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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

John 11:32-45

Of the raising from the dead by Christ which the Holy Ghost depicts to us for our instruction and consolation in Scripture, that of the daughter of Jairus, Luke 8:41 ff.; of the widow's son, Luke 7:11 ff.; and of Lazarus (John 11:20 ff.) none is more instructive perhaps than that of the brother of Mary and Martha, which our Gospel treats. Here was involved, not a stranger but a very close and dear friend of Christ, 11:5, and His disciples, v. 16. (Note how carefully and beautifully the evangelist pictures the scene and setting of the raising of Lazarus, vv. 1-31.) For our comfort and instruction let us consider

Occurring **The Resurrection of Lazarus**

1. *In answer to his sisters' prayers*
2. *In proof of Christ's deity*
3. *For the purpose of winning others for salvation*

1

A) The Lord raised Lazarus in answer to the prayers of his sisters, v. 32 (cf. vv. 20 ff.). a) These prayers were expressions of true faith and true Christian humility, v. 32 (cf. v. 22 ff.; also John 4:49), not impatient, carnal reproaches (cf. vv. 27, 28). b) Therefore Mary's prayer so deeply touched Jesus, v. 33; He groaned and was troubled because He inwardly was moved with sympathy and sorrow. c) Therefore also Jesus' willingness to help, vv. 34-36 (cf. vv. 25, 26).

B) The raising of Lazarus shows the power of Christian prayer, Jas. 5:15, 16; 1 Pet. 3:12; John 15:7; etc. a) Alas, we often fail in asking God for the gifts which He fain would give us, Jas. 1:5 ff.; 4:2, 3, both spiritual and earthly, John 16:24; Matt. 7:7; etc. b) We have, of course, no Scripture promise that God will raise our loved ones from the dead before Judgment Day; but do we pray ardently for our relatives and acquaintances and friends when they are sick or in trouble? (Note the sweet sympathy given Mary by the Jews, v. 31. Do we show this winsome, consoling sympathy?) c) Mary (as also Martha) did not pray *directly* for the raising of Lazarus; they poured out their grief before Him, leaving the time and manner of His help to His infinite wisdom; just so we should pray, Matt. 26:42; 8:2.

2

A) The resurrection of Lazarus took place in proof of Christ's deity (and thus to God's glory). a) It put to shame the doubt and unbelief of the Jews, v. 37. b) It showed forth Christ's omnipotent power, vv. 38, 39. c) It proved the divine glory of Christ, vv. 40, 41, 43, 44. As God created light and life in the beginning by His creative Word (Gen. 1:1 ff.), so now by the word of His power He restored life to Lazarus, vv. 43, 44. For a mere man to address dead Lazarus thus would have been the height of folly; for Christ to do so was to prove His deity, for just that is God's mode of working in the realms of nature and grace, Heb. 4:12; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25; etc.

B) Christ's deity must be professed by us today, since again the ancient error is being spread within the visible Church that Christ is a mere man, Matt. 16:13 ff. a) We cannot ordinarily perform miracles of nature, as Christ and the apostles did; for this we have neither a divine command nor a divine promise; but we can show forth Christ's deity by preaching the Word and then pointing men to the miraculous success of that Word, Acts 10:44 ff.; 21:19, 20. b) Neither the internal nor the external proofs of the truth of Christianity can convert men; this is done only by the means of grace, Rom. 1:16; 10:17; John 3:5, 6; Titus 3:5 f. The raising of Lazarus by Christ was, after all, nothing else than a preaching of the Gospel by deed, v. 4.

3

A) The resurrection of Lazarus took place for the purpose of winning others for salvation. a) The Jews were in need of a strengthening of faith, v. 37. b) Christ recognized the need of the revelation of His glory, v. 42. c) Mary herself (like Martha) was in need of consolation, v. 32 (cf. v. 25). d) The disciples, too, were weak in faith, vv. 16, 12. e) The effect of the miracle on many of the Jews, v. 45.

