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Outlines of the Standard Gospels

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raments applied only to the Israelites, the New Testament sacraments, however, to the Church gathered from Jews and Gentiles; that the former were to last up to the advent and ministry of Christ, these to the end of the world, 1 Cor. 11:26, because these are greater in power, better in usefulness, and easier in performing. But these and similar distinctions are secondary and of smaller moment."¹⁰)

And finally, if you do not object to an application of what we have heard to our own lives and official duties, I may add this: We have just seen how much clearer, brighter, richer, and more glorious are the sacraments of the New Testament. Do we realize for ourselves and do we bring home to our hearers all the wealth of God's grace that is entrusted to our weak hands in Holy Baptism and in the Holy Eucharist? Are we in danger of becoming professional, casual, or cold in our administration of Baptism to little children or of the Lord's Supper to our communicant members? If we could by God's grace catch a fresh realization of the unspeakably great love that has given us these mysteries of the House of God, should we not administer them with increased unction and fervor, should we not preach of them with a new and more winsome persuasiveness? Might we not act and speak more for the glory of God?

Hoffman, III.

F. R. ZUCKER

Outlines on the Standard Gospels

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1-15

The washing of the feet at the arrival from a journey was an Oriental custom observed for the relief and comfort of the guest, and was usually performed by a servant. Who would bend to this task now in that upper room in the seeming absence of the servant? For all behaved like envious lords, each waiting for the other to humble himself, and none yielding. Yet the feet were washed. Who was the servant? Jesus, in grace and mercy, makes the most of the situation. We behold

The Lord and Master in the Form of a Servant

1. *For our justification*
2. *For our sanctification*

1

The Lord and Master is introduced to us again, vv. 1-3, and He identifies Himself, v. 13. See His majesty, v. 1a, 3; Phil. 2:6.

¹⁰) Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*. Locus Decimus Nonus. *De Circumcisione et Agno Paschali*, pp. 220—221.

See His tender, undying love, v.1b. The disciples were as far below Him as He is above them, and none was more worthy than He. He is clean.

Here was an opportunity for each disciple to render honor and service to Him; but none volunteered. This particular opportunity of direct personal service never returned. It was lost. Soon those tired feet would be pierced and bleeding. Offended majesty, unrequited love! Yet they would acknowledge Him Lord and Master, v.13. Inconsistency. Sin of omission against Jesus, sin of omission against one another.

Jesus in the form of a servant, v.4,5. Each action of His deliberate, slow, impressive, because conscious, premeditated, willing self-abasement. Phil. 2:7,8.

Silence until v.6. The ensuing dialogue (vv.6-11) is evidence that Jesus was not only giving an example: He was fulfilling the Law by His active obedience, in perfect love to His fellow man and to His God. The Lord and Master was substituting for the sinners. The Prophet, giving a lesson, is the High Priest, redeeming the transgressors, working out their justification for the salvation of each, giving attention to the individual, and not socializing.

Peter becomes eager to receive and to accept his Lord's service, though he not yet understood (personal faith in, and submission to, the majestic Servant). Judas the Traitor, sullen and black at heart, opposes Christ's love (unbelief).

Peter knew hereafter. We know now. 2 Cor. 8:9; Matt. 5:17; Gal. 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Rom. 3:19-22.

Christ has placed also His active obedience into His Holy Supper, which He instituted in the same night. Here, too, the Lord and Master serves us and grants to us the justification wrought by His service for our cleansing.

Jesus fills our greatest need, does He not? Or are we perfect in love? Is anyone so proud and conceited to deny the dire need of justification by the substitution of Christ? May we by faith always rejoice in Jesus and His righteousness, Phil. 3:7-9.

2

The majestic loving Lord further adds to His service a practical lesson, vv.12-15. It pertains to the attitude of the heart toward the brother and to active service to him, from a new motive. Matt. 7:12. Jesus cites the old commandment and the old motive. Here He gives an example how to fulfill the new commandment, v.34. New because fulfilled by Him for us, v.1; new because the motive is new; new because the standard of perfection is higher.

