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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

John 14:7-14

There is a book with the title *Christ and Other Masters*. To us this title is derogatory to the true dignity of Christ. He is incomparable. Outside of Christianity a man may choose one "master" in place of another and not radically change his religion. But there is no substitute for Christ. Christ presents Himself in our text as

The Christ for Whom There Is No Substitute

1. *The Christ who reveals the Father*
2. *The Christ who continues His work through His believers*
3. *The Christ through whom alone prayers are acceptable and heard*

1

Who is Christ? Every page of the N. T. shouts out that He is the incarnate God. One of the primary passages is Christ's self-testimony on the eve of His departure. His disciples still have imperfect and confused views as to His person and mission, due to the veil of Jewish prejudice yet on their hearts. Patiently Jesus teaches them anew. He shows (v. 7a) that an adequate recognition of Him is at the same time a knowledge of the Father, since "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (v. 9). Philip's request (v. 8) separates what belongs together: the person of Jesus and the revelation of the Father. Philip asks for a momentary theophany. He has had a perpetual theophany; for Christ is the Son of God, who, though a distinct person, is of one essence with the Father (cf. 10:30) and stands in an unbroken communion with the Father (v. 10), so that who hears Him speak hears God speak; who sees Him work sees God work; who sees Him sees "God manifest in the flesh." Here is the fulfillment of Is. 40:5, 9. The fact is evidenced by His *words* (cf. John 6:63, 68; 7:46; then the host of words of self-attestation, e. g., John 14:1-6; Matt. 11:25-30) and by His *works* (cf. John 5:19-23; 7:31; 11:47; 20:30, 31). Hence the challenge to all disciples (v. 11). Unbelief in spite of the evidence is willful blindness.

After Pentecost (v. 7b, 26) Christ, the personal Revelation of God, was the foundation of the Apostolic message to the world (cf. John 1:14, 18; 1 John 1:1-4; 2:23; 5:20, 21; 2 John 9; Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:6). Any other Christ is a false Christ, and any god invoked apart from this Christ is an idol. This Christ is for all men the Face of God shining with grace. In that Face we read: John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19-21. This vision of God truly "suffices." There is no substitute (v. 6; Acts 4:12; Matt. 17:5).

2

Nor is there a substitute for the Christ who even today fulfills the promise: v. 12. The closing verses of the first two Gospels are parallels, the whole history of the Church since Pentecost is the commentary. The redemption, completed when Christ died and rose again, is now published and applied. The "greater works" are the results of that publication in the conversion of sinners: the spiritually blind are made to see, the deaf to hear, the dead to rise to newness of life—miracles without a par. Note, too, that the ministry of Jesus in the days of His flesh was limited to *one* nation and restricted to a brief period, while the work of the glorified Christ extends to *all* nations until the end; that when He died He left behind only few followers, while upon the coming of His Spirit a vast harvest was added. And so it has gone on till this day. We are privileged to experience the presence and the power of the Lord of Glory and share in His continuing work, seeing in this work ever new credentials of His claims to true deity.

3

Finally, where will you find a substitute for the Christ through whom alone prayers are acceptable and heard? (Vv. 13, 14.) The world is full of so-called prayers, but "apart from Christ no one is able to pray a syllable acceptable to God" (Luther). Only the prayer in Christ's name has the promise of an answer: the prayer of a heart united by faith to the Savior from sin (Eph. 1:6), seeking in its prayer naught but the glory of God, praying confidently for all that pertains to salvation, submitting all else to the direction and correction of God's will (1 John 5:14). No assertion of essential Godhead can be greater than Christ's doubled promise in our text. He must be able to hear all prayers, no matter how secret, to exercise all power, to overrule all events, and to foresee all contingencies.

The liberals of our day have forsaken this Christ and substituted a new Christ, a Christ represented as "the first Christian," as an example of faith and not the object of faith, as a teacher who has humanized God by picturing Him as a Father but is not Himself the personal Revelation of God the Father. What an effrontery to claim the title "Christian" and disseminate such blasphemy! "Will ye also go away?" Answer: "John 6: 68, 69. Thou art the Substitute for us all, but there is no substitute for Thee."

