

3-1-1948

Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

Otto E. Sohn

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Recommended Citation

Sohn, Otto E. (1948) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 19, Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol19/iss1/19>

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Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

QUASIMODOGENITI, THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

LUKE 24:36-48

The Text and the Day.—Quasimodogeniti being the Octave of Easter, this text properly re-emphasizes the rebuilding and strengthening of the disciples' faith. In the early Church the newly baptized received their first Communion on this Sunday. It was also called Annotine Easter and was celebrated as the anniversary of the believers' Baptism.

Notes on Meaning.—V. 36: "They" are the two Emmaus disciples reporting to the Ten. Jesus "stood in," or "stepped into," the room without opening the doors (John 20:19). That was the cause of the disciples' fright and supposition that He was a ghost. Jesus' "Peace be unto you" was intended as more than the customary greeting. V. 38: "Why?"—The disciples should have known better. V. 41: Strange conflict of emotions. Budding faith and joy alternated with the gloomy unbelief in which they had been held captive since Friday. Vv. 42-43: This eating was not done to satisfy hunger, but to prove the bodily resurrection. V. 44: "While I was yet with you"—during His public ministry. He was also with them now, but not physically, except for these brief appearances.—It is immaterial whether we take *ὅτι* as causal or explanatory.—"Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms"—the Old Testament canon. Vv. 45-46: "Opened their understanding"—they, not the Scriptures, were at fault. Everything was foretold, but they had refused to believe. Jesus does use passages from Holy Writ as prooftexts. That was His method of removing doubts. V. 47: The essence and summary of Christian preaching is "repentance (change of mind) unto remission of sins" on the basis of Christ's suffering and rising, clearly proclaimed by the Old Testament Prophets, first to the Jew, but also to all nations.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The two signs, like other miracles,

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merely prepared the way for the regenerating influence of the Word. Faith comes by hearing.

Preaching Emphases.—The outstanding lesson is Jesus' love in reviving the faith of His future witnesses through the Holy Scriptures.—The truths of the Bible seem absurd unless considered in the light of the Bible. Luther: "The devil flees from the Bible as one flees from a hot oven." As preachers we must demonstrate that our message is the Word of God and ask our hearers to rest their souls on it. Therefore we must also exhort them constantly to search the Scriptures in order to verify our preaching and thus let the Word be their sole authority in matters of faith and life.

Problem and Goal.—Our basic objective is to show that we can have a happy faith only when we accept the resurrection of the sin-bearing Christ as an indisputable fact. After this was accomplished in the first disciples, they became fearless, death-defying witnesses of the Gospel.

Outline:

**THE RISEN LORD REBUILDING THE FAITH
OF HIS LOVED ONES**

- I. He gives them infallible proofs of His return from the grave.
 - A. He permits them to see and handle His scarred resurrection body to establish positive identification.
 - B. He also demonstrates His return to life by eating in their presence.
 - C. These and other infallible signs were intended to remove all doubts and fears from their minds.
- II. He deepens their understanding of the Holy Scriptures.
 - A. Christian faith can be created and strengthened only through the Word.
 - B. The sorry plight of the disciples was due to their refusal or failure to accept and rely on the predictions of the Prophets and of Jesus.
 - C. Hence the Savior, with much patience, selects and expounds numerous Gospel texts from the Old Testament.
 - D. All of this clearly pictures the cause and cure of our own spiritual problems. **OTTO E. SOHN**

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI, THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 21:15-19.

The Text and the Day. — This well-known text gains new freshness as we fit it into the picture of the Propers of this Sunday. Peter was a penitent recipient of the "*Misericordias Domini.*" In the Epistle he urges this mercy of God and the challenging example of Jesus as motivating forces toward willing suffering. In the Gospel the Good Shepherd presents Himself to us and then shows what kind of undershepherds He can use in bringing "the other sheep" into His fold. In our text He draws each one of us, His sheep, aside for a personal interview.

