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Homiletics: Outlines on the Nassau Pericopes

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Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING

2 THESS. 1:3

The Text and the Day. — The day very easily degenerates into thankfulness for material blessings. Introit, Collect, and regular readings direct chief attention to the spiritual ingredients in Thanksgiving — recognition of God's plans for the soul and of His provision for the whole life of man. This text singles out the crucial area of Christian growth in the Church.

Notes on Meaning. — Some things in the Church seem not praiseworthy: persecutions and tribulations, v. 4. Nevertheless the Church needs to give thanks, v. 3: "We are bound," "it is meet." This urgency of Christian thanksgiving is not a grim demand of God, but has its reason in the nature of the Christian people, and the persecutions and tribulations have simply served to bring out this praiseworthy fact. That fact is that the members of the Christian congregation have had a faith which grew and a love which was very rich toward one another. Faith is that hold on the merciful God by which the Christian is sure of the forgiveness of sins and grows in Christian grace and life through the power of God. Love is the all-inclusive proof of this life in the Christian. Its first objective is the fellow Christian in the congregation.

Preaching Pitfalls. — "We are bound" should not be set forth to stress duty which God demands, but as a situation which the living faith and love of the congregation makes self-evidently necessary. Christians are to thank God because He is the Source of this faith and love; He Himself is the Agent of the precious growth in the congregation.

Preaching Emphases. — The preacher will be careful to insert the Christological implications of "faith" and "charity." They are set forth throughout the remainder of the chapter; the accident of the textual segment should not delimit this textual emphasis. — The plot to the entire section is that God Himself, even by using the difficulties of the people, and through the Gospel of Christ (v. 10), is the Worker of faith and love.

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Problem and Goal. — The problem is not explicit in this text, but is in the day, namely, that Christians thank God simply for those comforts which gratify their own physical senses. The goal of this text is to make Christians thankfully aware of the activity of God in nurturing the spiritual life of the congregation and to make them aware of the fact that their fellow Christians are the first object of their gratitude.

Outline:

THANK GOD FOR HIS CHIEF HARVEST

- I. God is indeed at work in the world.
 - A. We are grateful for the harvest and for His supply of physical needs.
 - B. But we need to learn to be grateful also for His supply of trial and testing, persecution and tribulation. To that end we must understand what His chief harvest is.
- III. The souls of His Church are God's chief harvest.
 - A. For that harvest He prepared in the sending of His Son.
 - B. He has sowed the seed of His Spirit through the Gospel of the Son.
 - C. Thereby He has created faith in Christians — His great harvest.
 - D. He has granted the most praiseworthy gift, faith growing in the hearts of the Christians of this congregation and throughout the world.
 - E. He has granted the visible demonstration of that faith and life, namely, the love of the members of this congregation, and of all Christians, for one another.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 12:41-44

The Text and the Day. — The Propers for the day stress God's help in stirring us up so that we may become ever better stewards and bring forth fruits of good works. The text is

related to the Epistle for the day inasmuch as St. Paul prays that all members of the Church may walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 41: "the treasury," the place for money to defray the expenses of Temple service. The Jews, besides paying the tithe, gave freely for the support of the Temple and its worship. V. 43: "more in than all they"—more in proportion to her means, more for her than all they had given was for them, more in God's estimation.

Preaching Pitfalls. — In connection with this text there is the danger that poverty be praised and riches denounced. God often blesses His people with temporal riches. Another danger is that the promise of reward be overstressed. A true Christian gives without any thought of reward.

Preaching Emphasis. — The motive for Christian stewardship is lacking in the text. The Gospel must be added. God gave His Son out of love for us. Christ so loved us that He gave His All for us. We should give *only* out of love for Christ and His Church.

Problem and Goal. — We should recognize the fact that it is God who has given us all that we are and all that we have. He owns; we only owe. The love of Christ should constrain us to give liberally, cheerfully, and proportionately.

Outline:

GIVING IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

- I. God wills it.
 - A. Christ sits at the treasury.
 - B. The Old Testament worship included it.
 - C. St. Paul teaches it.
- II. The Christian heart dictates it.
 - A. It is a heart of faith, love, and gratitude.
 - B. It is eager to do God's will.
 - C. It performs God's will cheerfully.
- III. Our hands perform it.
 - A. God fills our hands according to His will.
 - B. Our hands give according to His will.

ROBERT G. HEYNE

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 19: 27-30

The Text and the Day. — The church year is tapering off to its close; one more Sunday after this one. So the text, taken from the closing months of Christ's public ministry, has a note of retrospect: "We have forsaken all." The Propers for the day, however, stress what must be the dominant thought in such Christian reminiscing: prayer for mercy and trust in the Lord.

Notes on Meaning. — "Then" — the story is closely related to the context. The rich young ruler had revealed himself as loving his wealth above all. The conversation about a rich man being saved, vv. 23-25, seemed to condemn a whole class, v. 24. By contrast, "we" are different, an altogether different class. Perhaps "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven," v. 21, was the word that lingered in Peter's mind.

