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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 18: 1-14

People usually give good care and treatment to things they value. True, there are exceptions. But the successful farmer takes care of his land; the mechanic, the housewife, and others take care of the implements of their work. But another possession, our children, who are given us by God, should receive special care and treatment.

The Child That Is in the Midst of You

1. *Do not despise it* 2. *Do not harm it* 3. *Be good to it*
4. *Be like it*

1

In this sinful, ungodly world, children are often despised. Evidence: some desire all the privileges of home life, but children are an unwanted burden; some let their children grow up without thinking it worth while to train them properly, to teach them obedience and respect and manners; some do not think it worth while to lead their children to Jesus, to have them baptized and to teach them religion. Seventeen million children in the United States are without religious instruction. We are horrified at the working parents who give their children the key to the door and a dime for a hamburger and then let them shift for themselves. But it is much worse to give the children an education for this life and let the soul shift for itself. The Savior says: Vv. 10, 11. He gave the children His divine care and love. They, too, were lost. They, too, are redeemed. They, too, have the hope of heaven. They are precious in Jesus' sight. We should not despise them.

2

Nor should we harm them. Who would want to do that? Children are usually protected and sheltered by their parents; and if the parents fail, the state will intervene. Anyone who abuses a child is punished. And yet the Savior says: vv. 6, 7. That is the greatest harm that can be done to a child: to make it worse, to teach it to sin. That is done by an evil example, by people who curse and use dirty talk before children; by parents who lead worldly lives, who worship Mammon, and who show disregard for God's Word. A terrible punishment is threatened in the words of our text to those who offend children.

3

Instead of harming children, we should be good to them, v. 5. Often this passage is understood to refer to the adoption of a home-

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less child and to the support of orphanages. It indeed includes such deeds of charity, but it refers to more. The Savior uses the same expression that He uses in Matthew 25 when speaking of good works. Jesus is pleased with every deed of kindness done to a child. He regards it as done to Him. Those who show kindness to children, who provide for the bodily needs and for the welfare of their souls, who aid in mission work for children, are performing a God-pleasing deed.

4

The disciples were concerned about the highest places in heaven, v. 1. The Savior told them they would not even get there unless they became different, humble people. So great must be the change, by contrition and repentance, that it is like becoming a child again, beginning life all over again. He illustrates His teaching of regeneration by setting a child in their midst and telling them to become like that child.

Such a great change is not easy to accomplish. One may have to go a long way. One may have to break friendships and connections. But the Savior says just that: vv. 8, 9.

That is Jesus' teaching about the child in our midst. If we want our homes, our churches, our country to prosper, if we want America to be worth the effort our men have made in the war, we must give our children the care that the Savior commands in this text. Let us ask God for Christ's sake to forgive our failings and to make us more willing to do our full duty. **FREDERIC NIEDNER**

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 18:15-22

War is sin in action. Greed, hatred, jealousy, lie at the bottom of all this mass murder.

But God has placed another force into this world to deal with sin, to build where sin has torn down: Christian brotherly love.

Christian Brotherly Love in Action

1. *It admonishes the sinning brother*
2. *It seeks to gain the sinning brother*
3. *It forgives the sinning brother*

1

A. Context. God's earnest desire to save souls is the setting of this text. Children are the object of His love, Matt. 18:11; they should not be led into sin, Matt. 18:6; they should not perish, Matt. 18:14.

B. But also the sinning brother, one who commits a faith-destroying sin, is still the object of God's searching love. He is to be admonished; he is to be spoken to, not merely spoken of; he is to be observed, not to be ignored.

C. God has established *detailed procedure* for brotherly love in action:

Who is to deal with the brother? First of all, the *brother* who knows of the offense committed, then a small *group* of such Christians, then the *whole congregation* of Christian brethren.

How is this to be done? So important is this matter that God has carefully prescribed the details of the procedure, a procedure which is the most likely to produce results. First, eye-to-eye, where the possible hindrance of public interference is excluded and the advantage of a personal, heart-to-heart talk can be fully employed; secondly, by the joint pleading of a small group; thirdly, by a step which employs the dignified seriousness of the whole Christian congregation in the effort.

In what spirit is this to be done? The sinning one is "thy brother." Only after everything has failed is he to be "unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Therefore such admonition is to be done "in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted," Gal. 6:1.

2

A. For what *purpose* is such admonishing to be done? To *gain* the brother, that is, to bring him to sincere repentance. The aim is not merely to "pull the mote from the brother's eye" (Matt. 7:4), nor to *humiliate* the sinner before men, nor to "*get even*" for a previous insult, nor to *get rid* of him. Even where the final step, excommunication, is necessary, the aim still is to gain the brother.

