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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity

2 Cor. 4:11-18

Trouble is the watchword of the times. Man's best ingenuity is bent toward the invention of new means of destruction and death. War and its aftermath mean the quickening of trouble throughout the world. The Christian religion does not lead its members to turn away from trouble or to deny the existence of trouble. But it teaches them to understand it. St. Paul in this text gives an interpretation of trouble in his own life and thereby defines

The Purpose of Affliction in the Christian Life

He shows that in God's plan affliction has a purpose

1. *In the life of him who is suffering*
2. *In the lives of those who live with the sufferer*

St. Paul is indeed speaking of himself as a Christian preacher. But his description of trouble and its purposes fits every Christian believer.

1

Affliction has a purpose for the Christian who is suffering.

A. St. Paul outlines two purposes which God wishes to achieve in the Christian through trouble. — 1. He wishes to strengthen the Christian's faith. The outward man may perish in affliction, but the inward man is renewed day by day, v. 16. Through all affliction there exists and grows in the Christian the conviction that God who raised up Jesus can also succor the Christian, v. 14. — 2. God wishes to lead the Christian to glory. Faith is the laying hold on the promises of God, the accepting of salvation in Christ Jesus. Rom. 3:22. Hence the strengthening of faith through affliction is bound up with the assurance of eternal glory, v. 17. The suffering Christian just through his affliction is made mindful of the fact that the eternal glory outweighs every earthly pain, v. 18. Rom. 8:18, 35 ff.

B. Hence the heavenly Father is carrying out high purposes in the Christian's affliction. — 1. He is doing this in whatever shape affliction assails the Christian. Some affliction, like persecution for the faith, is very evidently "for Jesus' sake." But every burden of life is to be born gladly, every suffering endured with zest, since it is a part of the Father's scheme to make us partakers of Christ's suffering, v. 11. 1 Pet. 4:12-14. Rom. 8:36. — 2. Affliction carries out the purposes of God not directly, but always through

a process: it must turn the Christian to God's love and grace as conveyed through the means. It turns away from preoccupation with worldly and earthly things and makes the eternal ones stand forth in their full value, v. 18. Then, as the Christian uses Word and Sacrament, his faith is strengthened and enriched, and thus the purpose of the trial of the faith in affliction is achieved. 1 Pet. 1:5, 12, 13.

2

Also for the fellow man the heavenly Father has purposes in the Christian's suffering.

A. God aims also at our fellow men through our own afflictions.

—1. "All things are for your sakes," v. 15. What appears to be a disaster and a trial in the Christian is proving to be a means of life for the fellow man; v. 12. — 2. It is essential that the Christian himself understand this, gain this "mental set" for his own suffering. He must view it as a labor of love, a means toward a great and splendid goal. The Christian suffers patiently, not because he imagines any merit to be in the suffering or in the martyrdom (ancient ascetics), but because it leads to higher things in himself and in those who surround him.

B. How the Christian's suffering is of benefit to his fellow man. — 1. The Christian's faith and patience work thanksgiving in the fellow man, v. 15. The Christian knows how to suffer, even wrongfully; in Christ he has resources of patience, endurance, good cheer, which he applies to his suffering. The observer is thereby led to recognize the Christian's gifts of character as a grace from a higher source, v. 15; 1 Pet. 2:12; Matt. 5:16. — 2. Merely noting that the Christian has a character and a patience, which is God's gift, or merely desiring to possess a similar character, does not mean that the goal and purpose of God for the Christian's fellow man has been reached. But this insight into the Christian's character is to lead the neighbor of the Christian to receive the word of the Gospel, v. 13. 1 Pet. 3:14-16. Phil. 2:15, 16 — "holding forth the word of life."