In our confession and at the Lord's Table we solemnly promise improvement of life. This improvement consists in renewed love to God and the neighbor. It includes humility to God and sub-

mission to His Word and self-abasement over against the brother. This must be the attitude of our heart. Improvement includes renewed and greater service to God and to the brother according to the new commandment, though it may require menial labor, expenditure of time and funds, personal inconvenience.

Conclusion: 1 John 4:9-11. Hymn 150:5.

G. H. SMUKAL

Good Friday

2 Cor. 5:21

All the words of human language cannot fitly describe the miracle of Calvary, which we commemorate today. Calvary is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies from Genesis to Malachi (illustrate). Calvary is the world's great Atonement Day, when that wonderful work took place of which Luther writes: "Who redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature," etc. Calvary is the great dividing point of the world: here, through their unbelief, many fall and are eternally lost; and here God's elect rise to eternal life. What does Calvary mean to you? Let us consider

Calvary's Amazing Divine Love

1. *Calvary's amazing redeeming love*
2. *Calvary's amazing sanctifying love*

1

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." In these words our text depicts to us Calvary's amazing redeeming love. Simple words, indeed!! But oh, how profound is their meaning! Christ's death was not the death of a mere man. He did not die simply because He had attacked the rulers of Israel or because principles meant more to Him than persons. His was not a martyr's death, nor a reformer's death. God gave Him into death, John 3:16; Is. 53:10. Indeed, Christ gave Himself into death, John 10:11, 15, 17, 18. What amazing love! Rom. 5:8.

But why should Christ die? He knew no sin, John 8:46; Heb. 7:25, 26. He had no original sin, Luke 1:35; therefore also no actual sins. Dwell on Christ's sinless life, especially His faultless conduct during the *passio magna*, 1 Pet. 2:21-23. But that is not all. The sinless Christ who died on Calvary is God's Son, very God of very God, 2 Cor. 5:19; John 10:30. Marvel at Calvary's amazing divine love. Here the holy, righteous, sinless God dies. And why? God made Him to be sin for us, v. 21a. Bring home to the hearers this great truth, Is. 53:4-6; 10. Christ died on Calvary as the greatest sinner that ever lived, Is. 53:6. But why this sacrifice supreme? The Law had to be fulfilled; our spiritual enemies had to be defeated; our sins had to be atoned for; the demands of divine justice

had to be satisfied; righteousness had to be procured for us, Ps. 49: 7, 8; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:14, 15; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 John 3:8.

Such is Christ's death on Calvary — a vicarious, substitutionary death. Of such amazing divine love no man-made religion knows; it is only the Bible that tells us of "love so amazing, so divine." — But equally amazing is

2

Calvary's amazing sanctifying love. — "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." What do these words mean? 1. They accuse and condemn us: we have no righteousness of our own; we are sinners, lost and condemned under God's wrath and the curse of the Law, Gal. 3:10; Ps. 51:5; John 3:6; Gen. 8:21; Rom. 7:18; Eph. 2:3; Matt. 15:19; Jas. 4:17, etc. Preach the Law in all its severity. — 2. God demands of us perfect righteousness, Gal. 3:12; Luke 10:28; Deut. 27:26; Rom. 6:23. — 3. No man can by his own reason and strength supply that righteousness, Ps. 14:23; Eccl. 7:20; Is. 64:6; Job 14:4; Phil. 3:12; Ps. 143:2; Jas. 2:10. But, thank God, the Lord had mercy on us. — 4. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," God has secured through the active and passive obedience of Christ perfect righteousness for the world (objective reconciliation), 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Gal. 4:4, 5; 1 John 2:1, 2; Is. 53:4 ff. What amazing divine love!

But the words mean still more. Christ has not only procured righteousness for us, but in His mercy God *applies* that righteousness unto us, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20. The penitent thief. The centurion at the foot of the Cross. The story of the resurrection and Christ's gift of peace, John 20. Pentecost. Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19, 20. How great is divine love! Christ, having died for His sheep, now gathers in His sheep, John 10:16. Illustrations supplied by Acts and the Church's mission work.

