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Outlines of the Standard Gospels

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Confessional consciousness of the mighty Lutheran Church of America reacts with solemn earnestness against this unbiblical and un-Lutheran theology. It is the better part of wisdom to become conscious of the eminent and imminent danger to the integral Lutheran consciousness of America which any dallying with this type of theological thought would expose us to. It is too late for the Lutheran Church of America, which by the grace of God has been permitted to weather the storm of Reformed rationalism raging about our Church in this country for a whole generation, now to import a belated form of rationalism, an anachronism church-historically. We want God's pure word. We will have nothing else. And there is no personality so loftily placed that, God granting His grace, shall be able to woo us away from 'Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr.' In the awful world-collapse and world-crash, we have no time for anything but to seek the whole saving truth of the inviolate Holy Scriptures." —

The death of Nathan Soederblom was reported from Sweden, July 12, 1931. Addressing the Lutheran Academy at Dubuque in 1940, Dr. O. Evjen quoted these as the last words of the dying archbishop: "Nu har vi evighed" — "And now, eternity." We shall think of him, in that hour, as turning to "the boundless depths of the love of God in the Crucified One," confessed by him at Eisenach (as quoted earlier in our essay), and, realizing that "we are poor, we are nothing," experiencing "the empty hand of trust filled by God's mercy in Christ Jesus."

THEODORE GRAEBNER

Outlines on the Standard Gospels

Rogate

John 16:23-30

Rogate! Pray! World-wide trouble gives added significance and emphasis to this Sunday's call to prayer. Is. 26:16. Many have been brought to their knees who had perhaps never prayed before or had long neglected prayer.

But only prayer in Jesus' name is acceptable to God and will avail. What Jesus says in the Gospel for this Sunday concerning prayer in His name is of vital interest.

Prayer in Jesus' Name

1. *Such a prayer can be made only with a true knowledge of Jesus*
2. *Such a prayer is acceptable to God and heard*

A. Text.**1**

a. Jesus enjoins upon His disciples to pray in His name. V. 23. Up to that time they had not asked in His name. V. 24. Why? They had lacked a full and complete knowledge of Him. His sayings to them had been "proverbs," dark sayings. Their hope in Jesus was still mixed with carnal expectations. This imperfect knowledge was reflected in their prayers. Matt. 20: 20-23.

b. Jesus promised, however, that the day should come when they should ask in His name. "That day" is the time when the Holy Spirit should be poured out upon them. The promise of the Spirit is the outstanding topic of Christ's farewell discourse, of which our text is a closing part. John 14-16. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the disciples should then have a full and living knowledge of Jesus, both of His person and His redemptive work. They should know then that He came forth from the Father and came into the world and, again, that He should leave the world and go to the Father. V. 28. This verse sums up all of Jesus' personal life and work. With this knowledge of Christ, bestowed by the Spirit, they would ask in His name, basing all their pleas to the Father wholly and solely upon what Christ had done for them and, of course, asking according to the will of Christ, only what would tend to the glory of God, their own and their neighbor's true welfare.

B. Application: The day of Pentecost has come. The blessed work of the Spirit goes on. To the end of time the Spirit enlightens us to know our Savior and to love Him aright. Only with such knowledge can and will Christians pray the Father in Jesus' name. Humbly they will confess that because of their sins they are worthy of none of the things for which they pray. Cf. Luther's explanation of the Fifth Petition. They will base all their pleas upon what Jesus has done for them.

2

A. Jesus assures His disciples that through Him they have free and direct access to the Father and are no longer in need of intercession, not even His own, with respect to their prayer. Vv. 26, 27. Through Christ they have been made children of God. Gal. 4: 4, 5. Believing in Him and loving Him, they have entered into that relationship. For Jesus' sake God forgives them all their sins and dearly loves them. Ps. 103: 13. — (V. 26b not in conflict with 1 John 2: 1, 2. The priestly intercession of Christ retains for us the Father's forgiving grace, which He has gained for us by His vicarious and atoning life and death. Because now through Christ we possess the Father's love, we have free and immediate access to the Throne of Grace. — Least of all are we in need of the intercession of dead saints!)

B. In holy earnestness ("verily, verily") Jesus assures His disciples that their prayer in His name is heard. V. 23.—This promise, added to His express command, v. 24, assures the hearing of prayer in His name. It cannot be otherwise. Christ's merit has infinite weight and value with the Father. Prayers based upon this are sure to be heard.

