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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

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Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

NEW YEAR'S DAY

LUKE 4:16-20

The Text and the Day. — The Epistle and the Gospel assure us that the new year will be an "acceptable year of the Lord"; Epistle: the Law and the Old Testament in God's plan and preparation for the fullness of the time; Gospel (also Introit): His name is Jesus, Savior — the time of salvation is fulfilled. The Gradual shows the preaching of Jesus (in Nazareth) as the climax of prophetic activity; the Prophet ("the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me") tells us what the new year has in store for us. The Gradual also guarantees that we and our times are a part of the "acceptable year of the Lord"; the universality of the New Year message: "in the sight of the heathen," "all the ends of the earth."

Notes on Meaning. — The words of Jesus are clothed in Old Testament prophetic imagery. Some commentators believe the picture is taken from the deliverance of Israel from captivity and exile. Others believe that the "shadow" is the Old Testament institution of the Jubilee Year. The text reflects the observance of this Old Testament festival: announced by silver trumpet blasts (Hebrew: *jobel*, hence Jubilee Year), liberty, deliverance, freedom from slavery and imprisonment, restitution of property to the dispossessed and the poor (cp. Lev. 25:8 ff.). Is. 40:9; 52:7; Ps. 68:10-11. The "prisoners" of the text would seem to presuppose foreign captors; but the word is used in a wider sense in the New Testament. — The text quotes Is. 61:1-2 according to the LXX. Difference: Isaiah has: "The opening of the prison to them that are bound"; Luke: "And the recovering of sight to the blind." One explanation is that the meaning is the same: The prisoner blinded in a dark dungeon sees the light of day again. — "To set at liberty them that are bruised" is not a quotation from Is. 61, but reproduces Is. 58:6. — Did Jesus actually read only these few words from Isaiah? Undetermined whether this passage was the regular appointed pericope from the Prophets ("haphtorah") for the day. No doubt Luke is recording the

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"text" upon which Jesus based His sermon. He stops in the middle of a verse from Isaiah (62:2), omitting "and the day of vengeance of our God," because Jesus did not wish to speak on that subject at that occasion. — The "poor," "brokenhearted," "captives," "blind," "bruised," are terms expressing our spiritual needs; Jesus meets these needs also in 1948. Compare the similarity of terminology and thought in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed (Happy New Year!) are the poor," etc.

Preaching Pitfalls. — "Year" does not mean directly a year of 365 days, but the era of salvation; 1948 is a part of that era. "Acceptable year" is not in the first place an admonition to live a life acceptable to God — sanctification. It is the time in which we become acceptable to God because it pleased the grace of God to bring salvation to us, Is. 49:8; Eph. 1:6; 2 Cor. 6:2.

Preaching Emphases. — The sermon should stress the enduring grace of God in Christ Jesus; Jesus Himself promises us this for the new year. — Hearing the message of salvation ("according to His custom") is necessary to obtain and hold these treasures.

Problem and Goal. — Because we have heard it before, the Gospel proclamation may not appear as something new for the new year. The hearer must realize the continued need of getting and remaining right with God. This remains the number-one problem of the new year. Only with the unburdening of the conscience and freedom from sin can we begin to find the solution of our ills. And when we are God's children in Christ, all other needs will be met so that we can truly be happy in 1948. The tensions and fear, individual, national, and international, should, however, be mentioned in this framework. *Christus Consolator.*

Outline:

GOSPEL TRUMPETS PROCLAIM 1948 A JUBILEE YEAR

I. Jesus proclaims it an acceptable year of grace:

A. Freedom B. Consolation C. Light

II. It will be an acceptable year for us,

A. If we hear the Gospel proclamation with believing hearts;

B. If we continue to hear it ("custom").

WALTER R. ROEHR

THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

JOHN 4:5-14

The Text and the Day.—The Sunday after New Year is one of the difficult Sundays to fit into the church calendar. Its place depends upon the day of the week on which New Year falls. Shall the Sunday after New Year be connected with Christmas or with Epiphany? Our text falls into the Epiphany cycle rather than into the Christmas cycle, since it reveals Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Notes on Meaning.—Jesus being wearied, V. 7, emphasizes His humanity.—There cometh a woman of Samaria, V. 8. This woman came alone. Ordinarily women did not come alone. Was she an outcast with whom other women would have nothing to do? "Jesus sinners doth receive."—The gift of God, V. 10, is the living water. God alone is the Giver of this living water. Jesus gives this living water. Emphasizes the divinity of Jesus. He is God who gives this water.—The living water is life, spiritual life, which springs into everlasting life, V. 14.