The Christian's steadfastness under suffering will call the attention of his fellow man to the Gospel of Christ, which has so marvelous a power. This purpose of suffering is of signal importance in a day when the fashions of life turn away from the Church and men become cynical and materialistic. May God help every Christian to suffer his own trials of faith for good and thereby also be a light to others! Amen.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity**Rev. 21:1-8**

Not like a rosebud gradually unfolding, but like the bud of the evening primrose bursting to bloom, so "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and complete immediately, time will cease and break into eternity. The text, still applying the element of time, describes the last moment, placed beyond Christ's execution of His judgment, when He utters His majestic "It is done" (*gegonan*—*factum est*). We pilgrims yearn, filled by faith with the ardent desire for that last moment, and in anticipation we ask: What shall be all the joy laid up for me? Lord, I know not: eyes are holden till Jerusalem the Golden in its beauty I shall see. The text tells us what we are to expect in the very moment when heaven's light floods down upon us and when we get our first glimpse of the eternal Zion. We do not know whether that happy moment belongs still to time or already to eternity. But do you yearn for it? Let us meditate on

That Happy Moment Which Dissolves Into Eternity

1. *In which the former things are passed away*
2. *For which we prepare by faith in Jesus Christ*

1

The first part of the text opens to us a vision pertaining to the future and to our eternal bliss.—The former things are the separation from God, tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain.—These were caused by sin.—God will terminate these former things by (a) full restoration of the knowledge of Him and communion with Him, v. 3 (which is the chief joy in heaven, the source of all happiness), and (b) deliverance from all evil, v. 4, personally perpetrated, or inflicted by others mentioned in v. 8, who can no longer vex us.—God revealed in Christ Jesus, vv. 5, 6, is the Creator and Author of all this newness, and the manner of His creating all things new is described vv. 1-3, while the New Jerusalem is pictured vv. 10-27.—And then eternity begins, and the last moment of time is gone.

When the former things are passed away, the result is newness. To achieve this newness, Christ restored us to God, Col. 1: 15-22. Until the former things are passed away, we are still subject to the experiences of these things: God sometimes seems so far away, we shed tears, we die, we mourn, we see sorrow, we weep, we hear crying, we suffer pain and behold it in others. John 16:33; Acts 14:22. But the text comforts us, presenting the last moment (a) with an appeal to our physical senses, promising relief and deliverance from all troubles, v. 4; (b) with an appeal to our soul, to our faith in Christ, to our love to Christ, desire

for Christ, hope built on Christ, culminating in the eternal communion with Christ, v. 3. Can we fully imagine such bliss? No! "Bliss beyond our dreams is granted." 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Ps. 17:15. What is new then, will remain new forever. "It is done."

This comfort is applied to the individual Christian. *Πάν δάκρυον* (sing.=every tear) means every tear ever shed by any one believer. All other former things mentioned in v. 4 are also in the singular, though their appearance in our present life seems altogether too frequent and of duration too long. Christ gives to each of us, to each of our woes, personal attention. — This comfort is applied to the Church, v. 3, and to the creature, Rom. 8:18-23.

Transition. Let us wait patiently for that happy moment. We must not lose it. We want to be there. Let us prepare for it. How? Answer vv. 5-8.

2

The second part of the vision presents to us a warning and a sure promise. It pertains to the present time, to our present life.

The divine verdict, v. 8, is Law. The Ten Commandments remain in force. The condemned stand in contrast to the blessed. The eternal woe is executed upon the ungodly, the most terrible moment for them. We are terrified, because the curse covers also the fine transgressors. Have we a way of escape? Have we not forfeited all happiness of that last moment? Hymn 317.

The terrified are the athirst. To these the promise in vv. 6 and 7 is given. This is the Gospel. It remains in force, v. 6 b. It is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16. It proclaims and gives to us the adoption of sons, v. 7 b. It renders us victorious and makes us heirs to all the new things, v. 7 a. In the Gospel the Author of our happiness reveals Himself as the almighty Savior, vv. 5 and 6, whose word of promise stands sure, Ps. 33:4.

By faith in Jesus Christ we are prepared for that happy moment, Acts 16:31. Hymn 619, vv. 2 and 7. May we all be there. Hallelujah!

