

4-1-1946

Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

V. L. Meyer

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meyer, V. L. (1946) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 17, Article 23.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol17/iss1/23>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Homiletics

Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

GOOD FRIDAY

Is. 52:13—53:12

The Cross occupies the central place of history. Whether we view it with Isaiah, who foretold the crucifixion, or with John, who stood under the Cross, or whether we look back nineteen centuries from our modern age, the message of the Cross is the eternal wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24; 2:7-8).

Our text contains a meditation of repentant sinners under the Cross. Knowing the meaning of the Cross, we join in that penitent confession as

WE STAND UNDER THE CROSS WITH THE PROPHET ISAIAH

- I. We refuse to be disturbed by the blindness of men*
- II. We acknowledge the Crucified as our Substitute*
- III. We hail the Crucified as our victorious Redeemer*

I

With Isaiah we see the Savior despised and rejected, so marred that He barely resembles a man (Ps. 22:6). We hear the multitude mutter: "He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," meaning: A vile transgressor is stricken with a curse by Jehovah (Ps. 22:7-8; Matt. 27:39-44). They did not know the wisdom of God.

Today the world is still ignorant of the meaning of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:18 ff.). Though not many will say that Jesus deserved the crucifixion, yet the masses see in the Crucified not the Lord of Glory, but a helpless martyr who became the victim of envy and hatred. All the theories invented for the crucifixion and death of Christ leave man's mind in the dark. Without the Spirit's enlightenment we, too, would not esteem Him (v.3). Now we see in the Crucified God's own Son, who went into the lowest depths of suffering to save us. Though many pass the Cross unheeding and comparatively few "believe our report," Christ crucified shall be to us the

wisdom of God (Acts 8:26-39). Like Isaiah we will not permit man-made theories to disturb our faith in the atoning work of Christ.

II

Isaiah describes the intense suffering in body and soul of the Crucified (vv. 5-8, 10-11). He endured blows and stripes, the crown of thorns, the crucifixion. He was afflicted all the way from Gethsemane to Golgotha: by Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, the chief council, false witnesses, Pilate, Herod, priests, elders, soldiers, the blaspheming mob. Truly v. 3 a.

Isaiah tells us more v. 6 a: The *Lord* hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The sins of all men were charged against Him — sin and guilt and its consequences: griefs and sorrows (Matt. 8:17), punishment, chastisement (v. 10; 2 Cor. 5:21).

He was innocent (v. 9 b). Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him because He took our place. Isaiah emphasizes the substitution, declaring it no less than 12 times in ch. 53.

Can we view the Crucified without smiting on our breasts? He bore the sin of many, of all: war crimes, atrocities, transgressions, and iniquities; also the sins of His own people (v. 8 b), the indifference, desertion, and denial of His disciples (v. 6 a).

Can we think lightly of *our* sins as we behold the Man of Sorrows and remember that *our* indifference, selfishness, pride pressed the thorns into His scalp and drove the nails through His hands and feet? May we penitently join in the confession (vv. 4-6). Look up to the Crucified and say, "Thou wast wounded for *my* transgressions," etc.

III

Through our crucified Redeemer we have pardon, peace, and healing.

See all your sins on Jesus laid;
The Lamb of God was slain;
His soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man.

The crucified Redeemer was victorious. He was cut off out of the land of the living, but He was taken from prison and from judgment (Acts 8:33). Who shall declare His generation? (Rev. 1:18.) The strife, the wounds, and the

HOMILETICS

269

grief were His, but His was also the joy of victory. The spoils of His victory are redeemed souls (vv. 10-12). We now belong to Him. His chastisement effects our peace; His stripes bring about our healing. The ills we suffer are indeed a consequence of sin. However, to the pardoned, justified sinner this suffering is not a punishment, but a correction sent by God's love. Jesus bore the punishment for all your sins (Hymn 153:4).