B) "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." a) Lazarus had to become sick and die in order that souls might be won. b) So also in our life, if as true Christians we diligently and faithfully follow Christ, in all that we say or do in good or evil days, faithfulness in our calling, etc., should win souls for Christ; yes, even our death should glorify Christ by helping to bring to faith or strengthen in faith those whose life we influence. What a glorious mission we have to perform, as we live in this poor, sin-troubled world!

Application. — Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 9:19 ff.

J. THEODORE MUELLER

Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity**Matt. 22:23-33**

Jesus was approaching the end of His life's journey. Hostilities against Him became all the more pronounced and severe. The devil was extremely busy. His allies, the Pharisees and Sadducees, according to the record in Matt. 22, alternated in their attacks upon Christ. Jesus answered their questions and knew how to turn the occasion of an attack into the advantage of an opportunity to reprimand, to warn, to exhort, to comfort, and to teach. Our text reports that the Savior made use of a question addressed to Him by the Sadducees to give the divine answer to the question

Is there a Resurrection from the Dead?

1. *The unbeliever denies and ridicules it*
2. *The Lord Jesus affirmed and proved it*

1

Sadducees came to Jesus on the same day when Pharisees had sought to ensnare Him by the question concerning the tribute money, Matt. 22:15-22. Of course, they had failed in their sinister effort. Pharisees and Sadducees were opposed to each other in many things. However, they had this in common: they sought to destroy Christ and His work.

The Sadducees did not accept the doctrine of the resurrection. They did not believe in heaven or angels, etc. This resulted in conduct and behavior centered altogether in life here on earth. Jesus taught the doctrine of the resurrection. Hence Sadducees attacked Him on this point. They presented a hypothetical case. It was also much exaggerated. Hardly possible, certainly not probable, that such a thing would happen in family of seven sons, surely not that they would die one after the other according to their age, vv. 25, 26.

"Moses said," etc., v. 24. The point which they emphasized here is correct. Moses had recorded such a law of God; cf. Deut. 25:5 (Gen. 11:30). This was carried out, Ruth 4:5. Note, too, that Jesus made no effort to deny nor to correct this statement.

However, Sadducees were not interested in the question which they propounded: "Whose wife shall she be?" etc., v. 28. Their aim and purpose was to ridicule the resurrection. They wanted to express their utter contempt of any doctrine which holds that eternity should reunite a woman with seven husbands or else raise a quarrel between them as to which of the seven should claim her. Unquestionably, they planned to deny the resurrection by dragging it down into the ridiculous.

Today the unbeliever ridicules the doctrine of the resurrection. Attempted humorous allusions to the life to come; often sacrilegious

remarks are made by such as would mock at the thought of a resurrection. Men do not want to think seriously of a life to come. The very thought of an accounting in the life to come interferes with their type of life in this world and pricks their conscience. Next, the wish is father to the thought, and they arrogantly deny that there is a resurrection.

2

Jesus, first of all, told the insincere inquirers: "Ye do err," v. 29: you are making a big mistake; your argumentation is altogether wrong; you are ignorant of some very important facts; you have such a carnal conception of the resurrection.

Next Jesus showed that the dead will not rise with mortal bodies, v. 30. They will not die again. There is no need of propagation. There will be no marrying nor giving in marriage. Cf. also Luke 20:34-38. Believers will be like angels, v. 30. Resurrected bodies will be true bodies, same bodies as in this life, Job 19:25-27. Example, Moses and Elijah on Mount of Transfiguration. But they will be heavenly, glorified bodies, Phil. 3:21.

Jesus called attention to God's power. Resurrection can be accomplished only by omnipotence. God proved power in Creation. If He can create from dust of earth, He surely can raise again from the dust of the earth. Apostle calls attention to germination of seed as an example, 1 Cor. 15:37. Why should God not be able to raise the dead? Acts 26:8.

