

10-1-1947

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 64.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol18/iss1/64>

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Homiletics

Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 19:1-10

As we near the end of the church year, we are reminded of the constant, steady approach of "the day of Jesus Christ" (Epistle, Phil. 1:6, 10) and the end of the world. The July issue of the *Coronet* (1947, pp. 27-35) tells us of the eight different ways in which scientists, prior to the discovery of atomic fission, have conceived of the potential destruction of the earth. The Scriptures tell us that this earth on the Last Day will be utterly disintegrated. (2 Pet. 3:10-12.) Let us, therefore, employ well our allotted time in following Christ's example (Luke 19:10).

OUR CHURCH'S MISSION

- I. *What is this mission?*
- II. *Where is our field?*
- III. *How shall we carry out our task?*
- IV. *What are the results of this work?*

I

Not to win prestige in this life, or to get acclaim from the world, or to civilize the nations, or to improve man's living standards, or to bring political peace into this chaotic world; but (v. 10; Matt. 28:19) "to disciple all nations" (Luke 24:46-47; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 26:16-18; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2).

II

A. In general: "the lost" (v. 10), i. e., all who are, as Zacchaeus was, without Christ (Eph. 2:12; 1 John 5:12; John 14:6), either because they do not know Him or because they have lost Him through trusting in their own righteousness (Gal. 5:4).

B. In particular: (1) Jesus shows us by example that a man may be called by a good name (*Zacchaeus* means *pure*) and still be lost. Even so one may be called a fine fellow, a

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gentleman, a Christian, or an Evangelical Lutheran (a follower of Luther who is true to the Gospel), and yet be without Christ and lost. (Matt. 7:21-23.) (2) A bad reputation should not deter us from seeking a lost soul. Zacchaeus had the evil reputation of being a publican or taxgatherer for Rome (v. 2), a title which in that day was, perhaps, as despised in the eyes of the Jews as the sobriquet "collaborator with the Nazis" in France during the recent war. As Jesus did not by-pass Zacchaeus because of his evil repute, so we are to seek all the lost, no matter what the world may think of them. (Luke 15.) Do we? (3) Our Savior shows us that as is so often done, we are not to overlook the rich (v. 2) or those who hold positions of prestige and power ("chief," v. 2).

C. We know, however, that this incident is to be understood not only from the viewpoint of the Law, as an example which we are to follow (1 Pet. 2:21), but also from the viewpoint of the Gospel; for what Christ did here is imputed to us wherever we have failed (Jer. 23:6; John 17:19; Rom. 10:4). Here is the divine dynamic for continuing our mission. (Jer. 31:34; 2 Cor. 3:6.)

III

A. Jesus sought Zacchaeus. Even so should we approach the unchurched wherever we can; on the way (vv. 4-5), in the midst of our tasks (v. 1), in their homes (v. 5), etc. We know of congregations which have accepted this example with marked results. (See *Today*, July, 1947, p. 23: "How North Dakota Does It"; and page 30.)

B. The Lord brought salvation into the home of Zacchaeus by coming to him as his personal Savior (v. 9). Even so are we to bring Jesus into the homes and hearts of our fellow men by preaching Him to them as their personal Savior. (John 20:30-31; John 3:16; the Sacraments.)

IV

A. As Christ's labors drew forth the indignation and opposition of the enemies of the Gospel (v. 7; Luke 15:2; 6:7), even so today. If men cannot attack our message, they will fault our manner of presenting it or our associations, etc. However, this should not discourage us from our mission.

B. It brought sonship to Zacchaeus (v. 9 b) and salvation (v. 9 a), that is, it caused him to become a "son of the free

woman," a child of faith (Gal. 4:21; 3:29). Even so it brings those that are won into the family of God. (Gal. 4:4-7; 3:26-29.)