V. BARTLING

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity**Matt. 22:23-33**

"I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Even as this morning, so every Sunday when we recite the Creed, we make this confession of faith, we believe that this body of ours, though it dies, will be raised unto everlasting life. Some of us have confessed this a hundred, yea, a thousand times and more. Are we always fully conscious what this confession means, or do we at times merely repeat it as so many words? Our text this morning gives us occasion to meditate on it and to be reminded of the great comfort which this gives to us, that we can hopefully and truthfully say:

**"I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body
and the Life Everlasting"**

Let us learn

1. *Who can make this confession*
2. *Why we Christians can make it*

1

a. The Sadducees in our text, "who say there is no resurrection" (v. 23), did not and could not make this confession. These Sadducees were educated men and mostly wealthy; they were religious, too, claiming to accept the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Five Books of Moses. Many were members of the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 23:6-8). Even the high priests until the destruction of Jerusalem were chosen from this group. But these Sadducees did not believe in the future existence of man. They believed that the soul dies with the body. They were rationalists and materialists. — Such Sadducees are still in the world, not known by that name, but of the same religious type. The denial of the resurrection will not prevent their bodies from being raised on the Day of Judgment; and because of their unbelief they will find themselves in the company of the damned in hell.

b. Only Christians can make the confession, "I believe in the resurrection," etc. Before making this confession in the Creed we confess, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin." And prior to that we confess, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." Only those who by the Holy Ghost through His Word have been brought to faith in Christ and assured of forgiveness of sin can have the hope of the resurrection of the body unto eternal life. Only men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. 32), men who believe in and worship the true God, who have repented of their sin and accepted the Savior, who are Abraham's children according to the promise, can confess,

"I believe in the resurrection," etc. — Let us thank God that we, together with millions of other Christians, can make this confession. Let us secondly learn why we can do so.

2

a. Because the Scriptures so tell us. To the Sadducees Jesus said, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (v. 29). Jesus could have proved to the Sadducees from other portions of the Old Testament that there is a resurrection of the dead (Eccl. 12:7: future existence; Ps. 49:15; 71:20; Is. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2). Yet because the Sadducees said that they believed what was written in the Books of Moses, Christ met them on their own ground by referring to, and quoting from, Ex. 3:1-6: "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (v. 32a). From this saying of God, Christ drew the conclusion, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (v. 32b). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead long ago, yet God called Himself their God; but God is not the God of the dead, of that which does not exist; He is the God of the living. If He is still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then these men must still be unto God as living creatures. They have not passed out of existence, nor will their bodies remain in the earth; for being their God, and God being the God of the living, He is their God according to soul and body, as without either they would not be complete human beings.

The Scriptures, which are the unerring Word of God, declare the resurrection of the body. We, who live in the time of the New Testament, have additional proof and evidence for the resurrection of the body (John 6:40; 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:53; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:16). The very resurrection of Jesus is our guarantee that all who believe in Him shall also arise unto eternal life (John 11:24-26; 14:19; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 18; 1 Cor. 15:12-23).

b. Because God has the power to fulfill His promise. The Sadducees presented a problem to Christ, perhaps a fictitious one (vv. 22-28). Jesus answered (vv. 29, 30). The Sadducees did not know of, nor believe in, the transforming power of God, the power to transform the bodies of men as they will appear in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35 f.). In the resurrection, said Christ, men shall be not angels, but like the angels as far as marriage is concerned. In heaven there is no need for marriages. Situations as they exist in this life and for this life will not exist in the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The Sadducees tried to present a situation that would make the resurrection an absurdity, but they actually displayed their own ignorance and tried to advance some reason and excuse for their un-

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belief. When men pit their reason against the wisdom and power of God, they make fools of themselves (Rom. 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:19, 20).

By faith in Jesus, our Savior, we have forgiveness of sin, are the children of God, and have the assurance that we shall rise from the dead unto everlasting life. May God keep us in His grace, and may it ever be a great comfort to us that we can confess, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Amen.

J. H. C. FRIZZ

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 13:10-17

This is the Lord's Day, the Day of Rest. You are in the Lord's house, the hallowed home of rest. Rest, then, repose, be still. Jesus Himself is present to give rest to your soul; you are present to rest your soul in Him. He relieves you of your burdens. You hear, believe, pray, praise, give thanks. Then depart in peace, bold, courageous, strong, to meet another week, which, too, you will dedicate to the Lord.