C. The very promise of Jesus awakened in the hearts of the disciples some of the joy and comfort of successful prayer that was to be theirs in a full measure after Pentecost. V. 24b. Already the clouds of imperfect knowledge seemed to be lifting, and happily they exclaim: Vv. 29, 30. After the enlightenment of Pentecost they experienced the full joy of prayer in Jesus' name.

May we in living knowledge of the Savior experience the comfort and the joy of Christian prayer in these trying days! "Lord, teach us to pray!"

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

Ascension Day

Mark 16:14-20

The ascension of our Lord is a joyful event. David already rejoiced in it, Ps. 47:5-7; 68:18, 19. Much more should New Testament Christians hail with gladness the memorial day of our Savior's glorious ascent.

The Ascension of Christ a Joyful Event

1. *Because it is the crowning act of our redemption*
2. *Because thereby our Savior has come nigh to us*

1

For Christ His ascension was the solemn assumption of the throne at His Father's right hand, v. 19; 1 Pet. 3:22. He returned to the glory which was His before the world began. It was also the final triumph over all His enemies, Ps. 110; Eph. 1:20-22. For our redemption Jesus had entered into a conflict with the powers of darkness. He had conquered them, and the Father had acknowledged His victory by raising Him from the dead. Now there lacked yet that the mighty Victor celebrate His victory and receive the prize of conquest. 1 Cor. 9:24. That was accomplished by His ascension. Now the promise of the Second Psalm is fulfilled: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." God has given Him a name above every name. Phil. 2:9-11.

The triumph of the ascending Lord interests us. The enemies with whom He wrestled—sin, Satan, death, and hell—are our enemies. Therefore we partake of His victory. If we now doubt that the forces of evil lie prostrate at our feet, we must deny Jesus' ascension or that He ascended as our Substitute. This crowning act of our redemption seals our victory over the powers of hell.

Christ's ascension is also the reopening of heaven for all believers. He had said: "I go to prepare a place for you," John 14:2; and: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be," chap. 12:26. These promises are fulfilled. Eph. 2:6; Phil. 3:20, 21. He is even now waiting for the day when also we shall ascend on Elijah's chariot, Heb. 6:19, 20. "On Christ's ascension I now build The hope of mine ascension," etc., Hymn 216.

Indeed, a joyful event. If we often remember that our conversation is in heaven, Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1, what an incentive to active sanctification of life, to manfully struggle against evil lusts, to be zealous unto good works. Looking upward to the reopened Paradise, the believer patiently endures also the burdens which this war brings.

2

On the surface it appears otherwise, for Christ withdrew His visible presence from the disciples. However, He did not ascend as Enoch and Elias did, who merely entered heaven; He "ascended up far above all heavens," Eph. 4:10. The heavens did not receive Him, but He received the heavens, Acts 3:21. (Authorized Version faulty. See *Triglotta*, p. 1013.) He ascended into a majestic condition. According to His human nature also He is now present with the Church everywhere, as He said shortly before His ascension: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28:20. Luther says Jesus left the earth because He could do much more up there. From His throne He controls the kingdoms and empires and their leaders so that they must advance the interests of the Church. Eph. 1:22. The ascended Lord sends out His light and His truth, vv. 15, 16; Eph. 4:10-12. He gave Himself to the world at His birth; He gives Himself more completely since His ascension and to the end of days.

If we always had in mind the constant presence of our mighty ascended Lord, how easily would we bear the hardships of these latter days! With extended hands He left His disciples. The last words and gestures of a departed friend cling to the memory. To be blessed of Jesus is the richest treasure a man may possess.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem filled with peace and joy. So let us rejoice in the triumphant ascension of our Lord.

L. J. ROEHM

Exaudi

John 15:26 to 16:4

Back of the prescription counter in the apothecary's shop are many vials of medicine for various human ailments, and men and women come for the remedies that promise to restore their health.

The Bible is a spiritual apothecary's shop, where healing potions may be had for suffering hearts. I invite you to come and take with you

Three Remedies for Aching Hearts

1. *For Doubt* 2. *For Fear* 3. *For Trouble*

1

The first vial of healing medicine is v. 26. The Savior had spent three years teaching His disciples what they should know for their own salvation and what they should teach others. Now He must soon part from them, and He knew that doubts would assail them. They would wonder what He had meant. Peter had already wondered why Jesus washed his feet; Thomas had said, "How can we know the way?" Philipp had said, "Show us the Father." And there would be more of that later. And for all these doubts and questions the Savior promises them the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. He will testify of Jesus. He will enter their hearts, enlighten their minds, increase their knowledge, dispel their doubts, and strengthen their faith. That was the Savior's promise — a remedy for their doubts and for their distress.