What does Calvary's amazing miracle of redemption and reclamation mean to you? Christ desires *your* salvation, John 3:16. He desires that you make known this salvation to others. Let His surpassing love move you to ardent love toward Him, praising Him for His wonderful love not only by word and holy conduct, but especially by telling the precious story of His saving love made manifest on Calvary.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

Easter Sunday

Mark 16:1-8

Like heavy stones, fear, sorrow, and doubt are weighing upon many hearts this Easter Day. But there are none so heavy that the message of the risen Christ cannot roll them away. Every part of that message is replete with comfort, assurance, truth; also that part which reads:

"The Stone Was Rolled Away"

1

By whom was this done?

By the keepers? No, they were not allowed to break the official seal. By the chief priests? No, they were too desirous to keep Jesus entombed. By the women who "came to the sepulcher at the rising of the sun?" No, they were surprised to find it already rolled away. By whom? An angel—the same whom they saw seated on the right side of the opened tomb. Without asking permission of any man, he had broken the seal. As if it had been a pebble, he had easily rolled away the stone. Yet not by his own but by God's authority he had acted. For is he not called "the angel of the Lord"? (Matt. 28:2,3.) Did he not descend "from heaven," the seat of God's majesty? was not "his countenance as lightning," etc., to show that he was commissioned by Him who dwells in eternal light? In short, was not his rolling away of the stone *an act of God?*

a. Indeed, this was *God's* declaration that Jesus was risen and was His only-begotten Son, the true Messiah and Redeemer. Rom. 1:4; 4:25.

b. This the enemies had virulently attacked. At His crucifixion they had mocked, Matt. 27:43. The stone of His sepulcher they sealed in the same spirit of mockery. But when God by His angel ripped the seal apart and rolled the stone away, was He not answering: Look, you scoffers! *I have* delivered this Jesus. *I will* honor Him. He is all that you deny and more. At the risk of your souls you mock Him. Luke 10:16; John 5:23.

c. What a mighty, solemn witness! Let all deniers of Christ take warning. If the keepers did shake and the priests secretly tremble when God rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb, what will be the terror of all unbelievers when, on the Last Day, He rolls away the stones from their graves and calls them to judgment? To no avail then the cry "Mountains, hills, cover us!" Luke 23:30; John 3:36.

2

For whom was this done?

For Jesus, to let Him out of the tomb? No, before the stone was rolled away, He had gone forth—risen, glorified, empowered to pass through sealed rocks and locked doors. Not for Jesus, but for men, to tell disciples as well as enemies: The grave is empty; He is risen. Had the stone not been rolled away, who even of the noble women would have believed? They had come early to the sepulcher not only worried ("Who shall roll us away the stone?") but also troubled (Since Jesus is dead, what will become of the promise of salvation?). But when they saw the stone rolled away

and perceived that God by an angel had done this to say: "Be not affrighted; He is not here . . . is risen—your victorious Savior, Lord and King" (v. 6), sadness gave way to joy, doubt to faith. The stone was rolled away from their hearts.

a. Are some here burdened with a sorrowing sense of guilt, sighing: Who will roll away this stone from our conscience? See how God by rolling away the stone from Jesus' grave has declared Him to be your living Savior. Rom. 8:34.

b. Are some, because of war, laden with heavy fears, doubts, and worries, crying: Who will roll away these stones from our hearts? See how God by breaking the seal of the enemies has declared Jesus to be your divine Protector. Heb. 13:20; Eph. 1:20-23.

c. Are some grieving at the recent death of loved ones and asking: Who will roll away the stones from our graves? Who will open them and grant eternal life? Look to the grave of Jesus! Has God rolled away the stone from His, it is a proof that He can and will roll the stones away from ours. 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:20.

d. These stones God would have lifted from all hearts. Like the noble women, let us go quickly and tell. A. E. WAGNER

Easter Monday

Luke 24:13-35

Sometimes it seems as if present world conditions make Easter joy impossible. Does Ps. 118:24 really still apply? Certainly!

The Risen Lord, Our Companion on Life's Journey

1. *Though invisible to us, He is still at our side*
2. *He speaks to us through the Word of Scripture*
3. *Through this Word He creates true Easter joy in our hearts*

1

Vv. 13-24. Joyless, hopeless, the two disciples on Easter Day are on their way home. Their faith had been in vain, their hopes a delusion, so they thought, even though the risen Savior was actually walking with them.

