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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

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Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 JOHN 2:15-17

The Text and the Day.—The Propers for the day stress God's help in overcoming the flesh and in producing faith and love. The text is related to the Epistle for the Day in that it treats the new life in general, of which love is a particular feature.

Notes on Meaning.—15: "World" needs clarification for the hearer: not simply created and passing things, but world divorced from the life of God and hence involving lust. 16: "Lust" means emotional satisfaction and drive for things for their own sake rather than for the sake of God. "Life" is not the life with God of which the remainder of the Epistle speaks, but the animal existence without contact with the Spirit of God.

Preaching Pitfalls.—As one of the larger prooftexts this text will be familiar to all Christians catechetically indoctrinated. Its words are simple and easy. The very simplicity, however, may lull the audience to sense no problem and to relax attention. Furthermore, the text as it stands is hortatory and has no Gospel content. The hearer may be led to imagine that something good is to happen to him because of his repugnance for "world" and "lust," or that world and lust are evil simply because of the pastor's denunciation or because they pass away.—Note "the love of the Father is not in him," not "for him." This is not a threat, but a simple fact: love to the world and love to God do not exist side by side.

Preaching Emphases.—The Gospel must be added. The Gospel for the Day describes the gift of God's grace, which cannot be earned but is simply accepted; against that acceptance fight the interests of this present world. Better, the text must be taught in its context. The Apostle wants the Christians to preserve their fellowship with God and with each other. That fellowship is disrupted by sin and lust. But God in His grace gave Jesus Christ to remove sin and overcome the

power of the world; and in His abiding intercession every Christian, even when he sins, is assured of grace (2:1 ff.). This text stresses the point: alongside of the Spirit-filled new man exists the remnant of the flesh, in every Christian; that flesh may harbor lust and pride and is hence a perpetual reminder to the Christian to be alert and strong against forces without and within. — The dangers to the Christian's spiritual life come from common, everyday ingredients in his environment and in his fleshly nature. — He that doeth the will of God abideth forever. That means not only surface doing, but doing with the will in which God dwells.

Problem and Goal. — Lust and pride exist in the flesh of every Christian, and tend to make him careless about the world. The true Christian rouses from that danger and lives the spiritual life in God through Christ.

Outline:

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONQUEST OF THE WORLD

- I. What the world is.
 - A. Man without God. The satisfaction with the material.
 - B. The Christian's own flesh, still subject to the world.
- II. Why the Christian needs to conquer it.
 - A. It is without God and against God.
 - B. It will pass away.
- III. How the Christian conquers the world.
 - A. Christ's redemption has overcome the world for him.
 - B. Christ and His Spirit help him to do the will of God.
 - C. Through Christ that conquest is to all eternity.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 7:36-50

The Text and the Day. — The major Propers provide a mood and setting into which this text is readily placed: In-troit: Our cry to God is one that comes out of deep distress,

a sense of desperate need; it goes up to him trustfully, confidently. Gospel: Lost sinners whom our Lord came to seek and save; He feels Himself deprived of their fellowship; He rejoices in their return to Him. The Church, representing Him to the world, must hear the cry of the lost world and in His Spirit seek diligently and then rejoice over the returned sinner. The Epistle: The "ninety and nine" must not be self-sufficient, be careless in a false sense of security. We must be humble, valiant against sin, established in grace.

Notes on Meaning. — It would have been much easier for Jesus to turn down Simon's invitation. He saw the serpent in Pharisaism. It was a God-dishonoring and dishonest religion, for it lived on pride and self-righteousness. But Jesus loved people, whose sin He hated.

The notorious woman who approached Jesus from behind as He was reclining at the table may have been Mary Magdalene, as tradition holds. Jesus had straightened out her tangled life, given her the power of a new life. This transformation put her in His debt. She was resolved to pay her debt of love. Love found a way. It was a silent but courageous confession of Christ.

In his heart Simon despised Jesus, for he concluded that Jesus did not know what kind of woman this was. He could, therefore, not be a prophet.

The Parable. — A creditor forgave one debtor about \$100, another about \$10. The degree of their love for their benefactor will reflect their estimate of his goodness to them. "You, Simon, have shown Me little love; this woman has shown Me a great love." The difference goes back to your view of the size of your debt. There was no love in Simon's heart because there was no sweet and joyous experience of forgiveness; there was no forgiveness because there was no honest estimate and acknowledgment of sin. "Where there is no forgiveness of sin, there is no love" (Luther). Jesus knew Simon's type perfectly. At one time He said to a group of Pharisees: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41). The saints are always "chief of sinners." He who hasn't tasted God's forgiveness cannot love either God or man. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10). Invitations to dinner, acts of charity, honorable deal-

ing, decent deportment, do not necessarily flow from love. Much of what goes for love is only natural affection limited to friends. To give generous treatment to others may be nothing more than self-interest. The "I'll-invite-you-and-you-invite-me" relationship is basically nothing more than a commercial transaction.