We are disciples of Jesus, and we are living in knowledge and faith. But we are often disciples like Peter and Thomas and Philipp. Often doubts disturb our faith; questions shake our trust and set our minds into a turmoil. Why do I suffer? Why does God not help? Why did I have to lose my son in battle? And worst of all — can my sins be forgiven? Have I not sinned too much?

For all these doubts there is a remedy in the spiritual apothecary's shop. Through God's Word the Comforter will come to you, teach you, enlighten you, banish your doubts, and comfort your soul. Medicine for the body may fail to help; *this* remedy is unailing. You will learn to trust in God, and you will have the assurance of God's grace and eternal salvation. Take the remedy and use it. Do not be discouraged if all your doubts and anxieties do not vanish at once. Use the remedy often, and it will help.

2

There is another ailment of the heart — the fear to confess our faith. Every Christian recognizes what a great gift he has received from his Savior, forgiveness of his sins, comfort in trouble, and the certainty of salvation. He feels that he should tell others about it. He knows Matt. 10:32. And still many Christians fear to confess Christ before men. They feel too weak and inadequate for that task. For this fear there is a remedy, v. 27. That is a command to testify, but it is more. The disciples should testify because they were with Him from the beginning. Most of us have been

with Jesus a long time, since the days of our childhood. Others have come to Jesus later. But all have been with Him. We need not fear. We are not alone. When we have an opportunity to confess His name, He will be with us. He will make us strong. John 14:26.

3

And then there are many troubles that make the Christian's heart ache. One is mentioned in v. 2. The Apostles and the early Christians were persecuted, imprisoned, and killed. People thought they were doing good by ridding the world of Christians (Saul). These suffering Christians must have been tortured by the thoughts "Why must we be persecuted? Is God angry at us?" But for all this trouble there is a remedy. Jesus had told them before; they must expect suffering; it was necessary for them. And so, when any kind of trouble and trial comes to us and our heart cries out, "Why, O Lord?" then reach for this remedy, and know that God has told you that suffering must come, Acts 14:22; Heb. 12:6. It is necessary for you.

These are the potent remedies that will help us in doubt, fear, and trouble. Take them from the Word of God; they will cure the ills of your soul.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

Pentecost Sunday

John 14:23-31

The essential gift of Pentecost is nothing transitory, not like the marvels which attended the birthday of the New Testament Church (Epistle Lesson), but is an abiding gift, the Holy Spirit Himself (c. 16 ff.). He "abides forever" with His Church, and with Him we receive

The Gifts that Make Every Day a Pentecost

1. *The love of the Father*
2. *The Truth of the Spirit*
3. *The peace of the Son*

1

"My Father will love him" (v. 23) — a promise of blessedness truly heavenly. "God is love" is written on every leaf, sung by every star. "God loves me dearly, loves even me" can be sung only when the "No" of conscience and the Law has been drowned by the "Yes" of Christ's finished work (vv. 28-31) and the "Yes" of obedient faith. Rom. 1:4; v. 23 a.

God's love is more than disposition; it is action — self-communication, union with the beloved. V. 23 b. The Father not only welcomes the returning child; He Himself comes to him, makes His abode with him. And not only the Father comes but "We will

come": with the Father also the reconciling Son and the Spirit, who enables us to believe in the Son (1 Cor. 12:3) and sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5:5) so that we can say: "Abba, Father," Rom. 8:15.

The indwelling of the Holy Trinity, this "exceeding great and precious promise" (2 Pet. 1:4), is an inexhaustible comfort, making every day a Pentecost through its assurance of the Father's love; it should also be a strong inducement to live Pentecostal lives. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16.