In these days of war and turmoil a thousand voices shout to our ears that Christianity has failed, that we must look for other solutions of the world's problems. Or we are told Lutheran isolationism has failed; unless we unite, we are lost! Or our sons and daughters, husband or wife, are by the force of circumstances separated from us, are sent to the front, are reported wounded,

missing, killed. Our trust in Christ's answering our prayers seems to be a hollow mockery. Satan tells us Job 2:9. Our flesh asks Ps. 73:13, 14.

Does that change the fact that Christ lives and is at our side? Just as Christ actually walked with the disciples on that Easter afternoon, though they did not recognize Him, so to this day invisibly, yet actually Matt. 28:20; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:13-18 are true. In order to realize this, let us listen to His Words as they are recorded in Holy Writ.

2

Vv. 25-27. In order to cheer these despondent disciples, the risen Savior begins to speak to them, v. 17; points out the folly of their unbelief and the necessity of His suffering and death, vv. 25-27.

The same risen Lord speaks to us in His Word. Against the charge that Christianity has failed, read His statements Is. 40:12-31; 59:1, 2; Rev. 4 and 5; etc.; against unionism Jer. 23:16-29; John 8:31, 32; etc.; against sorrows and heartaches Is. 42:16; 46:4; John 14 and 17; Rev. 21 and 22. Particularly in these troubled days let us hear the Word of our risen Savior, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.

3

Words! Words! Words! How can words comfort and console and strengthen in these dreadful days? These are not words of mere man. Here speaks the risen Savior, the Everlasting God, Heb. 1:2, 3; Rom. 1:3, 4; John 6:62b.

The disciples experienced the power of Jesus' Word, vv. 31-35. Conditions round about them were unchanged. The same Satan, the same world, the same flesh harassed them. But a change had been wrought in them by the Word of the risen Savior, v. 32. Christ had been formed in them, Gal. 4:19, lived in them, Gal. 2:20, transforming their whole being and attitude.

With His Word the risen Christ Himself will enter your heart and will prove Himself the God of Comfort and Strength, so that you also will experience the truth of Paul's words 2 Cor. 1:3-5; Rom. 5:1-11. True Easter joy will enter your heart. You can go on your way rejoicing, Acts 8:39. This Word accepted in faith will keep you steadfast and loyal (1 Cor. 15:58) because of the indisputable fact of Christ's resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:12-57.

THEO. LAETSCH

Quasimodogeniti

John 20:19-31

On the first Easter, when the disciples were all together, suddenly the Savior appeared in their midst for the first time. Some had already spoken to Him. What would He say? Some had run

away. Some still doubted. Would He say, "Be loyal" or "Be strong" or "Be victorious" or "Be good"? None of those. He said, "Peace be unto you." That was the purpose of His incarnation, mission, redemption, resurrection—to bring peace. Peace that night meant the forgiveness of sins.

The Most Precious Gift of the Risen Savior—the Forgiveness of Sins

- 1. Jesus proved that His gift of forgiveness was sure*
- 2. He asked that His own should share it with others*

1

A. Jesus spoke of His great gift as "peace." That meant peace with the Father. 2 Cor. 5:18 ff.; Col. 1:20 ff. — He proved that this peace was genuine through His rising from the dead. — 1. The thing that actually gained peace between God and man was Christ's redemption. Gal. 4:5. His suffering and death completed it. — 2. But the resurrection demonstrated that the redemption was complete. Christ proved that He was no fraud; text, vv. 20, 27; and thus He showed that the ransom of mankind was fully paid.

B. But the Holy Ghost is Jesus' gift, too. The Savior did not leave His disciples with mere carnal proofs. — 1. They had their place in preparing the work of faith. Text, vv. 30, 31. Thomas, v. 29. Every Christian is glad that the resurrection of Christ is historically incontestable. — 2. But the Savior gave the disciples the Holy Spirit. V. 22; chap. 14:17; 15:26; 1 John 4:12 ff.; 5:9-12. That Spirit is ours through the working of Gospel and Sacrament. The Holy Spirit gives us the faith that Jesus is risen, that Jesus is our Savior, that our sins are forgiven, our debt before God canceled, our eternal peace secure.

2

A. The Savior now asks His own to share this forgiveness and peace with others. — 1. God-given faith works true love to our fellow men. Cf. 1 John 4:15-21. That means that they cannot rest. They want their fellow men to have their peace and joy. — 2. But the Savior specifically "sends" His disciples with this gift of forgiveness out into their world. They are to bring God's forgiveness to others.

