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## Outlines of the Standard Gospels

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## Outlines on the Standard Gospels

### First Sunday after Trinity

Luke 16:19-31

"It might have been" is one of the most sorrowful words of life. "Too little and too late" will be the chapter heading of the early part of this war.

The word "regret" does indeed not appear in our King James Version of the Bible, but our text could be summed up in one word: **Regret.**

#### **A Voice from the Beyond: Beware lest You Regret!**

Lest you regret

1. *Having neglected the one time of grace*
2. *Having neglected the duties of this time of grace*
3. *Having neglected the one word of grace*

#### 1

The rich man was granted a span of life on earth even as everyone else; he used this span of life even as everyone somehow uses his time. His use was that of indulgence, wearing impressive clothing, etc. Gradually his time was running out on him; still he "fared sumptuously *every day.*" Sin and carousing can become routinized and a guiding pre-occupation of life.

A life such as this man lived utterly fails of its purpose, although it may be a life that is impressive. Our man became rich; significantly the text says "he was buried." Splendor even in death, but still a failure of purpose. Such a life fails to realize that this span is the period of grace, the one time in which the saving hand of God is extended to the sinner.

Too late this rich man realized what a failure and misguided effort his whole life had been. In hell, for the first time, he realized what an opportunity he had lost, the opportunity to avoid the consequences in which he now found himself: "Have mercy on me!"

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and its voice is the voice of God. Theoretically they allege it as only co-ordinate with the Bible, but practically they establish it as supreme above the Bible. . . . Though admitting an infallible Bible, they put the supposed infallible interpreter in its place. Thus, as so often happens, extremes meet. Rationalism and ecclesiasticism, diverging from the truth, run around the circle till they agree in establishing themselves as the sovereign arbiter; the one class accepting as true in the Bible only what 'finds them,' that is, suits them; the other making the Church—that is, the hierarchy, that is themselves and their allies—the vicegerent of the Almighty, the custodian of truth and salvation." (*The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 22.)

Now at last he would have Lazarus help him in redeeming lost opportunities by asking him for that relief which was available only in this life. Too late! "There is a great gulf fixed." The time of grace cannot be postponed or transferred to the time after this life. It is immutably fixed on this side of the grave.

## 2

While on earth, the rich man had a duty towards sick and destitute Lazarus, but he neglects the performance. Now he is reminded that he had contributed to the "evil things" in the life of Lazarus and is sternly told that his neglect of the man is forever beyond the hope of correction; for Lazarus no longer *needed* such charity ("he is comforted"); and even if desired, charity *could not* be given: "They which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

Our duties of kindness, charity, forbearance, etc., must be performed in *this* life or *never*. We are fellow passengers on life's journey only once; no return trip. For example: parents and children can do to each other what is right only while together in this life. Used or unused, this opportunity comes only once, "while we are in the way."

Another duty: Too late the rich man attempts to turn *missionary*, praying that Lazarus be sent to his five brethren "lest they also come into this place of torment." Those brothers were near to him, but in life he had never given their salvation a thought.

Missionary duties can be performed only in this life. All the regrets of eternity will not compensate for neglect on this point. The generation of heathen that lives with us is also a Lazarus at our gates; we shall take care of him either *now* or *never*. Parents have in their children the "brothers" whose eternal welfare is to be a consuming interest, but that interest can be exercised only in this life, not in the beyond.

## 3

The rich man in the beyond was made painfully aware that all through life the *means of escaping his punishment* had been within easy reach. This means was the word of grace, "Moses and the Prophets." The rich man had this means while on earth, and his five brothers on earth still had it; for Moses and the Prophets were read in the Jewish synagogues every Sabbath. There the all-sufficient means of salvation was found in the Word. Neither was there a *substitute* for this means of grace: "If they hear not . . . the dead." What regrets for having despised this Word!

We have this same means of grace fully, abundantly. If neglected, there is no substitute in time or eternity. All regrets of

eternity will not compensate for this neglect. Let us think of this whenever neglect of the means of grace seem so trivial.

This whole text is a warning lest we become indifferent and secure. May we heed the word: Beware lest you regret!

H. O. A. KEINATH

## Second Sunday after Trinity

Luke 14:16-24

This parable is so rich in doctrine, admonition, and consolation that one little sermon cannot do it justice. Let us concentrate, therefore, on one sentence. A little word, often overlooked, but deserving special study:

### "And Yet There Is Room"

#### 1. A splendid tribute to God's grace.

**Text:** After bringing the poor, etc., to the feast, the servant said, "and yet there is room." He meant: My lord, you have made such vast preparations; though hungry multitudes are now being fed, there is room for many more. You have provided so bountifully. You are so gracious.

**Applications:** 1. But God is infinitely more gracious; through Christ has provided feast of salvation for all people. John 3:16: "Whosoever"; 1 Tim. 2:4: "All men." Many penitent sinners at His table, multitudes already in heaven — "and yet there is room." In Father's house many mansions, unlimited space, boundless grace.

