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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

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Father, has no further need of a King. The citizens of the kingdom of glory are the sainted conquerors and overcomers. They will be subject to God, who is all in all. And inasmuch as the Son is and ever remains the Head of the Church, He will as such be subject to God without in the least disturbing the Trinitarian relation. Divine revelation says nothing about an earthly millennium. We shy away from the millennial dream as from the devil's snare. This petition is our eschatological prayer. It revives and strengthens, not by our act of praying, but by its objective doctrine, our hope that the Lord shall deliver us from every evil work and shall preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory forever and ever.

Los Angeles, Calif.

G. H. SMUKAL

Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

Second Sunday after Trinity

John 8:1-11

When David had been delivered from his enemies and, in particular, from the hand of Saul, he wrote Psalm 18. The words of this day's Introit are taken from that Psalm, and they express our reaction whenever we consider God's goodness in delivering us from the hands of them that oppress us. In our text of today we have an example of such a deliverance, for herein we behold

The Victorious Christ Dealing with Sinful Mankind

1. He gains the victory over His adversaries.

A. The scribes and Pharisees, seeking His destruction, John 7:1, 25, 32, 45 ff., tempt Him "that they might have to accuse Him," v. 6.

Early in the morning Jesus, seated in the Temple, is teaching a large multitude, v. 2, when the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman into the midst "taken in adultery," v. 3, "in the very act," v. 4. Thus they place a problem before Him which evidently appears to them as offering Him an inescapable dilemma. Should He decide for the execution of the Law as demanded by Moses (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24; Lev. 10:9) and by Ezekiel (Ezek. 16:38-40), He would place Himself in jeopardy with regard to the law of the Romans and could be accused of inciting rebellion. On the other hand, should He decide against carrying out the Mosaic statute, He could be charged with a disavowal of His own statements (Matt. 5:17-19) and with failure to re-establish the Law, to do what was expected of the Messiah.

B. At first the Savior seems deliberately to ignore their question, v. 6, but when they continue asking Him, v. 7, He replies:

a. by calling attention to their own sinfulness, v. 7 (Greek: "The sinless one among you, let him start the throwing"). He thus disarms them, for which of them was ready to designate anyone of their own number as "the sinless one"?

b. By reversing the situation He places them into the very dilemma into which they thought to put Him. By the statement, v. 7 (pres. imper. Lit., "start throwing"), He compels them either to initiate the execution of the Mosaic Law at once and thus to jeopardize themselves with Rome or to refuse and thus to expose the utter insincerity of their first question before the multitude, v. 5.

C. The scribes and Pharisees do the only thing for them under the circumstances, v. 9, and so Christ emerges victorious over His adversaries.

How good to know that this Jesus is with His Church always, Matt. 28:20, guiding Her by His supreme wisdom and power, assuring her that "the gates of hell shall not prevail"! Matt. 16:18; Ps. 18:2; Ps. 46; and Hymn 262:2 (*The Lutheran Hymnal*). Do we realize and appreciate this sufficiently?

2. In His victory He delivers a most unworthy sinner.

A. The adulterous woman of our text was a most guilty sinner, vv. 3, 4, 11, and deserved the sentence of death, v. 5, as Jesus acknowledges, v. 7.

B. But Jesus delivers her from public shame by calling attention to the universal guilt of sin in all present, v. 7; from the sentence of death, which she deserved, vv. 9-11; and from a future life of sin with its final condemnation, for He shows her what she might do in appreciation for His kindness, v. 11.

C. Jesus delivers her for His name's sake, even as He has promised to deliver all who put their trust in Him, for He had been anointed "to set at liberty them that are bruised," Luke 4:16-21; Is. 61; to "seek and save that which was lost," Luke 19:10; "that the world through Him might be saved," John 3:17.

D. How consoling to know that Jesus delivers even the lowliest of sinners, calling them to His great Supper of Grace (The Gospel, Luke 14:21)! For which of us is not equally guilty in God's eyes and equally unworthy? Luke 12:47, 48; Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:9, 23; Matt. 5:28.

Surely this woman must have rejoiced at her deliverance. And shall not we rejoice over the daily deliverance which comes from Him who "justifieth the ungodly," Rom. 4:5? who "delivered me because He delighted in me," Ps. 18:19? Let us show our joy by practicing His kind of love toward one another (Cp. the Epistle, 1 John 3:16-18) and thus say with the Introit, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my Strength." Amen.

THEODORE F. NICKEL

Third Sunday after Trinity

Luke 15:11-32

The four characters in this most beautiful short story ever written are: the lost son, the friends of the son, the forgiving father, and the self-righteous, loveless brother. They are with us today. Which do we resemble?