2

The love of the Father, won for us by the Son, is offered to us and made our own by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Truth. V. 23 a, 24 b, 26; chap. 16:13; 17:17. Only as the Spirit "glorifies" the Son (16:14) in our hearts by revealing the truth of His person and work, can we through faith in Him be assured of the Father's love and have life through His name. 20:31. The Word of Truth, which begets this life, must also sustain this life. The devil and the Old Adam would soon ruin us if the Spirit of Truth would cease to be our Teacher and Reminder (v. 26), cease to warn us of the dangers to our spiritual life, and, when we have left the first love, cease to plead with us to do the first works. Rev. 2:4 f. Let us pray every day that the Holy Spirit may sanctify us through the truth so that every day may be a Pentecost.

3

To those who abide in the Father's love and the Spirit's truth Christ promises: v. 27. This is a peace that Christ, as He gives the promise, is about to achieve through His "going to the Father": peace with God through the blood of His cross, peace of conscience through the assurance of pardon. Christ's peace verily is "not as the world giveth," and he who possesses it need fear nothing that the world fears or does. His peace surpasses all understanding, gives triumph over every foe, makes every day a Pentecost.

Not even the last enemy, death, can rob us of this peace; for Jesus, who "is our Peace" (Eph. 2:14), is with us. As the farewell hour strikes, we may say, as He did in His farewell: v. 28 b. If in our last battle the "prince of this world" terrifies us with his deep guile and great might, we cling to the Prince of Peace and say, as He said and because could so say: v. 30 b. Gladly we obey His final summons: "Arise, let us go hence," namely, with Him as our Comforter and Guide (Ps. 23:4) into peace (Is. 57:2). And there, where there shall be no more night (Rev. 22:5), we shall live in an endless Pentecostal day, of which the present indwelling of the Holy Trinity is a prelude and pledge (Eph. 1:14: "the Holy Spirit of promise . . . the earnest of our inheritance." Compare also 2 Cor. 6:16 with Rev. 21:3).

VICTOR BARTLING

Pentecost Monday

John 3:16-21

In this part of His conversation with Nicodemus our Lord impresses upon His visitor's conscience the blessedness of faith in Him and the ruinous consequences of unbelief. This is a timely topic at all times.

Christ Contrasts Faith in Him and Unbelief

He shows that they differ

1. *In the appraisal of His person and work*
2. *In their outcome in eternity*
3. *In the character of their works*

1

Faith accepts the Christ of the Gospels. He is true God, the "Only-begotten of the Father," vv. 16, 18; God's Son, v. 17; but He is also true man conversing with Nicodemus. God out of love had given Him, v. 16, and sent Him into the world, v. 17. His coming in the flesh we celebrate at Christmas time. Christ is true God and true man in one person. That is what our faith, anchored in the Word of God, believes. Matt. 16:16.

This Christ is the Redeemer, sent into the world to atone for the sins of mankind, v. 17. The world was perishing in its sins, v. 16. How He wrought this redemption Lent and Easter commemorate. Faith accepts Jesus as the only Redeemer.

But there are those who believe not on Him, v. 18. Unbelief either treats the story of Christ as a myth or, at best, is willing to grant that He was merely a human being—a great teacher perhaps, with lofty ideals and high moral standards, who has left His impress upon the world. Compare the attitude of Modernists, the social gospel, and the Reform Jews towards Christ. Unbelief likes to quote His Golden Rule. Christ's ideals are even to be given consideration at the coming peace table. But unbelief declares openly that the idea that Christ is true God is preposterous. The thought that Christ's death is more than a martyr's sacrifice appears incredible to unbelief.

But the true appraisal of Christ's person and work is a serious matter. On it depends our eternal happiness.

2

Faith believes that vv. 16b and 17b reveal God's true purpose when He sent His Son into the world. The world lay under God's curse because of sin, Gal. 3:10, unable to save itself from God's wrath. Death was the gateway to eternal damnation. But v. 16. He who believes in Christ as his Savior is assured of eternal life,

1 John 1:7b. In the Last Judgment He will not be condemned, v. 18a, but through death enters into eternal life, John 6:40; 11:25, 26.

Contrast with this the wretchedness of unbelief. It deceives itself by the denial of sin, 1 John 1:8, and seeks to work out its own salvation. Unbelief works at cross purposes with God's plan of salvation outlined in v. 16 and thus is the author of its own damnation, v. 18. It prefers the darkness of its vain imaginations to Christ and His revelation of the Father's will, v. 19.

What a terrible sin is unbelief! It leads to eternal damnation. Even the so-called good works of unbelief will avail nothing before God, for it is faith alone that can make our works acceptable in God's sight.