C. It brought the fruits of his conversion to others (v. 8), as always. (Ex.: Paul, Acts 8:1; 9:1-2; cp. with 9:20, 31.)

D. It vindicated Christ's Gospel. (V. 8; Rom. 1:16; Phil. 1:3, 11; 4:14-19.)

Conclusion: Have we really done our part in this great work of Christ's Church? Must we not pray with the Introit: "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?" But, thank God, with the Psalmist (Ps. 130:4) we can accept Jesus as our Substitute and add: "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." (The Gospel, Matt. 18:24-27.) May we, therefore, "be filled with the fruits of righteousness" (Epistle, Phil. 1:11), so that we may "effectually" (Collect) carry out our Church's mission (v. 10). Amen.

THEODORE NICKEL

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 19:11-27

In spite of inconvenience, irksomeness, and drudgery, work is a source of joy and satisfaction to many people. The effort of their hands and minds enables numerous people to materialize some of their hopes and make their life and that of their neighbors more pleasant. After all, however, true happiness can't be achieved by working merely for the body and the transitory things of this life. In the Parable of the Pounds, Jesus points to work concerning the soul and the hereafter. Let us meditate on

JESUS' WORDS "OCCUPY UNTIL I COME!"

I. A blessing to those who heed it

II. A curse to those who spurn it

I

Though there is some similarity between Herod the Great and the nobleman (cf. Josephus, *War*, II, vi, Section 80-100; *Antiquities*, XVII, viii-xi), the Nobleman in the parable is Jesus. Taking a comprehensive view of the time that will elapse between His redemptive work on Calvary and the end

of the world, Jesus gives each one of His servants, beginning with the Apostles and reaching forward to Judgment Day, a pound, an insignificant amount as far as money goes (about \$20), and tells each one to work. The pound, however, cannot be anything else than the Gospel of Jesus and the gifts, physical, mental, and spiritual, which Jesus has conferred on His servants and with which those servants should work in spreading that Gospel.

Since immortal souls are at stake, working for Jesus is urgent. Every moment counts. Every worker in the Kingdom is obliged to make full use of his natural gifts, whether great or small, in speaking and living the Gospel.

Nothing could stop the Apostles. They faced threats, imprisonment, shame, and death. Yet they worked and acquitted themselves well in the task assigned them. Nothing could stop Luther. Neither Pope nor excommunication could deter him in his work for Jesus. Nothing could stop the fathers of our Synod. They brushed laxity in doctrine and living aside and consistently used the pound Jesus had entrusted to them. And nothing must stop us at the beginning of the second century of our Synod. Though the world is enticing us and unionism is so alluring, we must continue to hear the word of Jesus "Occupy until I come."

Those who work for Jesus are the ones who shall hear the blessed words "Well done, thou good servant, etc." But work precedes reigning with Jesus.

II

Some regard the judgment Jesus pronounced on the third servant in the parable harsh and unjustified, but this servant was both lazy and foolish. His effort at justifying his inaction was only camouflage. He had failed to recognize Jesus, the import of the Gospel and the gifts committed to his trust, his need of salvation, the terribleness of losing his soul. In returning the pound, he spurned Jesus and His love. He was indifferent to the needs of his own soul and uninterested in the spiritual life of his neighbor. Jesus did him no injustice in taking from him what he did not want.

There are too many within the pale of the Church who are like this foolish servant. Jesus has given them a pound and has told them to work. But indifference, love of the

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world, pursuit of pleasure, wealth, and a host of other interests cause them to lay the pound aside. But they do so to their own eternal hurt. Wailing and gnashing of teeth will be their just eternal lot.