An Inconsistency

Nor you nor I can make a blossom grow.

A seed must be corrupted in the earth
Before the first protruding blade will show

An evidence of a new flower's birth;
God lifts a spotless bloom from this decay,

Nor can the wisest scientist explain
How life comes forth out of the lifeless clay
Under God's wand of sunshine and of rain.

And yet what inconsistency to hold
That I shall not be lifted up by God
After this earthly body turns to mold
Like the corrupted seed beneath the sod!
Does God think more of flowers than of me,
For whom His blood was shed on Calvary? T. E. B.

Jesus adduced Scripture to prove that there is a resurrection. He quoted Moses. Could have quoted Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2, etc. Why did He quote Moses? Sadducees professed to accept only the teachings of Moses. They should have known what he recorded, Ex. 3:6, 16. Patriarchs had died when Moses wrote these words, but "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," v. 32. This

surely means that the patriarchs are alive with God. In other words, there must be a resurrection. The Scripture declares it. We may well remind ourselves again and again to follow Christ's example and quote Scripture to prove God's doctrine. That definitely decides matters. God's Word positively teaches a resurrection of the body, Dan. 12:2; Job 19:25-27; 1 Cor. 15; Luke 16: 19-31; John 5:28, 29; Phil. 3:21.

J. W. BEHNKEN

Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity

Luke 14:16-24

It is pleasant to meditate on the glories of heaven. Wrongly: as an escape from the realities and rigors of present responsibility. Rightly: as a glory spurring us on to overcome every present trial. But the Lord makes clear in the parable before us that any meditation on future bliss should not leave out of account a present fact and condition; that is, that the way to heaven lies only through an invitation, extended to men in this present world, toward which they must take a stand. This invitation is our subject today.

The World's Most Important Invitation: Accept a Place in God's Kingdom of Grace

1. *What does this invitation contain?*

A) The invitation implies that we are by nature outside of the kingdom of God. An invitation is extended to those who do not possess the good thing to which they are invited.—(1) Man is by nature outside of God's kingdom because of sin. Eph. 2:1-3. Man's disobedience to God cuts him off from a place in God's family and inheritance. (2) Man by nature does not even care to belong to the kingdom of God. His heart is depraved and does not understand the things of God. 1 Cor. 1 and 2. He places a higher value on such matters as making a living, buying and selling, family life, as the Savior points out in the parable. Thus matters otherwise good and profitable become a source of disaster. 1 John 2:15-17.

B) The invitation contains God's request that man should accept a place in His Kingdom of Grace.—(1) The invitation offers a gift. The Savior in this parable chooses that illustration which puts the emphasis on the free nature of the invitation. It asks men to accept something toward which they have done nothing; something which is completely ready for them, v. 17, like a festival meal. The similar parable Matt. 22 adds an episode emphasizing this fact by the further picture of the man without a wedding-garment. The invitation implies that God does everything; nothing of our old self, old pretensions and qualities, is to remain. (2) The parable plainly refers to God's invitation to accept salvation from sin and damna-

tion which has already been procured for us through the work of Jesus Christ, our Savior. This work has left nothing for man to do. It is God's gift to man, and it conveys its good to man simply in this, that man accepts it by faith, that he answers the invitation. Rom. 3: 23, 24; 11: 6; 2 Cor. 5: 19; Heb. 10: 12, 14.

2. How is this invitation extended?

A) An invitation implies a word which is spoken, listened to, and accepted or refused. — (1) Through the Gospel, the account of the Savior's work and the plea to accept it, this invitation is extended to men. They are to hear it. Rom. 1: 16; 1 Cor. 1: 18. This word is put into the keeping of Christians that they, too, may aid in the business of invitation. Vv. 17, 21; Matt. 28: 19. (2) This invitation is contained in, and reenforced by, the Sacraments, which likewise convey and seal the promise of the forgiveness of sins.

