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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

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Outlines on Gospels Adopted by Synodical Conference

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Mark 8:34-38

The human body is accorded a high value by both God and man. The Lord reminds man in Scripture that he is created in the divine image (Gen. 1:27) and that the bodies of Christians are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:20). Most people value the body highly and devote much thought to its nourishment, care, and health. The medical profession enjoys universal esteem. What about the soul?

The Value of the Soul

1. *As estimated by man*
2. *As estimated by God*

1

a. There are those who question the existence of the human soul. Many ancient and modern philosophers think that man is all matter, *e. g.*, Epicureans in the days of Paul (1 Cor. 15:32). Throngs today live only to pander to lusts of flesh, as though there were no soul or life after death.

However, man is not all matter. He is body and soul (Matt. 10:38; Job 14:22); and the soul is immortal (Eccl. 12:7).

b. Others, admitting existence of soul, put a low price on it, because the body has to them a higher value (Luke 12:20; 16:19 ff.; Ps. 127:2; Matt. 6:25 ff.). Many of them are out to gain the world or a sizable portion of it (v. 36 a; 1 Tim. 6:9). Also nominal Christians minister to the life in the body first and hope that somehow in the end their souls will be saved. No man, apart from the enlightenment by the Gospel, puts the true valuation upon his soul.

c. The result: loss of the soul. Losses always affect men adversely; loss of the soul brings damnation. Of those who are ashamed of Christ and His words He will also be ashamed on that Day (v. 38), that means, eternal damnation (Ps. 49:16-20).

2

God's estimate of the soul differs totally from that of man.

a. (Vv. 36, 37.) God regards the human soul so highly that nothing on earth can equal its value. No man can gain the whole world, but if one could, yet all the world with all its fabulous riches is worth less than a human soul. If, therefore, man's soul is lost in sin and under Satan's rule, then all human efforts to redeem it must fail (Ps. 49:7, 8). To what lengths have men gone to obtain peace of conscience! Penances of heathen, of Popery, etc.

b. That which is impossible to men is possible with God. He ransomed the human soul (1 Pet. 1:18; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9). So highly does God estimate the souls of men that

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He does not deem the sacrifice of His own Son too great a price. Such a price is not paid for anything of trifling value.

c. If God estimates the human soul so highly, how eagerly should people lay hold of salvation by faith in the Redeemer (Acts 2:37, 38; 1 Tim. 2:6; Acts 10:43; 1 Cor. 6:20). Conscious of his royal dignity, how gladly should the redeemed Christian take up his cross, the shame of the Cross of Christ, and all suffering that may follow. Even if it cost his life, he would save it (v. 35 b).

d. The high value God places upon a reclaimed soul is apparent from the blessings He bestows upon it: peace (Rom. 5:1); comfort in sorrow (Rom. 8:28 f.); glory and joy of heaven (Rom. 8:18; 2 Tim. 4:8). On the great Day, Jesus will not be ashamed of His cross-bearers, but will confess them before the Father and all angels.

LOUIS J. ROEHM

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 13:44-52

How blessed the lot of the citizen of the United States of America! Living in a country far from the havoc of war's destruction, in a land blessed with unlimited resources and rich in opportunity, he is a most fortunate individual. But more blessed than the most prosperous American is the Christian, rich in the treasures and resources of heaven. Hence

The Blessed Lot of the Christian

1. *He is fabulously rich*
2. *He will escape the destruction of the wicked*
3. *He has the joy of sharing his riches with his fellow men*

1

A. V. 44. "It was customary of old to divide one's possessions into three portions: the first for the needs of the family; the second for the emergency of flight; and the third for laying away in the earth. Hence treasures of no mean value were unexpectedly unearthed. Near Sidon, natives found several boxes of gold coins, bright like new, dating from the days of Philip and Alexander the Great; in India, English soldiers raised from a well money valued at \$1,531,250; and in 1906 there was found in Turkey an iron pot containing twelve hundred silver coins. Palestine was reputed to have hundreds of such hidden treasures. Jer. 41:8; Job 5:21; Prov. 2:4." (*Hom. Mag.*, Vol. 52, p. 388.)

Application: Many Christians are like the man of our parable. Though they have never sought after Christ (Rom. 10:20; Is. 65:1), when they have come to realize what a precious treasure the Gospel is, they regard it as the most valuable discovery of their

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lives. Sir James Young Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform, when asked, "What is your greatest discovery?" replied, "My greatest discovery is that I am a sinner and that Jesus Christ is my Savior." Do we always regard the knowledge of God's loving favor in Christ as that important?

B. Vv. 45, 46. "Diamond cutting was an art still unknown in those days. . . . Pre-eminence was given to the pearl. . . . Fabulous sums were paid for unique specimens. Caesar gave to the mother of Brutus a pearl worth \$240,000, and the famous pearl which Cleopatra dissolved at a feast and drank to the health of Mark Antony had an estimated value of \$400,000." (*Hom. Mag.*, Vol. 52, p. 393.)

