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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

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Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

ROGATE, THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

MATT. 7:7-11

The Text and the Day.— On the calendar of the church year Rogate Sunday opens the gate and paves the way for the observance of the Pentecost Festival, with Ascension Day preceding and Trinity Sunday following. The Holy Spirit, His person, His work, His blessings must be kept in mind. Luke 11:13.

Notes on Meaning.— Christ, the Prophet, urges us to pray. He is also our High Priest, Mediator, and King. "God hath put all things under His feet." Eph. 1:22; 1 Tim. 6:15; Col. 1:16. Prayer is backed by such an authority! There is a progression of intensity in the commands: "Ask!" "Seek!!" "Knock!!!" Effort on our part is demanded. We must get into action, persevere in prayer. Luke 11:5-8. The illustration in the text portrays the relation between a kind father and a beloved son. We are "evil," selfish, grudging, yet will not mock our own child. Our prayers are directed to the almighty God, who is our Father in Christ Jesus. He will not give us stones and serpents when we ask for bread and fish. God loves us with a divine intensity. Rom. 8:32.

Preaching Pitfalls.— Jesus urges His disciples (chap. 5:1-2), believers, Christians, to pray. Unbelievers cannot pray for repentance, conversion, or any gift. Their prayers are abominations. Prayer must not be treated as a means of grace. Prayer is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts, the product and fruit of faith. Rom. 8:26; Acts 9:11. Neither is prayer a meritorious work (indulgences).— God does not need our prayers to be reminded of something He is neglecting or forgetting. We need God and His gifts.— Distinguish between spiritual and temporal blessings.

Preaching Emphases.— Prayer is a barometer of our spiritual life. The Christian's heart is prone to spiritual sluggishness. We sleep when we ought to watch and pray. The creeping paralysis of formalism. The Savior arouses us to action. He impresses us with the fact that the great God bothers

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about us unworthy sinners, about our desires and needs. He is anxious to open His treasures. There are so many blessings we lack, because we don't ask for them with our whole heart and confidently. There are treasures withheld, because we don't seek them prayerfully with perseverance. The doors of so many opportunities are barred and locked to us because we fail to keep on knocking at the door which God is so anxious to open. "Prayer moves the hand that moves the world."

Problem and Goal. — The aim of our Lord on the Mount was to prevail on His disciples to persevere in prayer. While God has given and is willing to bestow all the temporal blessings Luther enumerates in his explanation of the Fourth Petition, our greatest need is the "good gifts," the "good things," the spiritual blessings, pre-eminently the Holy Ghost.

Outline:

TITLE TO THE BOUNTIES OF HEAVEN

- I. What are the bounties of heaven?
 - A. Some mistake stones and serpents for bounties of heaven. Dives; purple, fine linen, faring sumptuously. Luke 16: 19 ff. "Soul . . . eat, drink, and be merry." Luke 12: 19. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, Gehazi Naaman's garments and silver, David his neighbor's wife. Beware!
 - B. Our Father in heaven has good things to bestow. Temporal blessings, Luther's Fourth Petition; Abraham, Gen. 24: 35; Solomon, 1 Kings 3: 13; Joseph in Egypt. Job. Psalm 68: 19: "daily loadeth us with benefits." Spiritual blessings. A Savior, redemption, faith, full pardon, peace, hope, joy, eternal life. The Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts is the guarantee of all real blessings. John 14: 17; Rom. 8: 9; 1 Cor. 3: 16; Acts 1: 8.
- II. How does God propose to convey title to His bounties?
 - A. At times we feel that God withholds His bounties. We should have a larger measure of temporal blessings. Our spiritual life is at low ebb, our faith weak, our knowledge limited, our joy beclouded. There should be a more active church life, larger accessions, greater zeal.

B. God stands ready to open the windows of heaven and shower us with His "good things." His directive: "Ask!" "Seek!!" "Knock!!!" Prayer to the true and living God at the command and in the name of Jesus guarantees title to our Father's bounties. John 16:23.

God is willing to convey, v. 11. Are we willing to accept?