The parallel accounts have a few important additional touches. Both Mark and Luke state that specific blessings, such as "houses, brethren, lands" are blessings "in this time." The "hundredfold" of Matthew therefore refers to the time here on earth. Luke defines Matthew's "hundredfold" as "more than anyone has ever sacrificed for the Kingdom of God's sake.

V. 28 refers to blessings reserved for the Twelve. "Regeneration" is the time of Judgment Day. The Twelve shall have special distinctions at the time of Christ's return.

V. 30: The "first" are those within the Kingdom; the "last" are those outside the Kingdom.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The text does not argue any saving qualities for poverty and form of self-denial. Neither does it present the *motive* for following Christ. Note "inherit," not "earn," eternal life. The scope of the text is rather an evaluation by comparison: Is a loss of some material benefits for the sake of Christ really a loss? Is there no compensatory gain?

The text should not be treated as referring only to blessings beyond the grave; it definitely speaks also of compensations in this life.

Problem and Goal. — The aim is to give the Christian the proper sense of values in the face of certain losses or sacrifices that he makes for the sake of Christ. Never should

the Christian believe that by such sacrifices he establishes a legitimate *claim* on blessings or rewards. Note v. 30 in this connection. But the Christian should be aware of the compensation which the Lord gives in this life and steadfastly look to the future life which is promised to him. This will give him the proper viewpoint from which to judge all matters that enter his life.

Outline:

LOSSES THAT ARE GAINS

I. The Losses.

A. Such losses are losses for Christ's sake.

B. Such losses may come to the Christian in many ways.

II. The Gains.

A. What gains are promised.

B. The purpose of such promises of gain.

H. O. A. KEINATH

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 25:1-13

The Text and the Day. — Found only in Matthew. — The last Sunday of the church year should induce us to learn the true wisdom of preparing in time for eternity, so that we may be ready at any moment to leave this world at Christ's beck and call and join Him in the heavenly mansions. Mindful of the end of all things, we should stir up ourselves to holiness of living here; and looking beyond, we should set our affections on things above.

Notes on Meaning. — The parable is addressed to people in the Church. The parable sets forth the necessity of having and retaining grace unto the very end. The leading idea is the readiness of the Church for the coming of the Lord. This is not a preparation for some millennium. The preparation is internal, not external.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Laying the emphasis on external Christianity (Baptism, confession, churchgoing, partaking of Holy Communion). Laying emphasis on the number "five." Applying the parable to the Church as "wise" and to the world as "foolish." The merchants of whom the foolish virgins

were told to buy oil may sometimes be identified with the pastors; better not to make this point. Another pitfall is laying more emphasis upon the lamps than on the oil. Remember the foolish virgins also had lamps, but failed to supply themselves with oil.

Preaching Emphasis. — If the years of God's grace before the Deluge were definitely fixed at 120, we have every reason to believe that the years of grace for the world of our days are also fixed, not only for this world at large, but for every individual soul. The oil of God's grace enables the soul to meet the Bridegroom joyfully, without dismay. The decisive test is not the lamp, but the oil in the lamp. The chief point of the parable is to be found in the supply of oil which the wise virgins had in sufficient quantity, but the foolish lacked. The Lord stresses the importance of faith, without which no man can be saved. For a while perhaps the foolish virgins had some oil, but they neglected to replenish this at the proper source and at the proper time. In the time of testing they have no light, no evidence of love, no hymns of praise, to welcome the Lord in His coming.

Problem and Goal. — We should not be content with a small measure of faith. The "wise" maintained the supply of grace by constant recourse to the means of grace. The "foolish" were satisfied with their spiritual state once and for all and took no pains to keep their spiritual life healthful and active by renewal of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The sin of appearance without reality.

Outline:

UNTIRING PREPAREDNESS

- I. Faith allows no neutrality, stalling, and procrastination in matters of the soul.
 - A. In some things men may be different.
 1. Science.
 2. Politics.
 3. Economics.
 - B. In matters of the soul no man dare be indifferent.
 1. The divine claims upon the individual are urgent.
 2. The human claims upon the individual are urgent (brother's keeper).

3. The personal claims upon the individual are urgent (live with our conscience).

II. Unbelief paralyzes Christian vitality.

A. The world appeals to our flesh.

1. This gives us the disposition to slumber when we should be awake, alert.
2. The wise have the oil of faith to counteract their natural disposition.

B. The foolish sleep without oil in their vessels.

1. They took lamps but made no provision to keep them burning.
2. They were satisfied with a small measure of faith.
3. They foolishly believed that "it is never too late."

III. The true condition revealed in the hour of judgment.

A. There is an hour of judgment.

1. Behold, the bridegroom.
2. Behold, the bridegroom cometh.

B. There was a cry made.

1. It was made at an unexpected hour—"midnight."
2. It was an awakening cry—"all slumbered and slept."
3. It was a separating cry—"come ye forth."
4. It was a self-searching cry—"they arose and trimmed their lamps."

C. There was a crisis reached.

1. The security of the prepared. "They were ready—went in."
2. The refuges of folly—"they go to the wise; they go to the merchants."
3. The doom of the unprepared. The door was shut.

IV. The warning—Be ye ready!

A. The moral—watch.

B. Watch—because the time is uncertain.

C. Watch—because the event is sure.

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