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## Homiletics: Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

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## Homiletics

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### A Series of Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

During the next twelve months the **CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY** will present a series of sermon studies on Epistle texts. No specific pericopic system will be employed, but the effort has been made to choose texts which are related in thought to the theme of the service and which have not been treated during the past five years in this publication or in the *Concordia Pulpit*.

Our readers varied in their reactions to the type of sermon study provided during the past year. The great majority were favorable. In some instances our contributors will amplify the outlines and thus meet the chief objection to the current method.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

#### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

HEB. 10:19-25

*The Text and the Day.* — The Propers for the day stress the believer's confidence and joy in the coming of the Lord. Confidence and joy presuppose readiness. In our text the writer to the Hebrews gives instruction for such confident readiness "as ye see the day approaching."

*Notes on Meaning.* — The "therefore" of v. 19 demands a careful reading of chapters 9 and 10. — Compare 9:3 with 9:8 and with 10:19; 9:14 with 10:22; 9:28 with 10:25; et al. — The argument preceding the text has been: God commanded many symbolical acts and arrangements for the Tabernacle. Each of these signified, in one manner or another, that Christ would "by His own blood enter in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," 9:12. Now see 10:12. *Therefore*, brethren, we have boldness, full assurance of faith. — "Holiest" is heaven, or immediate access to God's throne of grace. — "Through the veil": As the priest of old had to pass beyond the veil to reach the mercy seat, so Jesus passed through the incarnation to reach the final sacrifice, its reward, and its result. — "Sprinkled from an evil conscience":

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a conscience cleansed by the washing (sprinkling) of the blood of Christ. — I refer the "bodies washed with pure water" to Holy Baptism.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — Care must be exercised in comparisons with the details of the Old Testament worship. All parts of that worship were symbolical of the atoning work of the Savior. It is advisable to describe only such parts of the Old Testament worship and Tabernacle as will be referred to in the exposition of vv. 19 and 20. Too much descriptive material will confuse and obscure the real point of the comparison. — There is probably a natural tendency, aided by the location of v. 25 in our Catechism, to overstress "assembling of ourselves together" in the sense of church attendance. That is, of course, included and may well be mentioned in the application, especially on this first day of a new church year. But it must always be kept in its proper sphere: a means to, and result of, "full assurance of faith." — Note also that "exhorting one another" applies more to 25 b than to 25 a.

*Preaching Emphases.* — A precious opportunity is presented at the very first service of the new church year to emphasize the full atonement by Christ and its result in the life of the Christian. We may well look upon this sermon as the "theme sermon" for a year's preaching. For faith and life, for soul and body, firm trust in the one sacrifice for man's sin is the dynamo that gives power to all. In the face of economic, ethical, moral, eternal problems, personal or global, being prepared for "His day" gives boldness and confidence for the interim. When we have a firm trust in Jesus' preparations for us for that day, being a Christian ceases to be a complex riddle and becomes a glorious adventure tending to a glorious end. But Christians must not only *expect* the coming of the Lord, but be *prepared* for it, which gives confident joy.

*Problem and Goal.* — To lead the hearer to the conviction that the coming of the Lord Jesus is imminent, but that this conviction does not breed fear. Strive to have the hearer, leaving God's house, feel: If Jesus come tomorrow, He has made me ready to meet Him. If I remain here for many days, He has given me the necessities for an even greater confidence, preparedness, joy.

**Outline:**

**THE JOYOUS CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE**

**I. Wherein Christian confidence consists.**

- A. In a bold approach to the throne of Grace.
- B. In a full assurance of faith.

**II. Whereon this Christian confidence is based.**

- A. On the faithfulness of Him who promises.
- B. On the knowledge that He is our High Priest.
- C. On the certainty of our ability to draw near to God.

**III. How this Christian confidence is maintained and increased.**

- A. By holding fast the profession of our faith.
- B. By provoking one another to love.
- C. By not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.
- D. By exhorting one another.