2. Praise given David for feeding all Israel, 2 Samuel 6:19; also Caesar for feasting Rome at 22,000 tables. But what must be our praise of God, who provides a spiritual feast so bounteous that after millions have partaken, it is still written, "And yet there is room."

#### 2. A bitter complaint against mankind.

**Text.** In disappointment the servant said, "And yet," etc. He meant: Our festive hall looks rather empty; delicious food remains untouched. And why? So many refused invitation, excused themselves, preferred other things. So thankless the people are that in spite of all our inviting yet there is room.

**Applications:** 1. So also with regard to God's feast of love. Generous is His grace, cordial the Gospel invitation: "Come"; but most men refuse, make same excuses: engrossed in business, pleasure, etc.; they have no desire for God's company. That is why Christ's flock so small, complaints so bitter: "And yet," etc.

2. What an attractive, opulent table the Lord by Word and Sacrament spreads for souls in the church! But how often pastor must complain: The church is half empty, many pews vacant; yet there is room.

**3. A strong incentive to Christians.**

**Text.** When servants said, "Lord, it is done . . . and yet," etc., he was asking, What shall be done with the remaining room, the vacant seats? Go again? To this the lord did not reply: No; it is enough; I'm satisfied; you may rest. "Go out," he said, "compel them." As long as there is room, invite them. "And yet there is room"—an impellent to renew effort.

**Applications:** 1. Every Christian as God's servant is obligated to invite, to compel others. Mission activity has brought many, "and yet there is room"—more than a billion heathen; many unchurched. As long as this condition prevails, we dare not rest.

2. Someone asked whether heathen could not be saved without Christ's Gospel. A Christian answered, "I am even more concerned about the other question, whether I can be saved if I disregard my Savior's will and make no effort to save others."

**4. A sweet comfort to sinners.**

**Text.** Often people are too timid to accept invitation to fashionable dinner. They would go, but think: Will we really be welcome? What about our poor clothes, etc.? Will there actually be a place for us? So strong were these feelings in the poor that the servant had to compel, coax, and show them there was still room.

**Applications:** 1. Poor, penitent sinners may feel themselves too unworthy even to hope for a place at the Savior's feast. Even in these self-righteous days there are a few such souls. What comfort for them this word: "And yet," etc. Even for poor Lazarus, covered with sores and boils, there was room in the healing bosom of Abraham.

2. Sinking ocean liner—insufficient lifeboats. Those left behind cried, "Oh, please take us along!" The tragic answer was, "There is no room."—What a contrast here! As mankind sinks in flood of perdition, God's comforting cry is: "Yet there is room."

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ALVIN E. WAGNER

**Third Sunday after Trinity**

Luke 15:1-10

In recent theological literature (Neo-Orthodoxy) the charge has been made that the Lutheran ethic is not sufficiently social. The specific charge: The Lutheran emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith and on the otherworldly character of the Christian religion leaves little or no room for a genuine interest in society's welfare. The charge is unfounded and rests upon a twofold error: 1. Misunderstanding the essence of Christ's work and of the Gospel. If the Church's program is the saving of

immortal souls by improving man's character, then the Lutheran Church has failed to develop a genuine social ethic. 2. Misunderstanding the nature of faith. Faith is the hand which appropriates Christ's merit, and therefore in sincere gratitude becomes active in the social realm. Cp. *Trigl.*, 941, 10 f.; Luther's *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, St. L., XIX:986 ff. The Lutheran Christian does not withdraw from the world but is keenly aware of his obligation to his fellow man; he has a genuine social ethic. In fact, his social consciousness does not stop with alleviating man's social ills, but concerns itself primarily with his fellow man's eternal welfare. As his Master, so the Christian is a "friend of sinners." The text, emphasizing the contrast between Christ's and the Pharisees' attitude toward sinners, suggests the theme:

**Cultivate a Christlike Spirit Toward the Lost Sinner**

**1. Deep interest in, and genuine love for, the lost.**

a. The Pharisees see only the Law, the outward form of the Law, which threatens to punish sinners. They believe that it is proper that man deals with publicans and notorious sinners as God deals with them according to the Law, v. 2.

b. The Savior is attracted to sinners and attracts them, v. 1. He came to save sinners. He is determined that everyone should share the fruit of His redemption. Therefore He still loves the sinner who has strayed from the fold. To emphasize His deep interest in the individual, He contrasts the one lost sheep with the ninety and nine, v. 4; the one coin with the ten, v. 8. Point of comparison: Every soul in danger is so precious that the Savior temporarily forgets, as it were, the others and centers His entire attention upon the lost.

*Application:* How prone we are to view the sinner only as being under the threat and curse of the Law. We see His sin, but fail to see the redeeming grace which has rescued him and the divine love which seeks his conversion. Cultivate the Savior's spirit! This spirit leads to action.