We who have stood under the Cross have the sacred obligation to make known the message of our crucified and exalted Redeemer. So He would sprinkle many nations and draw all men to Himself (v. 15; John 12:32; Hymn 510:1).

V. L. MEYER

EASTER SUNDAY

1 COR. 5:6-8

The appeal of the happy Easter message is chiefly personal. "Go, tell His disciples *and Peter*," etc. That crushed soul in particular should know. Jesus personally visits Mary Magdalene, the Emmaus disciples, and Thomas.—All this written for our learning. Whoever you are, whatever you may have done, Easter proclaims the accomplished atonement and certified salvation for every penitent sinner (Rom. 4:25; John 11:25-26).

Easter also has a direct appeal to Christian congregations. Our text was addressed to the Corinthian church as a group.

EASTER DAY IN A REJOICING CONGREGATION

- I. A day of united rejoicing over the victory of the Lamb*
- II. A day of congregational consecration to holier service*

I

The Corinthian church, founded by St. Paul (1 Cor. 4:15), was blessed with a large membership (Acts 18:10) and endowed with excellent gifts (1:5-7; 12:4-11).

But Satan soon built a chapel next door. See Luther's preface to this letter and Kretzmann, *Pop. Com., N. T.*, p. 87 for a description of existing evils. One of the darkest blotches was the case of incest (5:1), concerning which the church was indifferent, yea, puffed up (v. 2). This prompted Paul's appeal for discipline and the rebuke v. 6 a.

It is quite certain that this letter was written from Ephesus at Passover time, a fact which accounts for his approach to the problem:

a. The O. T. Passover (Ex. 12:3-14) was a means of grace. Cf. Pieper, *Christl. Dogm.*, III, 253. It commemorated the mighty deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, but the penitent and believing partaking of the lamb, which typified Christ, brought pardon and peace.

b. N. T. Christians also have a Passover Lamb (v. 7 b), the antitype of the former, risen again, whose death and resurrection freed us from sin, death, and hell (Rom. 8:33-34).

c. This death and subsequent resurrection of the Passover Lamb for their sins should be the focal point of the Corinthians' congregational thinking and united rejoicing. That would also do away with their indifference and arrogance.

The death and resurrection of our Passover Lamb should occasion united rejoicing on our part. Celebrate not at home, but in God's house, uniting hearts and voices, rejoicing and being glad together for liberation from the spiritual prison camp. There is power, inspiration, edification in united observance of the victory of the Lamb; also incentive to sanctification and consecration to holier service.

II

The misdeed of that offender, as well as the Corinthian church's attitude, was not only a grievous sin, but a detriment to the church. Comparable to the action of leaven, sometimes used in a good sense (Matt. 13:33), more generally in an evil sense, *e. g.*, false doctrine (Matt. 16:6), false beliefs (Gal. 5:2, 4), evil example (v. 6 b). The infection spreads, permeates, often doing irreparable harm and producing sham Christianity (Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Tim. 3:5; Rev. 3:15-16) and apostasy (2 Tim. 2:16-18). Hence Paul, arguing from the sacrificial slaying of the Lamb, pleads for congregational removal of the leaven and urges greater sincerity and truth. The church as such, not only individuals, should strive toward holier life and service.

The glorious message of the victory of our Lamb should not only refill our hearts with joy of salvation, but rouse us to solemn rededication. That requires congregational self-examination. Is there any leaven at work among us? Are

we tolerating indifference toward the means of grace, worldliness, lodgery, unionism, false doctrine, lack of interest in local and synodical work, unscriptural divorces, etc.? Let us heed the Easter call. Resist beginnings. The distance to Corinth is not great. The old leaven clings and spreads. Purge it out, and put in the new leaven. Let good influence and good example prevail and spread (2 Cor. 5:15). His tremendous sacrifice on our behalf is deserving of sincerity and truth on our part.

Congregational growth and improvement presupposes individual betterment. As the parts, so the whole. Standing before the bloodstained Cross and open tomb, let us appropriate to the fullest the certainty of our pardon and salvation and in return strive in His strength toward ever holier service.

