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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

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Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

The homiletic material presented for the church year 1947—1948 differs from that of other years in a twofold way. First, we are presenting an entirely new series of pericopes, that of the Nassau System, gotten out by Bishop Heydenreich in 1843. His system presents texts for a period of seven years. We have not strictly chosen the texts of any one particular year, nor have we limited ourselves exclusively to texts from the four Gospels. Secondly, instead of the usual longer sermon outline, we are giving a few brief paragraphs referring to the suitability of the text for the particular Sunday, its meaning, any pitfalls that should be avoided, special emphases that need to be given, any problem that may present itself, and the goal which the preacher should have in mind. To this we are adding a very brief sermon outline. We trust that this change in texts and sermon material will appeal to our preachers.

J. H. C. FRITZ

THE NASSAU PERICOPEs

Texts are taken from Series A of the Nassau System. Those taken from another series of the same system are marked with an asterisk. Texts with double asterisks are our own choice.

1st Sunday in Advent	Luke 19:1-10
2d Sunday in Advent	Luke 17:20-25
3d Sunday in Advent	Luke 3:1-6
4th Sunday in Advent	John 8:12-14
Christmas	Luke 2:1-14
Sunday after Christmas	John 11:25-29 *
New Year's Eve	Matt. 25:14-30 **
New Year's Day	Luke 4:16-20 *
Sunday after New Year	John 4:5-14 *
Epiphany	Matt. 3:13-17 *
1st Sunday after Epiphany	John 1:43-51 **
2d Sunday after Epiphany	John 2:12-22 **
Septuagesima	John 6:66-71 *
Sexagesima	John 12:37-43 *
Quinquagesima	Matt. 20:20-28 *
Invocavit	Phil. 2:5-11 *
Reminiscere	John 13:1-17 *
Oculi	John 13:31-38 *
Laetare	Heb. 10:26-31 *
Judica	1 John 3:16-24 *
Palm Sunday	John 17:20-26 *

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Maundy Thursday	Matt. 26: 26-29 *
Good Friday	2 Cor. 5: 18-21 **
Easter Sunday	Luke 24: 1-9
Quasimodogeniti	Luke 24: 36-48 *
Misericordias Domini	John 21: 15-19 *
Jubilate	2 Cor. 4: 10-18 *
Cantate	John 11: 20-27 *
Rogate	Matt. 7: 7-11 *
Ascension Day	John 14: 1-6 *
Exaudi	1 Pet. 1: 3-9
Pentecost	1 Cor. 12: 1-11 *
Trinity Sunday	Matt. 28: 16-20
1st Sunday after Trinity	Luke 12: 13-21
2d Sunday after Trinity	1 John 2: 15-17
3d Sunday after Trinity	Luke 7: 36-50
4th Sunday after Trinity	Mark 6: 17-29 *
5th Sunday after Trinity	Luke 10: 17-24 *
6th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 18: 7-9
7th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 14: 14-23
8th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 7: 24-27
9th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 25: 14-30
10th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 21: 33-44
11th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 5: 1-12
12th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 6: 9-15
13th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 11: 28-30
14th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 7: 13-14
15th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 6: 19-23
16th Sunday after Trinity	Eph. 3: 14-19 *
17th Sunday after Trinity	Mark 2: 23-28
18th Sunday after Trinity	Mark 12: 28-34 *
19th Sunday after Trinity	Rom. 5: 1-5
20th Sunday after Trinity	Luke 9: 28-36 *
21st Sunday after Trinity	John 9: 1-11 *
22d Sunday after Trinity	Col. 3: 12-15
23d Sunday after Trinity	(Reformation)
24th Sunday after Trinity	Mark 12: 41-44 **
25th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 19: 27-30 **
26th Sunday after Trinity	Matt. 25: 1-13
Thanksgiving	

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

LUKE 19: 1-10

The Text and the Day. — This story provides unexpected applications and fresh points of view for the beginning of the church year. "This day" and all of vv. 9 and 10 provide parallels to the Advent idea: a new day of grace, a new proclamation of the Gospel, now begins; let us greet it with Zacchaeus' zest and faith.

