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Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

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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

turn a new page, not principally in the almanac, but in our spiritual conditions, taking flight from worldliness, indifference to the truth, service of self, unbelief, and perhaps despair, into the arms of the Savior, who welcomes us in the Word and the Sacraments. Advent speaks of a threefold coming of Christ: at Bethlehem; in the means of grace; on the Day of Judgment. The last-named is the theme of our Epistle. Paul discourses on

The Coming of the Everlasting Day

1

The coming will take place soon. Even in Paul's day, according to the timetable of God, it was not far away (vv. 11, 12). How much closer is it in 1945!

Mockers say it will not come at all. Let them look at the frightful ravages of war and the terrors of the atomic bomb. These are signs declaring: The end is approaching!

How near the great day is, no one can say. God has mercifully kept the date a secret. Misguided interpreters, seeking to draw aside the veil, have always been proved false teachers.

It is as with the day of our death. God has not told us precisely when we shall have to depart this life. But our last day is coming; according to God's way of reckoning time, it is near.

2

It marks the disappearance of night and ushers in the cloudless, perfect, unending day. We passed through a season of war which may fittingly be likened to a dark, terror-filled night. The dawn has appeared, the cessation of hostilities. Soon we hope there will be with us the bright sunshine of peace. How ardently we shall greet it!

Similarly we Christians, living in a world of sin and sorrow, much encumbered by weaknesses of our own, see the dawn of the day of complete rest, peace, and joy and of reunion with our loved ones appearing on the horizon. What a day it will be!

It will mean our salvation, says Paul, entire rescue from everything evil and ignoble and distressing, our translation into the presence of God and the Lamb.

3

We should prepare for its coming. Paul uses vivid imagery. You must be awake when the day arrives. If you sleep, you will not enjoy its beauty. If we engage in deliberate wrongdoing,

Gospels; 1936, Synodical Conference Gospels I; 1937, Eisenach Epistles; 1938, no outlines; 1939, Thomasiaus Gospels; 1940, Synodical Conference Epistles; 1941, Wuerttemberg Gospels; 1942, Wuerttemberg Epistles; 1943, Synodical Conference Old Testament Texts; 1944, Standard Gospels. We welcome suggestions on a series for next year.—EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.

service of the flesh, despising God and the means of grace, we shall not be in a position to welcome the Lord.

Salvation need not be prepared by us, it is ready. But it can be lost by us through unbelief or willful service of sin, which separates us from Jesus.

What an earnest admonition that we wholeheartedly embrace Christ and let no false teaching or form of wickedness draw us away from Him!

W. ARNDT

Second Sunday in Advent

Rom. 15:4-13

The past years were years of global war and bitter hatred the world over. Peace has been declared. Yet in many circles hatred is still being fostered, and almost world-wide suspicions and jealousies forebode little good for the future. In striking contrast stands the picture of brotherly unity presented in our text by the Apostle as the ideal to be striven for within the Church of Christ on earth.

The Children of God United in Christ

1. *One in Christian faith and hope*
2. *One in mutual love and service*

1

The Apostle calls attention to a distinction which was so marked in the Old Testament as to constitute a constant source of mutual misunderstanding, contempt, hatred, and open enmity, the distinction between Jew and Gentile. In the New Testament this distinction was wiped out entirely as far as the relation to God and His salvation was concerned (vv. 8-12; cp. Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 1:20-22).

This applies also to the distinctions and differences existing to this day in society and also in the Christian church at large and in every congregation. There are, either by divine will or permission, distinctions which are recognized also by Christians: racial, social, cultural, intellectual, financial distinctions; differences as to sex, character, temperament, background, language, experience, custom, etc. Yet as far as the redemption by Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit are concerned, all these distinctions and differences, no matter how great they may loom up in the eyes of men, are nonexistent. All believers without exception with one mind and one mouth glorify God (v. 6). To the Caucasian believer no other God was proclaimed than He whose name was sung to the Mongolian (v. 9). The Anglo-Saxon rejoices in the same Savior whom the Russian praises and lauds

(v. 11). To the infant heir of the millionaire no better Baptism is granted than to the babe of the pauper. The same hope, the same Scripture, the same comfort, the same joy and peace in believing, the same power of the Holy Ghost are granted to each and everyone (vv. 4, 5, 13). All are received by Christ to the glory of God (v. 7). All trust in the same root of Jesse; all are filled with the same hope by the God of Hope (cp. 1 Pet. 1:3-9; 2 Cor. 4:17-5:5); all are ruled by the same gracious King; all are one in faith and hope.

Never forget to thank God, who has granted you this perfect equality before His throne, granted nowhere else in all the world in like measure, which you as a member of the Church of God enjoy through Jesus Christ! And show your gratitude also by loving service to your fellow Christian.

2

The glorious fact that all believers are by the grace of God children of the heavenly Father and brethren of all their fellow believers, must be a constant urge to Christian love and forbearance. In general, we should receive one another (v. 7). There must be no coldness, no aloofness, no clannishness, but all, no matter how their outer circumstances differ, should be united in Christian love and fellowship, in mutual affection and brotherly consideration, like-minded one toward another (v. 5).

This brotherly love and consideration is not to cease even if the brother is a weak Christian, rather neglectful in the performance of his Christian duties, crabby, cross, domineering, stingy, or afflicted with any other weakness. He is our brother, and we are our brother's keepers. We must not be satisfied with working out our own salvation, but help our weak brother to become stronger, our fallen brother to arise. Even if our efforts are misunderstood and resented, remember that Christ led a holy life not only for His own sake, but by His life He procured our justification and sanctification. He tried to win the sinners in spite of all ridicule and contempt and sneering insinuations (vv. 2, 3; cp. Luke 15:1 ff.).

For this purpose let us study Scripture (v. 4), there to be instructed and strengthened in brotherly love and patient, unwavering interest in our fellow Christian's salvation; there to find comfort if our endeavors seem fruitless, and hope which nevertheless continues its efforts, even if they seem hopeless.

And let us make the prayer of the Apostle our own personal prayer for a greater measure of patience and love and like-mindedness.

THEO. LAETSCH