B) The invitation is an effective and powerful one. — (1) True, it can be resisted, and it is resisted where man, influenced by the lusts of the flesh and the false sense of earthly values, persists in his refusal, vv. 18-20. So Israel repeatedly acted toward the message of the Gospel in Old and New Testament times; so many do to the present day. Luke 8: 12; John 3: 19 ff. (2) But God earnestly and powerfully invites. He has His Gospel preached and enlists us in this work in order to change, by the power of this message, the carnal heart and work faith. Acts 2: 38 ff.; 2 Cor. 5: 19 ff.; Jas. 1: 18; John 3: 5; 1 Pet. 1: 23.

The Savior's lesson of the precious invitation of the Gospel should impress upon us the glory of our salvation, completely prepared and waiting for all men; the power of the message which works faith in this salvation; the need of accepting this invitation and remaining steadfast in faith; and the responsibility which we have in sharing in the spreading of this invitation.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 16: 5-12

Scripture frequently warns us against the care of this world, the worry about, and the concern for, the things of this world. It is true that we need them to support this body and life, but God has promised to provide us with all that we need. Yet we overlook these promises of the Lord and begin to worry.

This care may prove very harmful to us. Therefore the Lord warns us: Matt. 6: 25-34; 13: 22. Our text shows us that

The Care of This World is Blinding Our Eyes to Spiritual Truth

1. The disciples show us that this is the case

2. The Lord shows us how we are to be cured of this care

1

The Lord was rapidly approaching the end of His public ministry. By word and deed He had proved Himself the promised Messiah. But His bitter enemies deliberately closed their eyes to this testimony and desired that He prove His claim by a sign from heaven. The Lord reproves them for their hypocrisy; outwardly very religious, they were in their hearts wicked and spiritual adulterers, who had broken faith with their Lord, 16, 1-4.

The Lord sailed away with His disciples, v. 5. He then uttered the solemn warning: v. 6. The disciples had been with the Lord for some time and had heard many of His parables. They knew that he used this method to present great spiritual truths. When He wished to ask about common, every-day matters, He used direct language, Matt. 15:34; John 21:5. The very use of this language should have led them to ponder the spiritual truth the Lord evidently wished to convey. But though the Lord did not even mention the word bread and spoke only of the leaven, they could think of nothing but of the fact that they had forgotten to provide themselves with sufficient food; cp. Mark 8:14. Thus the care of the world blinded their eyes to spiritual truth, as it had done before, John 4:31-33.

Do we not behold ourselves in this mirror? We know Matt. 6:33 and Luke 10:42. But how often our eyes are blinded! We go to church, yet matters of this world keep us from paying strict attention to God's Word. In times of trouble we too often forget about the more serious trouble of our soul. We often restrict the glorious promises of God to this world. We feel grateful for relief from sickness of the body, but feel little reason for thanking God, who heals the sickness of the soul. Our longing is often confined to the present instead of being directed to the glorious future.

2

Left to themselves, the apostles would not have been cured and the care of this world might have choked the Word. But the Lord took matters in hand, as He does today.

He reproved them, saying, "O ye of little faith!" Giving in to the care of the world was not a slight, insignificant matter. He does not declare that they have lost their faith altogether, but He warns them that it is growing weak; if they are not careful, they may fully lose it. We also are inclined to consider such worldly cares as an insignificant matter and therefore do not watch and pray. The Lord tells us, Be careful; your faith, this precious gift, is at stake.

The disciples had manifested faith when others had gone back and walked no more with Him, John 6:66. The Lord had

shown special confidence in them by choosing them as His disciples and considering them worthy to be sent out to testify of Him. This made their present weakness of faith all the more worthy of censure. We also know the Lord much better than many others. He has blessed us with a great measure of His presence and spiritual blessings.