Preaching Emphases.—As introduction to the Epiphany Festival we emphasize the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Jesus reveals Himself as the Son of God in order to be recognized as the Savior of the world, not for mere self-glorification.—This is brought out in the fact that He promises eternal life. Additional emphasis is given to this in the manner in which Jesus answers the questions of the woman. Cf. also vv. 16-22. In order to lead the Samaritan woman to a sense of guilt, Jesus inquires about her husband. How kindly Jesus deals with this great sinner in order to win her! When she inquires about the place of worship, Jesus speaks to her about the purpose of worship, namely, to find salvation. Salvation is to be found where God is worshiped in spirit and in truth. No mere lip service, but sincerity, in spirit. Wherever the truth of God is found, there salvation is found. Jesus says: "I am the Truth."

Problem and Goal.—The great need of the Church is the preaching of the fundamental truths of Christianity, sin and grace. "What must I do to be saved?" That is still the great question in life. Jesus alone is the Savior, who has come into

the world to give life to perishing mankind. Man cannot help himself. Eternal life is the gift of God brought unto man through the divine human Savior. This salvation is certain, no room for doubt. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." This salvation is life, the life in God, freedom from the guilt and power of sin.

Outline:

OUR GLORIOUS SAVIOR

I. We find Him sitting at the well of Sychar, tired and thirsty.

A. Born in deep humility, of a lowly woman in Bethlehem. Subjected to the law by circumcision. Persecuted by Herod. Must flee and stay in Egypt until His enemies are dead. He is indeed like unto us.

B. Happy are we that we have a Savior who knows and understands our infirmities. He can take our place and become our Substitute.

II. Yet He is the eternal God.

A. As such He reveals Himself to the woman of Samaria. V. 10, also 16-18.

B. He offers unto the Samaritan woman what no man could give her, the water that will spring into everlasting life. He satisfies the deepest needs of the human soul for time and eternity.

ARTHUR BRUNN

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

MATT. 4:12-17

(The text appointed in the Nassau series is Matt. 3:13-17. That is also the Eisenach Gospel for the day; it was treated last year for the Sunday after New Year, C. T. M., V. XVII, p. 917 ff.)

The Text and the Day.—The Epiphany is the festival of Christ, the Light shining to the world. Though falling in 1948 on a Tuesday, it well deserves special observance, since its message should introduce the two Sundays after the Epiphany, and since it stresses Christ and His redemption as life also to the Gentiles. This text, with its brief summary of Jesus' message and its use of Isaiah 9 and 11, well ties in with Introit, Gradual, Collect, and Epistle.

Notes on Meaning. — The Baptism of Jesus, the temptation in the wilderness, and now the conclusion of the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, are the incidents which launch Our Lord into His prophetic and redemptive ministry. To this time His power and glory had been evident to but a few; now He enters upon its use and demonstration — Epiphany! — The Savior's removal from Nazareth to Capernaum is significant. Capernaum was on the highroads of traffic from north to south, and more: it was one of Palestine's chief Jewish contacts with the Gentiles! So significant is this fact to Matthew (as taxgatherer in this very area he saw the significance very well!) that he reviews the forecast of the redemption which Isaiah gives in chapters 9 and 11, and its account of help and life coming to these areas, and especially coming to the Gentiles. — The stress in the prophecy is in the contrast between darkness and light, a darkness which is death. The darkness and death is that of man without God; the light, that of God's own help and grace coming to him through the Redeemer. They saw — Epiphany! — Jesus Christ preached the identical message that had been John's. His invitation was not to arms and to political restoration like that of fake messiahs, but to the heart and soul: Get a new mind! He offered, not simply relief from Roman rule or the self-indulgence of human pride, but the kingdom of God, the rule in the heart of God Himself. That Kingdom was not a visionary hope, and His preachments about it were not escape and air castles; but this Kingdom, this rule, was at hand! He Himself, the Savior, offered it to men, as He redeemed them from death and sought to work the saving faith in them through His Gospel. The Epiphany is that we can see Him in action and say *now* — now the Kingdom moved before their eyes and was ready to move into their hearts. John 18:36 ff; Luke 17:21.

Preaching Pitfalls. — V. 17 is not to be distorted into the un-Lutheran but not unprecedented teaching: feel bad about your sin, so that you can attain the kingdom of God. Rather is the meaning: that which gives the new mind and heart, both turning away from sin and the new life, is the kingdom of God; and He who works the kingdom is Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

Problem and Goal. — This text addresses itself to man in darkness because of sin, in spiritual death because of separa-

tion from God. Its goal is to lead the hearer to find and to see the light of life in Christ, for He, in His human career and His work of redemption, works that life of God and kingdom of God in man. Hence a by-product of this sermon in the hearer is his rejoicing in Christ and his happiness to share Him with his friend who is still in darkness and with his world.

