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## Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

Victor Mennicke

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

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## Homiletics

### The Nassau Pericopes

#### SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

JOHN 12:37-43

*The Text and the Day.*—The effect of the preaching of the Gospel is the central thought for this Sunday. In Paul this preaching produced utter disdain for the praise of men. (Epistle.) Some seed sown by the sower fell along the path and did not grow. (Gospel.)

*Notes on Meaning.*—This passage summarizes the final reaction of Israel against Jesus' message and works.—V. 37: They would not believe, and so they fulfilled prophecy. This condition applied to the time of the Prophets, but it was fully realized in the time of Christ. They would not believe, and so they eventually could not believe. Ex. 9:34 ff. When God hardens the heart, He brings just retribution on those who despise the grace offered them and consistently resist the ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 11:9. "Upon the sin of contempt follows the punishment of inability."—V. 41: When Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw the Savior.—V. 42: Believed on Him, i. e., had to admit that the word and miracles were genuine and divine. They were persuaded even that He was the Messiah. Yet, this was no true and living faith, no confidence in Him as the Mediator before the throne of God. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea did not belong to this class. That same week they publicly confessed their faith. Luke 23:50 ff.—The rulers' interest in the synagog centered in formalities and the praise of men more than in the acceptance of the Gospel.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*—The hardening of hearts is not to be confused with a supposed election to damnation. This text is not to be used for a sermon on predestination.—Jesus had clearly established Himself as God and Savior. Without this fact the entire text is unintelligible.—The "faith" of the authorities was not a weak faith, but a dead faith. James 2:17-19. Peter's refusal to confess Christ was not a sign of a weak faith, but indicated a lack of faith. No distinction is to be made between the unbelief of the people and that of the



rulers. The latter, because of their better knowledge of the Scriptures, were all the more convinced that He was "the One" who should come. Yet, even they refused to put their trust in Him and therefore received the greater damnation.

*Preaching Emphases.*—The text evidently warns us not to sin against better knowledge. During the Christmas season we have seen the Father's love. In the coming weeks of the Lenten season we shall hear about Christ's self-sacrificing love. These messages are to be accepted in true faith. We are not only to know the Savior, but also put our trust in Him. The refusal to accept the message of grace carries with it the gravest consequences.

*Problem and Goal.*—Since there is ever danger of becoming indifferent toward the preaching of the Gospel, the hearers must be warned in clear terms. They must be led to examine themselves. Without recognizing Christ as the Light of the world (v. 46), such examination is unprofitable.

*Outline:*

**ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF—A WARNING FOR ALL TIMES**

- I. They would not and, therefore, could not believe.
  - A. Israel willfully and consistently rejected the truth.
  - B. Their apostasy was predicted by Isaiah.
  - C. Hardening of hearts leads to God's judgment.
- II. The real cause of unbelief.
  - A. In particular—fear of the Pharisees.
  - B. In general—loving the praise of men more than the praise of God.
- III. How we may avoid Israel's fate.
  - A. We, too, are sinners.
  - B. We have seen the Savior's glory.
  - C. By accepting the Savior we overcome unbelief.

VICTOR MENNICKE

**QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY**

MATT. 20: 20-28

*The Text and the Day.*—The keynote of the three pre-Lenten Sundays is repentance. If we are truly penitent, we shall put our trust in the Lord, committing ourselves to His



guidance (Introit), and renounce selfish ambition and self-trust (text). The Gospel for the day illustrates man's natural inability to understand the necessity of Christ's death, while the Epistle emphasizes the supremacy of love. When the mind has been enlightened by the wisdom of the Cross, humility and love will be in the heart.

