v. 15. It is a clear and convincing argument from the less to the more important. Since all these facts were known to the ruler of the synagog, his denunciation of Jesus was contrary to his better knowledge. Hence the awful epithet "hypocrite." A call to repentance.

The miracle which our Lord intended also for the spiritual benefit of the ruler of the synagog failed to achieve its purpose. Of him and those that shared his view we hear only v. 17 a. A far cry from believing in Jesus.

Unfortunately there are also churches today which lay emphasis on the man-made accretions to the Gospel, so that their members are offended when they hear the pure Gospel of the grace in Christ Jesus. May our Lord ever keep our Church free from such disastrous error!

G. V. SCHICK