Notes on Meaning. — The "chief" of the tax collectors was suspected of special graft. — The setting of the story is the

final journey to Jerusalem, just prior to the Palm Sunday account of the Gospel for the Day. — 8: Zacchaeus “stands” before his accusers, makes his defense. That defense is that he restores and gives manifold what he owes. The present tenses may signify intention for the future (so many commentators). But they may also indicate existing practice which should stop the mouth of the accusers. 9: also a son of Abraham; cf. Rom. 4: 3 ff.; and the opposite, Rev. 2: 9; Phil. 3: 2, 3. 10: the core of the Gospel of Christ; cf. John 3: 17; Luke 5: 32.

Preaching Pitfalls. — “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down” may be construed to be the converting invitation of Christ; then the works of charity are future intent; and the sermon may stress the converting power of the Gospel. In that case Zacchaeus’ interest in Christ before He spoke is preliminary to his conversion, a preparation for faith. Simpler, and more preachable, is the assumption that Zacchaeus harbored faith in Christ before and hence sought to behold Him (cf. Stoeckhardt); then his hospitality and charity are fruits of faith, the faith to which Jesus responds with forgiveness and blessing.

Preaching Emphases. — The outstanding lesson is the Savior’s attitude toward the sinner and the believing sinner’s attitude toward Christ. At the beginning of a new church year: Though Christians have heard the Gospel before, they welcome a new year of worship as a chance to come closer to Jesus; and Jesus, in return, guarantees His salvation and its fruits. — Jesus’ repudiation of self-righteous belittling of the converted sinner is not a point to stress in a sermon for this day.

Problem and Goal. — Christians who have heard the Gospel may find the new church year uninteresting and unchallenging. That is a symptom of the flesh. Rather will they as Christ’s men welcome each new proclamation of the Gospel of Christ with joy and be happy to reveal the fruits of that Gospel in their lives.

Outline:

A NEW YEAR OF WORSHIP AND LIFE WITH JESUS

I. He promises to be Savior and Friend.

A. He gave Himself as man’s Redeemer.

B. He seeks the lost.

C. He rejoices to help and to be with His own.

II. Hence let us welcome Him zestfully.

- A. Our sins and problems ever remind us that we should seek Him.
- B. Despite preoccupations of life, we can find Him in the Gospel.
- C. Our whole life will be the reflection of His presence with us.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

LUKE 17:20-25

The Text and the Day. — The Gospel of the old pericopic series speaks of the coming of Christ to Judgment; also the Propers for the day. Our Gospel text likewise: "in His day."

Notes on Meaning. — Christ had been speaking of the Kingdom of God. The Pharisees asked when it would come. Their conception of the Kingdom was that of a kingdom of external power and glory. Not so, said Christ, but "the Kingdom of God is within you." Did Christ mean to say that the Kingdom of God is within the heart of the believers? Some commentators deny this, saying that the context forbids such an interpretation, for the Kingdom of God was not within the hearts of the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking. These commentators translate "among you," Christ telling the Pharisees that in order to find the Kingdom of God, they would not have to go far nor wait long for it. Other commentators say that not the "you," but the "within" was stressed by Christ and that He, indeed, meant to stress the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God as it is effected in the hearts of believers. This, after all, is the thought that must be stressed over against the wrong conception which the Pharisees had of the Kingdom of God.

Preaching Pitfalls. — It should be noted that, in the first part of the text, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees concerning the nature of the Kingdom of God and, in the second part, to His disciples on a new subject, the consummation of the Kingdom.

Preaching Emphases. — The season of Advent should not be lost sight of. Christ's advent into the flesh, His entire work of redemption, v. 25, had as its purpose His advent into the hearts of men by repentance and faith, and a hopeful and

cheerful looking forward by all believers to Christ's advent in glory on Judgment Day.

Problem and Goal. — Amidst temptations, tribulations, and trials, Christians at times grow weary and impatient, v. 22. In the text, Christ gives them the assurance of their salvation and of His sudden, v. 24, but sure appearance for their final deliverance and eternal happiness.