*Notes on Meaning.*— V. 23: Unlike earthly rulers, Christ does not award positions of honor by whim or favoritism. The honors of Christ's kingdom are a gift of grace. Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 1:9. V. 24: Not righteous indignation. They were all afflicted with carnal ambition. The Ten thought James and John were gaining an unfair advantage. They all craved to be rated higher than others. Pride is competitive. "The more pride one has, the more one dislikes pride in others." C. S. Lewis. The words "cup," "baptism," "minister," require explanation. "Servant," in v. 27, is properly rendered *slave*.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*— A sermon on "Why Some Prayers Are Not Answered," while textual, would hardly be in keeping with the day.— A vigorous denunciation of pride and selfish ambition must not lack the loving, patient attitude shown by Jesus. At the same time, care must be taken lest Christ be presented only as Example and not as Substitute. The Gospel, which does not appear until the end of the text, must not be treated as incidental in the sermon.

*Preaching Emphases.*— The text is to prepare the hearer for a proper observance of Lent. For this, as well as for a true understanding of Christ's Passion, humility is essential. V. 28 supplies the powerful motivation for humility. Only the Gospel can produce genuine humility. Even those who believe the Gospel experience the difficulty of retaining and practicing humility. In exposing pride and exhorting to humble service, the centrality of the Cross, Christ's self-humiliation and substitutionary sacrifice, must be maintained, though it is not necessary to make v. 28 the theme of the sermon.

*Problem and Goal.*— Selfishness and pride are deep-rooted and prolific. They tend to make a Christian indifferent to the Lenten message. Pride, easily overlooked in self, will lead to every other vice.— The Cross will dissolve selfish ambition and inspire humble service. "When I survey the wondrous Cross, . . . I pour contempt on all my pride." A Christian will gladly test his ambitions in the pure light of the Cross.



**Outline:****OUR AMBITIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS**

- I. The selfish ambition shown by the disciples.
  - A. How they manifested it and how repulsive it appeared when contrasted with Christ's humility.
  - B. How much we are like the disciples. Our pride and selfishness, when exposed to the light of the Cross, must become manifest even to ourselves.
- II. The humble service rendered by Christ.
  - A. He gave Himself as our Ransom.
  - B. Though He was the greatest, He performed the lowest service.
- III. The noble ambition inspired by Christ's humble service.
  - A. To renounce self-seeking glory in our attitude to God and to one another.
  - B. To excel by lowly service.

V. L. MEYER

**FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT**

(Invocavit).

PHIL. 2:5-11

*The Text and the Day.*— In our oldest and most widely used pericopal system this rich text is really the Epistle for Palmarum. However, it is altogether fitting that in the Nassau pericopal system it should serve as the Epistle for Invocavit, since on the first Sunday in Lent the catechumens of the early Church entered the final stage of preparation for their baptism at Eastertide. Beginning with Lent, the thought was stressed that they become servants of God who profess (*profiteri*: confess publicly, v. 11) their faith to the world. Hence, beginning with Invocavit, they were called *profitentes* rather than *katechoumenoi*. However, not only catechumens, but all Christians are to be *profitentes*, who profess that Jesus is their Savior and Lord.

*Notes on Meaning.*— V. 5: "In Christ": Christ is the sphere of the Christian life.— V. 6: "The form of God" expresses the very nature of Christ, not merely something external, since *hyparchoon* of the original text means "being constitutionally, by nature." 2 Cor. 8:9. An astounding