OTTO E. SOHN

EASTER MONDAY

Acts 10: 34-48

The Easter story is joyous. Easter day is joyous. But it is easy for creatures of habit to shrink the joy of Easter to the day and to the time when the words are said. The Easter story should do more than provide a setting for good cheer. For it is a power. The text shows the story of the resurrection asserting its power, not on Easter day, but some years later; not in a churchly environment, but in a conversation of the Apostle Peter with a man and his friends who were not Christians by profession.

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION STORY

- I. *It is a power indeed*
- II. *It can and should be channeled and distributed to others*

I

What is powerful about the resurrection story? Does it make so much difference in people when they hear it? What do we mean when we say that it is a power?

A. Let us make sure that we recognize the story. It is the announcement that Jesus Christ, who had been crucified and buried, rose again from the dead. The story by itself is interesting, remarkable, utterly unusual. But there is more

to it than the means of arousing curiosity. It is more than just a miracle. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has to be viewed in the setting of Christ's life and death, of His entire purpose and ministry (vv. 38-40). This was the Christ anointed with the Holy Ghost for a specific purpose, proving Himself to be the Son of God and Lover of souls, dying on the Cross for the remission of the sins of all mankind. His resurrection is more than marvelous. It is God's own token (vv. 40-41) that Christ is He who was sent and anointed and that His redemption is true and complete.

B. The resurrection story is powerful considered merely as history. It defies unbelief. It cannot be set aside; the evidence is inescapable (v. 41). Hence it speaks in terms even of human logic about the whole work of Christ's redemption, for which the resurrection is the seal.

C. But the resurrection story deals with more than evidence and logic. For it is God's own way of preaching the Gospel, of telling men that they have a Savior; cf. Peter's mode of preaching the resurrection (Acts 2:22-36; 5:30-32 and text; Rom. 4:25). The Resurrection says about Christ: God did this; and God did what He set out to do, namely, provide forgiveness of sins for all men, as He had promised (v. 43). Hence the resurrection story is the means by which the Holy Spirit comes to men (vv. 44-46), giving them faith in Christ as their Savior, joy of heart, and a new and incorruptible life.

II

That is a scene of power at work, this account of Peter and Cornelius. Would that such power could go on! Look at us! We need it, too! Our time needs it!

A. That is an important reaction to the story of this text. For this story is in the Bible to make clear that Christ saved not only certain people who were set aside by birth and training, but all (vv. 34-37, 43, 45).

B. In order that all men might find Christ, God joins with the resurrection story the mandate to tell it (vv. 36-37, 42; all the resurrection accounts; Luke 24:45-48). The Christian cannot look at the Easter story with polite and churchly interest, with a sense of curiosity or complacency; but always that story rings through to him, "Go, tell!"

HOMILETICS

273

C. This telling is not mere reciting. But it means witnessing—telling a fact for which you are yourself the corroboration. Peter could do that even on the level of logical evidence (v. 41); he had been among those who saw the risen Christ. But Cornelius and his friends, by virtue of their witness of Christ in word and deed, became a corroboration of the Easter fact even though they had not seen Him with their eyes (vv. 46-48; cf. John 20:29). Herein lies the challenge of the resurrection story to every Christian: that everyone may be a testimony of Christ arisen in him to newness of life. Cf. Rom. 6: 1-12.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 JOHN 5: 4-10

Easter proclaims the victory of the Prince of Life over the forces of evil. The raising up of Jesus Christ by the Father confirms the glorious victory. Hell and Satan are shorn of their might, death is devoured, and sin has lost its power over the redeemed. All who in living faith walk in the power of the resurrection partake of the Easter triumph.

FAITH OVERCOMING THE WORLD

*I. The nature of Christian faith**II. Its victory over the world*

I

Faith overcoming the world: a bold claim! Scientists say that they are conquering the earth and nature, but John makes a larger claim. What is this faith?