These foolish, indifferent people are just as bad in the sight of Jesus as the open enemies who say: "We will not have this man to reign over us." The Jews before Pontius Pilate were not the only ones who spoke similar words. Millions have uttered them since then. Whether they are Caiaphases, Porphyries, Ingersolls, or others of their kind, they will not be able to escape Jesus, whom they spurned. The words "Depart from Me," etc.," will overwhelm them and deprive them of peace forever. May none of you join the ranks of the enemies of Jesus! Heed the words of Jesus "Occupy until I come!" They are urgent, impelling, loving. They mean life and happiness forever. **ALEX WM. C. GUEBERT**

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 16:10-17

Context: Story of the unjust steward. Jesus wanted to illustrate proper wisdom in preparing for the future. (See Stoeckhardt, *Bibl. Gesch.*, p. 204.) Lord commends not unjust act, but the wisdom and ingenuity of unjust steward. (V. 8.) Children of this world display greater wisdom and shrewdness than children of light. (V. 8.) Christ's application. (V. 9.) Here today's text continues:

THE CHRISTIAN EVALUATES TEMPORAL POSSESSIONS AND TRUE RICHES

- I. He recognizes temporal possessions as a trust.*
- II. He recognizes the transcendent value of true riches*

I

Text calls temporal possessions "unrighteous mammon" (v. 11) because so often there is so much unrighteousness connected with the acquisition and possession of it. Money in itself is not wrong, or sinful.

God gives us our money and possessions. Whatever we are, and whatever we have, comes from the Lord. Cf. Matt. 25:15; John 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7; Eccl. 5:19; Deut. 8:18.

God expects us to use His gifts faithfully. Note repetition of word "faithful." (Vv. 10, 11, 12; cf. 1 Cor. 4:2.) He has entrusted them to us to be managed for Him, to be used according to His plan. We are to be administrators, stewards. (Luke 19:13; 1 Pet. 4:10.)

God does not want us to serve mammon. Mammon is not to be our lord, but our servant. (V. 13.) If we serve mammon, we hate God. If our heart is set upon riches, there is no room for God. Note the "either or" in v. 13.

The Pharisees serve as an example. They were covetous. (V. 14.) Christ's forceful presentation aroused their ire. They "derided" Him, i. e., they snuffed up their noses at Him and thus gave expression to their deepest derision, scorn, and contempt. They could not refute Christ's statement. Jesus had touched a very sore spot in their lives. Hence the Savior calls attention to their outward righteousness, the high esteem in which men held them, etc. (v. 15), but immediately calls attention to horrors and abominations which God sees. — The world is full of such a display of outward righteousness, but God sees beneath the beautiful veneer. We need to look into our own hearts. Is any covetousness there? That ruins everything. That is a sin of which not only the rich, but also the poor may be guilty. The love of money is not limited to the hearts of wealthy people. Wherever it is found, it is "the root of all evil." Everyone has some possessions. Everyone makes some use of them. What does God see in our heart? Only that counts. To God we must render account.

Our temporal possessions are not our own. (V. 12.) — We receive them as an inheritance, as God's special blessing upon our labors, as a result of the labor of others who work for us. At best we can merely use them and enjoy them here in life — ultimately we must leave them (1 Tim. 6:7).

II

V. 11. Savior speaks of *true* riches. The contrast brings out their superiority and transcendent greatness. They are the great spiritual treasures and blessings which God's grace has provided for us. This embodies all our spiritual gifts in this life and in eternal life. They are *true* riches because they are of incomparably greater value than all earthly possessions. They are true riches because Christ paid for them with His precious blood.

V. 12: "that which is your own." Spiritual blessings, strictly speaking, are not a trust, but a gift. Jesus purchased them for us. The Holy Spirit brings them to us through the means of grace. We appropriate them by the faith which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. These blessings are our very own. They will not be taken from us. We shall not leave them behind when we depart this life. Our Christian death rather leads us into the fullest use and enjoyment of these blessings. We shall have them as our very own throughout eternity.