Let Us Observe the Day of Rest in a God-pleasing Manner

1. *By glorifying God*
2. *By serving the neighbor*

1

Jesus glorified God. This was the solemn Sabbath, the Day of Rest, ordained by God. Those who observed the purpose and manner of its celebration (Ex. 22:12: physical rest; Lev. 23:2, 3; Ps. 27:4; 42:4: opportunity for worship; Ezek. 20:12, 20: testimony of faith; Col. 2:16, 17: shadow of Christ) glorified God. Jesus did this. On the Day of Rest He was active in the performance of the tasks of His threefold office. Inasmuch as His office required also on that day expenditure of physical and mental energy, He was working on the Sabbath Day. This was pleasing to God.

Jesus glorified God by His work of teaching the people by *word*, holding fast the faithful word and by sound doctrine both exhorting and convincing the gainsayers; and by *deed*, revealing Himself as the Almighty God, the Savior, the Great Physician, the Comforter. This was pleasing to God.

The woman glorified God. In her physical plight she arouses our pity. Her love of God that constrained her to come and to attend in spite of her difficulties excites admiration and puts many to shame. Her patient faith glorifies God. This was pleasing to God.

The people glorified God. They came as individuals "ready to hear," to learn, to believe the mighty works of God. A congregation assembled for this purpose is not distracted from the

Word, nor disturbed by pain and sorrow, such as is depicted in the text, nor swayed by hypocrisy and false doctrine, rebuked in the text. Such healthy application to His Word is pleasing to God.

The people glorified God by rejoicing (v.17b). The tense indicates that they began rejoicing and kept it up also after the service, when they watered their stock, performed works of necessity and of love, and observed fraternal and social intercourse. This was pleasing to God.

By choice, not by compulsion (*Trigl.*, pp. 91, 241, 243, 603 to 609), at the invitation of the Gospel, we assemble ourselves together to praise the Lord in the congregation. We look for this opportunity for glorifying Him (Ps. 26:12, 6-8; Luke 11:28; Eccl. 5:1). This is pleasing to God (Is. 66:2). Would any among the hale and healthy (v.17), or the infirm (v.11), or the children (Matt. 21:15, 16), or the young (Ps. 119:9), or the aged (Luke 2:27, 37), or the busy (Ps. 119:14, 72) neglect the opportunity of pleasing God? Excuses reveal a sense of guilt (Luke 14:18; Rom. 1:21). Let us observe the Day of Rest in a God-pleasing manner. At every public service something of great spiritual importance happens.

2

Jesus served the neighbor (1) by breaking to sinners the bread of life (v.10); (2) by exposing the hypocrite and the adversaries for (a) a warning to the people, (b) a call to repentance (vv. 15, 17); (3) by restoring health to the woman (v. 13). He was active for the soul and body of His fellow men. This is God-pleasing work also on the Day of Rest.

Many disregard the spiritual and physical needs of the neighbor; if on the Day of Rest, then every day. Often broad traces of selfishness mar our observance of the holiday. These traces are visible in the alms box, the mission treasury, the current fund. At times hypocrites are exposed, and adversaries move to promote their subversive activities. We are serving at the time when the love of many waxes cold. The Day of Rest offers time and opportunity for the strengthening and the practice of that Christian love which we have. See from the text how the love of the beautiful Savior stands out in bold relief against the contrast of the adversaries' uncharitableness. Let us follow His example by observing the Day of Rest in a God-pleasing manner. We pray:

Hear us, Cheer us
By Thy teaching; Let our preaching
And our labor
Praise Thee, Lord, and serve our neighbor.

G. H. SMUKAL

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity**Matt. 5:1-12**

Christians are not to live on earth as do the ungodly (Rom. 12:1 ff.). Being new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), they are to follow holiness (Heb. 12:14). To this our Lord admonishes us in the Sermon on the Mount, especially in our text.

True Children of God

1. *Their life in Christ on earth* 2. *Their great blessedness*

1

A. The Sermon on the Mount does not show us how we may become true children of God, but it teaches us how we are to live as children of God in Christ Jesus as we journey to our eternal home (v. 1 f.); the sermon was addressed to the disciples in particular, but in the hearing of the believing multitude. Modernists err who say we become Christians by doing what Christ here commands.