1. Not any kind of belief or opinion, but v. 4: "Whatsoever is born of God. . . ." Neuter gender, designating the aggregate of believers. Into their souls a life from on high has been planted. They have experienced a second birth making them partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), constituting them children of God (John 1:12-13). The victor over the world "believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (v. 5). See v. 1 Luther: "This faith does not flutter about and stare at its own thoughts, but is a certain understanding which lays hold of God in this Christ as His Son, sent from heaven, in

whom He reveals His will and heart and saves from sin and death to grace and the new eternal life" (St. L., XII:534).

2. World-conquering faith rests on a solid foundation, v. 6: "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ." Two or three witnesses required by law to constitute adequate testimony. Christ "came" — not "comes," *i. e.*, in Word and Sacrament — by water. His ministry began with His Baptism. Luther: "Here He begins truly to be Christ." It ended with the blood He shed on the Cross (Heb. 9:12). Water and blood testify that He is God's Son and the Redeemer of the world. — V. 6 b: "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness. . . ." The Holy Spirit descended upon the baptized Christ, and He continues to witness of Him in the written Word. "Spirit of Truth": His essential truth gives His witness infallible authority.

We accept the word of fallible men; the Christian faith is based upon testimony of the infallible God (v. 9). It is the witness of the Triune God in heaven (v. 7) and of a trinity of witnesses on earth (v. 8). The chief witness, the Holy Spirit, first. He constantly in the written Word and by the Gospel ministry testifies that in His Baptism and His death in blood Jesus has revealed Himself as the promised Messiah, who has reconciled the world to God. — "Agree in one," tend to one, *i. e.*, their testimony is that there is salvation only in Christ. — V. 10 a: believer bears in himself this Witness, the Spirit (Rom. 8:16).

What a glorious faith! Wrought by omnipotence of God in souls of weak, sinful people (Eph. 1:19), it has a foundation of documentary evidence which is divine and cannot be shaken (1 Pet. 1:7).

II

Vv. 4-5: "World," not merely the ungodly, but all forces of darkness, or "trinity of evil."

1. Overcoming presupposes warfare. The believer has renounced sin in every form, and so he faces a world of enemies, who tempt, slander, or persecute him (1 John 3:13; 1 Pet. 4:4, 12; 5:8). This warfare never ceases. Not "hath overcome," nor "will overcome," but "overcometh." It is a daily experience. Also a victorious struggle. He may fall (Peter, David), but he rises, becomes experienced, and goes from strength to strength and from victory to victory.

2. Such successful warfare is not of men, but of God (v. 4 b). Luther: "The Christian warrior is not a sensible heathen or a wise worldling, but one who by faith understands the Word of God aright and has laid hold on Christ by faith, which he exercises as his armor and weapon in such contending. Thus he can stand against the devil and the world and gain the victory; for the Word of God and faith is such a power in him that it breaks through and cannot be conquered" (St. L., XII: 532). — "*Hath overcome.*" As David's victory over Goliath was assured beforehand (1 Sam. 17:46), so the believer's faith knows no defeat (1 John 2:13; 4:4).

3. O blessed Christian soldier! Thy Champion, Christ, and His Spirit within thee enable thee to go forth in world-conquering power. Never doubt that His power within thee is greater than all the hosts of hell. Gird thyself daily with His armor until the end of thy course, when thou mayest also triumph with that valiant contender Paul (2 Tim. 4:7-8 a. Hymns 444 ff.).