The care which the disciples manifested was altogether groundless, vv. 9, 10. Twice they had been shown in a miraculous manner that the Lord could easily provide for physical needs. This surely should have been enough evidence to cure them forever. They knew that Jesus was not uttering empty words when He said: Matt. 6:33 b. They were to remember this truth for the future to keep them from again falling into this error. Likewise we must realize that the cares of this world dare not remain in our hearts because they in effect deny the gracious providence of our Lord. Therefore He has given us many glorious promises that He will care for us, so that we may drive away all gloomy thoughts. And God has manifested the truth of these promises in our lives many a time; let us remember these instances of the Lord's power and not be afraid.

Finally the Lord reminds His disciples: v.11. The understanding of God's Word is a most precious gift; we should not permit our cares to deprive us of this understanding. Therefore they, and we, must, with the help of God, again and again overcome these cares, so that the clear light of God's Word may shine into our hearts.

The cure was effective in the case of the disciples, v.12. May we, also, by the grace of God be cured whenever the care of the world besets us, that we may obtain the end of our faith!

PAUL F. KOEHNKE

Day of Repentance

Joel 2:13, 14

One of the most impressive words of the just and merciful God is that in Ezek. 33:11 (18:23, 32). Although God is just and righteous and cannot condone sin, He pleads with the sinner to turn from his sin and to seek forgiveness, grace, and mercy in Him alone. The Lord supports His call to all men with an oath by His own life, a fact which should cause men everywhere to take a most careful inventory as to their real attitude toward God. In this we also will be aided by the contemplation of our text.

The Lord's Serious Concern for All Sinners

1. *He implores them to show true sorrow over their sins*
2. *He promises them His grace and mercy*

1

In the entire first chapter of Joel, as well as in the first part of chapter 2, the Lord had painted a picture of almost unparalleled calamities and punishments of various kinds which He had sent upon the children of Israel on account of their wilful denial of the Lord and their frequent lapses into idolatry. He had also threatened further punishments if they refused to listen to the admonitions of His prophets and servants. Therefore He implores them to show true sorrow over their sins, to turn to Him with all their hearts, v. 12.

a) Fasting, weeping, mourning, as named in order, can indeed be simulated and imitated even by hypocrites, and men have great difficulty in distinguishing between the true and the false. But God searches the reins and the hearts, Ps. 7:9; 26:2; Jer. 17:10.

b) He calls upon His people for a turning to Him *with all their hearts*, in a change of attitude and relationship which is based upon sound facts, a turning away of the heart from that which is evil and cleaving to that which is good and right in the sight of God. This change is characterized by the emphatic call that the people should rend, not their garments, which could also be a mere show of hypocrisy, but their hearts. Not the act of Caiaphas, Matt. 26:65, is acceptable in the sight of God, but the true remorse of the publican in the Temple, Luke 18:13.

2

But if such godly sorrow has been effected in the sinner, 2 Cor. 7:10, then the Lord's anxious concern for the sinner will also carry into effect His promises of grace and mercy, v. 13.

a) On the one hand, the Lord is slow to anger. He is much more reluctant to assert His punitive justice than He is eager to show the wealth of mercy. He is not indeed like a weak father who condones the sins of his children, for He has found a way of satisfying His own justice. His repenting of evil means that He is ready to show mercy to a thousand generations rather than punish wicked sinners to the third and fourth generation.

b) As a correlate to these facts the Lord is gracious (*chanun*), ready to show unmerited love to sinners who repent. He is merciful, or warm-hearted (*rachum*), ready to take away even the consequences of sin according to His good pleasure. He is of great kindness, the word *chesed* denoting favor, pleasantness, an attitude of fatherly benignity, an eagerness to be of assistance to the foolish sinners who have lost their way.

In the measure in which we appreciate the Lord's earnest, serious concern for all sinners we shall be urged and incited to true repentance over all our sins and to a childlike confidence in His promises of grace and mercy.