Notes on Meaning. — A number of significant "coincidences" make the lesson of the text still more emphatic: "draught of fishes" (reminded Peter of Jesus' first call to service, Luke 5:10); "fire of coals" (reminded Peter of a similar scene on Maundy Thursday night, Mark 15:54); *thrice-repeated question* (reminded Peter of threefold denial, Mark 14:72). . . . "Simon, son of Jonas" — here Jesus omits the title of honor "Peter" (Matt. 16:18, John 1:42) and calls him by his former name and his father's name to show him his sinful weakness. . . . For explanation of "feed," see *Conc. Triglot*, p. 513. . . . "More than these"; more than the other disciples, as Peter had previously boasted, Matt. 26:33.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Here are several temptations to lose ourselves in "word exegesis." Various commentators make fine distinctions of meaning in the different Greek words used for "love," for "sheep," for "feed" in our text. There is not sufficient time for the preacher to use these distinctions in a sermon. Furthermore, it is dangerous procedure, since scholars do not agree in these distinctions. The lessons of the text can be applied very well without mentioning such details. . . . The stretching of Peter's hands can not be definitely applied to crucifixion. . . . Be sure to draw a clear picture of Jesus, the risen Lord, the Good Shepherd, the Source of all love and mercy. From Him our love for Him and for His work must come.

Preaching Emphases. — Jesus' question of love is both humiliating and inviting. It puts Peter in his place and re-

minds him of his sin but also lovingly draws him to make a frank confession. The Good Shepherd wants to use us, but He can use us only if we really love Him and admit our own sinfulness and weakness and complete dependence on Him and thus gladly submit our will to His guidance.

Problem and Goal. — All pride should be eliminated out of the hearts of even the most active and hard-working members. In its stead love of Christ must be replaced as the one motive for service. That will give them willingness and zeal to keep on serving at all costs and in the face of many hardships and disappointments.

Outline:

**AS THE RISEN LORD AND SHEPHERD
TALKS TO YOU TODAY**

- I. He asks you about your love for Him.
 - A. He proved His deep love for you.
 - B. He reminds you where your love has failed.
 - C. He insists on love as the only motive for serving Him.
- II. He asks you to help in His work.
 - A. The lambs and the sheep must be fed.
 - B. For this feeding He has left us His Word.
- III. He tells you that a disciple's life is not easy.
 - A. Our own will must be subdued.
 - B. We must follow Him alone. WALTER W. STUENKEL

JUBILATE, THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

2 COR. 12:7-10

The Text and the Day. — Like the Gospel for this Sunday, the account of Paul's "thorn in the flesh" ascends from dark depths of sorrow to the heights of a joy that passes understanding. The Gradual ties in beautifully, reminding the Christian that the path of his suffering follows that of his now glorified Christ. And the *Jubilate* of the Introit is echoed and re-echoed in the climax of the text: "Therefore I rather glory in my infirmities," and, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities."

Notes on Meaning.—All the opinions of Biblical and medical scholars concerning the exact nature of Paul's "thorn" are so many guesses. It seems to have been a most painful ("thorn," or stake; "to buffet," or fisticuff) *physical* ("in the flesh"; Luke his "beloved physician") and *chronic* malady (the time from the revelation, v. 4, until Paul's death was about 23 years). Why does not Paul mention the name of his affliction? Because the Holy Spirit wants to make it easy for us to think of our own "thorn," whatever it may be, and to apply the rich instruction and comfort of Paul's words to ourselves. (A good introductory thought.) —"Messenger of Satan." Job 2:7. The devil, in afflicting us, intends to destroy our faith. God, in permitting the devil to afflict us, has a glorious end in view, that which was achieved in Paul. — That the Apostle added a submissive "If it be Thy will" to his prayers for deliverance is taken for granted. — The perfect tense in v. 9, "He *has said* unto me," expresses the fact that the words of his Lord remained Paul's comfort for life. — "My strength is made perfect in weakness"; the strength of Christ is able to manifest itself fully and to accomplish its purpose in me when I have been brought to a realization of my abject sinfulness and utter nothingness. Only then can Christ Crucified and His grace abounding become my All; only then can "the power of Christ rest upon me" (lit. "spread its tent over me." Beautiful figure!); only then "I am strong." — "Therefore I rather glory in my infirmities. . . . Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities." The pilgrim of pain has reached the heights. He not only patiently submits to the "thorn"; he regards it as something to be proud of, as something lovely. This is the plus ("more than conquerors") toward which all Christian sufferers should strive.