B. This gift of forgiveness the disciples bring in several ways. — 1. They proclaim the message of peace, the story of accomplished salvation. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; John 17:20. That message works the faith which makes man partaker of the redemption, brings him the forgiveness of sins, Luke 24:47. — 2. But they also

pronounce the forgiveness which Christ has brought to the individual believer, through absolution and the distribution of the Sacraments. Text, vv. 22, 23. Cp. Acts 2:38; Matt. 26:28; 2 Cor. 2:10.—3. This implies the Christian's urging that the individual accept the redemption in faith, pleading with him to accept it lest he be lost. 2 Cor. 5:20; Ezek. 3:18 ff.; Text, v. 23. Not a warning that gloats, but a pleading that wins to God's own forgiveness in Christ Jesus!

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

Misericordias Domini

John 10:11—16

False teachers, unfaithful shepherds, have ever been a problem in the Church, both as to doctrine and as to life. It was thus in the Old Testament; cp., e. g., Deut. 18:20, 22; Is. 9:15; Jer. 28:1 ff. It was thus in the days of Jesus and the true Apostles; cp. Matt. 7:15; John 9:22, 34, 38; 10:1, 8; Acts 15:24; 20:29; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 2:1, 2. Over against the many false teachers and seducers of men we have in our text the beautiful description of

Christ the Good Shepherd

1. *By differing from all hirelings in giving His life for His sheep*
2. *By knowing His sheep and exercising loving care over them*
3. *By calling also other sheep into His fold*

1

Vv. 11-13. After announcing His theme and stating the proof for His love of the sheep the Lord, by way of contrast, at once characterizes the teachers and leaders who are the very opposite of Himself. The hireling has no personal interest in the sheep; he is not the owner; he is not concerned about their welfare. When he sees the wolf coming, he does not attempt to drive him away, but seeks his own safety in cowardly flight. The result is that the wolf can catch and scatter the sheep with impunity.—The hirelings of the flock today are such pastors and leaders as occupy their position only for the sake of personal gain. So long as no danger threatens, such persons may do their work of shepherding after a fashion, chiefly in such a manner as to avoid unpleasant references to prevailing sins in false doctrine and sinful life. But when days of testing come, when false doctrines threaten to enter the flock, or when the wickedness of the children of this world finds access, then such leaders desert their flock, mainly by refusing to raise their voices in warning or to take a definite stand against

the enemies. And so the archenemy of mankind has the best opportunity to enter the flock and to work havoc.

Over against such cowardice and flight under fire we have the example of the one Good Shepherd. For He is the one of whom even the Old Testament prophesied, Is. 40:3; Ezek. 34:23; cp. Ps. 23. He it is who at all times has given His sheep the care which they must have for all vicissitudes of life. Ezek. 34:15,16. And the culmination of His shepherd's love was shown in the fact that He gave His life for, in the stead of, His sheep. The vicarious atonement is the very center of the preaching of objective justification. What a wonderful proof of the fact that He is indeed *the* Good Shepherd!

2

Vv. 14, 15. The theme is restated by the Lord. He describes the spiritual relationship and fellowship which obtains between Him and the believers, His sheep. This fellowship is as intimate and beautiful as that which exists between the Father and the Son. The Father knows the Son as His only-begotten Son, in whom He is well pleased, who was His ambassador to the sin-stricken world. And the Son knew the Father as having been begotten from the essence of the Father from eternity, as being one with Him. This fellowship is especially evident in the planning and executing of the work of salvation.

Thus the Good Shepherd knows His sheep with the divine wisdom which knows what is in man and yet embraces fallen mankind with a love transcending human understanding, a love which culminated in His laying down His life for His sheep. Is. 53. And therefore the loving knowledge which He shows toward the believers finds its response in the fact that they know their Savior by faith, realizing more and more that He alone is their Good Shepherd.

3

V. 16. The last proof for the fact that Christ is the Good Shepherd is of particular importance to those who are not members of the Old Testament covenant people. In His own personal ministry Christ was indeed not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. 15:24, and He had previously instructed His disciples to confine their early work to these same people, Matt. 10:5. It was God's good pleasure to give His covenant people another, a special opportunity to accept their Savior.