HERMAN W. BARTELS

ASCENSION DAY

JOHN 14:1-6

The Text and the Day. — The text is admirably suited for Ascension Day. The Ascension of Jesus definitely meant a going away for Jesus. He removed His physical presence from His disciples. Acts 1:9. Our text was spoken in an atmosphere of departure. Jesus had spoken about leaving His disciples. John 13:33. Jesus speaks of leaving in our text, vv. 2 b, 3 a, 4. The text is a part of the beautiful farewell address of Jesus before going into His suffering and death, but it definitely points to His ascension.

Notes on Meaning. — The disciples had faith in God, and in addition they were to have faith in Jesus, the Son of God, v. 1. The deity of Jesus is the basis of faith in Him. John 10:30; 14:9; Matt. 16:16. The "many mansions" (v. 2) are really permanent abiding places. "The Father's house" is a term of real tenderness, a place to which the Father's children are to be transferred. Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:14-17. In a few words, Jesus creates a feeling of homesickness for heaven, and at the same time a sure hope of reaching heaven. "Many mansions" are in contrast to the one Son of God. "If it were not so" (v. 2 b) does not mean that the mansions do not exist, but rather, "If you had not believed this about many mansions," I would have told you. The departure of Jesus ushers in the glorious and eternal reunion, v. 3. V. 2 b refers to the ascension of Jesus, and "I will come again" (v. 3) refers to His return on Judgment Day. The question of Thomas (v. 5) is not a question of unbelief, but rather a question of discouraged faith. He was unable to see beyond the death of Jesus. In v. 6 the emphasis is on the "I am." Jesus is the Way, the only way and means to reach the Father. At the same time He is

the Truth, who proclaims the way and the life, the source and the end and goal of all life. John 1:4.

Preaching Pitfalls. — It is a mistake, especially on Ascension Day, to cast over this text a funeral atmosphere instead of making it a setting of joy, of triumph, of happiness, of a glorious mission successfully accomplished. It is a mistake to think that the "many mansions" indicates a place for men of many different faiths and opinions. The text is clearly a text of comfort, but in treating the text it is absolutely necessary not to forget the instruction which Jesus gives at the end of the text concerning Himself as the one and only way to the Father and to the place of the Father's mansions. Some try to describe Jesus' work of preparing the place for us in human terms, as preparing a guest chamber, furnishing it with the things which the particular guests may like. It is far better to consider the very presence of Jesus in heaven in His ascension as the best preparation for us. Rom. 8:34.

Preaching Emphases. — Since the text is to serve as an Ascension text, it should be emphasized that Jesus' departure to prepare a place for us points to the Ascension rather than to His suffering and death. The fact should be emphasized that His departure was not a loss for Jesus or for us, but definitely a gain. The Ascension Day sermon on the basis of this text should give us the message that our hope of ascending to heaven is Jesus and that our hope of ascending is not through our own merit, through our good works, but through the merit and work of Christ. Text: v. 6; Gal. 2:16.

Problems and Goals. — The problem of Jesus was the problem of giving His disheartened disciples new cheer and new hope. Our problem is to give our hearers, weary wanderers through life, disheartened by troubles and burdens, the thought that Jesus, though physically removed through His ascension, is not a distant Christ (Matt. 28:20 b), but a Christ deeply interested in us even today, still providing for us, the one and only Way to eternal happiness.

Outline:

THE SAVIOR'S BEAUTIFUL FAREWELL ADDRESS

I. It contains sound heavenly instruction.

A. Jesus is the only Way to the Father, to the mansions above, v. 6.

- B. This way is proclaimed by the Word (the Truth), v. 6.
 - C. It is accepted by faith in God and His Son, v. 1 b.
- II. It brings wonderful comfort and cheer.
- A. It relieves the troubled heart of the disciples, v. 1.
 - B. It looks beyond the immediate departure to the Ascension, vv. 2 c-3.
 - C. It looks to the mansions of the Father, vv. 2 a, 3 b, c.