Outline:

TWO ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- I. Its nature, as it is here upon this earth, vv. 20, 21.
 - A. Not an external kingdom of power and glory, v. 20; John 18:36, but
 - B. A spiritual Kingdom effected by faith in the hearts of men, vv. 21, 25; John 18:37; Rom. 14:17; John 3:3.
- II. Its final consummation at Christ's coming in glory, vv. 23-25.
 - A. Since Christ has completed His work of redemption, we are to look forward to His coming in glory, v. 25 (no so-called millennium), when He shall take His own unto Himself.
 - B. Christ's coming will be sudden, v. 24; no man knows when, Matt. 24:36. Therefore we should at all times be prepared, Matt. 24:42.
 - C. In the meantime we should patiently await Christ's coming, v. 22, and amidst temptations and trials be kept in faith through Word and Sacrament, 1 Pet. 1:3-9.

J. H. C. FRITZ

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

LUKE 3:1-6

The Text and the Day. — Many Gospel-pericope systems have chosen selections for this Sunday which deal with the work and the message of John the Baptist. This text presents John the Baptist's powerful call to repentance, a call which is of utmost importance at the present time. Advent is essentially a preparatory season for Christmas, but the Christmas message falls on hearts of stone if those hearts are unrepentant.

Notes on Meaning.—The names of the potentates, vv. 1, 2, ought to receive more than a passing glance. They are the diorama in which we see the power and glamour of the world and the pride and the callousness of the misguided leaders of the Church. Rome and Jerusalem—what power! Yet what corruption, sin and hardheartedness! Against the confused philosophical welter of Rome, Greece, and Judaism there arises the Word of God, committed to a lonely, austere, but magnetic man in the Jordan valley. The rigor of the Law and the sweetness of the Gospel fall from his lips. The cardinal words of the text—“repentance,” “remission of sins,” “flesh,” “salvation”—have a familiar ring for every truly Christian minister. But only the Biblical meaning of these terms is the meaning which can be preached from our pulpits. The picturesque language of Isaiah’s words emphasizes the necessity of God’s working through His Word to effect conversion in men’s hearts. Modern bulldozers can push tons of earth with ease. Explosives invented by man can tear gaping holes into the soil. But no man would want to think of leveling the Rockies, the Himalayas, and other mountain ranges. That task defies human effort. Converting a human being, even one, defies all human effort. God alone effects conversion and causes man to embrace the salvation He has prepared in Christ. “All flesh” in v. 6 is a comprehensive term. All who repent and believe in Christ shall see the salvation of God for all eternity. Those who do not repent shall also see the salvation of God, but see it from across the bottomless pit, like the rich man in hell, and lament forever, because they failed to heed the call to repent.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The names of international and national figures will not mislead a faithful ambassador of Christ to spend too much time on a dissertation on the alarming world situation today. Neither will he attempt to press every poetic expression of Isaiah into some spiritual counterpart. He recognizes the desperate need of the human heart in this era and gives his attention to preaching only the whole counsel of God.

Preaching Emphases.—Millions of words were spoken at recent criminal trials. Millions more are being spoken about the probable economic world collapse. Those words are nothing more than a breath of wind in the face of the Word that

has come to us in the Bible. That Word has effective power to turn man from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from hatred to love, from the pursuits of war to the pursuits of peace. Each age is essentially the same — godless, irreverent, apostate. In each age, God is ever the same, sending voices crying in a wilderness of sin that men should repent and turn back to Him. He promises forgiveness in Christ. No promise of His has ever been curtailed.

Problem and Goal. — Our problem, on the one hand, is to reach as many people as possible, including our parishioners. Our task, on the other hand, is to keep those with Christ who have learned to know Him and love Him. In both instances it is essential for people to realize what it means to repent and believe in Christ. The preacher cannot grow weary of preaching repentance, and the people, when they realize what repentance is, will not grow tired of hearing what the Word of God has to say on repentance and its blessed fruits.

Outline:

THE GREAT ADVENT CALL: "PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD!"