G. H. SMUKAL

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Heb. 11:1-10

Hebrew Christians, at the beginning of the New Testament Church, may have thought longingly of the beautiful forms of worship in the Temple at Jerusalem, especially of the impressive sacrifices with the elaborate ceremonies. All that was now abolished, having been only the shadow of things now fulfilled. Now, there was so much talk about faith, "mere" faith. In a similar manner one may hear faith belittled today. Indeed, we, too, may

have had such thoughts about "mere" faith. It is well, therefore, that we be reminded again of what faith really is and what it accomplishes.

Faith

1. Its essence

2. Its power

1

V.1. Here we are told what faith is. It is not an illusion, a dream, an imagination. It is not mere knowledge of the head, not theoretical knowledge, not the result of logical thinking, of a careful weighing of pro and con. Logical thinking has to do with things that are visible, that can be perceived with our senses. But faith has to do with things not seen, things hoped for, things that one would enjoy and longingly look for. Such things are what Christ has prepared for us through His atoning sacrifice, forgiveness of sins, the privilege of being God's children, eternal bliss in heaven.

These things are not seen. That we are children of God through Jesus Christ and heirs of heaven, is hidden in this life. That there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus cannot be seen, yea, we ourselves often feel the very opposite. But faith is the substance of these invisible things; it gives them shape and form; it makes them realities; it makes them real and certain to us. Thus faith becomes the evidence of their reality and certainty, so that we enjoy them in this life; they are a real comfort to us. By faith we are sure, know, and are convinced that God for Jesus' sake is pleased with us and has set aside for us eternal life.

V.2. So it was in the Old Testament. All those that had this faith were by it assured of God's pleasure. V.3. Faith implicitly, without question, accepts God's Word. Therefore a believer knows and understands what human reason is unable to grasp, that the world came into being by the Word of God, was created out of nothing. The believer knows that, because God has revealed it in His Word. In like manner faith accepts what God has revealed about our redemption and salvation, even contrary to appearances in this life. Oh, faith is something marvelous, it is the Spirit-wrought conviction that God's promises of grace in Christ Jesus are eternally true. From this it follows that such faith has marvelous powers.

2

Vv.4-10. The holy writer here tells of people who had faith in God's promises of grace and shows the power of their faith. Abel's sacrifice became acceptable and pleasing to God because of his faith. His faith in God's mercy through the promised Redeemer urged him to bring his thank offering. In some way not revealed to us God let him know of His pleasure. Faith gave

him the assurance that he was righteous. Enoch was translated into heaven without seeing and feeling the bitterness of death. He had faith, he believed in the promised Redeemer, and such faith brought forth the fruit of a God-pleasing life. Without faith it is impossible to please God, without faith man will flee from God, but faith seeks Him, looks up to Him as a refuge and help, because faith knows that God is merciful and forgiveth sins, because Christ has atoned for them. Thus faith drives away fear and brings love and childlike trust.

Therefore Noah, having faith in God's word when he was told of the coming flood, at once acted upon it. He built the Ark as he was told. He did not listen to the derisive remarks of his fellow men, who perhaps called him an old fool. The flood, though 120 years away, was real to him, and he prepared for it. Faith urged him to build the Ark. Thus faith in God's word saved him and his family, while the mockers perished. What an example of the power of faith!

Abraham received the command from God to leave his home, his kin, his country, to emigrate to a country unknown to him. He received the promise that that country should be his own and that of his descendants. Abraham believed. And his faith in the faithfulness of God made him willing to obey. He followed God's direction. When he could not find and obtain an abiding dwelling place in the land promised to him, when he had to live like a nomad in tents and move from place to place, only tolerated by the people living there—his faith gave him courage to carry on. Also his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob had this faith. Their faith rose above earthly things; it clung to the promise of the Redeemer, in whom all the nations should be blessed.

Faith in God's grace through Jesus Christ makes us look and yearn for the eternal city of heaven. Unconcerned about earthly conditions, be they good or bad, faith makes us deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. (Tit. 2: 12, 13.) Such is the power of faith.

Let us ask God to create and preserve in us such living faith!

H. J. BOUMAN

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity

James 4:4-10

This Sunday concludes another church year. Graciously the Lord has continued to draw nigh unto us through His Gospel. Let us consider how we used this extended grace. 2 Pet. 3:9 (all should

come to repentance); Matt. 25:13. We are still believers, but we also have cause for repentance. Sin is offense against God. Text loudly calls us to humility.