E. L. ROSCHKE

EXAUDI, THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION

1 PET. 1:3-9

The Text and the Day.—The Sunday after Ascension Day directs our attention to Pentecost, the day on which the ascended Lord sent the Comforter, through whom by means of Word and Sacrament the sinner is begotten unto a lively hope of salvation and thereby is comforted in his trials of life. It is this hope and comfort that the Introit, the Gradual, and the Gospel of the Day emphasize.

Notes on Meaning.—The believer's hope is called "lively" or "living" (v. 3), not because it is active and strong in him, but because God guarantees and produces its fulfillment.—"Reserved in heaven" (v. 4) implies that God watches, takes care of, guards and keeps the inheritance for the believer.—"If need be" (v. 6), trials and temptations do not befall the believer by chance; God permits these trials, but only in such measure as they will serve the spiritual welfare of the believer.—"Trial of your faith" (v. 7), rather, the testing of your faith to demonstrate its genuineness.—"Of your souls" (v. 9), not pertaining only to the soul or distinguishing the soul from the body, but the real being itself, the person.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The preacher must not ignore or skip too quickly over the words "lively hope" (v. 3). This is the essential feature which distinguishes the believer's hope from all the other hopes upon which men build. Our hope is a substantial, living hope, because Christ lives. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead makes the fulfillment of our hope absolutely certain, for Christ's resurrection is evidence of the fact that He has overcome all enemies of our salvation.—Note

further that the inheritance of the believer is described in negative terms: incorruptible, undefiled, fadeth not away. Even the word salvation is a negative expression meaning deliverance from sin and its consequences. — As a rule, only children are heirs. Hence the "begotten us again" (v. 3) must not be overlooked. Only he who has been regenerated, who is, indeed, a child of God, has the lively hope of salvation.

Preaching Emphases. — The First Epistle of Peter is the epistle of hope in the midst of suffering. The Apostle admonishes his readers to expect suffering (4:12) and not to be troubled by it (3:14), but to bear it patiently (2:23), yea even to rejoice in it (4:13), pointing out the purpose of such suffering (1:6-7). The temptations, trials, and sorrows of the believers are real and not imaginary. But believers are regenerated people, children of God, and thus their comfort lies in the living, certain hope of the inheritance above. It is easier to contend, and one is more apt to endure, when the crown beckons.

Problem and Goal. — To buoy up the courage of troubled believers and to inspire them with new patience and fortitude.

OUR LIVING HOPE

I. It is absolutely certain.

- A. The content of our hope is an incorruptible inheritance, salvation, reserved for us in heaven by God.
- B. This hope is the fruit of faith in the risen Lord, in which faith we are kept by the power of God.

II. It supports us in the trials of life.

- A. Trials come to us, if need be, for the testing of our faith.
- B. In days of trouble our living hope supports us who are children of God, enabling us to say: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

WALTER A. BAEPLER

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

1 COR. 12:1-11

The Text and the Day. — Both the Epistle and the Gospel for Pentecost teach the indwelling and the work of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men, and this text can be evaluated in the same way. Whatever one may choose as the topic of a sermon on this festival, whether it is conversion or sanctification, whether it is the state of faith or the progress of faith, whether it is the doctrine of the Church in its various phases, all must be connected with the work of the Holy Ghost in the Pentecost sermon.

Notes on Meaning. — The Apostle is writing about great spiritual gifts that are given by the Holy Ghost to the believers. The text is a clear outline of the spiritual life of a Christian. Man is by nature without adequate knowledge of God and without the true faith, v. 2. By his own mind and by false teachers he is led on false religious paths. But a Christian is called to faith and to the confession of the name of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, v. 3 b. Then the Christian receives many and various gifts from the Holy Spirit, increased knowledge of God, stronger faith, ability to do deeds of kindness and love, the wisdom to help people with counsel and right speech, and the boldness to lead men's hearts to the Savior. These gifts are imparted in different measure, as they are needed and as they can be used by different Christians. The gifts are not to be used for personal glory, but for the benefit of others. The Christian should not use the gifts for credit to himself, but for the profit of another.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Care should be taken to state that the Apostle is not speaking of the gift of faith. That is presupposed in v. 3 b. The gifts and graces that the Spirit of God grants to believers from time to time are meant. — Do not spend any time in your sermon to prove that there are no more miracles, vv. 9-10. One might happen tomorrow. And do not say that miracles are happening every day and then point to things that are wonderful and marvelous, but not miraculous.