B. 1. True Christians are poor in spirit (v. 3; Luke 6:20). For the greater part they are not only poor and despised in a worldly way (1 Cor. 1:26 ff.), but they are poor in their own regard of themselves, not trusting in themselves as did the Pharisees, but being humble; not boasting good works, but relying upon God's grace in Christ, as did the publican (Luke 18:10 ff. [Stoekhardt's exposition of the Beatitudes in *Bibl. Gesch. des N. T.* is perhaps the best.]). (2) They mourn (v. 4). In general their life is one of mourning, of affliction (Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 11 and 12). But they mourn their sins (Pss. 32, 51, etc., Rom. 7:18 ff.). (3) They are meek (v. 5), i. e., not proud, but humble and lowly and of a gentle, long-suffering disposition (1 Cor. 13:4 ff.; Mos., Num. 12:3; Paul, 2 Cor. 4:7 ff.). (4) They hunger and thirst after righteousness, seeking to do that which is right before God and man, since by faith they have obtained Christ's perfect righteousness in conversion (Job 1:1 ff.; Simeon, Luke 2:25 ff.; Anna, v. 36 ff.; Mary, v. 51). (5) They are merciful (v. 7; Gal. 6:9, 10; Luke 10:30 ff.). (6) They are pure in heart (v. 8; 1 Cor. 6:19; Ps. 51:10; Joseph, Gen. 39). (7) They are peacemakers (v. 9; 1 Cor. 7:15; Mark 9:50; Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14; 2 Tim. 2:22; Abraham, Gen. 13). (8) They suffer persecution for Christ's sake. (vv. 10-12; Rom. 8:35 ff.; 2 Cor. 4:9; 12:10; 2 Tim. 3:12; Acts 8:1 ff.; 13:50 ff.).

C. In these words our Savior presents to us the goal for which as Christians we should strive. Imperfect as we are (Phil. 3:12 ff.), we should in daily repentance confess our sins and by faith in Christ secure constant strength for greater zeal in sanctification (Col. 1:11; 2 Pet. 3:18; Phil. 4:1 ff.).

2

A. True children of God, following this glorious pattern of life, are truly blessed. (1) Theirs is the Kingdom of God, Christ's kingdom of grace and glory, with all its spiritual and eternal blessings, already now by faith, hereafter in fruition (Luke 12:32; Matt. 25:34; Luke 23:42; Rev. 11:15). (2) They shall be comforted (v. 4), already now through the Gospel (2 Cor. 7:4; Luke 16:25). (3) They shall inherit the earth (v. 5; Ps. 37:11; Is. 65:13. Joseph, Gen. 41:41 ff.; David, 2 Sam. 5:1 ff.). They shall be filled (v. 6); their desire for doing what is right, for doing good works, shall be filled, and in heaven their many good works shall be made manifest (Matt. 25:34 ff.). (5) They obtain mercy (v. 7); as they showed mercy, God will show them mercy (Matt. 25:34; Ps. 41:1 ff.). Consider Christ's great praise of the good Samaritan. (6) They shall see God (v. 8; Ps. 24:3 ff.; Ps. 42:1 ff.; Job 19:27; 2 Cor. 5:7 ff.). (7) They shall be called the children of God (v. 9; Ps. 34:14 ff.). God acknowledges them as His dear children, especially on the Day of Judgment (Rev. 7:9 ff.). (8) They will have a rich reward of grace (vv. 10-12; 2 Cor. 4:16 ff.).

B. This ineffable blessedness of God's children in this life is not always and fully realized by them, because their Old Adam under the burden of the cross is often depressed and dejected (Job 3:1 ff.). But by faith the great blessedness of which Christ speaks in the text is theirs nevertheless and shall be fully revealed in the life to come (Luke 23:43; Rev. 14:13; John 10:27, 28; 1 John 3:2; Ps. 16:11; John 17:24; Rom. 8:18; etc.). But while Christ thus pronounces upon God's true children all these blessings, the very opposite awaits those who despise His Gospel and reject His grace (Luke 6:25, 26). May God grant us grace that we may be and remain His dear children in Christ Jesus, receiving the rich blessings of His matchless love.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 10:40-42

The entire text chapter is devoted to the sending forth of the twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel (v. 17). The occasion for their commissioning is stated 9:35-38.