Outline:

CHRIST THE LIGHT OF LIFE TO THE WORLD

- I. Christ embarks upon the ministry that brings life to the world.
 - A. John the Baptist completes the preparation; Christ begins the work.
 - B. His work spreads life over Jew and Gentile alike.
- II. Christ preaches the message that is life to the world.
 - A. He helps the dead heart and mind to change and be new toward God.
 - B. He does so as Redeemer; His work of procuring forgiveness.
- III. Christ brings the light and joy that marks the new mind and soul.
 - A. The person, the people who emerge from darkness to light are joyful.
 - B. Then take and use that Light, in Gospel and Sacrament, that means the Light and Joy for us and many others and reveals Christ as Light.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 1:43-51

The Text and the Day. — The text sets Christ before His newly gained disciples in His Epiphany glory. In it Christ stands before them as the Son of God, the King of Israel, in whom they would see the heaven opened. The text also sheds light on the character of the disciples gained.

Notes on Meaning. — The events of the fourth of seven memorable days are chronicled in our text. — "Follow Me" is the familiar call to discipleship. — Philip is the only Greek

name among those of the disciples. Cf. John 12:20. — "Though the name Nathanael does not occur in the various lists of the Apostles, it has always been assumed that he is to be identified with Bartholomew, the name being a patronymic." — The Messianic prophecies of the Pentateuch and those in the Prophets were the basis of Philip's faith. — He who marks the sparrow's fall and who has numbered the very hairs on our head, also knew what went on in Nathanael's heart on a certain day and under a certain sycamore-fig tree. — Having heard this, Nathanael was led by the Lord to the appreciation of greater things — the heaven opened and the relation between God and sinful mankind restored. (Gen. 28:12-22.)

Preaching Pitfalls. — The finding of Philip was not accidental, but gracious providence. — We need not be startled that Jesus was known as Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Joseph was recognized as His legal father. In the course of time the disciples would learn that the Savior was conceived by the Holy Ghost. They would grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:18.) To Nathanael it seemed incredible that the promised Messiah would arise from insignificant Nazareth. His skepticism was answered by Philip with a simple "Come and see," the best remedy for preconceived notions.

Preaching Emphases. — The burden of the text is the manifestation of Jesus as the promised Messiah to the first little circle of disciples. This manifesting of the glory of the Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14) is still going on through the preaching and the teaching of the Gospel. Philip and Nathanael knew the Scriptures — Moses and the Prophets — and they went on to the words of the fulfillment in the New Testament. It is of paramount importance that we know the cardinal passages of the Old and the New Testament. On them our faith must rest. Through them the glory of the Savior is revealed to us and heaven opened. By them we are prepared and encouraged to gain more followers of Christ.

Problem and Goal. — The Savior revealed — this was a day of grace for Philip and Nathanael. The hearts of two disciples revealed — this was a day of joy for Jesus. One was a grateful missionary, and the other had a heart without duplicity. "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). But Nathanael was one. Are we recognizing the pres-

ent days of salvation? Are we on our part providing Christ with days of joy? The Gospel of John reveals the marked attention which Christ gave to the individual soul. When the individual comes to Baptism, when he receives absolution and the Holy Supper, when the Gospel is preached to him, the Savior is revealed in His glory. The aim of all preaching is the manifestation and the glorification of Christ. He must increase and the preacher decrease. (John 3:30.)

Outline:

CHRIST REVEALS THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON

I. By His Word He gains men for discipleship.

A. Through the Gospel the Savior gains a disciple.

B. Through the Gospel missionary interest is aroused, and another disciple is gained.

II. By His Word He gives evidence of His Divine Majesty.

A. Through the Gospel skepticism is overcome.

B. Through the Gospel intimate acquaintance is made with the Savior, and the glory of His person is revealed.

III. By His Word the Believers see heaven opened.

A. Through the Gospel the believers are led to confess and proclaim the glory of the Savior's person.

B. Thus through the Gospel the believers see heaven opened.

H. C. HARTING

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 2:12-22

The Text and the Day.—The Sunday belongs to the Epiphany cycle, and the text definitely stresses an epiphany or manifestation of Christ. The main thought of the propers for this day, praises to God for His wonderful works, can well be woven in with this text.

