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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

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Homiletics

Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 15:17-27

"These things I command you, that ye love one another" (v. 17). It is characteristic of Christians that they love one another. Says John: "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14). Christians love even their enemies. (Matt. 5:44.) But Christians are hated by the people of this world. This fact should, however, not disturb them. That is the lesson which the Savior in our text impresses upon us.

THE CHRISTIAN IS HATED BY THE WORLD

We learn

- I. That the world hates the Christian is in the very nature of the case*
- II. Why the world hates the Christian*
- III. That the Christian should not be disturbed thereby, but rather be encouraged in his Christianity*

I

That the world hates the Christian is in the very nature of the case.

A. The world hates Christ, therefore it hates His followers. (Vv. 18-20; Acts 4:15 ff.; 5:17-18.)

B. The Christian is not of the world, but in his thinking and doing differs from the world as day differs from night. Therefore the world hates the Christian. (V. 19.)

C. The Christian not only differs in his way of life from that of the world, but refuses to take part in the world's sinful life and also denounces it. Therefore the world hates the Christian and persecutes him, even as it persecutes Christ. (V. 20; Acts 16:16-24; Gen. 39:7 ff.)

Application. Have you experienced the hatred of the world, or do all men speak well of you? Jesus says: "Woe unto you," etc. (Luke 6:26.)

II

Why the world hates the Christian.

A) The world hates the Christian because it knows not God. (V. 21.) That God is Love, having revealed Himself as a gracious God in the sending of His Son to be the world's Savior, the world does not know. Although the man of the world knows that God is (natural knowledge of God), he does not seek after this God, but ignores Him and makes unto himself his own gods, idols.

B. The world knows not Christ, the Savior, whom God sent into the world. (Vv. 22-25.) In this the world is without excuse, for Christ manifested Himself through His teachings and through His works (miracles). The world hates both the Father and the Son (v. 23), but does so "without a cause" (v. 25), thus pronouncing upon itself its own condemnation.

Application. Let us thank God that we have learned to know both the Father and the Son, have been brought to faith in our Savior, by whom we have been redeemed not only from the guilt and punishment, but also from the power of sin, so that we can lead a godly life.

III

The Christian should not be disturbed by the fact that the world hates him.

A. The Comforter whom Jesus sent from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, testifies that Jesus is the Savior, that by faith in Him we have forgiveness of sin and are God's children. (V. 26.) He brings to our remembrance whatsoever Jesus has said (John 14:26), and reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; He guides us unto all truth. (John 16:7-15.) This testimony of the Spirit we have in God's revealed Word, the Bible. This is the testimony of the Spirit of Truth.

B. We also have the witness of the Apostles, who were with the Lord during His visible sojourn here upon earth, heard Him speak, saw Him perform His miracles, and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit recorded these things for us in the Scriptures. (V. 27.) The reliability of the Christian religion is well substantiated.

That the world hates us should not at all be depressing;

it is rather evidence that we are not of the world, but that Christ has chosen us out of the world to be His own. (V. 19.)

Application. Do we diligently hear, read, and study the Word of God and meditate upon it? Then we shall by the Spirit of Truth be kept in faith and receive power to overcome sin and lead a godly life. By this our godly life and by our own testimony, preaching the Gospel, we also shall be witnesses of Christ to the world so that others, too, may enjoy with us the blessings of Christianity.

J. H. C. FRITZ

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 17:1-12

Most traditional post-Easter Gospel pericopes until Pentecost are selected from somber farewell addresses John 14—16 rather than gladsome resurrection story. Nevertheless very appropriate: a) Jesus anticipates disciples' problems caused by His departure, the answer to which would come after and through His resurrection; b) they and we must learn that not deliverance from trouble, but the glory of God is ultimate objective of the Father's mysterious ways with us. (1 Cor. 1:31; 10:31; 15:28.) This is the burden of text. It presents

OUR HIGH PRIEST AT THE DOOR OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES

- I. *He prays that the Father might be glorified through Him*
- II. *He pleads that His loved ones be preserved to the Father's glory*

I

V. 1. Opening words of sacerdotal prayer offered by great High Priest as He goes forth (18:1) like Jewish high priest to bring great offering for sin. (Heb. 9:24-28.) Sorrows of death and hell ready to compass Him about, hence prayer for deliverance or strength to be expected. He knew what lay ahead (Luke 18:31-34), yet He looked beyond the bitter ordeal and desired only the Father's glorification. True, He prays for His own return to premundane glory, from the full use of which He had refrained until now, but only that the

Father might be glorified. That was His mission, for which power over all flesh had been given Him (v. 2), namely to exalt Father as God of love and mercy. To that end He had lived perfect life, manifested God's name in word and deed. (Vv. 4-6.)