- I. Prepare in true repentance.
 - A. Realize your sinful state.
 - B. Turn to Christ with all your heart.
- II. Prepare by living God's Word.
 - A. Live the Christian life.
 - B. Lead others to Christ.
 - C. Seek the answer to all your problems in Christ.
 - D. Look to Christ for a peaceful departure from this life.

A. W. C. GUEBERT

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

JOHN 8:12-14

The Text and the Day. — Since it is the Sunday before Christmas, text and sermon should prepare for the festival, even as the Introit, the Collect, and the Gradual.

Notes on Meaning. — Man by nature is in the darkness of sin, leading him into eternal darkness, Is. 60:2. Christ is the Light of the world, v. 12. By His work of redemption, Christ

rescued man from the darkness of sin. Now those who follow Christ, believe in Him, shall have the light of life. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men," John 1:4. The followers of Christ no longer walk in the darkness of sin, v. 12. Their attitude towards God has been changed. He is now their Father, and they are His children. That changes their entire life. Their attitude toward man and their whole outlook upon things material have been changed. — The Pharisees did not accept the testimony of Christ, because He bore record of Himself. They would rule one single witness out of court, v. 13. But Jesus could bear record of Himself, because He is the eternal Son of God, sent by the Father for the redemption of the world and returning to the Father after the work had been completed, v. 14. Since His record is divine, no additional witness is needed. His Word is final. Christ speaks to us through the Scriptures.

Preaching Pitfalls. — While it is true that we Christians, too, are the light of the world, Christ's light being reflected in us, Matt. 5:14, this is not mentioned in this text.

Preaching Emphases. — The emphasis in the text and in the sermon centers in Christ's word "I am the Light of the world."

Problem and Goal. — The preacher should not fail to tell why men still live in the darkness of sin. It is because of their unbelief. He should also not fail to tell that faith is not a mere historical acceptance of Christ and His work of redemption.

Outline:

CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

- I. Why all men need this light, v. 12 b.
 - A. Man by nature is in the darkness of sin.
 - B. All misery in the world results from sin and finally leads to the eternal misery of hell.
- II. By His work of redemption, Christ became the Light of the world, v. 12 a.
 - A. As the sinner's Substitute, Christ fulfilled the Law, Gal. 4:4, 5.
 - B. As the sinner's Substitute, He suffered the punishment of sin, 2 Cor. 5:21.

- III. Christ revealed Himself to us as the Light of the world, vv. 13-14.
- A. As man could not redeem himself, so he could not know of God's plan of redemption.
 - B. Christ's self-revelation is unique but trustworthy, because He is the Son of God.
- IV. Who shall have the light of life, v. 12 b?
- A. Not those who continue in sin and unbelief, John 3:18-20, but
 - B. Those who repent, believe, and bring forth the fruits of faith, John 3:36, 21. J. H. C. FRITZ

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1947

LUKE 2:1-14

The Text and the Day.— Since the text is the wonderful account of St. Luke, of the birth of Jesus, the real Christmas story, no better text can be found for the anniversary of the Savior's birth. The Propers for this day, the Introit taken from Isaiah 9, the Collect stressing the fact that God was made man, the Epistle bringing the Christmas prophecy of the Old Testament from Isaiah, or the universality of salvation through Christ from Titus 2, all form a definite unit.

Notes on Meaning.— The first part of the text merely sets the stage for the miracle of the ages, determines the historical setting for the great event which has divided all time and gives the approximate date of the happening, the reasons for the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. All of these facts, however, are minor considerations. They are like the golden prongs that hold the precious jewel. Vv. 6 and 7 tell the miracle of Christmas, the greatest event in history, in the simplest, factual language. "She brought forth her first-born Son." These seven brief words in the original Greek, as well as in the English translation, certainly are a masterpiece of simple reporting. The statement "No room for them in the inn" makes room for many surmises as to the reason, but in reality is but a simple statement to explain why the newborn Savior was laid in a manger. Vv. 8 and 9 describe the first Christmas preacher, God's holy angel, the small, but devout

first Christmas congregation, the simple, but believing shepherds, and the first Christmas worship, held under the vaulted dome of the Palestinian skies. The Christmas message of the angelic preacher, recorded in vv. 10 and 12, is a message intended to remove fear, intended to bring happiness and joy based upon the wonderful Christmas fact that a Savior had come for all people, come in poverty and lowliness, but come to give God all glory. The last two verses of the text, describing the angel choir and the angel song, indicate that the purpose of Christ's coming is to glorify God and to bring peace to men.