Notes on Meaning.—The buying and selling of animals occurred in the outer Temple court, not in the sanctuary. Money-changers did a thriving business by converting foreign money into legitimate Temple coins, with which the Jews paid the Temple tax. That which may have begun as a well-meant accommodation to worshippers coming from distant lands be-

came a *business* conducted right on the Temple grounds.— The sign demanded was to be a convincing proof of authority to interfere with that which had been sanctioned by common custom.— The cleansing of the Temple was repeated some two years later, showing that the old practice of commercializing religion had been reinstated.

Preaching Pitfalls.— There is a temptation to use this text for a point about improper financial practices in the church, especially v. 16. A warning along these lines may well be necessary, but this is certainly not the basic scope of the text; neither is it the dominant thought of the season for which the text has been selected. The text is Christ-centered; it contains a telling manifestation of Christ in the face of shady religious practices and in the face of enmity in high places. It also points forward to an eventual greater manifestation, the resurrection, and its incontrovertible proof of Christ's authority.

Preaching Emphases.— Christ is the central figure of this text. His authority was exercised in an unexpected manner. Challenged by His enemies and being faced by falsity in religious life, He, first of all, overcame the opposition by an act of divine majesty; then He proceeds to point at the still greater demonstration of His authority to come some two years later. In the sermon, the preacher may start with the general theme of Christ as the authoritative "sign" for all times, follow this through the text, and then proceed to apply the principle to modern church life. Ex.: Christ the authority in the Church of today; His authority against modern unbelief, skepticism, etc., as evidenced by His resurrection; modern unbelief cannot ignore this sign.

Outline:

JESUS, THE SIGN FOR OUR WORLD

- I. He is a sign of warning to those who reject Him.*
 - A. A warning against false religion.*
 - B. A warning that His authority is over all.*
- II. He is a sign of comfort to His followers.*
 - A. He ever defends His temple, the Church.*
 - B. He comforts them by His resurrection.*

H. O. A. KEINATH

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

JOHN 6: 66-71

The Text and the Day. — First of three Sundays in preparation for the Lenten season. Today's Epistle reminds of Israel in the wilderness drinking of the Rock which followed, Christ. The Gospel about the vineyard and their penny a day to show that men are saved entirely and only by the grace of God. The text, therefore, in perfect harmony: "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Notes on Meaning. — Attention must be paid to the context, the statements about the Bread of Life in the preceding verses 32-35 and in v. 58. Also the inability of the unconverted to understand this deep spiritual truth, v. 60. Verse 68 is one of the Bible's great "Jesus Only" texts like Acts 4:12 and John 14:6. It also contains the idea of the indwelling Spirit in the words of Jesus as in preceding v. 63. "One of you (not *hath*, but) is a devil." In Judas the actual attributes of Satan are operative.

Preaching Pitfalls. — "Disciples" in v. 66 must not be used in a restricted sense, but broadly as in Luke 7:11. They are followers who listened gladly to much of the preaching of Jesus and made an effort to improve their lives when reason dictated its practicability; now suddenly they are faced with the problem that the essence of the Gospel offends human reason. The question of Jesus: "Will ye also go away?" must not be construed in any shade of personal disappointment, but as pure love for the Twelve, because He knows so well that when you lose Jesus, you lose all. It should not be overlooked that Peter said: "We believe," taking for granted all the Twelve agreed; but Jesus tears to pieces this assumed idea that all of them without an exception are sincere believers.

Preaching Emphases. — One of the Bible's sharpest warnings against permitting sin to live in the heart, "He that should betray." The coming Lenten season calls for humility. Jesus does not name the betrayer. A minister may chastise very severely from the pulpit the sins of hearers, and his own, without naming offenders; for that would tear down instead of building up. The question in v. 67 calls for a decision for or against Christ. Before Peter testifies of his own and others'

faith, he gives all credit to the Lord who produces faith through the Word of spirit and life.

Problem and Goal.—The human heart is desperately wicked and deceitful, as is evidenced both by those who are offended and by the hypocrite who remains. But the love of Christ seeks to save. Therefore follow Rom. 10:9: "Confess with the mouth and believe with the heart."

Outline:

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

I. *Some go away from Jesus.*

A. *Walk no more with Christ — neglect Word and Sacraments.*

B. *Pretend to remain, but let sin dwell in the heart.*

II. *Some go with Jesus.*

A. *Knowing there is none other Savior.*

B. *Receiving His words of eternal life.*

C. *Confessing His name before men.*

HENRY G. HARTNER