contrast—"thought it not robbery"! The Apostle uses not *phroneoo* for "think," but *heegeomai*, which is here more relevant, since its first meaning is "to be a leader." "Robbery" is the act of snatching violently, as by one who lusts for a possession and cannot keep his hands off. Christ was different from the first Adam, who sought equality with God by means of robbery, for Christ had a native right to equality with the Father.—Though Jesus has from eternity shared the *kyriotes*, the Lordship, of the Father, He has never used His omnipotence to force men to confess Him. V. 7: Christ became the Savior through His humiliation, suffering, and death, through His abasement, not through His omnipotence. "Made Himself of no reputation": the translation of the Revised Version, "emptied Himself," is more literal. Christ, by emptying Himself, did not cease to be God, but He did give up "the experience of the common glory of the divine for the experience of the servitude and subjection of the human." Christ became a miserable slave and a crucified criminal. The word *ekenoose* is so important and so realistically descriptive that this entire passage is ordinarily known as the *kenosis* passage. V. 8: "Humbled Himself," made Himself so low that the verdict of His foes was: "This man is impossibly the Kyrios, the Jehovah; why, he is not even an average man; He is a criminal." V. 9: "Exalt," really "exalt to the highest rank and level"; "give": not the ordinary verb *didoomi*, but *charizomai*, "to give freely, graciously," Eph. 1:21-23; Col. 2:9. V. 10: "Jesus": all worship not conducted in this name is utterly invalid and worthless; "under the earth," the dead. V. 11: "Confess," *exomologeoo*, "confess from the heart, freely, publicly." Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth doth speak. "Lord," no article, hence a proper name of Jesus. Acts 2:36. "To the glory of the Father": We glorify the Father through the Son and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*—Some commentaries interpret "a name which is above every name" to refer to Kyrios. True, *Kyrios* is commonly regarded as the Greek equivalent of Jehovah, a name so sacred to the believers of the Old Testament that its use was safeguarded and restricted. It is likewise true that we too often fail to be filled with the awe and reverence which the word "Lord" suggests. It is a name suggestive of God's greatness and power. However, our text



clearly shows that the "name which is above every name" is "the name of Jesus." (V. 10.) Note the distinctly Christian character of this name; while the identity of Kyrios may be mistaken quite easily, that of Jesus is not. This personal name was given Him already before His birth by His Father (Matt. 1:21), and the use made of this name, as well as the regard one has for it, distinguishes the Christian from all other religionists.

**Preaching Emphases.** — Christ became our Savior (Jesus) and Lord the hard way, a way so hard, in fact, that no other human being could have substituted for Him. Hence the name *Jesus* means so much to us. Having known and experienced the glories of eternity before His incarnation did not lighten his task. The Lord, Kyrios, though God, had to become not only a man, but even a slave (*doulos*, v. 7); He had to empty Himself in order to extricate mankind from the mire and doom of its own corruption. At the same time, however, by becoming a *doulos* Himself, Christ dignified our conception of service and deprived this word of the stigma which has ever been attached to human and pagan conceptions of the word *service*. — The exaltation of Christ redounds to the eternal glory of the Father. (V. 11.)

**Problem and Goal.** — The present lesson, grand in its conception in the English translation, is even more grand, pithy, forceful, and emphatic in its original. — There is no better way to acquire the mind of Christ (v. 5) than by searching the Scriptures and thus learning also to love and know Jesus, His glorious name and His great work. Passages like our text impress indelibly upon our hearts and minds the signal character and import of His work of redemption.

**Outline:**

**JESUS, A NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME**

- I. He earned this name as an obedient servant.
  - A. Though a member of the undivided Trinity, He emptied Himself and became a human servant.
  - B. Though in essence His equal, He carried out His Father's will.
  - C. Though inherently immortal, He became obedient unto the death of the Cross.

II. He was given this name as our exalted Lord.

- A. God Himself has exalted Jesus and given Him His name.
- B. Hence we must venerate Him as our Savior and Lord.
- C. It is incumbent upon us to confess this to the world.
- D. This we do as servants of God and to the glory of the Father.

Suggested hymns: *Lutheran Hymnal*, Nos. 6, 339, 114.

WALTER E. BUSZIN

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

(Reminiscere)

JOHN 13:1-47

*The Text and the Day.* — The Introit, supported by the Gradual, strikes the keynote of the day. We call upon God to “remember” (*reminiscere*) His “tender mercies” and, therefore, to “keep us (the collect) . . . from all adversities (i. e., satanic possession, the Gospel) . . . and from all evil thoughts” (i. e., lust of fornication, the Epistle), that we “may abound more and more” (Epistle). In a sense our text is a reply to this prayer. Here our Savior overcomes Satan for us by fulfilling the Law in our stead. Here Jesus shows us how we may overcome temptations (pride and selfishness, Luke 22: 24-27), namely, by sublimating our energies in the direction of humble and self-sacrificing service.