Let Us Humble Ourselves

1. *What reason we have to humble ourselves*
2. *The blessings of true humility*

1

The stern words of our text are addressed to Christians. (Brethren: ch. 1:2, 9; 4:11.) Does it seem strange that Christians are addressed thus? Let us not misunderstand the Apostle. He is not charging Christians with gross physical adultery, but spiritual adultery. This is evidenced by the fact that he immediately adds "friendship of the world." Friendship of the world here called adultery. As a husband must be faithful to his wife, so the Christian to the Lord.

V. 4. Also Christians are tempted to curry the favor of the world; show deference to the views of the age (*Zeitgeist*). The course of this world — death in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:2. The God of this world blinds the minds, 2 Cor. 4:4. This present world is evil, Gal. 1:4. The desire of this world is lust, 1 John 2:16. Have we as Christians always drawn a sharp line of demarcation between the things God wants and those the world suggests? Whoever sets his mind on the things the world loves constitutes himself an enemy of God. V. 4 b.; Rom. 8:9.

V. 5. The Scriptures are often treated lightly, as if they speak "in vain." Threats and promises are considered to be empty, *κενῶς*. V. 5 b illustrates whereto despising of the Scriptures leads. The Old Testament Scriptures *teach*, *λέγει* — e. g., in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments; Num. 11:29; Prov. 21:10. (V. 5 b no direct quotation.) "Doth the Spirit which took up its abode within us (i. e., the Holy Spirit) long enviously"? Thayer. Social sins are inevitable result of despising God's Word.

V. 6. Pride is closely allied to envy; it arises from a spirit of insubordination to God; disregards his admonitions and judgments. Cf. Pharaoh of Oppression, Ex. 5—14. This inordinate self-esteem also tempts church members. A youth considers himself too intelligent to work with the common people of the church; a girl too accomplished to associate with the other young people of the church; a woman too talented; a businessman too important. Since the beginning of this church year God has permitted war to come upon our country, and yet many treat this thunderous voice of God's wrath with as much contempt as His Gospel. All such God resists.

As Christians we abhor all spiritual adultery, but our Old Adam is ever ready to compromise with sin. Let us avoid all double-mindedness and rather humble ourselves; the more so because of the blessings of true humility.

2

V. 6. Humility, of course, is a gift of God. 1 Cor. 15:10 a. That we repent of our sins, believe on Christ Jesus, is all God's gift. This gift will increase. V. 6 a. Realizing that *He* gives grace, we will not boast of our accomplishments but rather humble ourselves. The more we decrease in our estimation, the more Jesus increases in us. Micah 6:8; Col. 3:12.

V. 7. Humbling ourselves is subjecting ourselves. Whoever subjects himself to God thereby resists the devil. V. 7 b is an implied condition. The devil must repeatedly be resisted. Cf. Matt. 4:5, 8. Military expressions are used: submit—obey orders; resist—"take a bold stand over against an enemy and do not retreat"; flee. Humbling ourselves before God and putting on His armor (Eph. 6:11 ff.) we have power to overcome temptations. 1 John 5:18 b. Power over temptation is a blessing of humility.

V. 8. True humility looks to the Lord for help. "Draw near." Matt. 11:28; John 6:37; Ps. 37:39 f. "He—gives me power—to walk in godliness and good works." The Lord cleanses the hands of the humble that they work that which is good. He makes their heart chaste that they do good works in the proper spirit. "Let us ever walk with Jesus."

Vv. 9 and 10. True humility is not pleasant to our sinful flesh. To be wretched, to mourn over our sin, is not the way of our depraved nature. Yet how blessed! Grace from God, power over evil, companionship with the Lord, production of good works is the beginning of exaltation in this life, and it will be continued on a far grander scale in the heaven of glories.

Looking backward over the past church year, let us humble ourselves because of our manifold sins. Looking forward into the new church year, let us draw near to God, and He will give us more grace.