P. E. KRETZMANN

Thanksgiving Day**Lam. 3:22-24**

The present is a time of trying uncertainty, care, and anxiety. A state of national emergency has been proclaimed. On every hand feverish activity in preparation for the grim business of war. In these days the annual Thanksgiving Day proclamation goes forth. Can we in all sincerity comply with it? Indeed! From the dark background of evil days the never-failing mercies of God shine forth all the more brightly. — Let us join Jeremiah of old in making

Grateful Recognition of God's Mercies

This means

1. *To take inventory of God's mercies toward us*
2. *To regard these mercies as unmerited indeed*
3. *To have the Lord for our all-sufficient portion*

1

A) In the dark days of misfortune Jeremiah still recognizes God's mercies, various manifestations of mercy; foremost, the fact that Israel was not "consumed," that there was still a remnant of God's people, enjoying blessings even in captivity, with the hope of returning, etc. The darkness of his days does not blind him to the rays of light that yet appear.

B) Base ingratitude, if we in our time failed to take true inventory of God's mercies toward our nation. Though not unaffected by the ills of our time, yet "we are not consumed." On the contrary, to the present day the history of our country is a record of unparalleled blessings. Contrast days of first Thanksgiving Day with the present. Note wealth of natural resources, abundant harvests, improved economic conditions, earnings, etc. Precious free institutions still preserved. — Above all, contrast our nation with practically all the nations of the old world, engulfed in the carnage and horrors of modern warfare. The advantage and security of our geographic situation, etc. What a catalog of blessings! —

Nor let us fail to take inventory of individual blessings. First Article; Fourth Petition. Let us not overlook God's spiritual blessings. Second and Third Article. Literally God's mercies are new every morning. Every rising sun a call to bless the Lord. Ps. 103. Surely, a true inventory will make this and every day a true Thanksgiving Day. — All the more, since blessings are indeed unmerited mercies.

2

A) Jeremiah ascribes the preservation of wayward Israel solely to God's mercy, his unflinching compassion, and great faithfulness. Had God dealt with Israel according to strict justice, they had indeed been utterly consumed. — Jeremiah makes this confession his own. "We." — All the more gratefully is Israel therefore to regard its preservation and blessings.

B) True gratitude ever recognizes God's unmerited mercy, compassion, and faithfulness as the one and only source of blessings. Thus Jacob. Gen. 23:10. The professed thanks of the Pharisee (Luke 18:10 ff.), hypocrisy. — Our nation, too, has every reason to make Jeremiah's confession its own. Half the population unchurched. National sin of gross materialism, greed, avarice, glaringly reflected in our days by most revolting conflict between capital and labor, with attendant violence, unworthy of a civilized nation. Corruption of every description, a veritable stench rising to provoke the righteous wrath of God. Surely, if any nation, ours has every reason to confess: "It is of the Lord's mercies," etc.

Nor are we Christians without guilt. Individually we confess with Luther: Explanation of Fifth Petition. — Collectively, as a church, coldness and indifference in our Lord's service. Let us sincerely, penitently, join in the confession of our text! Thus will the mercies of God appear all the more adorable and make us truly thankful.

3

A) Grateful recognition of God's mercies will bring to our hearts and lips the joyful declaration: "The Lord is my portion."

Many material blessings had been withdrawn from Israel during the captivity. But God's grace and favor was still theirs. To Jeremiah that was all-sufficient, providing for every need in time and eternity. Reference to Num. 18:20; Ps. 16:5.

B) The grateful heart recognizes God and his mercy as the greatest and highest good. Rightly so. Folly to place creature above Creator, the gift above the Giver. To lose God's grace and favor is to lose all. In possession of it through simple faith in Christ, lovingly, gratefully loyal to our merciful God, we may truly ("saith my soul"), also in these troublous days, join the apostle in the triumphant challenge Rom. 8:31, 32; Ps. 73:25, 26.

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

NOTE: Beginning next month, outlines on the Epistle Lessons of the Wuerttemberg Series will be published. EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