Preaching Emphases. — The text will permit a fine combination of a doctrinal presentation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, with a practical delineation of a

Christian's daily life, and both should be given prominence, for neither can stand alone. A sermon is not Christ-centered just because it describes the atonement on Calvary, but because it exhibits the beginning and the progress and the consummation of faith in Christ.

Problem and Goal. — If the preacher will keep before his mind the purpose of leading his members to see what spiritual gifts are given to believers, and to understand that they have, in some measure, received these gifts, and that they are expected to use them, then he will have helped his congregation toward a greater spiritual life.

Outline:

**THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE HEART
OF A CHRISTIAN**

- I. The natural man is without adequate knowledge of God and without saving faith in Christ. We are converted to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, v. 2 b.
- II. Being converted to Christ, we receive great gifts from the Holy Spirit — growing knowledge, increased faith, ability to help others in time of need by word and deed, eloquence in preaching and teaching God's Word, boldness to confess the name of Jesus.
- III. Having these gifts of the Holy Spirit, we should use them, not to gain credit for ourselves, but solely for the benefit of our neighbor. There is no limit to the good that a person can do if he is not concerned about who gets the credit. A Christian should not say that he would do much good if he had the ability that some other people have. Good deeds are not done with the ability that you would use if you had it, but by using the ability that you do have.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

MATT. 28:16-20

The Text and the Day. — The Introit ("Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity"), the Collect, and the Gradual have been selected to stress the doctrine of the Trinity. The Gospel and the Epistle of the old series of

pericopes do not speak of the doctrine of the Trinity, because when they were selected this Sunday had not yet been set aside in the church calendar as Trinity Sunday. The text in this Nassau series refers to the Trinity in the baptismal formula, and it should find a place somewhere in the sermon. However, if a preacher would devote his entire sermon to the doctrine of the Trinity, important as it is, he had better choose another text, as Is. 48:12-17. This text also shows that already in the Old Testament the doctrine of the Trinity is taught.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 16, "into Galilee." See Matt. 26:32; Mark 16:7; Matt. 8:7, 10. — V. 17, "some doubted." Not did the Apostles doubt that Christ had risen from the dead, for He had appeared to them already more than once. If they doubted at all, it was in reference to His identity at this particular time. But perhaps there were others present also who did not recognize Christ at once. — V. 18, "all power," not "is," but "hath been given unto Me," to the *man* Jesus, for according to His divine nature He had all power from eternity. — V. 19, not "teach," but "make disciples of all nations." No longer were His preachers to go only or primarily to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but to the Gentiles as well. — "Baptizing." The institution of Christ's Sacrament of Baptism. Infants are baptized at once, adults after instruction. Before the jailer was baptized, we read that Paul and Silas "spake unto them the words of the Lord," Acts 16:30-33. — Not "in," but "into the name of the Father," etc., into communion with the Triune God, which gives the assurance of the divine blessings of eternal life procured by Christ, the Savior. — "Into the *name*," not "names"; there is only one God, but three persons. — V. 20. The making of disciples was to be done not only by baptizing, but also by *teaching*. Both infants and adults who are baptized need further instruction to learn "all the counsel of God," Acts 20:27. — "I," the God-Man, "am with you alway." What a precious, comforting doctrine!

Preaching Pitfalls. — If the preacher does not read his Greek text, he may fail correctly to understand and present certain portions of the text as pointed out in the previous section.

Preaching Emphases. — After God the Father from eternity had decreed to send, and in the course of time had sent,

His Son to be the Savior of the world (Christmas), and God the Son had become man and brought about the world's redemption (Good Friday and Easter), and God the Holy Ghost was sent to work faith in the hearts of men by means of the Gospel (Pentecost), the Church has received the Savior's Great Commission to carry on and forward the evangelization of a sinful world.