Preaching Pitfalls.— Since the wonderful Christmas story is so old, Christmas preachers often feel rather helpless in preparing a Christmas sermon and look for novel, often rather foolish, ways and methods to present the Christmas message. They are very apt to get lost in a maze of dates, statistics, and historical facts, thinking only of the first section of the text. Another danger in the well-known Christmas Gospel for the preacher is the danger of stressing only minor details—the poverty of Jesus, the cruelty and heartlessness of the innkeeper, the beauty of the angels' song. Preachers with Modernistic leanings like to stress the human nature of Christ and forget the fact that He is Christ, the Lord. The heart of the message of Christmas, the joyous news of the coming of the Savior for the entire fallen human race, is all too easily pushed into the background.

Preaching Emphases.— In delivering the message of Christmas on the basis of the text, the emphasis should be on the simple, but all-important fact that God's only-begotten Son became a human being, our brother, in order to become our Savior. Cf. John 1: 14; Titus 2: 11, 13, 14 a. The lowliness, the humiliation of the divine Christ, may well be stressed, but we dare not forget the honor and the acclaim that is due Him who in spite of great lowliness is Christ the Lord, and due to God the Father, who out of love for the world gave His only-begotten Son.

Problem and Goal.— The problem is to make proud, sinful man realize the need of a Savior from sin and the fact that the lowly Son of the lowly maid of the house of David is the one and only Savior, and to give all Christmas worshipers the consoling truth that Christ is the Savior of *all mankind*, with-

out distinction of color, race, or social standing. Because the Christmas message is old, men are inclined to listen with deaf ears, but as long as we preach the Word, which is Spirit and life, God can produce marvelous results, which we cannot produce with the greatest of human philosophy or the most beautiful Christmas music and decorations.

Outline:

THE WONDERFUL BIRTH OF THE WONDERFUL CHILD

- I. The simple but interesting setting.
 - A. God's hand, in arranging matters, setting the stage for the most dramatic event in history (vv. 1-5).
 - B. The simple but miraculous birth. Mary the virgin, the Christ Child, God made man. (Vv. 6, 7.)
- II. The glorious announcement of the wonderful birth.
 - A. The angelic Christmas messenger (v. 9).
 - B. The angelic Christmas sermon (vv. 10-12).
 - C. The angelic Christmas song (vv. 13, 14).
- III. The wonderful purpose of the wonderful birth of Jesus.
 - A. He comes to save men from sin, from fear, from hopelessness and despair.
 - B. He comes to save all people, Jews and Gentiles, shepherds and scientists. He comes to save *us*, no matter what our situation in life may be.
 - C. He comes to glorify God and to bring peace, eternal peace, to man. E. L. ROSCHKE

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

JOHN 11:25-29

The Text and the Day.—The last Sunday in December, the end of the year, reminds us of the end of our days. Faith in the newborn Savior removes all fear of death, sustains us in our sorrows and bereavements, and gives us comfort and hope in our dying hour.

Notes on Meaning.—“Resurrection and life” are essentially the same; life is the opposite of death, and resurrection is the annulment of death. “Shall live” does not mean shall come to life on the day of resurrection, but continue to live from the moment of physical death. “Liveth and believeth in

Me" — to believe in Christ is to live in Christ, live forever. "Shall never die," more exactly, "in no way shall he die forever." "Believest thou this?" refers to who Christ is, not only to what He did. What Christ did has value only because He is the Son of God. "The Christ" embraces all that the Old Testament contains in its promises to Israel. Martha called Mary secretly so that the hostile Jews should not intercept the interview with the Savior which was to follow.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The words of Jesus, vv. 25, 26, are Gospel throughout. Martha shows by her confession that she understood not only who Jesus was, but also the purpose of His coming. While the context is not to be ignored, the text will stand alone. The statement is general that whosoever believes in Jesus shall never die in the sense in which death is usually regarded by men. What happened in the raising of Lazarus gave proof to the words of Jesus, but we believe even though we do not see.