Application: Many like the pearl connoisseur of our text seek for the truth as a precious gem and, when they have found it in the Gospel of Christ Jesus, are ready to sacrifice every other treasure for it: the disciples (Luke 5:11, 27, 28); Paul (Phil. 3: 7-9); Luther (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 262:4). Do we appreciate the Gospel that much? (Matt. 10:37-39; Luke 14:26-33.)

2

A. Vv. 47-50. "The dragnet was . . . sunk to the bottom of the sea by pieces of lead fixed to the nether side, and on the upper side portions of cork kept the net upright in the water. It was drawn forward through the waters, enmeshing good and bad . . . fish in one broad sweep." (*Hom. Mag.*, Vol. 52, p. 395.)

B. *Application:* While the lot of the wicked on this earth often appears very similar to that of Christ's followers or even better than it (Parable of the Tares; the Rich Man and Lazarus), a great difference will be evident on the Day of Judgment when the Christians will escape the dreaded lot of the damned (v. 50; Matt. 8:12; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). Do we appreciate this?

3

V. 52. *Application:* This parable urges upon all of us to share our treasured Gospel, ever presenting "old truths in new forms," for a Christian who has "understood these things" (v. 51) cannot but share his spiritual blessings (Matt. 16:25; 1 Cor. 10:24; Matt. 25:35-40). Do we, according to our abilities, provide our fellow men with the Gospel synodically, congregationally, and personally?

Conclusion: How often we have failed to appreciate our great wealth in Christ and our final deliverance! How seldom we have shared our spiritual riches! And yet for Jesus' sake God has not imputed these sins against us. He has not removed from us the treasures of His Gospel. May we then with thankful hearts appreciate our blessed lot and share our joys with others.

THEODORE F. NICKEL

Thanksgiving Sermon

1 Kings 5:4, 5

Thanksgiving Day, a day on which a whole nation annually is directed by the heads of the government of nation, state, and city to go to church, to thank God for His blessings, is definitely a good American custom. Other nations have observed such days for special occasions, but no nation has done this for so many years.

America has every reason to observe Thanksgiving Day each year. Our country is richly blessed. Enumerate the blessings of field and forest, of mine and oil wells, of freedom and liberty. We as American citizens have the right of free worship, the boon of equal opportunity for all. These things were true also in 1945, but this year we have special reasons to celebrate Thanksgiving, as urged upon us in text.

Two Special Reasons for Thanksgiving

1. *The Lord, our God, hath given us rest on every side*
2. *Now we may devote ourselves more fully to the task of building God's house*

1

A. Context, 1 Kings 5:3 b. The era of David had been an era of war. David was a fighter, a warrior king, nearly throughout his reign. 1 Chron. 22:8. He fought with Goliath, against Saul, against heathen nations, against his own son Absalom.

B. Wars were also about us on every side during the last ten years. War in China, war in Spain, war in Europe, war in foreign lands, wars all about us. On Dec. 7, 1941 (Pearl Harbor), we were as a nation drawn into the bloody maelstrom of war with all its horrors and dreads, unrest and anxiety, dangers and death. Total war raged in hitherto unknown fury for nearly four years, but now: text, v. 4.

C. Special blessings of peace. Described in text as "rest." War is a time of great unrest, anxiety, care. Peace brings rest. Removes much of the hurry, strain of war. Has done this even now. This is a special reason for thanksgiving in 1945, special reason for gratitude to God. Text, v. 4 a. Cf. Is. 2:4; Hos. 2:18.

D. On this Thanksgiving Day of 1945 we should not hesitate to give credit to our leaders — governmental and military. Name such leaders. We should be thankful to our men of science (radar, etc.), thankful especially to our soldiers and sailors, who have borne the brunt of battle. We do not wish to minimize the effort of men in bringing war to a successful close. We should not hesitate to be thankful for them today and also in the future. Especially, how-

ever, thank God today for giving our land victory, peace, and rest. Ps. 46: 8, 9.

E. God was the real cause of victory and peace in David's and Solomon's day. God was real reason for victory and peace in our day. Give evidence. Who gave unusual weather at Dunkerque for evacuation? Who kept Japanese from following up advantages of Pearl Harbor? Who led Hitler to attack Russia rather than England? Who sent fog to keep Remagen Bridge from destruction? Only answer is: "God." This is answer of our text (v. 4). It is the answer of the Bible.

F. To God all praise and glory. Ps. 115:1; Ps. 107:1, 2. Surely one big reason for Thanksgiving Day, 1945, is God's wonderful blessing of victory and peace. But we have another reason for real gratitude on this day. After dreadful era of destruction we now can devote ourselves more fully to building, building of God's house.

2

A. Situation in David's Day. David was eager to build God's house, but 1 Kings 5: 3 a; 1 Chron. 22: 7, 8, 9.

B. War period of destruction. Destruction of many churches. Give examples. Many congregations were scattered in China, Poland, Finland, Germany. Also here in our country, war effort interfered with Church. Migration of war workers, etc.

