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Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

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Homiletics

Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

THANKSGIVING DAY

Ps. 106:47-48

Few more fervent Thanksgiving Days have ever been celebrated in our country than that of 1945. Even dullest hearts saw reasons to give thanks for God's great acts of that year.

More than a year has now passed since those great events. Many things have happened since then. Is there less reason today to be thankful?

HOW SHALL WE OBSERVE THIS YEAR'S THANKSGIVING DAY?

- I. In due humility II. With heartfelt thanksgiving
III. With a fervent prayer*

I

A. Some may think there is no special reason for humility in our case. The might and progress of our country is the envy of other nations. Our prosperity continues unabated while other lands live in fear of starvation.

B. Our text is a Psalm of thanksgiving; but instead of merely praising what God has done, the writer devotes most of the Psalm to recounting the evil that his people had done. His memory takes him to heathen temples where fallen Israel had worshiped, to many rebellions in which the nation attempted to cast aside what God in His wisdom had laid upon them: "Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitudes of Thy mercies" (v. 7). Still: "Many times did He deliver them" (v. 43). The Psalmist's motivation for giving thanks is the *unworthiness* of his people in the face of God's continued blessings.

C. Looking at events in our lives and in the life of our nation, we also are impressed by our unworthiness. Greed, lovelessness are at bottom of all our problems. As a nation we have often shown ourselves as bad as the lands which

feel the scourge of God today. The Psalmist could say of us: "Many times did He deliver them, but they provoked Him with their counsel" (v. 43). Still, we have abundance, we have security, we have the world's highest standards of living. How unworthy we should feel of all this!

II

A. The Psalmist does not deplore the absolute ungratefulness of his people, but rather the fact that their thanksgiving was of the wrong kind: "Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works" (v. 12, 13). Overwhelmed by the demonstration of God's help, there was a sudden burst of thanks, then all was forgotten again.

Giving thanks which begins and ends on Thanksgiving Day is of the same kind as that of Israel in this Psalm. True gratefulness requires a continuous appreciation of the great things God has done for us. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel *from everlasting to everlasting*" (v. 48).

B. Heartfelt thanksgiving sees the blessing of God in *all* that He does. In this 106th Psalm, the writer adduces an array of events for which Israel should be grateful. He allows the great national events to pass in review before their eyes: deliverance from Egypt (v. 7), from the Red Sea (v. 7); he also recalls the more personal evidences of God's mercies (v. 43-44).

So our thanksgiving should remember God's blessing in everything. Not only when He directs mighty world-stirring events in our favor, but also when we receive the continual blessings of fruitful seasons, of health and security, we are to remember the Giver of all things.

III

A. The Psalmist, recounting the blessings of the past, looks also to the future: "Save us, O Lord our God" (v. 47). It is a sign of true gratefulness for the blessings of the past to realize that also in the months to come we shall succeed only with God's help.

Before us, on the national and international scene, lies the chaos of peace: mass starvation, international suspicion, man's fear of himself, preparations for further bloodshed. In in-

dividual lives there is the chaos of uncertainty and fear of things that may come to pass.

B. Significantly the Psalmist prays: "Gather us from among the heathen" (v. 47). Christians today are tempted to look upon the future with the eyes of the heathen, i. e., hopelessly, greedily, despairingly. Our prayer on this day that God would remove us from such heathen thinking about the future. Rather: "cast all your care upon Him."—"Commit thy way unto the Lord."
H. O. A. KEINATH

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 PET. 3:3-14

Another church year is drawing to its close, and yet the world stands. Christians recognize this time as a further period of grace, but scoffers mock. God tells us in our text what we should answer them when they blasphemously ask,

"WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING?"

1. The delay of Christ's coming is not due to a lack of power.

The claim that Christ is not coming to judgment originates with scoffers. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:17-18. The fact that He has not as yet come is no proof that He will not come. The ungodly are poor logicians.

God has shown His almighty power: a) In Creation. The earth came forth "out of water" (Gen. 1:2, 9, 10); by the almighty power of the Creator of heaven and earth (Ps. 24: 2; 33:6; Heb. 11:3). The Creation is to be studied to gain a correct picture of God's power (Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:24-27). He who made the world is also powerful enough to destroy it. b) In the preservation "in water." By the mere use of water God preserves the world and prevents it from becoming pulverized and scattered as dust. Water also provides the world with life-giving moisture (Is. 55:10). c) In the Deluge (v. 6). The Flood of Noah's time destroyed the world as it was, and a new world emerged. Results of the Flood are still visible—greatly reduced arable land, fossils. They remind us of God's power through water.

If God accomplished so much through water, how much more will He do through fire! (Vv. 7, 10, 12.) His Word,

which cannot be broken, assures us that on the Day of the Lord this world will be turned into a heap of ashes.

There is no real delay in the promise of His coming. God merely uses a different calendar than we do (v. 8). A thousand years in heaven seem as one day, and one day in hell as a thousand years. The Lord will come much too soon for all ungodly (v. 7 b, 10 a). We have every reason to look for the promise of His coming.

II. The Lord has not yet come that the time of grace might be extended.

V. 9. Long-suffering means not merely a postponement of punishment, but above all the desire to save. It has the conversion and salvation of mankind in view. Scripture tells us with words, Christ with tears, the Triune God under oath, that He wants all men to be saved. Universal grace (1 Tim. 2:4). God's wish that all should reach repentance prompted Him to send Christ into the world to redeem all men. God not only loves, but is love. His desire to save holds off the day of His coming. God's grace is both serious and efficacious. It is offered us through the Gospel.

Since God would save us, we are to continue in true faith (v. 14. Rom. 5:1). Through Christ we are pure (1 John 1:7). In this faith we are to be active. a) We are to use the time of grace to live a life of holiness (v. 11. *Triglot*, p. 941 ff.; p. 45, Art. 6; p. 57, Art. 20, par. 27). Every hour of prolonged life is another hour to do good works. Suggest specific works! Ciphers alone are of no value, but when preceded by a number, become very important. Similarly, "good works" do not save us, but when flowing out of faith hold a significant place in Christianity. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-25.) b) Wait for and "earnestly desire" His coming (v. 12). We are to live so as to be ready at all times to receive the Lord. c) We are to prepare for a life in a new heaven and a new earth (v. 13).

In this time of waiting we are ever to realize the imminence of the Lord's coming (v. 14). A needful warning! Soon the time of grace will be spent.

History repeats itself. a) There still are mockers and lawless men. b) As God destroyed the world by water, He will destroy it again, through fire. c) As He desired to save all men in the days of Peter, He still does.

VICTOR MENNICKE