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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 19:16-26

The scope of the text (see *Gospel Harmony*) is Law and Gospel: the old doctrine of sin and grace. The sermon will be a doctrinal one. It will take us by surprise; for we expected to whip the rich into hell and to exalt the poor into heaven. However, the disciples were quick to comprehend, and therefore, in exceeding amazement, they asked the question:

Who, then, Can be Saved?

Jesus answered

1. *With men this is impossible*
2. *But with God all things are possible*

1

A) With men, etc., for all men are sinners, rich in self-righteousness, poor in true righteousness, transgressors of the supreme rule and of the Golden Rule.

The young man was rich in temporal possessions, which he loved, v. 22. Riches relative: very rich, rich, fairly rich, less rich—depending on the standard of comparison set arbitrarily by the individual's envy and greed. A relatively poor man holds to his own with as tight a grip as the rich. This text is a warning also to the poor, for it teaches that all men are guilty of the same attitude toward earthly riches. Does the balance in our Lord's treasury prove anything? Even while we inwardly rejoice, being poor, that the relatively rich must hear their timely lesson today, along comes Peter, even Peter, and connects to v. 21 his question in v. 27. And he a child of God! He blasts our hidden hope that the man in the pulpit is an exception to the all-inclusive "with men." Matt. 6:24, 30.

The young man was rich in self-righteousness, vv. 17b—20. The rich have a better chance to do good and thus to keep the commandments? Therefore they are closer to heaven than the poor? Poverty is handicapped? True or false? See Luke 16:9-11. Jesus tries those rich in self-righteousness by a challenge, a promise, and an invitation, v. 21. Critical moment. It was not lost, for the conscience was pricked; the conviction of the guilt of self-righteousness, of insufficiency, of imperfection, overwhelmed the young man. Lacking, he turned to his riches. Again Jesus, shifting His application from the individual to the masses, omits the designation "rich" in His statement "With men this is impossible." Rom. 3:23. "Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments

... other injury." We boast of our good works and forget our sins of omission. To keep the commandments is impossible; hence salvation is impossible with men. In perplexity and amazement we ask: Who, then, can be saved? We hide away like Adam and Eve. How would v. 22 read in your case? He turned sorrowfully away because, being poor, he loved his few possessions, because he loved his children more than Jesus, because he loved pleasure, because he deified his reason? All this time I wanted to say: Thou art the man!

B) The impossibility leads to despair. The disciples understood Jesus. Why try to ascertain whether "camel" was the term for an anchor rope, or "needle's eye" a small gate in the wall-door? In either case there would be a slight possibility of entering through, which Jesus denies. The anchor rope can be threaded through the needle fiber by fiber; the camel can be stripped of its burden and enter through the small gate. But, clearly, Jesus speaks of an impossibility. Therefore this figure of speech generally employed by the Jews to denote an impossibility must be applied literally to pound into the mind and heart the utter impossibility of salvation by works. This means that every one of us is a sinner who cannot enter heaven. There is no exception among us. This is exceedingly amazing. It crushes us to despair. Hymn 310, v. 3.

2

a) Jesus reveals Himself as the true God, vv. 16, 17.

b) In Christ the salvation of man is possible. Christ has made it possible by the work of redemption. Objective justification is a fact.

c) Now He seeks the subjective justification of every individual, calling and inviting each to come to Him and to follow Him, v. 21.

d) When the sinner was converted to Christ, a miracle happened. God did that which was impossible with men: He saved the sinner by His grace through faith in Christ, which He Himself wrought in him, Eph. 1:19, 20, and the camel has entered through the needle's eye.

e) Thus, and only thus, are we saved, without respect of persons. Why, then, are we saved and not the others? Peter, and not the rich young man? We must divide the question. Only then can we answer it. We are saved by grace only, without the deeds of the Law. The young man and others are lost by their own fault. Obstinate, and sometimes sorrowfully, they decline Christ's gracious invitation. Jesus wanted the young man in the kingdom of heaven, v. 21.

f) Can we living miracles of God thank Him sufficiently for His grace? Out of true gratitude serve Him as one redeemed from

under the Law and now above the Law and under the Gospel, daily accepting the invitation, fruitful in good works, rejoicing in the promise of reward, but always mindful that it is a reward of grace and not of merit.