H. B. ROEPE

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**SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

2 PET. 1:2-9

*The Text and the Day.* — While the knowledge of Christ's momentous coming to judge the world in righteousness fills the hearts and minds of some with dread and horror, this same knowledge inspires others to petition the Holy Spirit, the Oil of Gladness, to multiply unto them grace and peace. Endowed richly with these blessings, the Day of Judgment, as terrifying as it is to those who live without Christ, without hope, and without God, is to those called to glory and virtue a day on which they, as God's children, will realize the fulfillment of the great and precious promises of eternal salvation made unto them by their eternal and benevolent God and Father.

*Notes on Meaning.* — "This entire epistle takes for granted that the reader possesses the knowledge of God" (Bengel). V. 2: Peter uses *epignosis*, "complete knowledge," not *gnosis*, which is employed by Paul (Rom. 1:21) participially when referring to the incomplete knowledge the heathen possess of God. *Epignosis* implies also a more intimate relationship and knowledge. Original: "In [not through] the knowledge."

**V. 3: *Zoee*:** New life in the Christian believer; *eusebeia*, as may be seen from the context: godliness as carried out into practice. Note that *life* and *godliness* here go hand in hand. In the following verse *corruption* is the antithesis of *life*; *lust*, of *godliness*. "To glory and virtue," original: His own glory and virtue. *Aretee* is not ordinary virtue, but outstanding virtue or excellence.

**V. 4: *Whereby*:** "His glory making the promises to be exceedingly great, His virtue making them precious" (Bengel). *Epangelmata*: promised blessings; "these promises have a sanctifying effect on the believer, assimilating him to God," (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown). *Geneesthe*: "ye may become partakers" (R. V.), now in part, in heaven perfectly, 1 John 3:2. *Physis*: nature, not essence. We partake of this nature only through Christ, our Mediator. This acquisition is an escape, a being rescued, not merely an intellectual effort of some sort. *En epithymia*: in [not through] inordinate and unbridled affection for earthly things. The fault lies *within* man himself. *Phthora*: moral decay; man becomes either regenerate or degenerate.

**V. 5:** "Peter here teaches that so-called practical Christianity without the spiritual motive is incomplete and unintelligent" (*Expositor's Greek Testament*). *Spoudee*: earnestness as well as diligence. *Pareispherein*: to contribute in addition to something else. *Epichoregeoo*: providing more than what is barely needed ("add to" of A. V. too weak); in other words, provide sumptuously, lavishly. *En tee pistei*: faith mentioned first, then its fruits. *Aretee*: strenuous energy; *gnoosis*: discretion. The fruits of faith specified are seven, the number of completion. Bengel: "Faith leads, love brings up the rear."

**V. 6: *Engkrateian*:** self-control. "Incontinence weakens the mind, continence strengthens it" (Bengel). *Hypomoneen*: not a stoical endurance, but one trusting in God; *eusebeian*: false teachers are ungodly persons (*asebeis*).

**V. 7: *Philadelphia*:** love toward the brethren; *agapee*: love toward all men, including enemies. This love is more than an emotional manifestation; it is directed by deliberate choice.

**V. 8: *Hyparchonta*:** being at hand, subsisting; *kathisteesin*: render you habitually; *argous*: unproductive, ineffective, em-

phasized by *akarpous*, James 2:20: Faith without works is *argee*, barren, useless; *epignoois*: "Die *epignoois* ist ihrer Natur nach etwas, was waechst."

V.9: *Mee paresti*: lacketh; *typhlos*: blind to what exists; *myoopazoon*: nearsighted; may be clear-sighted in worldly matters, but closes eyes to the things of God; *leetheen*: willful forgetfulness; *katharismou*: purging; was used in connection with ceremonial washings of the Jews; may here refer to Baptism.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*—Luther replies to the question: "What is the divine nature?" by stating: "Eternal truth, righteousness, eternal life, peace, joy, delight, and whatsoever good may be named. Hence he who becomes a partaker of the divine nature is wise, righteous, and omnipotent against the devil, sin, and death." The expression, therefore, "conveys the thought not so much of the *substantia* as rather of the *qualitas*" (Meyer's Commentary). Cf. John 1:12-13; Heb. 12:10; 1 Pet. 1:23.