Now the eventful hour was at hand. "No more in world" (v. 11). Yet no thought of evading duty. Captain of salvation willing to be made perfect through suffering. Father must be glorified.

The prayer was answered. Father glorified Son, not only granting strength for faithful performance of duty (e. g. Luke 22:43), but highly exalting Him. (Phil. 2:9-11, note "to the glory of God the Father.") Christ's faithful performance of His redeeming mission causes God now and forever to be praised as God of love and mercy. His exaltation by the Father is the seal, giving us comforting assurance against sin and adversity. Well may we heed today's call, "Cantate." See Introit and Gradual.

II

Christ not only our Savior, but pattern of what we must expect. Our path to glory likewise leads through suffering (John 15:18-21; 16:1-3, 33.) Hence Jesus includes Apostles. (Vv. 6-12.) The world He omits for the moment. (V. 9 b.) The Twelve, at least some, had belonged to the Father prior to Jesus' ministry, being true Israelites. (V. 6 b.) Then the Father gave them to Him, that He should give them eternal life by bestowing a clearer knowledge of Father and Son. (V. 3.) This He had done. (Vv. 6 a, 8 a.) They in turn believed and kept the words (vv. 6 b, 8 b), except Judas. (V. 12.) In heaven their imperfect knowledge would become perfect, they would know as they were known. (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:1-3.)

But now He was leaving, while they were still in world with work to do. Many tribulations. (Chap. 16:33.) Hence He pleads that the Father preserve them. (V. 11 b. Cf. vv. 15, 16, 19.) That, in turn, would serve to glorify the Father. Every ransomed soul adds to the praise of the God of mercy and love. (Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 4:12-16; 1 Cor. 6:20; John 21:19.)

This prayer of Jesus includes all children of God till end of time. (V. 20.) We have been redeemed, but we must

through tribulation enter the Kingdom. The Easter Gospel assures of salvation and gives strength to glorify Father in midst of trials. Christian faith, by which world is overcome, comes by hearing. Thus the Father keeps those who are Christ's, that they might be one. God, grant us undying love of Thy Word, that our lives be lived to Thy glory.

OTTO E. SOHN

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

LUKE 11:1-13

"Lord, teach us to pray." Disciples needed it. We also need instruction. Jesus gives it gladly. Recorded in our text for our benefit. For richer, fuller, and more blessed prayer life we consider

GOD-PLEASING PRAYER

Jesus teaches

- I. Childlike Prayer* *II. Persevering Prayer*
III. Confident Prayer

I

"Our Father." How can that be? Total corruption (Ps. 51:5; John 3:6), alienated all from God. (Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21.) Yet childlike prayer possible. Jesus brought us back into God's family. (Gal. 4:4-5; Rev. 5:9.) This relationship ours by faith. (Gal. 3:26-27.) Therefore "Our Father"; "ask Him as dear children ask their dear father."

Jesus exemplifies the privilege of childlike prayer in vv. 11-12. "If a son." Also in v. 13. "Heavenly Father." (Cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6.) Away with stiff formalism, cold ritual; ours the right of children.

II

This Jesus also taught. Here in our text. (Vv. 9-10.) Upon another occasion, e. g., the Syrophenician woman (Matt. 15:21-28), by practical demonstration. We also have His own example in Gethsemane. — "Ask, seek, knock," not to denote stages in prayer, but perseverance. Guard against danger of "vain repetitions," e. g., novena, etc. (Matt. 6:7.) Rather 2 Cor. 12:8-9.

Jesus uses illustration: "The importunate friend" (vv. 5-8), to bring out the necessity of persistent prayer.

III

Jesus teaches to pray confidently by the promises. Six times the promise is repeated that God will answer. (Vv. 9-10.) "Given," "find," "opened" repeated.

Also by assurance that God will give good gifts. He uses example from life. (Vv. 11-12.) Then He reaches climax of divine logic in v. 13: Gift of Holy Spirit.

Promises to kindle faith, to overcome doubt, and so teaches and gives power for confidence. (Cf. Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24.) Examples: The leper: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (Luke 5:12-13.) Centurion of Capernaum. (Matt. 8:8, 13.)

Conclusion: Such prayer has the stamp of divine approval, because it is taught by Christ Himself, born of the Spirit through Gospel, and submits willingly to God's will. How often have we not failed in one point or the other! Need of Fifth Petition. Gratitude that God hears and grants forgiveness for Jesus' sake. Therein lies power and willingness to learn ever better from Christ Himself how to pray.