L. J. ROEHM

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 PET. 2:21-25

To the scattered Christians of Pauline churches in Asia Minor, Peter, the Apostle, addressed an encouraging letter. Some of these Christians were slaves who had to endure grief at the hand of pagan masters, perhaps because they were Christians. The Apostle instructs and admonishes them and dwells on the nobility of suffering innocently (vv. 18-20). He points to the vicarious suffering of Christ and to the noble example left by the Savior. We turn to

CHRIST, THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF OUR SOULS

- I. *He laid down His life for His sheep*
- II. *He turns His wandering sheep back to Himself*
- III. *He has left them an example to follow His steps*

I

Christ was anointed with the Oil of Gladness above His fellows (Ps. 45:7), to be the true High Priest of His sheep and therefore also to be the true Shepherd and Bishop of their

souls. As such He suffered for His sheep (v. 21), suffered instead of them (Is. 53:4-5). This substitutionary suffering was an innocent suffering (v. 22; 1 Pet. 3:18). Our very redemption was wrought by the innocent suffering, borne by the guiltless Son of God in our stead (2 Cor. 5:21).

Christ not only suffered for us, but He also died for us (v. 24 a). As our Substitute, Christ carried our sins onto the Cross. Voluntarily He bore the awful load of sin (Is. 53:4-6, 12). As our true High Priest He sacrificed Himself upon the altar of the Cross (Lev. 14:20; James 2:21; Heb. 10:5). He died the death of the accursed (Deut. 21:23), and thereby He redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). Oh, the sweetness of the Gospel truth! The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep and thus He atones for their sins, and the accursed tree of the Cross becomes to them the true tree of life (Gen. 2:29; 3:22; Rev. 22:2; Hymns 175:1; 172:5-6).

The blessed purpose of Christ's redeeming work is stated v. 24 b. By His innocent suffering and death Christ has redeemed us from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin. Since we have been healed by the wounds of Christ, sin should no longer retain its strangle hold and deadly grip on us. Out of deep gratitude to our good Shepherd we should cease to exist for sin and live for righteousness. It is true, we shall never be wholly sinless, but righteousness should be our constant aim (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:15; Phil. 3:12). May our prayer be Hymn 168:6-7.

II

The great purpose of Christ's death on the Cross was to turn His wandering sheep back to Himself. In v. 25 a the Apostle refers to Is. 53:6. By nature we have all turned away from God and His Word of Life. We have listened to the seductive whisperings of the devil, to the siren voices of this world, and walked upon the self-chosen ways of sin. Left to ourselves, we should be like sheep scattered abroad and having no shepherd (Matt. 9:36). But by the grace of God we are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. By His pleading voice (Is. 1:18) our hearts and minds were turned back to God (Acts 26:18). According to His abundant mercy He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3). May

the preaching of the Cross be and remain unto us the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18).

Having returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, we shall be fed and refreshed in the green pastures and beside the still waters of His Word. Gratefully we look up to our risen and triumphant Shepherd as our Overseer, who watches over us. We live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him. He will guide us with His counsel and afterward receive us into the glory of the fold of heaven. What blessed assurance and comfort!

III

The Apostle also reminded the Christians that the Anointed had left them an example, a definite pattern, to follow on their pilgrimage to the heavenly mansions. Christ's painful way of sorrows has left us a blessed heritage of shining footprints in which we should travel. Gratitude to Christ should move us to render this homage. Of course, our walk is only a weak copy of Christ's perfect pattern. Let us ever keep the perfect model before the eyes of our faith.

Christ suffered innocently (v. 22). No deceitful words ever fell from His lips (Is. 53:9). The scattered Christians, especially the slaves, were in danger of practicing deceit to escape their duties. Therefore the Apostle admonishes them. May the perfect pattern of Christ constrain us to tame our tongue and to avoid all deceitfulness (James 3:2-10; Ps. 34:13).

Even under the severest provocation Christ maintained a majestic silence (v. 23 a; Is. 53:7). To the end he remained unblamable. No one could convict Him of a single sin (John 8:46). Moreover, He prayed for His enemies (Luke 23:34). Christ pronounces those blessed who follow in His footsteps (Matt. 5:10-12, 44-45).

V. 23 b. "He placed the entire matter into the hands of the heavenly Father, the just Judge, that He might adjust the affair as He should think best." God rights every wrong. — What noble footsteps to follow! What a perfect example to emulate! May the Holy Spirit ever remind us of our high calling as redeemed Christians, sought by Christ, turned back to Him, and strengthened to follow in His steps (Hymn 422:1, 4).