C. Text, v. 5. Now peace — now many congregations can build churches and schools. Situation in St. Louis. Ten congregations plan to build churches and schools. Ten mission chapels are to be erected in Western District alone. Give examples of building plans in your own city or District.

D. Now in days of peace we shall be building houses of the Lord, but not merely houses of wood and stone. The real temple of God, the Church can now be built in a new and better way. Glorious mission opportunity at home and abroad. Thank God for setting before us an open door. "Come, let us build," slogan of Peace Thankoffering, can now be fulfilled.

E. On this Thanksgiving Day we should thank God that he has given us the men and the means of carrying out great program of building. 273 chaplains and service pastors will return to civilian life. All potential kingdom builders. P. T. O. was a remarkable outpouring of gifts. Latest estimate, September, 1945: \$5,661,700. It may reach total of \$6,000,000. All this is definitely a blessing of God, for which we should show gratitude in word and deed.

F. Final appeal to consecrate ourselves anew to God and to pledge ourselves on this Thanksgiving Day to become real temple builders in era of peace.

E. L. ROSCHKE

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity**Luke 19:11-27**

This nobleman is Christ Himself. — Originally God had created men to live in His world below and later to remove them to glory. Man spoiled this plan of God; by sin he left God's kingdom and became a subject of Satan. Christ came, delivered us from the kingdom of darkness, and restored His kingdom on earth. Then He went to receive for Himself the Kingdom of Glory and in His time to return again. In the meantime we remain here in His kingdom on earth; and for our guidance He leaves us the command:

Occupy Till I Come**1**

To whom does He give this command? To His servants only. — There are others — citizens, but rebellious. He does not at once reckon with them; that He postpones until His return. Israel was for a time His elect nation; but they turned against Him. Many today who are not Israelites after the flesh belong to that tribe, do not acknowledge Him as King, or only do so as a matter of form while they are disloyal. With them He will deal when He returns, v. 27.

But He has loyal servants. These He has chosen from the great mass; brought them to the knowledge that He is their Savior and King (called them by the Gospel, etc.). He not only makes them His servants; He equips them for efficient service; gives them capital for their use: knowledge of His Word, ability to apply it; gifts of body and mind; property, position, influence; patience, tact, courage, bravery, strength to suffer. Every servant receives such gifts; Christ forgets no one. Not all the same (Matt. 25:15); but in the end they are of equal value, 1 Cor. 12:14-25; Rom. 12:4-8. The Lord gives them all, and it is for no man to say which is greater and which less.

2

Only to His servants, but to all of His servants, He gives the order: "Occupy till I come," — take care of My kingdom, do business for My kingdom till I return.

They are servants, workers — no drones, no "ladies" or "gentlemen" in Christ's kingdom. Not slaves, who do what they do unwillingly, by constraint; but they remember what He has done for them, what they have received from Him, and they cannot help doing willing service. Yes, there is a wicked servant who took all he could get, wrapped it in a napkin, and hid it in the ground; and in the end the Lord got no return on His investment; but he was only a sham servant.

With their gift the servants are to do business for the Kingdom, work to maintain and build it (spreading the Gospel by personal mission work; supporting ministers and teachers; home and foreign mission; taking active part in congregational life; their very life a sermon to those who are outside).

The Lord wants action; the wicked servant (unprofitable servant, Matt. 25:30) is not excused because he has done no evil with his pound. Sins of omission are as bad as sins of commission, James 4:17.

3

This is the last Sunday of the church year — a good time for self-examination. Behind us a whole year in which we have continually taken from the Lord; what have we done with our pound?

Let's come down to actual life. There are young people wasting their time, one of the most precious gifts of God, instead of using it to prepare for a useful life, especially in the Church (divine worship, Sunday school, Bible class, other Christian associations); parents who let their children grow up without thorough instruction in the way of salvation and the Christian life; church members who have time for everything else, but not for meetings; money for everything but church dues. — I have preached this sermon to myself first; now forget me and hear your Lord and mine say, vv. 22-24.

Sins of omission are no trifling matter; that rich man, Luke 16:19, sinned by omission, and he woke up in hell; then he wanted to make up for it; it was too late.

A new church year is coming; there is still time. The same Lord who denounces these sins has provided the cure. Repent, go to Him in faith and prayer, and amend. Even at best there will be much lacking; but let us do our best. The Lord will grant gifts, help, will cover up our failings, and in the end (blessed day!) will say, v. 17.

THEO. HOYER

Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons *

First Sunday in Advent

Rom. 13:11-14

The season of Advent has come. Let it not merely mark a milestone in the annual succession of the seasons, but a period of blessing, reminding us that Jesus comes again with His grace, Spirit, forgiveness, comfort, and loving aid. We are exhorted to

* Beginning with this issue we are offering our readers outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons. These texts have not been treated in our periodical since 1933. In the intervening years we have published outlines on the following series: 1934, Occasional Sermons; 1935, Standard