Preaching Pitfalls.—This text does *not* address itself to sufferers in general, but only to *Christian* sufferers ("for Christ's sake"), and especially to Christian sufferers who, like Paul, must put up with their "thorn" for a long time.

Problem and Goal.— "The mass of suffering in a congregation, hidden away behind the quiet faces in the pews, is almost unbelievable. But the average preacher seems not to be very sensitive to it or to get dulled and deadened to it as the years go on; he can talk to people at their wits' ends, with their whole souls crying, Why and why and why? in

a glib, complacent, non-understanding way that does not help, but maddens." * That is the problem. Let the preacher take the individual cross-bearer by the hand and lead him, step by step, and ever upward, through this text: from the depths of near despair to prayer, to the Word of the Cross and of grace, to a realization of God's loving purpose toward him — and so to the heights of glorying in his "thorn." That is the goal.

Outline:

THE TRANSFIGURED THORN

- I. The thorn and the dark. (V. 7)
- II. The thorn and the cry. (V. 8.)
- III. The thorn and the light. (V. 9a.)
- IV. The thorn and the glory. (Vv. 9b-10.)

OSWALD RIESS

CANTATE, THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 11:20-27

The Text and the Day. — Since Cantate rounds out the Easter season, the text serves well to allow the preacher to sum up all the hope and joy which he has expressed during this triumphant cycle. The Introit suggests the application.

Notes on Meaning. — The resurrection of Lazarus is not included in the text and will remain in the background of the sermon. — V. 20: Very likely Martha alone knew of Jesus' coming; hence Mary remained in her posture of mourning. Cp. also vv. 28 and 29. — V. 21: Martha is not reproaching Jesus. She is merely expressing her sorrow which she and Mary had felt during these days. Cp. v. 32b. — V. 22: Before this, Martha had looked specifically for a healing. Now she generalizes her prayer with "whatsoever." She still believes His promise of v. 4. — V. 24: Martha is often abused in the interpretation of the story recorded in Luke 10:38-42. Here she shows her faith. — V. 27: Martha believes what Jesus has said, because He is the Son of God, the promised Messiah. There is no parrying.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The central verse is well known to

* A. J. Gossip, quoted in H. E. Luccock's *In the Minister's Workshop*.

the hearers, and for this reason much of its striking power and beauty may have been dulled. — Like Mary and Martha, we are inclined to stress the importance of the raising of Lazarus and forget that the greater and more important miracle is the resurrection on the Last Day. The latter includes the ability to do the former. Cp. Matt. 9: 5.

Preaching emphases. — The heart of the text lies obviously in verses 25 and 26, and their contents will receive the emphasis. — Christ's resurrection is the pledge that we shall share His gifts by resurrection unto life.

Problem and Goal. — Shadows are constantly falling, not only in Bethany. Today, as the sun shines, we sit at the feet of Jesus to hear the one thing needful. Tomorrow the shadows may fall and sorrow come to us and our loved ones. But in the midst of death we are surrounded by life. This is the unique hope that the Christian has in Christ, "He that believeth *hath*" now, as well as later, "eternal life."

Outline:

WHEN SHADOWS FALL

- I. See what sin and death have done.
 - A. A beloved brother is dead.
 - B. Sorrowing sisters lament.
 - C. Mourning friends are helpless.
- II. See the Savior, who is the Resurrection and the Life.
 - A. The Resurrection — we shall live.
 - B. The Life — we shall never die.
- III. Take the gifts He pledges.
 - A. Confidence — to live is Christ.
 - B. Hope — to die is gain.
- IV. Believest thou this?
 - A. I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.
 - B. Cantate. ARTHUR C. REPP