At the same time He was fully aware of the fact (and He gave abundant proof of its power in His ministry by His occasional contacts with people who were not members of the Jewish nation) that He was the salvation of the Lord unto the ends of the world.

People all over the world who were not children of Abraham after the flesh, were, according to the Lord's prophecy, to hear His voice. And He would thus bring the believers from all nations of the earth together in the communion of the saints, truly the Good Shepherd of all.

P. E. KRETZMANN

Jubilate

John 16:16—23a

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Ps. 30: 5. That is the Christian "Order of the Day." It has been said that the customary way of counting the hours of the day is of heathen origin and reflects a heathen view of life: The day begins and ends at midnight—in darkness. In Genesis, and afterwards among the Jews, the day begins in the last rays of the sun; then the night; but thereafter to the very end the glorious day. That is the Christian life.—In this text the Lord Himself gives us

A Forecast of the Christian Life

1

First of all, the Lord speaks of the Apostles' life. It was the night before His crucifixion. He tells them, v. 16. In the light of sacred history we understand the words "I go to the Father" comprised all His suffering, His death, resurrection, and ascension; hence, literally, the disciples for a little while did not see Him, then again they saw Him. They did not understand, vv. 17, 18. Hence Jesus repeats, v. 19, and adds, v. 20. Three times the same words, and then a double affirmative; evidently an important matter.

The Lord's purpose is to prepare them for what is coming. They were still living in the sunshine of their first conviction; the Bridegroom was still with them. But the night was coming; not only the next few days but throughout their life, v. 20. How often, when dangers threatened and the future looked hopeless, they thought of the Lord's words, Luke 17:22. The world celebrated Jubilate.

But after Good Friday came Easter—forty days of joy. And though He then again withdrew, the bond that united them with Him could not again be severed, Rom. 8:35—39. The day had dawned for them; and while there still came moments of darkness, in the end came the eternal light; evening and morning were past, and it was day.

2

Vv. 22, 23a show that the Lord is not only speaking to the disciples who heard Him but to all His followers. He forecasts the entire history of the Church on earth. And v. 20 shows that the

Lord here refers not to the common adversities of life, which Christians as well as others must bear, but to those afflictions which cause the world to rejoice: persecutions of every form and degree waged against Christians because of their faith and convictions.

The early Church passed through such a night of affliction, but in the end every Julian Apostate had to concede the victory to the Galilean. In the Middle Ages, the night of Antichrist's rule in the Church, the faithful, almost despairing, pleaded: Ps. 12:1. But there came the tidings "out of the east" and "out of the north," Dan. 11:44, the angel with the everlasting Gospel, Rev. 14:6, 7; and the Wicked was revealed and consumed with the spirit of God's mouth, 2 Thess. 2:8.

Two centuries later, Europe and America were overwhelmed with a flood of deism, materialism, and rationalism. Voltaire said: "I am going through the forests of your Christian doctrines, and I will girdle every tree, so that presently not a sapling will be left to you." Thomas Paine brought the manuscript of his *Age of Reason* to Benjamin Franklin, who said: "Do not unloose that tiger; if our people are what they are with the Bible, what will they be without it?" In 1800 Yale had only three professing Christians enrolled. But in due time God sent a new awakening.

Within the memory of many of us a new attack began, now from within the visible Church; the termites are boring in the walls, the moles undermining the foundations (higher criticism, modernism, unionism, etc.). But we have the Lord's promise, Matt. 16:18; and we have the testimony of history that always, after the darkness, came the day of victory and new success.

3

The text finds application to every individual Christian. Your life begins in the sunshine of God's love (baptism; childhood in a Christian home; confirmation). But night follows, more or less dark (contempt, scorn, opposition, persecution of the world; not the least of these the fact that the world rejoices *because* they can make the Christian weep and lament). There come times in every Christian's life when he longs for one, just one of the days of the Son of Man, of His almighty help; and his greatest sorrow is that he cannot see it; it seems as though the Lord does not hear nor heed. (If that is not your experience, better examine your life!)