EDWIN H. PFLUG

ASCENSION DAY

JOHN 17:11-26

Immediately before His great suffering Jesus prayed the prayer of which our text forms a part. In spirit He saw His redeeming work completed, but He was concerned for His disciples, who would not immediately ascend to heaven with Him. His prayer tells us what He continually asks of His heavenly Father for all His disciples. (V. 20; cp. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25.) That brings Him near to our hearts. People who show no interest in you are "distant" even though they work at your side all through the day. Others, though a thousand miles away, are near and dear to you, because in their letters they share your joys and sorrows. Our ascended Lord stands in a most intimate relation to us as His prayer shows.

WHAT IS OUR ASCENDED REDEEMER ASKING
FOR HIS DISCIPLES?

I. Protection

II. Unity

III. Glory

I

He has sent us into the world (v. 18), the world which does not know God. (V. 25; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 5:19.) He does not ask His heavenly Father to take us out of the world (v. 15), not yet. First we are to fulfill our mission in this world. (Matt. 5:13-16; 28:19-20; Acts 1:8.) In doing this we are not to adopt a "Safety First" policy; no, our heavenly Leader wants us to face the hatred (v. 14) and brave the hardships and dangers of this world. (Matt. 10:16 ff.) His prayer is not: "Keep evil from them," but: "Keep them from evil." (V. 15.) In days of trial, may we always remember that our ascended Redeemer prays to His heavenly Father that He may keep us in all our sorrows, conflicts, woes, and preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom. Paul had that confidence. (2 Tim. 4:18.)

In asking for our protection, Jesus includes our sanctification (vv. 17, 19), that we may be wholly consecrated to His cause. (1 Thess. 5:23.) For that purpose He has given us His Word, the Truth, that we might not only be defended, but become more than conquerors. (Rom. 8:37.) What a mighty incentive to serve our exalted Lord with ever greater courage and devotion during that little while that still lies ahead before He calls us home!

II

Jesus has sent His disciples into all the world, but wherever they are, He prays that they all may be one. (Vv. 21, 23.) One, not only in outward fellowship, but perfectly one, because He dwells in them all, and they all dwell in Him. — This unity is wrought by God; it cannot be brought about by passing resolutions; it is a superhuman achievement.

The purpose of this unity: Vv. 21, 23. When Chinese, Japanese, Negro, and white Christians confess the same Christ and are inspired by the same hope of heaven and unite in intimate Christian fellowship, a fellowship which even a war cannot disrupt; when the Gospel produces the same blessed fruits in Africa and India as in America, the world takes notice (Acts 4:13), and some will inquire into the unique power of the Gospel and be won for Christ.

Wherever we perceive this unity, we should joyfully acknowledge it and carefully guard against everything that would hinder or disturb it, such as unscriptural teaching,

lovelessness, worldliness. Whatever disturbs the believer's oneness with Christ will likewise disturb the unity of Christians with each other.

III

Our ascended Lord prays that we who are one with Him may share His glory in heaven.

He has given us His glory. (V. 22.) All the glory that goes with membership in God's family is ours now, by faith. (John 6:47; 1 Pet. 1:8.) Jesus prays that we may see His glory and be with Him in heaven where He has gone. (V. 24.)

This glory is still hidden from our view. Heaven seems so far from us, and we are tempted to prefer things seen to treasures unseen. But Jesus, our exalted Head, draws His members after Him. Our hope is directed heavenward. (Col. 3:1-4.) When our task in this world is completed, we shall enter the Kingdom of Glory and be with our Savior in undimmed, never-ending glory. (John 12:26.)

The assurance that we have a divine Intercessor in heaven who prays that we might be kept unharmed, in true unity with Him and with one another, so that we might be with Him forever and see His heavenly glory, increases our longing for heaven (Tit. 2:13; Phil. 3:20) and makes us eager to serve our Lord faithfully. (Luke 12:32 ff.)

V. L. MEYER

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION

Acts 1:15-26

We marvel at the wonderful ways of God, not only in the world of the physical (Ps. 139:14), but also in the realm of the spiritual (John 3:5-7). One question particularly has troubled people throughout the ages, and that is the question why God chooses some, while others are rejected.

We also marvel how God selects certain people for greater service in His Kingdom, while others are cast out. Our text gives us much instruction in this matter, and it is good for all of us, pastors and people, teachers and pupils, the leaders and the led, to take to heart what God has to say.