*Preaching Emphases.*—Our knowledge of God and our relationship to Him are neither barren nor ineffectual. The father-son (daughter) relationship which exists between God and His children not only purges us from our old sins and endows us with virtue, but it also makes us recipients of God's great and glorious promises. These gifts become ours through the redeeming knowledge of Jesus Christ.

*Problem and Goal.*—"Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The blessed season of Advent is indeed a good season in which to think on these things.

**Outline:**

**CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE BEARING FRUIT**

- I. Reveals to us exceeding great and precious promises.
- II. Informs us how we may escape corruption and obtain virtue.
- III. Specifies how we might be partakers of the divine nature and heirs of life eternal.

Suggested hymns: 61, 63, 74

WALTER E. BUSZIN

## THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2 TIM. 4:5-8

*The Text and the Day.*—The Third Sunday in Advent has appropriately gained the character of being the Sunday of the holy ministry because the ancient Gospel text (Matt. 11:2-10) deals with Jesus' testimony regarding the ministry of John the Baptist; and in the ancient Epistle text (1 Cor. 4:1-5) the great minister Paul discusses the office of the ministry also. Obviously, the Epistle text before us fits perfectly into the picture and even adds the fine Advent thought of looking forward to Christ's Advent on Judgment Day.

*Notes on Meaning.*—“Sober” here in the Greek really means “calm and watchful and collected in spirit.” The word used for “suffer afflictions” is used frequently of the hardships of military service (2 Tim. 2:3), which fits well here also. “Make full proof of thy ministry” implies: “Do not shirk any phase of your ministerial duties,” Col. 4:17. “Offered” alludes to Paul's pouring out his blood as a drink offering not as a sacrifice of atonement, but as a thankoffering to God for His mercy. (Phil. 2:7.) “Departure” is the picture of a ship loosed from its moorings preparatory to setting sail, Phil. 1:23. “Kept” denotes “hold firmly.” “Love” here means “to welcome with desire, to long for.” It is a remarkable feature to see how Paul combines past, present, and future in this dramatic swan song.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*—Let us avoid using this text to bring some “pet peeve” regarding our ministry to the attention of the congregation. This text, together with the regular texts for this day, is to make everyone of us feel how little and how lazy we are in comparison to divine standards for a *full* Gospel ministry and even in comparison to men like John the Baptist and Paul. There is, therefore, no room in this sermon for self-glorification. Let us also emphasize that these words are not only Paul's words, but above all God's Word. Paul and Timothy and John the Baptist will serve best here as illustrations.

*Preaching Emphases.*—With Christmas near at hand, ministers are often exceedingly busy, but perhaps at no season of the year do any of us lead the *full* life which John the Baptist and Paul led as messengers of Jesus. This text gives us

good occasion to preach to ourselves, and then also to show the congregation that *we need* an abundant measure of the grace of God in Christ Jesus because of our sins and infirmities and deficiencies. Thus also as ministers we are looking forward to Christmas because *our* Savior was born, and we long, together with all Christians, for the final appearing of Jesus to take us home to heaven.

**Problem and Goal.**—It was Paul's purpose by the inspiration of God to encourage Timothy to go on boldly as a messenger of Jesus in spite of the evil times and in spite of the martyrdom of Paul. It should be the Christian pastor's purpose here to show his people that he has no regrets that he has entered the ministry and does not seek sympathy, but rather asks his people to share in the *joy* of his ministry by joining in with the best of their abilities and according to their station in the *full* life of the Gospel ministry.