As in the days of our Savior's earthly sojourn, so today the preaching of the Gospel is the crying need of a stricken world, with its teeming millions without God, without hope in this world. As then, so now the Savior commissions his own, pastors and laity (Mark 16:15).

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Our text has

Words of Encouragement for Preachers of the Gospel

Consider

1. *To whom they are addressed*
2. *What they tell us*

1

A. 1. The words of our text are addressed first to the twelve Apostles. They were called by the Lord and were being trained by Him for the public ministry. They, as leaders, would be the first to experience the hardships, disappointments, hatred, and persecution foretold by the Master. Their subsequent experiences indeed proved the need of this encouragement.

2. So today the encouragement of our text is meant for Christian ministers, who in the course of their ministry experience the truth of v. 24.

B. 1. But our text speaks of others as well. It mentions those who "receive" the Apostles, "receive" a "prophet," a "righteous man" (vv. 40-42). These are disciples of Christ in general, as distinguished from the Apostles, from prophets, from incumbents of the office of the holy ministry — the Christian laity. They too have the commission to preach the Gospel (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; 1 Pet. 2:9, addressed to every Christian man, woman, and child). All must recognize the privilege and responsibility.

2. And how may these preach the Gospel? (a) By confessing Christ before men (v. 32). By word of mouth, wherever and whenever in their associations with fellow men opportunity presents itself. By the testimony of Christian lives, demonstrating in their lives the regenerating power of the Gospel. Examples: Joseph (Gen. 39), early Christians, etc. (b) By aiding the cause of the Gospel through acts of kindness and helpfulness. Examples: Rahab (Heb. 11:31); widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17); Philipians, Philemon, etc. All these "received" prophets, Apostles, righteous men. These are devoted Christians, who put forth special efforts for the propagation of the Gospel; and thus by their kindness, generosity, and helpfulness aided the preaching of the Gospel. Receiving "in the name of a prophet," "in the name of a righteous man," "in the name of a disciple," however humble ("little ones"), means that such helpful acts of kindness were done not from the motives of ordinary, general charity, which we owe to all men, but for what the name "prophet," etc., implied and stood for. "For their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:13). By their aid to prophets, etc., they were making valuable contributions to the preaching of the Gospel.

Apply to consecrated, generous individuals, organizations, schools, and Sunday schools of today and their aid to the work of the church, kindness to missionaries, etc.

2

A. V. 40. Also Luke 10:16; John 20:21. Preaching of the Gospel and aiding its course is carrying on the work of the Lord Jesus Himself and His heavenly Father. That alone is sufficient encouragement (1) in view of the glory and majesty and adorable love of God and our Savior (John 3:16; Gal. 2:20). To be associated with Him, to be His messenger, is indeed a high privilege for any mortal! (2) In view of the nature of the work. The Gospel is God's own message of pardon, peace, and salvation to a lost world. A power of God (Rom. 1:16). To bring this Gospel to men is the noblest work carried on in this world, none excepted. What a privilege to be associated with that work! Are we ever mindful of this?

B. God in His grace promises to reward all who work with and for Him in this glorious cause (text). The entire chapter replete with promises.

1. In this life, in their work, God takes loving care of His workers, makes provisions for their sustenance, protects them, blesses them (vv. 29, 30; cf. also 1 Kings 17). Receiving God and Christ, not only into our home and board, but into our hearts as well, guarantees every blessing (Ps. 23:1).

2. A "prophet's reward" in eternal life (v. 32; Dan. 12:3; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8). This prospect is overwhelming.

In the "prophet's reward," a "righteous man's reward," all shall share who "received" them and in any way aided the cause of the Gospel.

What an encouragement to overcome all obstacles in the work of the Lord, particularly also our own sinful weakness, coldness, and indifference! All who believe the Lord's promises will be stirred by them to joyful, zealous work (cf. the joy of the Seventy, Luke 10:7).

God make us all devoted workers, to the glory of His name and the salvation of men!

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