VICTOR MENNICKE

Thanksgiving Day

Lam. 3:22

Do conditions today warrant services of thanksgiving? Some may suggest their omission at this time. After years of disturbing conditions within our country our nation has been plunged into the seething caldron which threatens to destroy the nations. However, God's children realize that despite the dreadful conditions

on earth we have reason to thank God. May God inscribe this truth into our hearts and lives on this Thanksgiving Day.

Despite the Present Evil Day We Have Reason to Thank God

1. *We are not consumed*
2. *We must ascribe this to God's mercy*

1

"This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope." (V. 21.) In the foregoing chapters the Prophet had described Israel's pathetic and distressful condition. The divine seer is attending the funeral of Jerusalem. He foresees not merely the horrible captivity, but also the destruction of the Temple of God. Nevertheless, one thing he wanted to remember: v. 21.

Also we in this day of hatred and strife, war, and bloodshed, destruction and devastation, severing of family ties, shifting of population, enormous increase of taxes and living costs, resultant fear and consternation, should remember that though we have deserved it, "we are not consumed."

Have we deserved it? What caused the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Especially sins against the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Commandments and utter forsaking of God. Also true of Nineveh, Israel, Judah, etc.—What about our national sins: adultery, fornication, robbery, theft, murder, disrespect for superiors, misuse of God's name, despising God's Word, ruling God out of one's life, etc.?—However, let us mention not merely national sins, but consider sins of which we Christians have been guilty: indifference toward God and Sacrament, worldliness, excessive drink, gluttony, sinful amusements, neglect of home life, prayer, etc. God used the severe rod of the depression, but how few repented and turned unto the Lord! Now God speaks the thundering language of war. Has there been repentance and improvement?

Nevertheless, we are not consumed as we have deserved. God has provided necessities of life. Shortages and rationing of foods and materials, 'tis true, but we've had sufficient. Spiritual blessings in abundance in home congregations, in army camps, on battlefields. We have had Christ, Calvary, forgiveness, eternal life.

2

The Prophet ascribes everything to God's mercy and compassion. It is well to emphasize this, for we are inclined to ascribe everything to our ingenuity, wisdom, ability, and we boast of our accomplishments. It is hard for us to admit "all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness," etc. We must remember that God

sends rain and sunshine. He gives health and strength of mind and body. We labor, but He blesses. — God guards and protects; without Him we could not exist. The present plight on earth shows man's woeful weakness and helplessness. If we have not suffered devastations as in other parts of the world, it was not our accomplishment, but God's mercy. With regard to spiritual blessings, we have contributed even less. Christ earned them. The Holy Spirit works the faith within us by which we appropriate them.

Let us declare this before God and men in our services today, in our homes, and wherever opportunity presents itself. Let us show by our life and conduct that we believe this. Give God and His mercy all credit and glory. Cf. Gen. 32:10; Ps. 68:19; 115:1, etc.

"His compassions fail not"—as in the past so also in the future. What comfort in these perilous days! How thankful we should be for this assurance! How fervently we should pray that God might bestow mercy and compassion upon us, our country, our armed forces, the young men and women who are serving our country, the nations of the world, that God might soon bring about a just and honorable peace! We may well pray confidently, for "His compassions fail not."

J. W. BEHNKEN

Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

First Sunday in Advent

Psalm 24

We have here an admonition addressed to gates and doors. Gates stand for the city and its inhabitants, and the exhortation is addressed to Jerusalem and the whole nation of Israel. From eternity God had chosen Israel to be His own people, Is. 43:21. This admonition has not lost its force today, though Israel has been rejected. The New Testament Church of God is the Church of Jesus Christ, composed of Jews and Gentiles, Eph. 1:3-6; 2:19-22; Heb. 12:22. It is this city, the Church of God, that is exhorted,

Welcome Your Coming King of Glory!

We ask with the Psalmist,

1. *Who is this King of Glory?*
2. *Who shall stand in His holy place?*

1

V. 8 a. So asks the Psalmist and answers his own question in triumphant accents, vv. 8 b, 10 b. It is the Lord, the unchanging God, who has Himself defined this name, Ex. 3:14, 15; 34:6, 7. It is