Problem and Goal.—The problem is to make and keep the Christian conscious of the purpose of his life on this earth, that is, to "make Christians of all nations," v. 19. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," Acts 1:8. The goal is to persuade the Christian to live up to this high privilege and responsibility in a world of great distress and in need of the old Gospel and the Christian example of a godly life.

Outline:

Introduction.—Use the thoughts given under *Preaching Emphases.*

THE LORD'S GREAT COMMISSION TO HIS CHURCH

- I. What is this commission? Vv. 19-20. "Evangelize all nations, baptizing and teaching." The great need of this in our day.
- II. Who gives this commission? Vv. 16-18, 20. He who bought us with His own blood. (Jesus gave the commission after He had died and arisen again, and before He ascended into heaven.) He who has all power in heaven and in earth and who has promised to be with us always. See also Mark 16:20.

We often fail even to make an attempt to approach an individual or open a new mission field because to us it seems hopeless, while the fact is that we have not faith in the power and promise of our Savior and in the power of His Gospel, vv. 18, 20; Is. 55:1-13; Rom. 1:16.

J. H. C. FRITZ

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 12:13-21

The Text and the Day.—The text for this Sunday warns against materialism and centers the mind on God and His treasures. Both the text and the Collect for the day call for trust and faith in the true God. The early Church was wise in choosing a similar text, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, for this Sunday, for after the close of the festival cycle of the church year, in which the great saving acts of God have been presented, it is fitting to show the Christian congregation that during the long Trinity season it must keep its eye fixed on God and let its faith in God be manifest and operative in every phase of its life.

Notes on Meaning.—V. 13 is true to life. In the first verses of this chapter Jesus had been busy instructing His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, to fear no man, to confess the Son of Man boldly, to avoid the sin against the Holy Ghost, and to depend on the Holy Ghost for proper words when they should fall into the hands of the enemies of God. This instruction was weighty with solid, spiritual food. But one man, probably representative of a number of other persons in the company surrounding the disciples, failed to benefit by the spiritual food Jesus had been holding forth, for his mind was occupied with a sharp brother who was unfair in the distribution of a family fortune. In answer to this man's request for an equitable division of the inheritance Jesus told the Parable of the Foolish Rich Man and strove to lift this particular man and others like him out of the clutches of money and other material things up to faith in the one true God. "Covetousness" in v. 15 is any kind of greediness, for the Greek text reads: πάσης πλεονεξίας. Πάσης without the article means "any kind of," "every kind of." In the parable note the repeated use of "I," "my," evidence of the fact that the rich man was self-centered, proud, satisfied with the things of this life, thoroughly forgetful of God and the needs of his soul, and so without God, without Christ, without salvation.

Preaching Pitfalls.—This is not a difficult text for a sermon. But in warning against covetousness, materialism, and godlessness the preacher dare not forget the Gospel. The Gospel with its rich treasures is the only magnet that can draw

men away from the love of money and from the love of any other earthly pursuit. Therefore "rich in God" must come into its own in the sermon.

Preaching Emphases.—Though the text is not difficult, every conscientious preacher knows how ready numerous members of the Church are to render lip service to the Lord on Sunday and how eager those same members are to let all manner of covetousness be their guiding light for the rest of the week. He realizes that this text asks him to preach a sermon which will not find favor with some of his members either because they have never embraced a right attitude toward God or have lapsed into worldliness. Yet covetousness is a wall that separates from God. It must be broken down, and the riches of God in Christ presented so clearly, so appealingly that any other kind of riches will lose its attraction.

Problem and Goal.—The problem is to have every member see Jesus and say with the man in Mark 9:24: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Outline:

WHEN ARE YOU RICH TOWARD GOD?

- I. When you recognize the brevity of life.
- II. When you accept the Word revealed in the Bible.
- III. When you place all your trust in Jesus.
- IV. When you strive to bring the treasure of God to others.

A. W. C. GUEBERT