The true riches will motivate our life and conduct. The whole emphasis on *faithful* service centers in service rendered unto God, and this implies service unto the fellow man. The Savior calls attention to the fact that since John's preaching of the Kingdom of God men are "pressing" into it. Cf. Matt. 11:12-13. This by no means implies that the Law has been abrogated. (V. 17.) Such as enjoy the greater riches will put forth all the greater efforts to serve God and man. This bars service of mammon. Christians make mammon subservient. With it they do so much good. They feed and clothe the poor. (Relief in war-torn countries.) They arrange for adequate support of pastors and teachers. They liberally support the cause of missions at home and abroad. They invest in God's kingdom and for God's kingdom. They burn with fervent desire to share the *true* riches with others.

J. W. BEHNKEN

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 12:35-44

A religion for this life only prevails in wide church circles today. A religious philosophy which ignores the eternal destiny of the soul perverts Christianity into its opposite and destroys souls. (1 Cor. 15:19.) The religion of the Bible directs sinners away from the earth to heaven as their real goal. The Christian religion is otherworldly. Therefore Christians live their lives in view of eternity.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF THE JUDGMENT DAY

- I. Believers cultivate an attitude of watchful waiting*
- II. They labor faithfully in their calling*

I

1. Vv. 35-36. Not only in old age, but immediately upon conversion the believer looks forward to his Lord's second advent. His treasure is in heaven, therefore his heart also. (V. 34.) "Loins girded about," the long outer garment fastened up—always done before travel or labor (2 Kings 4:29; Acts 12:8). "Lights burning," instantly ready to open the door, to light the way, and to wait on groom and bride, even if they return from the wedding festivities in the middle of the night. Thus latter-day Christians are pictured in the New Testament. (Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:7.) They "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18). Luther: "The apostle exhorts us . . . to turn our backs upon the present life, which passes away and which we must finally forsake, and constantly directs our eyes upon that future life with a solid and certain hope, because it is our portion and will abide forever" (IX:932). Again: "A Christian should look upon this temporal life with closed eyes, but the future life he should look at with eyes opened wide in a clear shining light" (IX:933).

2. Such eager waiting for the Lord's second advent implies *constant watchfulness*. (Vv. 38-40.) A faithful servant is awake and alert, though his master come at the least-expected hour of the night. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15); "at an hour when ye think not" (v. 40). Had the goodman of the house been alert, as a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods would have remained in peace (Luke 11:21). The watchful believer daily prays: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). Then sudden destruction cannot come upon him as travail upon a woman with child (1 Thess. 5:3); rather he looks up and lifts up his head, because his redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28).

The Christian life in view of the Judgment Day is a paradox. While he daily expects his Lord's return, he devotes himself to his calling as though there were no Judgment Day.

II

1. Vv. 41-43. The Lord's reply to Peter's question (v. 41) implies: Yes, you disciples first. As a faithful and wise steward conscientiously carries out his lord's orders in admin-

istering his estate, so the disciples and all Christians, ever watchful for the Lord's second advent, give themselves wholeheartedly to the faithful performance of their Christian obligations. They labor in their calling (2 Thess. 3:12; Luke 5:2); are zealous unto good works (Titus 2:14), especially in testifying of the redemption in Christ (Matt. 24:14); keep themselves unspotted from the world (2 Pet. 3:14); use this world as not abusing it (1 Cor. 7:31); regard their afflictions as light (2 Cor. 4:17) and rejoice therein (1 Pet. 4:13).

2. A question addressed to the conscience: "Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward?" (V. 42.) Luther: "It is correctly taught, but not learned readily; preached aright, but not easily believed; exhorted properly, but not easily followed out; well said, but badly done. . . . Verily, it should not be so with Christians, but contrariwise. . . . A Christian should be in this life on earth only with the left hand, but with the right hand and all his heart and soul he should be in the yonder life, in heaven, and constantly await it joyously in certain hope." (IX:933.) Again: "To such eternal life have we been baptized; to this end Christ has redeemed us by His death and blood; to this end did we receive the Gospel." (IX: 939.)

Conclusion: vv. 43-44; v. 37 b.

L. J. ROEHM