HOW GOD CHOOSES MEN FOR GREATER SERVICE

- I. He rejects those who spurn His grace*
- II. He calls to greater service the faithful and the believing*

I

A. In order to understand our text, it is well to study the context. Acts 1 speaks of the stay of Christ on earth for forty days after His resurrection, of the wonderful promise and the wonderful commission He gave to His disciples (Acts 1:8), and His glorious ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Just prior to our text we are told how the disciples with joy in their heart returned unto Jerusalem for the purpose of worship and fellowship (Acts 1:14). It was in those days (v. 15), the days between the Ascension and Pentecost, that Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and reminded them of the fact that it was necessary for them to choose a successor to Judas. Then Peter indicated why Judas had been rejected and why his bishopric had been taken from him. (Vv. 15-20.)

B. God had given special grace to Judas Iscariot. Judas had the privilege of being reared in a Jewish home. As a Jew, he was brought into the Kingdom through the sacrament of circumcision. He was privileged to have as a guide the inspired Word of God. Furthermore, Judas was especially blessed because (v. 17) "he was numbered with us and obtained part of this ministry." He was made treasurer.

C. Judas, however, did not appreciate the blessings he had received. Though he was especially honored by being made the treasurer of the little group, he yielded to temptation and appropriated part of the money to himself. When Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus, Judas denounced her act as extravagance; not that he cared for the poor, but because he wished that the price of the ointment had been put into the bag whence he could have helped himself as he had done before (John 12:5-6). Judas' greed caused him not only to steal, but also to desire more money, and so he betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver. His greed led to theft, to betrayal, and finally to ruin, for he committed suicide (v. 18). As a result of his sin, as a result of his unbelief, he was finally rejected by God (v. 25 b), and his place of honor was given to another (v. 20).

D. What happened to Judas happens occasionally today, to called servants of God, and also to Christians from the laity. They receive special grace, special blessings, special honors, but they permit themselves to be misled, they permit

sin to grow in their heart. At first it may seem a small matter, but unchecked, this small seed grows into an evil tree which finally brings faithlessness and unbelief, wreck and ruin upon the individual, causing him to be rejected completely by God. This may happen to Christian pastors and to Christian teachers, to Christian church officers, Christian men and women if they do not watch over their sinful hearts and permit themselves to be carried away by the sinful lusts and desires and inclinations that slumber in their breast. Certainly the life and experience of Judas is to serve as a warning to all of us.

II

A. The whole meeting in which Peter had made his address was called for the purpose of choosing a successor to Judas. This was a matter of importance at that time, and it teaches us an important lesson for our day also. It is well for us to see from our text what things were observed by the Apostles as the tools of God in choosing someone for greater service in the Kingdom.

B. (Text. Vv. 21-22.) As candidates for the apostolic office the Apostles selected men who had been close to them and to the Lord Jesus. In choosing anyone for special service in the Church or congregation, it is well at all times to remember that those who are closest to Jesus, and are ready to listen to His Word are best equipped to render special service in the Kingdom. Another essential feature for the apostolic office was that the candidates had to be witnesses with the Apostles of the resurrection of Jesus (v. 22 b). Those who wish to be special servants of God certainly should not dare to reject the fundamental teaching of the resurrection. (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:17; Rom. 4:25; John 11:25-26.)

C. It is well to remember when God chooses men for special service in His kingdom, He frequently does this through the instrumentality of men. (V. 23.) The Apostles appointed two candidates. Then they prayed (v. 24) and put the whole matter into the hand of God, leaving it to Him who knew the hearts of men to choose the one who would be best equipped to take part in the ministry. It is well to follow this same custom today. When a congregation needs a new pastor, a new teacher, new church officers, they may select the can-

didates, but after all they ought to be willing, as the Apostles of old, to put the whole matter into the hands of the Lord in prayer. After all He is the one who calls and appoints His servants.

D. In the case of the successor to Judas, God did this in a direct manner (v. 26); Matthias was chosen by lot. Today God does not choose His special servants by lot, but He does this through the process of an orderly election. But still it is God who operates through the votes of men as He operated through the lot that fell upon Matthias.

Conclusion: As we look upon the story of our text, as we see so vividly the hand of God in it all, let us keep in mind that He rejects those who reject His love and grace and mercy, but that He is willing to give greater places of responsibility to those who stay close to Jesus, who remain humble, believing Christians, who are ready to place themselves fully at the disposal of the Master. May we keep the instructive lessons of our text in mind in our own congregation as well as also in our Church at large, also during the second century of its existence.

E. L. ROSCHKE

