

2-1-1947

Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

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Recommended Citation

Nickel, Theodore (1947) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 18, Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol18/iss1/10>

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Homiletics

Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

REMINISCERE

LUKE 7:36-50

While in the midst of preparing the catechumens for confirmation, there comes to mind the memory of that sacred pledge to "renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways" and to "walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ." Many who have made this profession of faith have since lapsed. Hence, realizing "that of ourselves we have no strength," we pray in today's collect on behalf of the catechumens and ourselves, "that we may be defended from all adversities," etc.

In order, then, that we may "abound more and more" in our efforts to walk so as "to please God" (the Epistle, 1 Thess. 4: 1), let us seek to increase our love for Jesus by realizing how great is God's forgiveness of our sins, for, according to our text:

FAITH IN GOD'S GREAT PARDON IS PRODUCTIVE OF GREAT LOVE

I. True faith is faith in a great pardon

A. The story. Our text presents to us two characters: one, a Pharisee, self-righteous and without true faith, vv. 39, 45-49; the other, "a woman in the city, which was a sinner," v. 37, whose faith was genuine, v. 50. The Pharisee had invited Jesus to a meal, and this woman — as is not uncommon in the Orient (see Trench, *Parables*, p. 232, Note c) — visited as an onlooker and, standing behind the reclining Savior, washed, kissed, and anointed His feet as they were turned toward her on the divan before the table, vv. 37-38. When the Pharisee doubted Christ's standing as a prophet, v. 39, Jesus, knowing his thoughts, v. 40, told the Parable of the Two Debtors, vv. 40-43, and thereby taught two very important lessons.

B. The first lesson: True faith is faith in a great pardon.

1. The woman had such faith.

a. She realized that her sins were many and great. Our Lord compared them, v. 41, to a debt of five hundred denarii, or \$85.00 in American money, a large sum when we realize

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that it took a workman of that day almost two years to earn it.

b. These "many sins" were forgiven her: "frankly" (lit. "freely"), v. 42; completely, v. 47; by the Lord Jesus Himself, vv. 48-49; as a gift through faith, v. 50; so that she could go home with a comforted heart and a peaceful conscience, v. 50 b.

c. She believed, therefore, that she had received a great pardon. She showed it by her "much love," v. 47. (Note: the meaning is not, "her sins . . . were forgiven, because she loved much," which is contrary to the context, vv. 42 b-43; but, "her sins, being many, were forgiven, as is evident from the fact that she loved much").

2. We, too, accept forgiveness as a great gift of grace, for

a. We are great sinners, Rom. 3:9-23; James 2:1-10 (even favoritism makes one guilty of the whole Law, vv. 9-10); Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Is. 64:6; John 3:6; Rom. 7:18; 8:7.

b. But Christ also has taken away our many and great sins, John 1:29 (a task completed on the Cross, John 19:20); 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 John 2:1-2; having pardoned them all, Rom. 5:18; 2 Cor. 5:19.

c. This manifold, universal forgiveness is offered us freely, v. 42; Rom. 3:24; and by grace, Eph. 2:8-9; in the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Eph. 2:4-9.

d. It is accepted through faith alone, v. 50; Rom. 3:26-30; 4:5; Gal. 2:16.

e. It is a truly great pardon.

The second lesson of our Savior's parable is this, that

II. True faith is productive of great love

A. Simon, the Pharisee, had no such faith, v. 39, and consequently was unproductive of love toward Jesus, vv. 44-46, for, Heb. 11:6; John 15:4-5.

B. The woman, however, had this faith, and therefore showed forth great love, vv. 43 and 47.

1. She manifested her love by lamenting her sins, vv. 38, 48-50; by unashamedly and humbly confessing Christ before others, v. 38; and by sacrificing her best, vv. 37-38, to honor Him.

2. This love was the fruit of her faith, as is indicated by our Savior's question, v. 42; by Simeon's answer, v. 43 a,

which met with the Lord's approval, v. 43 b; and by Christ's application of the parable, vv. 44-47.

C. Our faith, too, will manifest itself similarly, Ps. 51:17; Gen. 32:10; Luke 18:10-14; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 3:8; Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6-7; for faith invariably produces love, James 2:17, 20, 26; Gal. 5:6, love for God and our fellow men, Matt. 22:36-40; 1 John 4:19-21, 7-11; 5:1-3.

Conclusion: How often Satan, the world, and our flesh hinder us from producing love! How frequently we, like the Pharisee, sin against love! Realizing this, we cry with today's Introit: "Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and loving-kindnesses. . . . I trust in Thee"; and oh, how good to hear Christ assure us again: "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Believing this, may we abound in love. Amen.