H. C. HARTING

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 PET. 2:11-20

"Strangers," "pilgrims," "conversation" (cp. ἀναστροφή, v. 12, and πολιτεύμα, Phil. 3:20) are terms which imply a starting point, a progress, and a destination. We Christians are familiar with these terms applied to us by Scripture and based on the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. The start is in the past (vv. 10, 25; 4:3). Now we are on the way (v. 11). The destination, yet in the future, will be reached soon (1:3-6; 5:10).

WHILE WE ARE ON THE WAY

- I. We stoop to conquer II. We serve to save*
III. We suffer to jubilate

I

We stoop to submit to the civil authorities, ordained by God (v. 13). The occasion for Peter's admonition was not insubordination on the part of the Christians, but the false accusations advanced against them by unfair unbelievers. For the Lord's sake we stoop (vv. 15, 16 b, 12 b, 17 c), even as He stooped (Matt. 22:21; 17:25-27), and that to an unjust government (John 19:10-16) which disregards its double duty (v. 14). We stoop with respect to the neighbor (v. 15 b), to stop his ignorant and foolish slander, and to correct by Christian word and deed his warped attitude (v. 12). This stooping does not hinder us in the enjoyment and exercise of our Christian freedom (v. 16; Acts 5:29), for we stoop as free servants of God. Yet we are admonished, while on the way, to abstain from fleshly lusts (v. 11), such as maliciousness, hypocrisy (v. 16), from undue criticism of the government (v. 17 d). Thus we stoop to conquer our own old Adam, who wars against our soul (v. 11), and to conquer the old Adam of every reviling, slanderous persecutor (v. 12). This does not mean that we can establish a utopia while we are on the way, but Ps. 2.

II

Also our service on the way is only through Christ. Context. He served to save (Matt. 20:26-28). His footsteps mark our way. We are to serve the Father to promote His

glory (vv. 9, 12, 17 c). We are to serve His Church in love (v. 17 b), to promote her welfare and prosperity. We are to serve all men by respecting their value and dignity (v. 17 a) as immortal souls, as redeemed of Christ, though most of them decline that honor and dishonor themselves, in their pride and self-esteem underestimating their true value. Our service to them is our invitation that they join us on the heavenward pilgrimage. We are to serve our masters, whether our relation to them be unpleasant or tender (v. 18). If this was to be the behavior of domestic servants, of house slaves (οἰκέται), surely the Christian employees of the present day find an important lesson here. Our service requires renunciation, abstinence from such lusts as selfishness and unfaithfulness (v. 11). It demands a consistent holiness of life, seemly behavior (v. 12). Doing the Father's business (v. 9 b) keeps our own souls from sin's contamination (v. 11) and maintains as its glorious objective the salvation of human souls (v. 12). The success of our service and good works will be seen chiefly in individuals, not in the conversion of masses, hence in the gradual growth of the Church, the gradual improvement of the family and community (Matt. 10:24, 25; 1 Cor. 15:58). While we are on the way, we leave an influence which will remain (John 15:16; 16:33).

III

The suffering referred to is that inflicted upon the slaves by froward masters, but then generalized (τις, v. 19). All Christians suffer wrongfully the world's enmity, which at times grows to the proportions of grief to be endured patiently (vv. 20, 15, 12). The stones are aimed at us and hurled to crush us on the way. Peter knew. Paul became a martyr. They rejoiced and gloried in tribulation. We, too, jubilate. While we are on the way, we bear the reproach of Christ (v. 21; 5:13; Heb. 13:13-14), our conscience toward God is clear (v. 19), and we give no occasion for the spitefulness of the ungodly (v. 20 a). Furthermore, God views our innocence with favor (v. 20), and our sufferings glorify God. We suffer with rejoicing, we suffer to rejoice. Plod on, dear soul, and God bless you!

G. H. SMUKAL