G. H. SMUKAL

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 18:24-28

Our Gospel, beginning with "then," points back to the incident in vv. 21-23, where we are told how Christ, after having predicted His impending suffering, was rebuked by Peter and so was Himself obliged to administer a stern reproof to this impulsive disciple. The well-meaning but foolish apostle did not wish to see his Master take upon Himself so heavy a cross, but this was prompted by things "that be of men," that is, by his carnal reason. After all, Peter did not wish for himself a life of suffering coming to him with his Lord's suffering. There are many Christians today who, as Peter, do not care to suffer but desire for themselves ease, pleasure, and glory on earth. But Christianity is something very serious and must be taken seriously. We have reason to consider with Holy earnestness

The Christian Life

1. Its high demand

2. Its glorious gain

1

A) The Christian life is described in our text as a "coming after Me," v. 24. Having accepted Christ as his Savior, the Christian follows the Redeemer. The Christian therefore dare not plan his own life; it is planned and directed by his Lord, John 21:18 f.; 2 Cor. 12:7-9. Christians must therefore heed the high demand which the life in Christ makes on them.

a) They must deny themselves, v. 24, must renounce their own natural self, their natural wicked desires, in short, all evil inclinations and tendencies of their Old Adam, 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Rom. 6:6:

b) They must take up their cross, v. 24, cheerfully endure all sufferings which the profession of Christ entails and otherwise joyously bear all cross which, for their good, God places upon them, Phil. 2:5 ff.; cf. Matt. 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:3. Note the emphasis with which this lesson is taught.

c) They must follow Christ, v. 24, that is, do all things demanded of them in obedience to God, as He did, John 4:34; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; 1 Thess. 4:3; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:10; etc.

B) Why the Christian life makes such high demand, vv. 25, 26.

a) Whosoever will save his temporal life by yielding to his

carnal appetites, refusing to bear his cross and to obey God, thus renouncing the Savior and casting away faith, shall lose the eternal life which Christ has secured for all men by His holy Passion, Mark 16:16; 2 Pet. 2:1.

b) There is nothing which a man may give in exchange for his soul, v. 26; Ps. 49:7, 8; Luke 16:23 ff.; Heb. 9:27. Once the soul is lost, all is lost.

As we consider these earnest words of our Savior, let us keep in mind not only the gross lusts and sins which every decent person regards as shameful, such as murder, adultery, theft, and the like, but also such sins as are committed by thought, desire, and word and, above all, the sins against the first table of the Decalog, "fine idolatry," "not praying, praising, and giving thanks," "not gladly hearing and learning God's Word," as also carnal pride, covetousness, impure conversation, inward unwillingness to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh and to obey God's will, etc. The demand is high indeed! Matt. 19:25 f.; Mark 10:26.

2

A) There is a glorious gain for the true believer, who in sincere love leads a Christian life pleasing to God.

a) He comes after Christ, v. 24; that is, he is His true disciple; and Christian discipleship is the greatest bliss to which a man can attain, Matt. 13:16; 16:17; Matt. 5:11; 1 Pet. 4:14.

b) He shall find his life, v. 25; that is, he shall secure eternal life by grace; and, oh, how glorious eternal life is! John 5:28 f.; Dan. 12:2; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Luke 23:43; Rev. 14:13; 1 John 3:2; Ps. 16:11; John 17:24; Rom. 8:18.

c) He shall receive a rich reward of grace, v. 27; Matt. 25:31 ff.; 5:3 ff.; 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:41 ff. This salvation is sure, v. 28. Jerusalem's destruction foreshadowed the coming final Judgment, which, however, means to believers eternal salvation, just as the destruction of Jerusalem did not harm Christ's followers who lived at that time, Matt. 24:16; Luke 21:28.

B) If Christ found it necessary to admonish His disciples so earnestly then, how much more do we need His warning today! 1 John 1:8 f.; 2:11, 15-17. The line of demarcation between the Church and the world is rapidly disappearing. 2 Tim. 3:1; 4:3.

Application. — We must by God's grace cultivate a truly spiritual spirit, weaning our hearts from this world and setting our affection on the things above, Col. 3:1, 2. "Watch and pray!" The warnings of our text were addressed to the disciples by the loving Savior, who earnestly desired their salvation. V. 26. Judas lost his soul. But eleven were saved. God grant us steadfastness in faith for Jesus' sake!