**2. Unremitting effort in behalf of the lost.**

a. There is nothing in the sinner to prepare or effect his return to God. God must do everything.

b. Christ never wearies in seeking the lost. Point of comparison: Christ seeks and labors "until He finds." Deals with the individual. There is no social gospel dealing with society *en masse*.

*Application:* Our interest in the lost wanes when our efforts are not immediately successful. Pasteur's love for his fellow men prompted him to labor in spite of opposition and seemingly insurmountable obstacles until he found ways to safeguard mankind's

health. The Savior's example must prompt us to deal sympathetically with our lost fellow man. Luther: "Das sind die rechten christlichen Werke, dass man hinfallt, wickele und flicke sich in des Suenders Schlamm, so tief als er darin steckt, und nehme dessen Suende auf sich und wuehle sich mit heraus und tue nicht anders, denn als waeren sie wirklich seine eigenen." St. L., XI:1237. Cp. Rom. 9:3; Phil. 2:4 ff.

3. *Genuine joy over the returned sinner.*

a. Joy is an attitude of the heart. The world murmurs: v. 2 b. Only the Christian is capable of this Christ- and angel-like spirit, vv. 6, 9, 10.

b. This joyful attitude manifests itself in action, v. 5.

*Application:* Our mission work, brotherly admonition, dare never be done for personal satisfaction. We shall experience true joy when we realize what bliss has come to our restored fellow man and what glory to our Redeemer.

F. E. MAYER

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 6:36-42

The first three post-Trinity Gospels show us divine Mercy at work: comforting Lazarus in the eternal home, inviting guests to the Great Supper, seeking the lost. Now we are exhorted to show ourselves "children of the Highest" (v. 35) by a life of mercy.

We are shown: "Be Ye Merciful!"

1. What mercy does
2. Whence mercy comes
3. What mercy receives

1

The word here used for mercy designates an abiding feeling of compassion excited by the misery of another, whether friend or foe, and impelling one to eager efforts in order to bring relief. "Your Father is merciful" (v. 36). His mercy is seen in the realm of nature (v. 35 b; Matt. 5:45) and, above all, in the realm of grace (Titus 2:11; 3:4). Jesus is Mercy Incarnate (see Matt. 9:36-38; Acts 10:38). "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15) and afflicted by our afflictions (Is. 63:9), He "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:24), "laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16).

Do we take after our Father? Do we follow our Savior? Are we merciful? Jesus gives us three tests. (a) *The test of the tongue*—"judge not, condemn not" (v. 37a). What this means becomes clear in vv. 41, 42, viz., that the followers of the merciful

Lord cannot engage in officious, uncharitable, self-complacent censoriousness. Over against this merciless "judging" stress the positive side of the Eighth Commandment. Point out, too, that there is a "judging" demanded by mercy. It is suggested in v. 39: "leading the blind"; v. 42 b: "pulling out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." See further: Matt. 18:15 ff.; Gal. 6:1 f.; Ps. 141:5; Prov. 27:6. (b) *The test of the heart*—"forgive" (v. 37 b). See, e. g., Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; Matt. 18:21 f. (c) *The test of the hands*—"give" (v. 38 a). Give your time, your talents, your strength, your goods—your life (1 John 3:16).

These tests, rigorously applied, will show how far we fall short of the standard. How, then, may mercy come into our lives? How can we improve ourselves?

## 2

Not by going to school with the Pharisees. These are pictured in vv. 39-42. See also Luke 15:1, 2, 28-30; 18:9 ff. To exalt themselves, the self-righteous abase others. In the school of the Pharisees you will remain as blind as your teachers. And in that school we are all enrolled by birth. Selfishness is this school. Behind all our failures to meet the Savior's threefold test is just this, our innate selfishness.

There is only one school in which mercy is learned, the school of Jesus. Here we are first taught to know our sinful self, to see the "beam" in our own eye. Then, however, we experience the Savior's forgiving mercy toward those who flee from self to His salvation. Paul's self-estimate, "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), is repeated in perfect honesty by all pupils in the school of Jesus. With severity towards self there is coupled in them charity towards others. In thanks for mercy received the pupil follows in the paths of his merciful Teacher and Savior, seeking to show mercy with tongue, heart, and hands.

## 3

Further to encourage His disciples toward a life of mercy, Jesus also speaks of a gracious reward for the merciful: vv. 37, 38. Not that our mercy earns the reward. Mercy in us is but a sign that God's mercy toward us has not been in vain. See 1 John 3:14. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7)—in this life (Acts 20:35; Ps. 41:1, 2) and in the world to come (Matt. 25:21-40). The Lord's gracious reward transcends all thought and beggars our little favors (v. 38). Woe, however, to the unmerciful. The principle of v. 38 b works in two directions. See also Matt. 18:23-35; 25:41-46.

What crying need for mercy in our days! "Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth" (Ps. 86:15). Make us like Thee.

VICTOR BARTLING