B. Since this is the noble aim, note the *persistence* which the Lord prescribes. At least three definite steps of admonition are to be taken, and these may be taken as often as there is hope of gaining the brother. The combined effort of a whole congregation is finally to be employed for this purpose.

C. Since gaining the brother is the all-important purpose, the Christian congregation is assured of the *great power* which it has: Whatsoever ye shall bind, etc., v. 18. Such an act of a congregation is not to be compared with a society's dropping a member from the list or with a club's scratching the names of non-paying persons, but the congregation is the medium by which God speaks to the sinner about his soul's welfare.

D. Since the admonition by the congregation is of such importance, it is reminded of the *great power of prayer* in this con-

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nection, v. 19. Surely, in dealing with a sinning brother, the prayer of the church is especially *necessary* and has the promise of *effectiveness*.

3

A. To forgive a sinning brother, especially where his wrongdoing has hurt our pride, is a difficult task. So Peter thought there must be a limit to what can be expected of us in this matter, v. 21.

B. Jesus shows that forgiving the brother is more than a single act; it is rather an *attitude*: "until seventy times seven," that is, unlimited, v. 22. That is true of person-to-person forgiving; it is true of a congregation's forgiving of the penitent sinner.

C. There is an *urge* to such forgiveness in the words: "Whatever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," v. 18. In heaven, before God, forgiving is the constant theme; it must be if we sinners are to be saved. Realizing that God in heaven forgives us, we should find it easy to forgive others. Fifth Petition.

H. O. A. KEINATH

Eighth Sunday after Trinity

John 7:14-24

The ceremonies of the Festival of Tabernacles (the completed harvest, the seventy sacrificial bullocks, the pouring of water, the Temple illumination) were interpreted by the rabbis as symbolizing the victory of the Jewish faith over heathendom. At the height of the festival Jesus appears. His presence and His message confuse the leaders and teachers of the people, vv. 43, 53. And rightly so, for the rabbinical religion, though it had the show of divine origin, was man-made, while Christ revealed the true religion. And so there must be an inevitable clash between the Jewish teachers and the Teacher sent from God. The conflict between reason and revelation continues. (Cp. the Standard Epistle and Gospel lections for today.)

The Incompetence of Human Reason to Judge Spiritual Truth

1

The origin of the Christian religion is above reason.

A. Human reason can indeed through observation discover many things about God's being and works, Rom. 1:19, 20; Ps. 19:1; etc. (Natural knowledge of God.) But in its arrogance it claims to be competent to find spiritual, saving truth by an honest search, continued study, deep meditation, vv. 14, 15. In the opinion of the people Jesus lacked the necessary education, the "scientific" background. Today: the great scientists, successful industrialists, the

renowned philosophers are accepted as the religious authorities. Yes, every unconverted man believes that in spiritual truths he is his own "Delphic Oracle."—This attitude springs from spiritual pride, v. 49. Man wants to be a little god. The natural man claims to have clairvoyant powers (spiritism and theosophical cults); or he identifies himself with God and presumes to be competent to read the Divine Mind (Christian Science); or he claims to find God by studying human personalities (Modernism); or he ascribes to himself the prerogatives of an "infallible" teacher (the Papacy). Let us who because of our Old Adam live in glasshouses not throw stones. The arrogance of our Old Adam frequently becomes evident, for example, when we rationalize about matters of doctrine or Christian conduct, spurn God's Word, or twist it to suit the preconceived notions of our Old Adam.

B. But human reason is totally unqualified as the source of divine truth. Reason, science, philosophy, education have a place. But not in theology. a. Divine truth is supernatural, above reason. God's being and attributes are beyond human comprehension, 1 Tim. 6:16. No man possesses the powers of mind and the instruments of investigation to know God. There is only one way to find divine truth, v. 16; cp. 1:18. b. But is Christ the reliable Source of divine truth? Our text offers two conclusive proofs. First, Christ's divine character, v. 18. He seeks God's glory. Second, Christ creates divine conviction, v. 17. Everyone who does God's will, that is, believes, 6:29, 40, will accept Christ's doctrine. We leave the realm of philosophy, science, reason, argumentation, and enter the realm of faith. We believe the Gospel because Christ is God's Son, and we believe that He is God's Son, because we believe the Gospel. To the unbeliever that appears to be an argument in a circle, but to the Christian it is the absolute truth. He knows that what he believes is divinely authenticated.

2

The content of the Christian religion is contrary to human reason.