THEODORE NICKEL

OCULI

LUKE 10:17-22

Passiontide is a sad season! We contemplate the bitter suffering of our Lord; we know and confess that we have caused it with our sins. Yet to the two sad disciples going to Emmaus the Lord said: Luke 24:17; and when they told Him He answered: vv. 25-26. — At first glance our text seems a strange text for Lent—the Seventy come with joy; Jesus tells them to rejoice; He Himself rejoices and sends a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father. Yet it is a true Lenten text; but it speaks of results, of victory.— So Jesus today says to us: In this Lenten season

REJOICE!

- I. *Because I have defeated Satan for you*
- II. *Because your names are written in heaven*
- III. *Because God has revealed this to you*

I

Jesus sent the Seventy to prepare the people for His coming, giving them explicit instructions and promises (vv. 2-16 of this chapter). He had told them that they were going as

lambs among wolves. They came back and reported that in His name they had overcome even the mightiest enemies, the devils. Jesus affirms that Satan has no longer power to withstand him who comes in Jesus' name; he is fallen from his high estate; Jesus "beheld him falling"—He defeated him.

Christ's promise to the Seventy is given to all who confess His name. "The old evil Foe" will to the end "mean deadly woe" to them, with all the agents who aid him and the agencies he uses; but neither spiritual nor physical serpents and scorpions shall be able to hurt them; no, not even if in the end they die as martyrs. Nor shall Satan be able to hinder their work when they go to carry out the great commission "Preach the Gospel." Even though "deep guile and great might," etc. David slew Goliath in the name of the Lord. True, "with might of ours," etc. "But for us fights," etc. "Though devils all the world," etc.

An unspeakably great, a divine promise: v. 19. Jesus means to encourage us for the never-ceasing battle with the Evil One; and He says: Rejoice! You are sure of victory!

II

And yet there is a slight rebuke in the Lord's answer, v. 20a. Did He see a danger in this joy of the Seventy, pride in their accomplishment rather than joy in this, that people had come to accept their message of salvation? Basis of a Christian's joy is that his name is written in heaven and that he can bring this message to others: It is again possible that your names will be written there.

Yes, God has a book in which are written the names of all who will inherit the kingdom of heaven (Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 20:12). This book might have been a record of all men, for God wants all men to enter glory. Man changed that; on that sad day (Gen. 3) the book was closed, and the angel with the sword was set to watch the entrance to life. But God in His mercy has again opened that book; and there are in that book the names of those who have been cleansed of their sins by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 21:27); for: 1 John 7:7. When a sinner in faith accepts the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, his name is written in heaven; and then—here is true joy!—Heb. 12:22-24; no power on earth or in hell can blot out those names.

III

How do we know all this? V. 21. Again a cause for rejoicing. This is not a matter of human experience, but of divine revelation. All the wise and prudent with all their research and investigation could not discover who God is (Job 37:23), what His attitude is toward men (no heathen ever dared to think of a gracious God!); much less could they know of the Gospel way of the forgiveness of sin through the vicarious atonement of the Son of God (Rom. 16:25). To men it is all a mystery, a secret which they cannot fathom; God must reveal it.

And God has revealed it (Matt. 13:11; 16:17); and that not in such a way that only the wise and prudent may understand it, but so that babes in age and understanding may grasp it; in fact, those who are wise in their own conceit and proud of it, proud of their own ability and accomplishment, will forever miss it; but to those who, like children, take God at His word, take their reason captive under the obedience of faith, to them the mystery is solved (1 Cor. 1:18-25). They know God, their heavenly Father, and His Son, their Savior.

For that we owe God everlasting thanksgiving. And that is the source of never-ending joy to us, a joy on which we dwell in every season of the church year, particularly, however, in Lent, when we consider specially the great culmination of this revelation of God, the working out of the mystery of salvation in the suffering and death of His Son.

Luke 10:23-24. — Thank God, we see and hear what they saw and heard! May God give us grace to accept it in the same childlike spirit and with the same joy!

THEO. HOYER

LAETARE

JOHN 8:12-20

Time: Feast of Tabernacles. **Davis:** "It was also customary in the evening following the first day of the festival, and perhaps on the subsequent evenings, to illuminate the court of the women from two lofty stands, each supporting

four immense lamps, which threw their light not only into the courts of the Temple, but far and wide over the city." Symbolized the pillar of fire which led Israel out of Egypt. In the midst of this festival Jesus calls out: v. 12.

CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

I

He gives light to the world.

a. Implications. One implication behind this claim is that the world is in darkness. But is it? The world does not think so. Believes it can solve its own problems if it can only get the co-operation of others. Only a few years ago man thought he had the answer in science. "Side by side with the growth of science, which is also the basis of material prosperity and unification of the world, has come a steady deepening of human sympathy, and the extension of it to all weak and suffering things. . . . Science, founding a firmer basis for the co-operation of mankind, goes widening down the centuries, and sympathy and pity bind the courses together." (F. S. Marvin, *The Living Past*, 1923, p. 270.) Now man is generally agreed that civilization is sick and that science may actually be catapulting the world to its destruction. Some are frantically working at treaties, world government, economic adjustments and arrangements, and fail to see that these are merely symptoms. Others sense that the trouble is somewhere beneath the surface, and they are earnestly searching for a power which can change the attitude of man to man. Yet in its blindness the world cannot dig deep enough to get at the root of sin. In the face of this groping in darkness, Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world."

A second implication is Christ's deity. Light symbolized God, Gen. 15:17; Ex. 3:5; 14:20; Ps. 27:1. Used also of the Messiah and understood as such by the rabbis, Is. 9:2; 60:1-3; 49:6b. Hence Simon says: Luke 2:32, and John writes: chap. 1:1-14. Pharisees understood this claim and therefore challenged Him, vv. 13-19.

b. How is Christ the Light? He knows the darkness of civilization, its sickness. He knows that behind the strife, disaster, and corruption is the darkness of sin, which has benighted man's heart. He shines into our heart to show us the existing sickening darkness.

He is the Light of Truth to show us God — His love and His plan of salvation. He is not simply a map to tell us to look for the way out, but the Light to follow out of the darkness to the eternal light of glory.

He is the Light that heals the soul's sickness and the festering sores which have taken their corrupting hold in the darkness.

He is the Light that gives life. Human knowledge without this Light can only fetter men more securely in their blindness.

He is the Light that tells us what good works are.

II

His followers walk in light.

Christians also have the title "light of the world," Matt. 5:14. It implies that they have been called out of darkness.

They are knowers of the truth. With this light they know where they are going. But do we believe that we have this light? Why do we walk uncertainly as though we believed the world and would follow its marsh lights?

They live in light. Matt. 5:15-16; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5-8.

They are givers of light. 2 Cor.4:6; 1 Pet. 2:9. It is urgent that they pass this light on. How sorely the world needs this light! Why is it that Christians are not aware that the world is engaged in a race with catastrophe? It is the quality of light to give light.

Would you have more light? Then turn to His Word. Ps. 19:8; Prov. 6:23.

Conclusion. Hymn 277:3.

ARTHUR C. REPP

JUDICA SUNDAY

JOHN 11:41-53

With Thee is the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9; Jer.2:13; 17:13; John 4:10, 14; Is. 55:1; 12:3-4).

JESUS, THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

I. Abolishing our death

II. By His death

I

If Lazarus was not dead, then Jesus did not raise him from the dead. To arrest and block doubt, it is important first to prove the fact of Lazarus' death. Unbelief denies the resurrec-

tion of Lazarus also in view of successful experiments in applied breath control and in view of medical experiments in re-vivification. In all these cases life had not ceased, and *rigor mortis* had not set in.

The death of Lazarus is attested by pronouncements of the Holy Spirit (vv. 41, 44); of Jesus (vv. 14, 25); of the sisters (vv. 21, 32); of the comforters (vv. 19, 37). Furthermore, time, and the offensive condition of the body (v. 39), proves that this was not a case of catalepsy or asphyxia or breath control. The enemies do not deny the miracle (v. 47). The glory of God (v. 40) is revealed and promoted only by truth, never by deception. Lazarus was dead.

He was dead because he was mortal; a mortal, because, like us, a sinner; a sinner, he must, like us, accept the wages (Rom. 6:23a; Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27). This is the application of the Law.

He was dead, because the glory of God should be revealed by his death and resurrection (v. 40; 2 Cor. 4:11; 5:1-5). This is the application of the Gospel (Num. 23:10).

For these very reasons also, Jesus, who was about to make an exchange with Lazarus, had a right to the grave of His friend. At His command the grave was opened. In this tense moment Jesus hallowed the grave by His presence and by prayer to His Father. It is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving; of intercession; glorifying both the Father and the Son; to the welfare and for the instruction of the people; revealing the purposes of the miracle. Christians desire such prayer at their graves.

The majestic word which challenged death and the amazing act of Christ's power should be presented reverently, not sensationally dramatized. Death releases the dead at the command of Jesus; and Lazarus, yet bound hand and foot, emerges out of the grave, is loosed of the graveclothes. Jesus is the Fountain of Life and abolishes death.