J. THEODORE MUELLER

Tenth Sunday after Trinity**Luke 19:1-10**

Jesus on his last journey to Jerusalem passes through Jericho. This city, once accursed of God (Jos. 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34), becomes the scene of another of those wondrous demonstrations with which the ministry of our Lord is replete, a demonstration of his love of sinners and of the truth of the sweet Gospel "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The recipient of the Savior's grace is Zacchaeus, the chief of publicans at Jericho. His experience affords comfort and encouragement to sinners to the end of days. Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus. For a helpful understanding of his experience, as set forth in the beautiful story of our text, let us consider

Note The Desire of Zacchaeus to See Jesus

1. *How this desire arises* 2. *Wherein it reveals itself*
3. *How gloriously it is satisfied*

1

A) The desire of Zachaeus to see Jesus was not like that of Herod (Luke 23:8), the desire of idle curiosity. It is not likely that this hard-headed business man, interested only in his business and profits, should entertain such curiosity concerning Jesus. Mere curiosity would not have prompted him to satisfy his desire in a manner that exposed him, the wealthy and prominent business man, to ridicule.

B) His longing to see Jesus had quite another source. His wealth had failed to give him true peace of mind and happiness. The manner of amassing it had cost him the good will of his fellow-men. His business had stifled the finer sentiments of human sympathy and charity, had made him hard and inconsiderate. All the seeming advantages it had brought him, easy living, prominence, etc., failed utterly to recompense him for the troubled conscience that was his. As a Jew, he knew the Law of Moses. His undeniable transgressions had brought the wrath of God and the curse of the Law upon him. A troubled conscience had made him an unhappy man despite his wealth and position. — Then he had heard of Jesus, whose fame filled the land. He had heard not only of Jesus' claim of deity and Messiahship but also of His love of sinners. All that he had heard filled his heart with the assurance that Jesus was indeed the Savior he needed, and with a longing to see Jesus. Connected with this longing was a ray of hope that in this Jesus he, too, might find that peace of mind which his wealth had failed to give him, peace of mind

forfeited by sin, peace of mind that can come only with the assurance that man is at peace with God. This longing was the beginning of faith wrought in the heart of Zacchaeus by God's Holy Spirit. — A troubled, yet hopeful heart, hopeful because it trusted in what he had heard about Jesus, was the source of Zacchaeus's desire to see Jesus.

C) Application.

2

A) When Jesus came to Jericho, the desire of Zacchaeus to see him was most strikingly evidenced. Here was his opportunity! No obstacles (the press of people, his small stature), no fear of ridicule (the big business man sitting in a tree!), could stop him now. To see Jesus, to hear Him, became the paramount business of that day.

B) True desire to see Jesus must ever evidence itself. Though invisibly, nevertheless truly, Jesus journeys through the world today in the precious Gospel of His redeeming love. Wherever that is proclaimed, there is Jesus passing through, presenting golden opportunities to see Him, who He is and what He means to a lost world. True desire to see Him will evidence itself today in glad hearing of the Gospel. — Alas, how easily we yield to obstacles and fear of ridicule! Our age is too much given to convenience, even in the matter of seeing Jesus. How many are willing to give the evidence of Zacchaeus? God strengthen our desire to see Jesus, in whom we rest all our hope in time and eternity, to hear and read His Word where He reveals Himself to us! Surely, the proper evidence of such desire cannot but follow.

3

A) Gloriously beyond all expectations Jesus satisfied the desire of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus had hoped for a passing glimpse, for just a word of reassurance. Instead, Jesus, beholding Zacchaeus and discerning his very thoughts, pauses and addresses him: vv. 5, 6. "Hasten," Jesus bids Zacchaeus in evidence of the Savior's joy in finding and saving another sinner and of the importance of the moment. Hasten, do not delay, the opportunity may never return. And joyfully Zacchaeus did hasten. Not moments but hours of his precious fleeting time Jesus devotes to this one sinner, convincing him beyond a doubt and for inexpressible happiness, that indeed He is the Savior of sinners, the Son of God come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. Salvation in the fullest, sweetest sense had indeed come to Zacchaeus and his house.

B) The evidence of a satisfied longing, v. 8. A vow of love and gratitude. Emphasize the spontaneity of the vow. Also the

large amount of the offering. The restitution vow also exceeds the requirements of the Law of Moses and gives evidence of the complete transformation effected in Zacchaeus through the power of Jesus' love.

C) *Application.*—Thus will the Savior of sinners ever satisfy the longing of a sinner's heart and bring salvation to every house into which He is received. Thus the power of Jesus' love will ever transform sinful human hearts, filling them with love and gratitude, with willingness to serve Him here in time and hereafter in eternity. Hymn 99:3.