Preaching Emphases. — V. 27 is of primary importance. Faith in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, must be stressed. The sting of death is sin. Christ atoned for all sin, and thus death has lost its sting. Indeed, death is abolished because sin has been removed. All that Christ has procured for us is appropriated by faith, i. e., not a mere historic or intellectual acceptance of the truths regarding Christ's person and work, but trust and confidence of the heart. Through faith the believer is joined to Christ, who is Life itself. Hence there is no real death for the believer. Death is merely the entrance into the fullness of life.

Problem and Goal. — True Christmas joy is produced by faith in the newborn Savior. Such joy shall and will accompany the believer throughout his life, also in days of sorrow and bereavement, indeed, even in the hour of death, if he will remain steadfast in his faith.

Outline:

FAITH WHICH OVERCOMES DEATH

I. The nature of such faith.

A. Not any faith, but faith in Jesus Christ.

B. Not faith in Christ, a mere teacher or founder of a new religion, but in Christ the Redeemer, who came to overcome death.

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C. Not a mere intellectual knowledge of this truth,
but trust and confidence in Christ and His work.

II. The power of such faith.

A. The believer, it is true, must die.

B. But in death he does not lose life, but enters into
eternal life.

C. He does not, like the unbeliever, experience the
terror of death.

WALTER A. BAEPLER

NEW YEAR'S EVE

MATT. 25:14-30

The Text for This Occasion.—The text is one of the parables of Jesus. The whole parable may be used, in order to make the sermon completely textual; but on an occasion like New Year's Eve, when the minds of people are tense, it may be better to select one or more verses for the text and to supply the rest in the sermon. V. 14 could readily be used as a short text to captivate the attention of the hearers. The worshiper feels the nearness of the end of the year. He is reminded of the end of life and of the end of the world. It is a good time to impress the great truths of our faith in Christ.

Notes on Meaning.—The Savior's oft-repeated expression "The kingdom of heaven is like" can readily be paraphrased by "in religion it is like this." A talent was a very large sum of money, sometimes given as ten thousand dollars. It is used in the parable to bring out the fact that the Lord is giving us very great gifts and opportunities and expects great use of them. The Lord's gifts to us are not picayune trifles that may be disregarded at will.

Preaching Pitfalls.—Every parable was given by the Savior to teach one definite lesson, and everything in the parable has the purpose of making that one lesson clearer and more significant. Outside the one lesson the other parts have no special significance of their own. They must not be stressed as having a teaching of their own. It would be folly to make any applications based on the treatment of these three men to the business methods of today.

Preaching Emphases. — The lesson of the text is that God regulates the lives of His children on earth, that He gives to all duties to perform and responsibilities to undertake, each according to his ability, and that He expects everyone to exercise true stewardship, to make use of the gifts and opportunities that he has, and that God will take everyone to account for the use he made of his gifts and opportunities. On New Year's Eve these lessons can be woven into the situation that presents itself at the close of the year.

Problem and Goal. — The goal should be to counter the present-day seeking for pleasure at the end of the year and to inculcate serious thoughts. Our faces should be turned backward: to see what God has done for us in the past year, to think with repentant hearts about our sins of omission; and we should renew our resolve to be better followers of the Savior in the year to come.

Outline:

Often in history certain years have been given special names. 47 B. C. was called the Year of the Great Confusion, because it was the beginning of the Julian Calendar. There was great confusion of dates. 1882 was called the Year of the Great Comet. 1517 is the Year of the Reformation. The past year may be called

THE YEAR OF GOD-GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES

- I. God regulated our lives and led us in His paths.
- II. God gave us opportunities to care for our souls and to serve our fellow men.
- III. God expected us to make proper use of these opportunities, and He demands an accounting from us.

As we see and admit and repent of our failures, let us flee to the mercy and grace of God in Jesus, our Savior, and implore the Lord's help to do better in the new year.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