The Lord offers consolation to each one of His friends. It is only "a little while" and relief will come; that is the Lord's promise, v. 20b; 1 Cor. 10:13; that is the experience of all the children of God (Joseph, David, Job, Luther). It is only "a little while" and the night will end and the day will dawn, v. 22; 2 Cor. 4:17; evening and morning will lead into day — the last, the eternal day; and you will celebrate the never-ending Jubilate. THEO. HOYER

Cantate**John 16:5—15**

There are truths in the Bible which even many unbelievers accept, *e. g.*, that there is a God, that shameful sins should be punished, etc. But the Bible also contains statements which are especially repugnant and distasteful to the world. We have such a truth in our text. Here Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit condemns unbelief as the great, aye, the chief and worst sin of the world.

**Why Does Jesus Single Out Unbelief as the Great Sin
Which the Holy Spirit Condemns?**

1

Because unbelief is the fountain from which all other sins pour forth. It is the source of all corruption, wickedness, and transgression. The world does not admit this. It is a common saying among the worldly "It makes no difference what a man believes as long as he is sincere and lives up to what he believes." But by this statement they contradict God Himself. Indeed, the dark history of sin refutes their folly.

Go back to the first sin committed by Adam and Eve in Paradise. When they told Satan, "God has forbidden us to eat of this fruit," the devil told them, "Yea, hath God said?" He created doubt. And when the matter became doubtful and the offered bait seemed so desirable, Eve fell and took Adam with her. Again, of Cain and Abel we are told, Abel had faith, but Cain sacrificed without faith, Heb. 11:4. From this lack of faith there came forth jealousy, hatred, and finally murder itself.

The men of Babel undertook to build a tower because they did not believe in God's protection, forgiveness, and mercy. What brought Pharaoh to this terrible, tragic end? His unbelief. Unbelief was the cause of the sins of Esau, Nadab and Abihu, of Saul, of Ahab. Unbelief moved the Jews to commit that shameful and cruel crime of crucifying their own Messiah.

You may think of a hundred and one sins, some of them shameful, disgraceful, some of them ugly, hateful, deathly ruinous, but the source of all of them is unbelief. That is the reason unbelief is mentioned here especially. If we wish to be God's children, we must diligently use the Word, for "faith cometh by hearing," etc. Rom. 10:17.

2

Unbelief is so great a sin because it is so *inexcusable*.

Our courts deal more leniently with one who seems to have an excuse for his misdeed, *e. g.*, a man who steals to appease his hunger has been treated with great leniency. We shall not decide

such cases now. One thing, however, is certain: there is no excuse for not believing in Jesus. I have not the time to mention all evidence in favor of Jesus and His claims. Note this:

a) The miracles which Jesus performed, of which His very enemies testified, "This man doeth many miracles," John 11:47; of which Nicodemus said, "We know that Thou art a Teacher," etc., John 3:2.

b) Jesus' resurrection, foretold and fulfilled, 1 Cor. 15:4-8.

c) The many prophecies of Jesus, *e. g.*, concerning wars, concerning the Jews, concerning the growth of the Christian Church — all fulfilled.

d) John 7:17.

Application: Do not allow people to tell you that because of their superior intelligence they cannot believe with childlike faith. Most of the people who say they cannot believe the simple truths of the Christian religion, believe all manner of the most ridiculous nonsense, *e. g.*, evolution, reincarnation, transmigration of souls, etc.

3

Because it is utterly *ruinous*. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16.

a) Why is this? All men are sinners, subject to God's wrath and lost. There is only one hope for the sinner, and that is in the redemption of Jesus Christ. This blessing is offered to us in God's Word, the Gospel, and the only means of taking hold of it and possessing it is faith, faith in Jesus Christ. If this faith is missing, the sinner is hopelessly lost.

b) Moreover, the Scripture expressly teaches us that through the Holy Spirit's work of creating faith in our heart, true godliness, true fear of God, true holiness of life begin, Gal. 3:2. Examples: Paul; Luther.

Application: Let us flee, therefore, from unbelief as from the most shameful and most ruinous pestilence. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may create and sustain faith in us, and let us diligently use the means through which the Holy Spirit does this in us. "One thing is needful!" — "Let them hear Moses and the prophets!"

"Lord, increase our faith!"

MARTIN S. SOMMER