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Mark 12:41-44

Many passages of the Bible teach the virtue of Christian giving, Mal. 3:10; Luke 6:38; 1 Tim. 6:17, 18; Gal. 6:9, 10. But the Bible also teaches Christian giving on the basis of example. It does not only tell us of the many and wonderful gifts of the children of Israel, who frequently gave much more than the tithe, Ex. 35:22; 36:5; 1 Chron. 29:3, 4; it also brings us the story of the widow's mites, which sets before us in very simple language, a very humble person who became

A Striking Example of Christian Giving

1. *This example shows us the proper spirit of giving*
2. *It gives us an inspiration as to the amount to be given*

1

A) Context. The Savior had just delivered a rather stirring message. He had taught in the Temple and had directed His words particularly to the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes (vv. 38-40), and then "Jesus sat over against the treasury," v. 41. We of course do not know exactly where this treasury was located, but most Bible commentators think of the thirteen trumpet-shaped metal receptacles, each marked by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and placed in the court of the women, to receive the gifts of the worshipers for the benefit of the Temple and the temple tax. Near them and over against them Jesus sat down to watch the people as they made their contributions.

B) Jesus is interested in the gifts of His people, v. 41a. This was true in Old Testament times, when it was definitely demanded that every faithful Israelite bring one tenth of his income as an offering to God, Lev. 27:30. Lambs without blemish, perfect bullocks, were brought as offerings. And Jesus noticed when they did their share and when they did not give in the right way. (Cf. Is. 1:

11-14; 43:24; Mal. 3:8.) What was true in the days of the Old Testament is true also in the days of the New Testament. Jesus still keeps a watchful eye on the treasury to see who gives, in what spirit they give, and how much they give. Many people do not like the idea of giving under the watchful eye of the Savior; they do not like to have any one know how miserably small their gift is; they do not like to have people know in what spirit they are bringing their gift to the altar. Still it is true today, Jesus still watches the treasury, watches every collection basket, watches every church envelope.

C) The Savior saw that many rich people put in much, v. 41b. Some of them may have come to give merely from a sense of duty, some merely to keep their standing in the church and not really out of love to God. But the Bible merely tells us the fact that rich people gave much.

D) The Savior, however, definitely picked out one who gave in the right way and in the right spirit, vv. 42, 43. The very fact that the Savior commends her is evidence of the fact that she gave in the right spirit. Even though she gave as much as she gave, the Savior would not have commended her if she had not given freely, voluntarily, gratefully, as the fruit of faith 1 Cor. 13:3. What this woman teaches by example the Bible again and again teaches by precept, 2 Cor. 9:7; Rom. 12:8.

E) Unless we give gladly, freely, cheerfully, we shall never have the joy of giving. As long as we look upon giving as an obligation forced upon us, we shall always feel as though a part of us is being cut off, amputated, when we give a dollar or a larger sum. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

2

A) V. 42. On the surface it looks as though this amount is very small, only two mites, about one fourth of a cent, or two and one half mills. Certainly this amount was small, and yet people have criticized her for giving as much as she gave. Some say she should have kept the money for her own support, or she should have at least kept half of it. This is the attitude of worldly wisdom.

B) The Savior definitely says: V. 43. The Savior considered this matter so important that He called His disciples together. He begins His statement by saying: "Verily I say unto you," which always indicates the importance of His message. The disciples are to hear something for their own personal benefit, and at the same time they are to learn the principle according to which all gifts in the Church are to be estimated.

C) Since the Savior emphasized the smallness of her gift and still said that she gave more than all the rest, it is evident that He

was not comparing the sums involved, but rather the quality of the gift. The rich people had only given their surplus and not even all of that. The poor widow of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. Hers was a sacrifice indeed. By giving her last cent, she placed herself completely into the keeping of God, who could and would provide for her far better and more surely than a million times any number of mites could.

D) The woman gave so little, and still she gave so much. Did this widow starve? God undoubtedly took care of her. But can you imagine yourself doing as she did without the fear of starving? Many who live in abundance decline to give or give too little, because they fear they will not have enough for the future. Their lack of faith robs their giving of its true value. The widow's gift, though of copper, was gold in the eyes of God. How do your gifts look in His eyes? The widow's act cannot be mechanically reproduced. Copy her faith; then you will be in her class, and the size of your gift will take care of itself. If you will, like the Macedonians of old, first give yourself to the Lord, if you will let the love of Christ constrain you, then you will also do as they did and give much. 2 Cor. 8:2, 3.