Christians are wary of fiction and caricatures designed to pollute the Fountain of Life, such as they read of, for instance, in "*The Nazarene*" (Shalom Asch) on the raising of Lazarus: "a corpse set in motion"; "alive or dead, or both, the long, shriveled body reeked of the grave"; "yellow-ashen face . . . the aspect of an empty skull above the covered leanness of a

skeleton . . . legs moved stiffly, like wooden supports.”— Lazarus lived a normal life after his resurrection, for the mark of Christ’s miracles on body and soul is their completeness and perfection.

Thus Jesus taught by deed His word of life, that we should have faith, hope, comfort in Him, (vv. 41-42, 26, 40; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:55-58; John 10:28; 14:19; 1 Thess. 4:18).

II

The miracle was of such importance as to necessitate a special session of the rulers. This is the common procedure of the enemies. This protocol reminds us of Psalm 2. The spiritually dead would check the flow of life to save their own cause of deceit and greed unto death. Their own leader contemptuously sneers at their consternation and impotence, and pompously he suggests the destruction of the Life: Stop the Source! Kill the Life-Giver! Seal the Fountain! This seemed profitable for himself and for those in power with him and in league with Rome, and expedient for the Jewish nation—a plausible argument of deceit and selfishness. To lend weight to his murderous plan, the diplomat invoked his office and dignity as though he were God’s oracle. And so they condemned the Fountain of Life to death, with satanic deliberation, before they called Him to trial (v. 53).

But the Holy Spirit also attended that session. Unconsciously Caiphas was His instrument. Caiphas was to make this utterance, into which the Holy Spirit placed the divine sense and meaning, because Jesus (1) should die for that nation and (2) establish the united Kingdom and household of God. The prophecy teaches the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23); the universality of the redemption; the vicarious atonement.

And so it came to pass that the Fountain of Life abolished our death and sealed its doom by His shameful but vicarious, victorious death (2 Tim. 1:10), that we now see His glory (v. 40) at the graves of His believers and then, in the glory of the resurrection (v. 24), behold the glory of His gracious countenance (John 17:24).

G. H. SMUKAL

PALM SUNDAY

JOHN 12:1-19

Jesus had sincere, loyal friends, e. g., John the Baptist, Martha and Mary, John and Peter, etc. Why not? Will not a good man gain true friends, disciples, and followers? But, strange as it may seem, Jesus also had bitter enemies. We naturally ask: Why? In our text we have the answer to our question:

WHY DID HIS ENEMIES HATE JESUS?

I

Because of His words and works.

a. If we read this text only, we may at first get the impression that the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead aroused the ill will of these Jewish priests against Jesus. However, we dare not forget what had happened before Jesus performed this miracle. In the chapters which precede we read of a number of disputes between Jesus and these Jews. In these Jesus had reproved them for their pride, hypocrisy, greed, and self-righteousness. Cf. John 8:40-59; see also Matt. 23:13 ff. *These words* of Jesus aroused their hatred (note Matt. 21:45).

b. Now, when Jesus substantiated His claims by this miracle, their fury knew no bounds. These evident divine powers convicted them (John 3:2). A few, very few (Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea), became disciples of Jesus, but the majority hated Him all the more. He had "stopped their mouths"; now they would use force. Behold their fury, v. 10.

That has always been the way of the enemies of the truth. Cf. Jer. 37:16 and Jer. 38:6; Acts 22:21-25. The Apostles experienced the same hatred. Luther. Today. Matt. 10:18-24; Gal. 4:16.

II

Another cause of the hatred against Jesus was *the failure of His enemies to prevent His wonderful success.*

a. In spite of all that they had done, His disciples clung to Him, and many women were devoted to Him, e. g., Mary, vv. 1-3. Cf. Luke 8:2-3. Later, Christians were persecuted because they clung so tenaciously to the worship of Jesus.

b. Then His enemies saw that His following continued to

increase. They themselves had to acknowledge that all their efforts against Him had failed, v. 19. Cf. John 11:47 and 53; Matt. 27:18. Jealous rage drove them to use even so despicable a traitor as Judas. What shameful conduct in religious leaders, to make use of so contemptible a liar (v. 5) and thief (v. 6)!

Behold, Jesus is hated because of His goodness and because He saves the poor out of the clutches of the cruel and deceitful. John 8:46.

Surely we do not wish to join the company of Judas and the enemies of Jesus! But remember, here no neutrality is possible. Matt. 12:30; Matt. 10:37.

Hymn: 334.

MARTIN S. SOMMER