*Notes on Meaning.* — V. 1: “*Before the feast,*” i. e., “before the feast proper,” the “*supper*” of v. 4 evidently being the Pass-over Supper referred to by the Synoptists, Matt. 26: 19, 20; Luke 22: 15; Mark 14: 12, 17. See Fahling, *Life of Christ*, first edition, p. 592. “*He loved them to the end,*” i. e., “He loved them to the uttermost,” as was evidenced by the subsequent foot washing, the Holy Sacraments, the discourses (John 13—17), and His death on the Cross.

V. 2: Not as the A. V., but “*supper having arrived,*” or if the reading *ginomenou* is adopted, “supper arriving,” *Expositor's Greek Testament*, p. 815, vol. I.

V. 3 b is a confession of His deity, as also the expression *ho kyrios* in 13 and 14, while v. 3 a is an acknowledgment



that "all things," including our salvation, have been committed to Him.

V. 7: "*What I do*," i. e., *My active obedience*, in fulfilling the jots and tittles of the Law as your Substitute (Matt. 5:17), is not clear to you now, but you will understand it later.

V. 8: "*If I wash thee not*," that is, if you are unwilling to receive a menial service at My hands, you will also have to reject My far greater and the even more menial service of My sacrifice on the Cross, without which you cannot be saved. Therefore receive this lesser service as a token of the fact that you accept the greater.

V. 10: "*He that is washed*," i. e., he that has bathed, needs only to wash his feet, which alone would be soiled on the walk from the bath. Even so he that is completely cleansed in My blood needs only the daily remission of those sins which are committed each day in his walk through life. (Catechism: Significance of Baptism.) "*Yet not all*." Judas remained unclean only because of his unbelief, of which Christ's betrayal was only a symptom.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — Our Savior specifically calls His act "an example." Hence it is not a sacrament, but only "*an example*" which is to be emulated by serving one another in humble, self-sacrificing love, even as He served us. The great danger with this text is that we are inclined to emphasize Christ, our Example, at the expense of "the Lord, our Righteousness." Hence we remind our readers that in being our Example, Christ preached the Law, making us aware also of our shortcomings. However, by His perfect example He also fulfilled the Law for us, thus furnishing us with His righteousness as a covering for our unrighteousness. And it is this wonderful Gospel truth which alone can supply that inner drive whereby a poor sinner, with all his heart, wants to follow Christ's example. (Jer. 31:31 ff.; 2 Cor. 3:6 b.)

*Preaching Emphases.* — Stress the fact that Christ Jesus, our Lord and Master, was not too proud to give His Life in humble self-sacrificing service in order to effect our salvation. We ought, therefore, not be too puffed up with pride to serve our fellow men with the humble service of love, that they, through us, may be won for Christ.

*Problem and Goal.* — The preacher's problem is to break down pride and selfishness, which stands in the way of lov-



ing service for Christ. This is done (1) by our pointing to Christ's perfect example as the ideal and thus showing our hearers how far we are from that perfection; (2) by emphasizing the fact that Christ counts His achievement to us through faith, thus covering our failure with His righteousness; and (3) by using this marvelous truth as the divine impulse towards a greater effort on our part to emulate our Savior's beautiful example of humble service.

**Outline:**

**LIKE OUR LORD, LET US SERVE TO SAVE**

**I. Our Lord served to save.**

**A.** His whole life was a life of service for our salvation. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:7; Luke 22:27; Rom. 5:19; 4:4-5; Matt. 5:17.

**B.** In serving His disciples by washing their feet, He as our Lord (vv. 3, 14) and Substitute fulfilled the law of love in our stead, also instead of sinners like Judas and Peter and me. Vv. 8-10; John 17: 19-20.

**C.** In serving thus, our Lord left us an example. V. 15.

**II. Let us also serve to save.**

**A.** How? (1) We cannot, of course, atone for men's sin as their substitutes, but we can bring them to Christ, their Substitute and ours, and so save them. (2) We cannot attain to Christ's perfection, but we can strive to emulate His example, by replacing pride with humility and selfishness with self-sacrificing service to all, so that others may, through our example, be moved to desire and accept Christ, too.