**Outline:**

**THE FULL LIFE OF FAITHFUL MESSENGERS OF JESUS**

- I. In their youth and years of activity.
  - A. They will be calm and watchful.
  - B. They will be ready to endure hardships.
  - C. Their one message will be the Gospel of Jesus.
  - D. They will shirk no responsibilities and dodge no issues.
  - E. Wherein I have failed, I ask Jesus and you to forgive me; wherein His grace has made me strong, I ask you to follow me.
- II. In their age and under the shadow of death.
  - A. They will be faithful unto death, even martyrdom.
  - B. They look back upon their past ministry with joy.
  - C. They are content at present, sure of a reward of grace above.
  - D. They look forward to the future joy with hopeful anticipation.
  - E. They bequeath the Gospel to those that shall follow them.
  - F. Regardless of our age or danger of death, such is also our Advent faith and hope; yours also, we hope.

WALTER W. STUENKEL



## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2 COR. 4:3-6

*The Text and the Day.* — In olden days this last Sunday before the great day was called *Praeparatio*, the preparation. Our hearts are attuned to expectation. In a wondrous song we sing: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." — How shall we prepare to welcome Him? By following the Herald's cry: "Make straight the way of the Lord." We need to learn the emptiness of our life that we may reach out for the fullness of Christ. Therefore we pray in the Collect: "Stir up Thy power, and come, and with great might succor us, that by the help of Thy grace whatsoever is hindered by our sins may be speedily accomplished by Thy mercy and satisfaction."

*Notes on Meaning.* — V. 3: "If our Gospel be hid," i. e., veiled. Paul still has in mind the imagery of chap. 3:13-16, referring to the veil upon the face of Moses and the hearts of the Israelites. V. 4: "The god of this world" is Satan, the great idol, who demands worship and receives it from the multitudes who lie at his feet. "Hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." "This shows clearly that unbelief is the reason for their blindness, for unbelief cannot 'see' the Gospel with its light, though it is constantly proclaimed" (Luther). V. 5: Paul had previously said that his ministry is (1) one of triumph (2 Cor. 2:14-15); (2) a divinely accredited ministry (2 Cor. 3:1-5); (3) a spiritual and glorious, not a legal, ministry (2 Cor. 3:6-18); (4) an honest ministry (2 Cor. 4:1); (5) a ministry commended by the life he led (2 Cor. 4:2); a ministry in which not self, but Christ Jesus, the Lord is preached. V. 6: In the face of Moses men saw the Law; in the face of Jesus Christ they see the Gospel. By a clear revelation through Jesus Christ the Gospel brings the knowledge of the divine glory.

*Praching Emphases.* — Our faithful God has come to our rescue, driven back the darkness, revealed the glory of His grace in the face of Christ Jesus. As the sun gives physical light, so that Daystar from on high gives the light we need for our souls. Unbelief embraces darkness; faith embraces light. While other lights are going out over the world, one

faithful light remains, the light of the glorious love and mercy of God, revealed in Him who is Himself the Light of the world.

*Problem and Goal.*—To show that only a Christmas brightened by the light of Christ's glorious revelation is a Christmas that escapes the darkness of the world. If our Christmas is to be glad with holy joy, it must come with the joy light of Christian faith for every heart.

*Outline:*

THE JOY LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

- I. It comes from the Father of lights.
  - A. Light for the world at creation.
  - B. Light for the soul through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- II. It shines in the face of our Savior.
  - A. There we can see what God is like.
  - B. There we can see God's will for us.
- III. It is a faithful and true light.
  - A. This light shines faithfully over the whole world.
  - B. The rulers of darkness oppose it.
  - C. It brightens every believing heart.

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C. W. BERNER

CHRISTMAS DAY

HEB. 10: 5-10

*The Text and the Day.*—How this precious Christmas text could for so long remain unnoticed is a mystery. "*When He cometh into the world, He saith. . .*" Here we have Christ's words, spoken at His coming, concerning His coming, and conveying the real meaning of His coming and of Christmas.

*Notes on Meaning.*—"*Wherefore*": because "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (v. 4). Four lambs every day, eight every Sabbath, eleven animals every new moon, additional offerings every festival day—1167 public sacrifices every year, besides unnumbered private sacrifices and the unbloody sacrifices of cereals, wine, and incense: such were the demands of God for 1500 years. The reason: sin, which can be atoned for only

by blood. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" of sins, Heb. 9:22. So the blood of animals flowed in streams until the coming of the Babe of Bethlehem.