Jesus announced absolution to the woman: "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." Faith saves because it grasps saving grace. The penitent woman received absolution, not the self-righteous Simon. He was conscious of no great sin guilt, and therefore any word of forgiveness would have no meaning to him. Simon had still to learn, and so do many religionists, the basic truth of sin and grace. Only then could there be help for him.

Preaching Pitfalls. — This woman did not merit forgiveness by her love; her love followed forgiveness received. When Jesus says: "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," we are not to think that a person can be forgiven in part. When we know and believe that God's love covers our grievous sins and takes us into His fellowship, then our love has its rooting in God, who Himself is Love.

Preaching Emphases. — Love is the commodity the world is short on, also the Church. Coldness of love results from pride, dishonest dealing with the problem of sin, failure to see ourselves fully in the mirror of God's Law, refusal to come to God in the dust of repentance. He who has felt the hot winds of divine wrath upon his sin, who has sensed the terrifying gulf between God's holiness and his own unholiness, will reach out for the righteousness that avails. God's love in Christ has opened a fountain of forgiveness, and this is the true source of all love. All the fruits of the Christian life result from the union of Christ and the sinner.

Problem and Goal. — Only a faith that expresses itself in love is a saving faith. "He that loveth not knoweth not God" (1 John 4:8). Christians must learn to know that love is the highest moral quality in the world. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" (1 John 4:12). They cannot love and will not love until God's love has won them over, made their hearts tender by showing them how deeply they were in debt, how fully God has forgiven that debt, and how they ought to love all whom God loved.

Outline:

GOD'S FORGIVING GRACE INSPIRES OUR LOVE

- I. He first loved us.
 - A. He tenderly loved sinners.
 - B. He fully forgave sinners.
- II. We therefore love Him.
 - A. We have acknowledged ourselves as sinners.
 - B. We have seen the greatness of our debt.
 - C. We believe that He has forgiven that debt.
 - D. We are resolved to love and serve Him.

C. W. BERNER

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 6:17-29

The Text and the Day. — "The sufferings of this present time" are the theme of the Epistle for the day. As St. Paul was the outstanding sufferer among the Apostles, so was John Baptist among the Prophets. — Note the Introit, Psalm 27:1.

Notes on Meaning. — Note the context, vv. 14-16; also Matt. 14:12, "His disciples went and told Jesus." — V. 20, "observed him," better: "kept him safe" (so Luther and R. V.). — V. 20, best texts not *epoiei*, but *eeporei*, "was much perplexed" (R. V.). Note in *Expos. Greek Test.*; cf. also Luke 9:7. — V. 21, "gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and leading men of Galilee." (It is well to read this whole graphic account in the Revised Standard Version.)

Preaching Pitfalls. — Jesus is not mentioned in the text. But note the context. The story of John's martyrdom, though important in itself, is injected somewhat parenthetically into the report on the ministry of Jesus. The Gospel message must be introduced from Christ's ministry. Jesus is in the background of this story; and in the sermon He must ultimately be brought into the foreground, irrespective of the particular theme selected. Do not overlook the fact that John had prepared the way for Christ and that it was because of his fearless witness to the righteousness of God in Christ that John was imprisoned and beheaded.

Preaching Emphases. — This colorful story, involving four

principal characters, offers material for varied specific themes, such as: the terrors of an evil conscience, the awful power of the spirit of revenge, the tragic consequences of seductive dancing, the woeful results of a sinful oath, the effects of intemperance and sensuality, the curse of unprincipled rulers, and the like. But the context calls for speaking of John as suffering for Christ. It seems best to emphasize the relationship of John's martyrdom to Christ's ministry.

Problem and Goal. — (Will depend on *theme* selected.) The lustful and cruel king, the vengeful queen, and the dancing daughter seem to have been in control of the situation; but actually it was the distant and apparently helpless Prophet of Galilee. John's execution was part of the inscrutable counsel of God for the building of Christ's kingdom. In his death as well as in his life John glorified Christ. Likewise the Apostles and later martyrs, from Stephen on. "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace." The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. Neither do the modern martyrs to the truth as it is in Christ labor and suffer in vain. Their faithfulness even unto death helps others to be steadfast and unmovable. To all disciples Jesus says: "Ye are My witnesses." And to the steadfast believers and faithful witnesses is given the promise of the crown (Rev. 2:10).

Outline: FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

- I. John Baptist was faithful in all his ministry.
 - A. He preached the Law fearlessly, rebuking high and low, calling all to repentance. — V. 18; Matt. 3:7 ff.
 - B. He preached the Gospel of salvation, ever pointing to Christ and His kingdom. — John 1:29.
 - C. He sought nothing for himself, but only the honor of Christ and the salvation of souls. — John 3:27-30.
- II. John was faithful at the cost of his own life.
 - A. He feared not the wrath of the king (like Moses, Heb. 11:27). Apparently, when personal and direct rebuke failed of effect, John publicly reproached the king and the queen as they were living in open sin and giving grave offense in Israel.