3

V. 21 speaks of people whose works "are wrought in God." They are people who have faith in Christ. Their works are not perfect, Phil. 3:12; Rom. 7:15. But in faith they strive towards higher ideals of Christian life, Phil. 3:14; Gal. 5:24. The Christian "doeth truth," v. 21, what is right in the sight of God. Believers live according to the instruction given Col. 3:17. Their imperfect works done in faith are acceptable to God through Christ's perfections, Matt. 25:21. Those who believe in Christ have no fear of having their works made manifest before God and man, v. 21.

How different the character of the works of unbelief. Compare Gal. 5:19-21. Many of these things are not considered wrong by the world, but God condemns them, v. 19b. No matter what the unbeliever may do, sin vitiates even the noblest of his works. Any hopes that his deeds will earn him favor with God are forlorn, Gal. 2:16 end. God's final verdict will be Luke 13:27.

Nicodemus was convinced by Christ's discourse. He became the follower of the Lord. God grant that we, too, believe in Jesus unto the end.

G. V. SCHICK

Trinity Sunday

John 3:1-15

Trinity Sunday — do we give enough attention to this festival? The doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental. The three Ecumenical Creeds emphasize this truth. This is the banner of the Christian Church and distinguishes us from all false religions.

The Triune God is Vitally Interested in the Sinner's Salvation

1. *God the Father sacrificed His only-begotten Son*
2. *God the Son purchased salvation for the sinner*
3. *God the Holy Ghost regenerates the sinner*

1

V. 2. Nicodemus recognized in Christ one who is "come from God." However, he had no true knowledge of Christ, nor of the Father, who had sent Him.

Today we find many warped opinions about God. The oft-repeated "Fatherhood of God" pictures the Lord as a generous old father who merely overlooks faults and transgressions of the sinner. — The rationalists and Modernists have an altogether wrong concept of God the Father.

Scripture reveals God the Father as holy and righteous. He cannot condone sin, Ps. 5:4, but must punish every transgression, Deut. 27:26; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23. Despite the repeated statements of Modernists that God has nothing to do with the present catastrophe on earth, we know that God's thunderous voice of righteous wrath speaks in unmistakable accents of sin's punishment.

Scripture also reveals God the Father as a God of love, John 3:16, who sought and wrought the world's reconciliation by sending and sacrificing His only-begotten Son.

2

Nicodemus, a very prominent Israelite, approached Christ in a most gentlemanly manner, v. 2. Christ's miracles had impressed him. He sought a private interview. Evidently he wanted to learn. (That he came by night may be due to fear; cf. John 19:39.) But he considered Christ merely an *exceptional teacher*. Modernists do the same when they use such terms as "divine," "come from God," but find in Christ a mere man, nothing more.

Scripture knows God the Son only as the God-Man, vv. 11-13; Rom. 9:5, etc.

Scripture emphasizes that Christ's main purpose in life was to save sinful mankind. Luke 19:10; Matt. 20:28. — Jesus knew throughout His life that He would give His life as a ransom. What He told Nicodemus, vv. 14, 15, referred to His death on the cross and to the purpose of His death. Every Israelite understood, and certainly everyone today should understand, this wonderful Gospel message to mean that God the Son became man to purchase salvation for the sinner by being "lifted up" on the cross. This is the very heart of the Savior's work.

3

Many do not know what to believe and to say about the Holy Ghost. Is He a person? Is He merely an influence? Is He merely God's power?

Scripture leaves no room for doubt that He is a Person, 2 Sam. 23:2; Job 33:4; Matt. 3:16; John 14:26; that He proceeds from the

Father and the Son, John 15:26; Gal. 4:6; Romans 8:9; and that He is true God, Acts 5:3, 4; Matt. 28:19.

Christ, in emphasizing the urgent necessity of regeneration, v. 3, ascribes this work to the Holy Spirit, vv. 5-8. Scripture elsewhere emphasizes that this is possible only through the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12:3.

V. 5. The Holy Spirit accomplishes His miraculous work through the means of grace, Word and Sacrament. Cf. Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:17; James 1:18; 2 Thess. 2:14. Do the means of grace seem lowly? Let us remember that they are the means which God has chosen to perform the work of our regeneration.

Trinity Sunday — let us thank God that He has revealed Himself unto us in His holy Word as the Triune God, who is so vitally interested in our salvation.

J. W. BEENKEN