**B.** Why? (1) Because He who so served us requests it. V. 14. (2) Because there is no greater service possible. (V. 16. (3) Because by such service we receive a blessing. V. 17. (4) Because by imputing to us His perfect obedience through faith He has forgiven and still forgives our many sins of pride and selfishness and lack of love.

**Conclusion:** Through Christ, our Lord, we have been saved to serve. Like Christ, our Lord, let us, then, serve to save.

**THEODORE NICKEL**



## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

(Oculi)

JOHN 13:31-38

*The Text and the Day.* — Introit, Gradual, Collect, stress the thought of the helplessness of the people of God in the midst of adversity when they are without God. The Epistle stresses the positive ideal of walking in purity and love; the Gospel describes the constant menace of the forces of evil. The text draws together the positive charge to love and the warning against unfaithfulness into the bidding to recognize Jesus as Son of God and Savior, the Source of all spiritual life.

*Notes on Meaning.* — "Now is the Son of Man glorified" is said at the darkest moment in the ministry of Jesus, when Judas went out to complete the betrayal. Yet this marked the glorification of Jesus and of God in Him. For the great glory of Jesus is to redeem man from sin; the glory of God in Him is to prove a love to mankind through the redemption. Cp. John 1:14; Phil. 2:8. The betrayal was the human and evil device through which the divine program came into being. — V. 32: If God would prove His love through Jesus, then God would also return Him to the full use of the divine majesty, crown Him with glory and honor — a forecast of the resurrection and ascension. Phil. 2:9-11. — V. 33: The thought of the ascension reminds Jesus of His parting from the disciples in the visible flesh and leads Him to restate the counsel which marks the purpose of their life in the world after the ascension, namely, v. 34. At the foot washing the Savior had stated the commandment of love, v. 15; now He calls it directly a new commandment. Cp. 1 John 2:7-8, a commandment as old as the nature and will of God, yet new because in the redemption of Christ and in the fellowship of Christ with His people they receive the power to carry it out and because love is the new device by which men show that they have learned of Jesus and follow Him, v. 35. — Vv. 36-38 Simon Peter reveals, as previously in this chapter (vv. 6-9) that he does not really fathom the full meaning of the Savior's counsel. He is stirred by pride and self-exaltation, and so the Savior warns him of his collapse.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — Homiletically the temptation will be



to preach two sermons, two ideas not thoroughly related in fact and in persuasion: vv. 31-35, 36-38. The preacher's problem is to make the warning of the second section have substance and positive value through the Gospel of the first section and to discuss the new commandment of love in its relation to the redemption of Christ, which makes this love possible.

*Preaching Values.* — The detail of the Savior's work needs to be added, but the divine purpose and nature of it is well expressed in this text, the glorification of God. This is God's glory, that man is redeemed; this is Christ's glory, to implement that purpose of God. Even after the visible departure of Jesus that process of glorification continues among the disciples, namely, as they love and as they succeed in keeping the faith and the love.

*Problem and Goal.* — The text provides the illustration of the needy disciple — one who is not sure of the abiding presence of Christ or one who is too certain of his own strength without Christ. To both the Lord Jesus gives the one thing needful: the insight into His redemption, which is the source of love to others and of continued faith in Him.

*Outline:*

**THE REDEEMING WORK OF CHRIST THE SOURCE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS**

**I. The Christian's pitfalls.**

- A. He is unsure of the meaning of the Savior's work.
- B. He is sluggish in the exercise of love.
- C. He is overconfident in his own power to be faithful.

**II. The Savior's help through His redemption.**

- A. The Savior through His suffering and death redeems the world and carries out God's purpose of salvation.
- B. Thus He enables the Christian to love even as He and the Father love.
- C. Thus He provides the one remedy for overconfidence and the one power for steadfast faith.

**RICHARD R. CAEMMERER**