A. Reason clearly manifests its incompetence in judging spiritual truth. a. It is not competent in its own field. The rabbis should have known their own law. But they completely misinterpret it, vv. 22, 23. Moses commands circumcision on the Sabbath so that man may not be deprived of the "lesser" blessing, but they forbid healing and deprive man of the "greater" blessings. (On the exaggerated views concerning the Sabbath see Edersheim, *Life and Times of the Messiah*, II, p. 777 ff.)—The people judge without being acquainted with the facts, viz., the plot to kill Jesus, vv. 20, 21; cp. 5:16.—Today: Science and philosophy not always trustworthy

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in their own fields. How can they determine the content of divine truth? b. The results of this incompetence are two devilish doctrines: hypocrisy, v. 19a, and murder, v. 19b (the plot against Jesus and heartlessness against the impotent man), cp. 8:44. — Examine the content of philosophical systems, e. g., fatalism, pessimism, hedonism, humanism, agnosticism. Cp. 2 Tim. 3:2-7.

B. The Christian religion teaches the very opposite. a. To make men whole, v. 23; cp. 5:14, in soul and finally in body. Christ reveals the Gospel of salvation, freedom from the Law, the gift of the perfect righteousness. b. In revealing the true nature of God, Christ reveals truths which are contrary to depraved human reason. We cannot follow incompetent human reason. Let us glorify the Father by accepting Him as the God of grace in Christ Jesus. Hymn 381, v. 1.

F. E. MAYER

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Mark 12:38-44

Few stories are so well known as that of the "Widow's Mite." Children as well as adults often refer to it.

This, of course, is good, and it would result in helpful blessings for the Church's missionary and benevolent needs—if only the story were always referred to in the right way. But what do we find? Very often it is improperly quoted and falsely applied. Therefore our theme

The Right and Wrong Use of the "Widow's Mite"

The Right Use.

1

A. To remember it as a *church* contribution.

Text.—Into the Temple treasury—for maintenance, repairs, services, charities of God's house—the widow placed this remarkable gift.

Application.—Church purposes should come first in our giving. And if the widow's mite is to us a reminder to place luxuries, pleasures last and religious, charitable causes first on our personal budgets, then we use it right.

B. To consider it as a *large* contribution.

Text.—In fact, never has one been larger. Though a farthing—only two mites—it was "all that she had, even all her living." "She cast in more than all the rich who cast in much," said Jesus.

Application.—To stint in our giving is so easy. But if we regard the widow's mite as an incentive to larger, more munificent offerings and even in days of poverty say: "If that poor widow gave something, so can I," then we use it right.

C. To admire it as a *loving* contribution.

Text.—It was entirely unlike the gifts of the scribes (vv. 38 to 40), who prayed and gave "for a pretense." Jesus saw that it was brought in the right spirit. Not self-righteousness, self-glorification, but faith, love, appreciation of God's Word and house prompted it.

Application.—Some have asked whether it was right for a widow to give away all she needed for personal living. But just that is evidence of the intensity of her faith and love. And if we admire this, making our contributions similar expressions of love to Him, who gave His life for us, then we use it right.

2

The Wrong Use.

A. To regard it as an *excuse for disproportionate giving.*

Text.—By commending the poor widow, Jesus did not imply that God is pleased with every small gift. He meant to enforce a lesson in proportionate giving, or giving as one is able "according to the blessing of the Lord," Deut. 16:17. Much is required of those who have much, Luke 12:48. And His disciples were to see that in proportion to the widow's mite the rich should have given much more than they did.

Application.—If, then, a Christian who could give more brings the same little contribution in days of prosperity as in days of adversity, never increases his offerings in line with his growing income, and excuses his small gifts by saying, "Well, the Lord was satisfied with the widow's mite"—that is a dreadful abuse.

B. To employ it as a *cover for proud giving.*

Text.—The disciples in Jesus' day had so many bad examples of proud, Pharasaic giving before their eyes. (Scribes, Pharisees, Matt. 6:1-4.) To warn against these and encourage humble, sincere, selfless giving, Jesus pointed to the widow's example.

Application.—If, then, a Christian makes large contributions and does so in a proud and boastful spirit, thinking "wonders what he has done," yet to cloak his pride says, "Well, it's only a mite"—that is fearful misuse.

C. To look upon its lessons as a *trivial matter.*

Text.—Jesus Himself considered Christian giving so important that He carefully observed the treasury, the gifts, and the givers. Not even the widow's mite escaped Him. So important He regarded it that He made it an object lesson for His disciples, that He prefaced His remarks with "*Verily, I say unto you,*" that His Spirit recorded the incident in the eternal Word as a profound lesson also to us, His disciples today.

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Application.—If, then, we regard the “Widow’s Mite” merely as a pretty story, ignore its important lessons, and look upon giving to religious and charitable causes as a minor, unimportant matter, we, too, are misusing it.

O Christians, for the sake of Him who has blessed us with salvation, let us make the right use of this story.

ALVIN E. WAGNER

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 21:33-46

God has been very good to us as Americans, as Christians, as Lutherans. Enumerate the blessings America has enjoyed even during the dreadful days of war, the blessings which are ours as Christians, the special blessings which we enjoy as members of the Lutheran Church.