God's Way with His Erring Children in Contrast to Man's Way

1. *In the battle against sin*
2. *In the return from sin*

1

A. God's way. God gives blessings for body and soul in lavish measure. The hired servants were well provided, v.17; the son much more so. As this father exercised wholesome discipline in the home, later recalled by the son, vv.18,19, so God warns and keeps His children from sin.

If you have not fallen like the prodigal, God's grace alone has kept you.

If you have sinned like the prodigal, the fault is yours, not God's. Say: "I have sinned."

B. Man's way. There were plenty of "friends" who lured the wayward son to a life of riot and waste, leading to ruin of body and soul. You do the same when you encourage that "little friendly game" for money, the intoxicating glass, the intimate association with loose company.

Vv.14-16. Famine and want brought no friends near—his pockets were empty! They used him until he was of no use to them. No pity or kindness for the starving, desperate down-and-outer. "What is that to us?" Go and feed swine, but you can't have swine fodder for yourself! Coldhearted, loveless man has no remedy for the anguish of an accusing conscience. Matt.27:4.

Is your way with the sinner Godlike? Or can some wayward son or daughter point the accusing finger at you, saying that you coaxed them downgrade? Can you look unmoved on the sinner polluted in his own blood, Ezek.16:6, and pass by on the other side?

Teach me the wayward feet to stay
And guide them in the homeward way.

2

A. God's love still pursues the sinner in his shame and misery. Vv.17-19. Starvation and degradation. Prov.13:15.

He came to himself. Had he thought only of his sin and misery, he would have despaired. One step from despair to suicide. But he thought also of the loving care of his father. Conscience condemned, but memory brought back the picture of home and love.

That love made him homesick. The Gospel of God's love is powerful even in remembrance, after years of forgetting.

Drawn with the cords of love, he arose — no longer "down" — and came to his father. The world does nothing to start the wayward sinner homeward, Godward. God does everything. Am I doing God's work?

V. 20. The father longingly looked out for his son. He ran to meet him, embraced and kissed him, "kissed the past into forgottenness." Forgiveness before confession!

God, "whose heart with pity still doth break whether we seek Him or forsake," is slow to anger, but swift to show mercy. Ps. 145:8.

What the returning prodigal said, v. 21, was true. The father did not minimize his son's wrongdoing, v. 24. He forgave him. He was so overjoyed at his son's return that he spread a banquet in which his whole household was to share and to make merry.

That is God's way of welcoming the returning sinner and making him glad with the joy in the matchless grace of a forgiving God. V. 10.

B. Men too often behave like the elder brother, vv. 28-30. He is proud, sullen, self-righteous. In spite of the prodigal's repentance, it is "this thy son," not *my brother*. Suppose the prodigal had met his elder brother first!

Lack of humility and love will make even church members act like the elder brother. They forget that by forgetting God they, too, wandered into a far country.

May we appreciate the grace of God which stooped just as low to save and enrich us as it does to rescue and lift up the prodigal sons and daughters of our day. Then we will imitate God's way of welcoming the sinner and Christ's way (vv. 1-3, 28-32) of pleading with the self-righteous.

V. L. MEYER

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 7:1-6

Our Synod's mission among the blind may be taken as a parable of all our church work. What is our business but to help the "blind" to see the Light of the world? The old Gospel for this Sunday has the ever relevant warning of Jesus about "the blind leaders of the blind." Also in our text Jesus teaches us

Our Need of Clear Vision

1. *As keepers of our brother*
2. *As keepers of a holy treasure*

1

A. "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Yes," says he who through Jesus has found the Father. Augustine's dictum about God "Always active, always tranquil," with the clauses reversed, describes the Christian. Because "tranquil" (Luke 6:36; Matt. 6:24-34), he is active in loving service (7:12, 17). He sees himself as his brother's keeper both as to his body (Matt. 25:35, 36) and as to his soul, rendering him the loving service of brotherly admonition.

B. Our duty to our brother, and the way to its performance, is first shown negatively by its perversion (vv. 1-4); for alas! as in Jesus' days, so with us the perversion is better known than the true practice. The "judging" prohibited, v. 1 ("Don't pose as judges"), is illustrated by a proverb (v. 3) which seems to have been current like ours about "those who live in glass houses." Grotesque like a cartoon, it reveals the hypocrisy of the "blind" oculists, the ancient and modern Pharisees, who measure progress in religion by severity in judging—self? No, others. Especially repugnant is this judging when it is practiced with the air of fraternal concern (v. 4), while the only motive is self-love: running others down in order to expand the ego. The "mote" in a particular case may be only a fancied one; and though real, the blind oculist is the last one who is able to help. Often it is the case of "the big thief hanging the little thief." Note that "mote" and "beam" are of the same vegetable matter. In every case the self-righteous, loveless judge through his very pride and uncharitableness has in his eye a "beam" which totally blinds spiritual vision. What damage these blind oculists have wrought; and not least of all to themselves, calcifying their own heart and putting into the hands of the Eternal Judge a measure of judgment which will be as stern as theirs, yet just. Vv. 1, 2; James 2:13.