The widow in the Temple certainly should inspire us to give much for the work of God's kingdom. Just think how, even in money, this widow's gift has multiplied endlessly. How many givers' hearts has she not helped to purify, to fill with stronger faith, and to make truly generous in their giving. When the final computation is made in heaven, the interest which this woman gets will be far beyond anything that the gifts of others could possibly produce. May the example of this poor widow, by God's grace, inspire us to ever greater trust in God and to more generous support of His kingdom!

E. L. ROSCHKE

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

John 8, 31-45

To be a Christian and merely to be religious are two different things. Many people who openly despise preaching and God's Word still would object to being called irreligious and unbelievers. They would rather point to their Christian ancestry, their association with Christians, their good character and citizenship, as evidence that they, too, belong to Christ's flock. Our text presents a group of people who claimed to be very religious; yet Jesus says of them: "Ye are of your father, the devil," v. 44, and calls them unbelievers, v. 45.

Why Many who Are Outwardly Religious Still Are No Followers of Christ

1. Because they still are the slaves of sin.

Jesus was dealing with some Jews of His time who claimed to be religious and yet were His enemies. They piously maintained: "We have one Father, even God," v. 41; they claim to be members of God's kingdom by their descent: "We be Abraham's seed," v. 33, and "Abraham is our father," v. 39.

In spite of these claims they were slaves of sin, i. e., such as willingly continued in sin. Jesus implies this, saying: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin," v. 34. He also points out their specific sins: "Ye seek to kill me," v. 40; "The lusts of your father ye will (*θέλετε*) do," v. 44. They boasted of a freedom which they did not possess and therefore haughtily rejected the offer of Christ to make them free from the slavery of sin, v. 32.

Likewise many today are desirous of appearing religious but willingly live in some pet sin: greed, immorality, love of money, enmity with their neighbor, etc.

But Christ's verdict over all such is: "The servant (i. e., the slave) of sin abideth not in the house," v. 35; he does not belong in God's kingdom. Though such a one claim to be in God's "house," he is but a slave, who has no place therein. Are you still a slave of sin?

2. Because they believe a mere outward profession is sufficient.

The Jews of the Old Testament days were a highly favored people, Rom. 3:2; 9:5. Those of Christ's time enjoyed the special privilege of seeing and hearing their Messiah. Yet we read: John 1:11. It is astonishing to observe that this chosen race of old is generally the most persistent in rejecting Christ.

The Jews of Christ's time believed that outward profession and membership in the chosen race guaranteed them the favor of God. Their argument against Christ's charge of their slavery in sin is: "We be Abraham's seed," v. 33. His accusation that they perform the works of the devil, even to the extent of seeking to murder their Messiah, is repudiated by the protest "Abraham is our father," v. 39. They even claim to have God as their Father solely by virtue of their nationality, v. 41.

These men of Christ's time have their followers in all ages, including our own. Some think they are Christians because their parents or other ancestors were Chtristians; some feel confident that, because they once were confirmed at Christian altars, or because their names are found on some one's communicant list, or

because they contribute a few dollars to the Lord's work and occasionally occupy a church pew, they can on that account call themselves Christians. Matt. 7:21. Is that your mistake?

3. *Because they will not accept Christ's Word.*

Jesus offered to make these Jews free from the bondage of sin by His Word of Truth, vv. 31, 32. From Him they could have received the assurance that by faith in His atoning sacrifice they would be lifted into the glorious liberty of the children of God. But just this word of Christ these "religious" people would not accept. Note how Jesus ascribes their wickedness to this opposition to His Word, vv. 37, 40, 43, 45.

How true to our experience with many so-called "religious" people, who yet never become Christ's followers! Some find Christ's Word unwelcome because it conflicts with their reason; they would rather follow a false science. Others oppose His Word because it demands the crucifying of their flesh. Still others dislike His Word because it denounces their pet sins in unsparing words; and some occupy the pews of the church but are satiated with this Word and merely tolerate that it is preached to them. All these likewise "abide not in the house forever," although they may pretend to be Christ's willing followers.

How necessary to remember that fellowship with Christ means more than a veneer of self-established piety! Only if we continue in His Word are we the disciples whom the truth makes free.

H. O. A. KEINATH