Blessings of God are obligations for us. Many people, even Christian people, who are ever ready to accept the blessings of God, are not so ready to respond by acknowledging God’s goodness and by living up to their obligations. Many indeed are like the wicked husbandmen. For this reason it is well for us to consider very thoughtfully

Man’s Wicked Refusal to Acknowledge God’s Goodness

1. *How this refusal manifests itself*
2. *How those fare who refuse God*

1

A. The context, Matt. 21:1-32. — It closes with the Parable of the Two Sons and the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

B. Text, v. 33. — It begins with a very short but detailed description of the goodness of God. God as the householder had not only planted a vineyard, but also hedged it about for protection, etc. It is not difficult to recognize in this a description of the Jewish people and the blessings which God had showered upon them. Is. 5:7. God had definitely planted the vineyard of Israel. He had fenced it about, not only with the protecting walls of the Law, but also with the geographical position of Israel, tucked away in a safe corner of the world. God had given Israel not only temporal blessings, but Israel had everything, from the Temple on down, for its religious needs. Cf. Is. 5:4.

C. Text, vv. 34-36. — God does not give His blessings without a purpose, without expecting results. The householder sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it. Instead of giving the householder the fruits due him, they treated his

servants shamefully. They beat one unmercifully (Greek: flayed him); they killed another, murdering him outright; and they stoned a third. When the householder, in his patience, sent a larger group of servants, they again refused to acknowledge the goodness that had been shown unto them and treated this second group as they had treated the first. Yes, they meted out the same wicked treatment even to the son of the householder, vv. 37, 38. Describe the scene.

D. It is not difficult to see what Christ meant to tell the people to whom He was speaking. To Israel He had sent His servants, Matt. 23:37, but they had refused to show the fruit which God expects of His people, the fruits of true contrition, faith, obedience, truly good works. Finally God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, but instead of acknowledging Him, they rejected Him, John 1:11. They were plotting to kill Him. Very soon after Palm Sunday they actually cast Him out of the city and crucified Him outside the city wall on Calvary's height.

E. The picture also applies to other nations which at one time enjoyed the full spiritual blessings of God. It applies today to Germany, a nation once richly blessed by God, the nation of a Luther, of a Melancthon, a nation the greater part of which refused the blessings of God, refused to bring fruits unto repentance. (A Lutheran chaplain reports that in a church of 1,700 communicants in Germany the regular Sunday attendance was only 18 to 20.) But the text also speaks to us as Americans and as Lutherans. God has been especially gracious to us, but oh, how many of us have refused to acknowledge the goodness of God, have refused to bear real fruit! How do those fare who refuse God's goodness, who refuse to bear fruit?

2

A. Text, v. 40. — The question indicates that something will happen to the wicked people who refuse to give fruit unto God. Quickly the people answer, v. 41. The people who answer here are undoubtedly the pilgrims, not the Sanhedrists, v. 45. Their answer is correct, because they have their minds only on the objective facts. They follow their own sense of justice, a justice which will indicate God's judgment on all unbelievers. Other vine growers would take the place of those who refused to bear fruit to God. These other vine growers are not a specific nation like the Jews, not a specific race, but the New Testament Church, which began on Pentecost, as Christ indicates, vv. 42, 43, 44.

B. Christ indorsed the verdict by quoting Ps. 118:22, 23. He indicated that He is the Cornerstone, who was rejected by the builders. The Kingdom of God would be taken away from them and given to others. Yes, definitely they would be as one fallen on

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a rock. They would be crushed as people on whom a stone would fall, veritably pulverizing them. We know what happened to the Jewish nation at the destruction of Jerusalem. Unto the Gentiles was given the opportunity to become the real vine dressers, the real custodians of the Church of God, the new spiritual Israel, composed of men of all nationalities.

C. It is well to remember this fact in our own day and age. The vineyard of God was entrusted not only to the Germans, not only to Britannia, not only to Russia, not even solely to our own blessed United States. It is given to all Christians, to all believers, and all nations. Those who reject the goodness of God, those who refuse their stewardship obligations, will certainly find the statement of Christ come true for them as individuals and as nations. They may fall on the Stone, the stumbling block of Christ. The Stone may fall on them, when the judgments of Christ will strike them, Matt. 25:28.

D. The appeal of Christ was direct, His logic was clear, so that even His enemies understood what He was speaking about, v. 45, but the results were not those desired. Instead of repenting, instead of turning in faith to Him whom God had sent unto them, they were ready to lay hold on Him, kill Him right then and there, and hesitated only because of their fear of the multitude. Only a few days later they carried out their wicked plans and brought about their own destruction. What a reason for all of us in these trying days, in which we still enjoy His blessings, to learn from the sad experiences of Israel, to bear fruit, gladly serving Him forevermore!

E. L. ROSCHKE