- B. John suffered unjust imprisonment (miserable dungeon!) because of the king's wicked oath, false sense of honor, and moral cowardice.
- C. He evidently made no attempt to placate the king and escape further suffering by promising to keep silent.
- D. Thus he suffered cruel death as a faithful witness. Remember: John was as human as we; these sufferings were as painful to him as they would be to us. He endured all for Christ.

Conclusion. — John is an example to all preachers. — Through nineteen centuries Christ has had such faithful witnesses. Refer to the martyrs of the first centuries, of the Reformation period, and of recent times (Lutheran pastors in the Baltic provinces, in Russia, Poland, Germany, Norway). All believers in Christ must be witnesses for Christ and, if God wills, be ready to suffer for Him. But especially the ministers of the Word must be men who count not their lives dear, but will preach righteousness and salvation in Christ "unto death" — to the point of martyrdom. — Just how faithful are we?

MARTIN WALKER

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 10:17-24

The Text and the Day. — "That we . . . may obtain Thy promises" (the Collect) is the prominent thought for this Sunday. According to the Epistle we are to obtain a blessing. The miracle recorded in the Gospel was to bestow material and spiritual blessings. The Lord is our Salvation!

Notes on Meaning. — V. 17: "the seventy"; other disciples sent by Jesus into Perea to do preparatory evangelistic work. Cf. Num. 11:16 ff. — "even," also: as the outstanding achievement in their estimation. — "in your name": by the authority of Jesus. — V. 18: "I saw Satan fall," not the prehistoric defection from God. Satan began his powerful reign of destruction on earth *after* he had been cast out of heaven. Christ's entire redemptive work was the crushing victory over Satan. 1 John 3:8; John 12:31. The fall of Satan was his deprivation of power over mankind, especially the power to accuse them before God. Cf. the proverb against the king of Babylon,

Is. 14:12. Their ability to cast out Satan was but a natural consequence of Satan's fall. — "as lightning": a blinding force, suddenly extinguished. — "heaven": the heaven of his power. 2 Cor. 4:4. — V. 19: "serpents," etc.: the entire hellish brood together with all evil coming from Satan. Illustrations: Acts 28:3; Eusebius, *Church History* III, 39:9. V. 20: "notwithstanding": not so much in this . . . as in that. Jesus did not disparage the charismatic gifts, but corrected erroneous views regarding them. V. 21: "Jesus rejoiced in spirit"; cf. Matt. 11:25 ff. A "devotional utterance." An hour of mutual joy for teacher and disciples. — "these things": Luther: Gospel and faith. — "hidden": no human wisdom ever found or fathomed the Gospel, 1 Cor. 2:7, 9; 1:18, but rather despises it, Luke 7:30. This spiritual blindness is their own fault, Luke 19:42; and at the same time their just retribution, 1 Cor. 1:19-21. — "wise," etc.: without article to emphasize quality. — "babes": those who resemble little babes in sincerity and humility. Ps. 8:2; 1 Cor. 1:27. "Human objects must be known to be loved, the divine must be loved in order to be known." — V. 22: "all things"; emphatic position; divine wisdom and power, glory and blessing for those who shall inherit salvation. — "the Son": the only one who stands in this unique relation to the Father. The Father can be known only through the Gospel revealed by the Son; and the Son only when the Father draws us to Him. — V. 23: "what you see": the full revelation of the Gospel. — V. 24: The Old Testament believers saw afar off. Heb. 11:13. The disciples communicated with Him as the Word made flesh. We share their blessedness. 1 John 1:1-4; *Lutheran Hymnal*, 407:5; 300:5; 611:5.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The text speaks not so much of the blessings in heaven as rather of heaven. Even though difficulties of this life are mentioned, a happy and victorious tone should pervade the sermon. Do not belittle outstanding gifts and achievements. They do have their place in the economy of the Church.

Preaching Emphases. — The blessedness of those who hear and see Jesus is the dominant thought of the text. Christ's love as operative in His redemptive work and revealed in the Gospel must be placed in the forefront throughout the sermon. It must be presented as the message of all ages.

Problem and Goal. — The proper evaluation of God's love is to be aroused and stimulated so that saving faith in Christ's atonement be furthered and lead to true blessedness: peace and hope, love and life in time; fullness of joy in eternity.

Outline: THE HEAVENLY REGISTER

I. The Registrar.

- A. The Father, Lord of heaven and earth. (V.21)
- B. He has a gracious will toward mankind. (V. 21 b)
- C. He gave His only begotten Son. (V. 22)

II. Those registered.

- A. Not confined to those achieving sensational success. (Vv. 17, 20 a, 21 a)
- B. They are those saved by grace. (Vv. 20 b, 21 b)
- C. They are blessed. (Vv. 23-24)

III. The manner of registration.

- A. Jesus destroyed the works of the devil. (V.18)
- B. Jesus transfers His victory to believers. (V.19)
- C. Jesus, through the Gospel, efficaciously reveals saving knowledge. (V. 22)

VICTOR MENNICKE