But "*when He cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not. . . . In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure.*" Though required by God, these sacrifices had no power to remove sin (v.4). Nor did they relieve men of the consciousness of sin (v.2). In fact, their continual repetition was a constant reminder of sin (v.3). At the same time, however — and that was their chief purpose — they focused the eyes of the faithful on the promised Sin-Bearer, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." But more these animal sacrifices could not do. Hymn 156:1. Therefore Christ at His coming into the world said to the Father: "*Sacrifice Thou wouldest not.*"

"*But a body hast Thou prepared Me.*" Here is the heart of Christmas. Christ would say: "I am born to die. I, Thy eternal Son, have become the Son of Man to redeem man. Thou, Father, hast given Me a body that I might have blood, that I might shed that blood, and that by the shedding of My blood — God's blood — I might do that which all the blood of animals could not do — take away sin."

"*Then said I, Lo, I come . . . to do Thy will, O God!*" That sounds like a shout of joyful anticipation. "*I come,*" because I want to come and carry out God's plan for the redemption of the world as announced "*in the Volume of the Book.*" "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work,*" John 4:34. And finish it He did. He ascends the altar. "*He taketh away the first,*" the animal sacrifices, "*that He may establish the second,*" the sacrifice of His own body. He dies the death He wants to die, but only after He has proclaimed the accomplished salvation of the world with the cry "It is finished!" That is what our text means when it concludes: "*By the which will,*" namely, by the will of God as joyfully carried out by His Son, "*we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"

**Problem and Goal.** — The problem: because of Modernist conceptions, which make light of sin and regard Christ as a mere moralist, few people know the true meaning of Christmas. The goal: to help our hearers celebrate a real Christmas

by leading them to the realization of the sinfulness of their sin, to the acceptance of Christ as their Sin-Bearer, and to the dedication of their lives to His services.

*Outline:*

**WHAT CHRIST SAID WHEN HE CAME INTO THE WORLD**

**I. "Sacrifice Thou wouldest not."**

The many Old Testament sacrifices. Only blood can atone for sin. But such is the sinfulness of sin that even the streams of blood which flowed from Jewish altars could not wash it away. Neither can anything that you may do or suffer.

**II. "But a body hast Thou prepared Me."**

The Christmas story. God gave His Son a body that He might have blood — blood which, because it is God's blood, could atone for all our sins. That is the all-glorious meaning of Christmas. Christ was born, not merely to be our Teacher and Example, but to be our Sin-Bearer and Savior. Accept Him as such, trust in Him, and you have forgiveness, life, and heaven.

**III. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!"**

Christ's love for the Father and you moved Him willingly and joyfully to come and die for your sins. Your love for Christ must move you, in like spirit, to live your life for Him.

OSWALD RIESS

**SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

1 TIM. 3:16

*The Text and the Day.* — A wonderful *post festum* text. In it we still hear, as it were, the pealing of Christmas bells and the refrain of Christmas anthems. The message and the songs of the festival season are not to be heard and sung in vain.

*Notes on Meaning.* — The truth that is to be unfolded in our brief text is the pillar and foundation of the Church of the living God. The personal union of the two natures in Christ is a confessedly great mystery that transcends all human comprehension. The invisible God was visible in the

flesh (John 1:14). Christ was God Invisible from all eternity. In the person of Jesus Christ divinity and humanity were so closely united that whosoever saw the Man Jesus saw God. (John 14:9; John 10:30.) Where this great and blessed mystery is known, true godliness is generated, namely, love to God and the brethren. (1 John 4.)