C. V. 5. Luke 4:23. Self-judgment is the prerequisite for effective spiritual service to others. Such judgment in the light of Christ's trenchant interpretation of the Law (Matt. 5) leads to the prayer 6:12 a; to adoration of divine mercy (1 Tim. 1:15: "chief of sinners"); to a merciful estimate and treatment of others' faults. (Study Gal. 6:1; Rom. 15:1; James 5:20; Lev. 19:17; Ps. 141:5; Prov. 25:12; 27:6). Let us have no unmerciful judgment among us, but much more fraternal admonition. "Love buildeth up" (1 Cor. 8:1) — the love that in humble self-judgment has cleared the vision and through experience of God's mercy has received a tender hand for the delicate operation of helping remove the brother's "mote."

2

A. With clear vision we should daily examine our riches in Christ, "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (6:33), with all the attendant blessings; each item "holy," each a "pearl." The clearer this vision, the more eager we shall be to share our holy treasure with others. Shared joys, double joys. He who has love in his heart has spurs in his side. Matt. 5:13-16. This evangelization is to be world wide.

B. As keepers of a holy treasure, however, we need also the clear vision which sees that the Gospel cannot be applied where the Law has not done its work. When an unbeliever continues in his rejection of the Gospel, when he persists in his wicked life, when he shows that he has as little regard for the Savior and His Gospel as dogs have for holy things and swine have for pearls, then we must tell him Mark 16:16. So Christ did, Matt. 10:14, 15; Luke 23:8, 9; so Paul did, Acts 13:45, 46; 28:25-28. Also in church discipline there is a necessary final step when the former brother must be told that he is henceforth regarded a heathen man and publican until he repents.

Conclusion: The need of prayer that we be both keepers of our brethren and keepers of holy things. Mark 10:51.

V. BARTLING

Fifth Sunday after Trinity

John 1:43-51

Our text presents the sequel of several episodes, each of which was of great importance in the early ministry of Jesus. We have there the brief, but comprehensive sermon of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God." We have the account of the first meeting between Christ, on the one hand, and Andrew, Peter, and John, on the other. These episodes already establish what is brought out strongly in our text:

The Wonderful Relation Between Jesus and His Disciples

1. *He seeks and finds them*
2. *They accept Him as Savior and Master*
3. *He assures them of His abiding presence*

1

a. Jesus finds Philip, the historic present emphasizing the gracious patience of the Lord. He addresses a simple invitation to him: "Follow Me!" The Savior's interest in gaining this man for His kingdom brought out very strongly. V. 43.

b. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and immediately characterized him in a manner that showed the truth of the remark

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in chap. 2:25. He, the omniscient Son of God, searches the hearts of men, revealing to them the innermost secrets of their mind, with a view to gaining them for Himself. V. 47.

c. To this day the Lord seeks men through the Word, whose preaching should always be the foremost activity of every faithful pastor, as well as of parents in the home and Christians in general. He wants men everywhere to become His own and live under Him in His kingdom, etc.

2

a. Philip was won by the simple invitation of Christ, possibly having been prepared by the other men who had spent some time with the Lord. V. 43 b. He accepted the Savior so wholeheartedly that he at once became a missionary, equipped with an enthusiastic testimony based on the fulfillment of the ancient Messianic prophecies. V. 44 f. And he clung to his witness in spite of Nathanael's skeptical remark. V. 46.

b. The doubts of Nathanael were completely overcome by the words of Christ which so completely revealed His omniscience. Therefore he also voiced his acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel. V. 49.

c. This is again and again the gracious consequence of the Gospel proclamation. People everywhere are gained for Christ, to accept Him as the promised Redeemer and as their Master, being convinced by the Word of truth, which in itself works faith. Hence the need of enthusiastic mission work, with the full proclamation of the Gospel.

3

a. In a way, the revelation of Himself in the few words addressed to Philip and then to Nathanael was the most overwhelming assurance that the Lord was interested in the soul's salvation of these men, whom He here called as His disciples and later also made Apostles. This interest was especially evident in the declaration of v. 50 cp. with v. 48. The same holds true with regard to every person in the world. The omnipresence and the omniscience of Christ emphasized again and again, as in Ps. 139. This a matter of great comfort to every believer.

b. The abiding presence of the Savior is emphasized especially in His last declaration, v. 51. Using phrases taken from the story of Jacob in the Old Testament, Gen. 28:12, He assures the newly won disciples that He, in His ministry among men, would be in the closest relation with His heavenly Father. And He here uses the significant term "Son of Man" for the first time, a designation which truly brings out the divine-human character of the Lord and brings Him and His saving grace close to the heart of every believer at all times.

P. E. KRETZMANN