Of Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, it is said that He is "justified in the Spirit." Note the antithesis between *sarx* and *pneuma*. The latter denotes the divine nature of Christ, the former the human nature. According to both natures Christ has taken away the sin of the world. Thereby He has appeased the wrath of God and effected the reconciliation between God and man. Christ is our Substitute. But His substitutionary work had to be perfect to include all mankind. (1 John 2:2). The union of the two natures guarantees this perfection. Christ has been justified as our Substitute. Thus He is "made unto us Righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Pet. 3:18). "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

"Seen of the angels." When and where? The Son of God, manifested in the flesh, accepted the ministrations of the good angels during His humiliation. (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43.) These angels were present at His birth, proclaimed His resurrection, and stood by at His ascension. They also behold in beatific vision the fullness of His glory in His exaltation. (Eph. 1:10, 20; 3:10, 20; 1 Pet. 1:12; Heb. 1:6.)

"Preached unto the Gentiles." With a few notable exceptions the activity of the manifested Redeemer was confined to the covenant people, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then, before He ascended into heaven, He issued His majestic command (Matt. 28:19-20). The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down. (Eph. 2:14.) St. Paul already made headway in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:8.)

"Believed on in the world." For nearly 2,000 years Christ, manifested in the flesh, has been the Sum and Substance of all Christian preaching; so also He has been the Substance of all Christian belief. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has been a "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16; Is. 55:10). It is not believed by the world (most people reject the Gospel), but in the world a

great multitude (Rev. 7:9) of repentant sinners have come to the saving faith by the operation of a gracious God.

"Received into glory." These words refer first to the ascension of Christ (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2), but also to the succeeding state of glory, in which Christ, according to His human nature, entered into the full and constant use of His divine majesty communicated to His human nature (Eph. 1:20-22; Eph. 4:10). For our comfort Jesus has promised us John 14:1-3.

*Preaching Emphases.*—Like John 3:16, our text is a brief summary of the whole Gospel. It is most likely a stanza out of an ancient hymn of praise dedicated to the person and work of Christ, then also to the blessed activity of the Church, and finally to the glory of the Church Triumphant. Whether our hearers believe it or not, they cannot deny that the claims of Christianity are tremendous.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*—Two trilogies are noted. Three pairs have been noted by others: (1) flesh—spirit, (2) angels—nations, (3) world—glory. We prefer the trilogy as indicated in the appended outline.

*Problem and Goal.*—That Christ be magnified by the glorious hymn of praise. (Phil. 1:20; Acts 19:17.)

*Outline:*

AN APOSTOLIC HYMN OF PRAISE  
TO THE NEWBORN SAVIOR

- I. It exalts the Person and the work of the newborn Savior.
  - A. God was manifest in the flesh (Incarnation).
  - B. Justified in the Spirit (Resurrection).
  - C. Seen of the Angels (Ascension).
- II. It exalts the fruits of His redeeming work.
  - A. Preaching unto the Gentiles (Preaching).
  - B. Believed on in the World (Faith).
  - C. Received up into glory (Kingdom of Glory).

H. C. HARTING

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

PHIL. 3:13 b-14

**Text and Day.** — New Year's Eve looks back with a spiritual audit; New Year's Day looks forward with hope in Christ. Yet the two are not separable. Hymns, prayers, psalmody will be chosen to sharpen the mood of self-examination, but also to insert into that mood the trust in Christ and the desire to live for Christ.

**Notes on Meaning.** — This sectioning of the text is suggested in order to lend emphasis to the "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before." St. Paul has discussed the objective of the Christian's grasp and life, beginning with v. 7. That objective is complete salvation in Christ Jesus, v. 9. Components of this salvation are the experience of Christ as Savior, v. 8; justification, v. 9; newness of life and mind, vv. 10-11; and ability to suffer with Him and thus be glorified with Him, v. 10 (cf. 2:5-10). This great complex of goals is the Savior's design for the Christian, v. 12 b; to that end He gave Himself in the atonement. Now the text makes clear that the Apostle does not think of that entire process as already complete; the full resurrection of the spirit here, and of body and spirit in eternity, has not yet taken place. (Cf. 2:12; 1 Cor. 10:12 ff.) Hence it is the great program of the Christian life to "reach forth unto those things which are before." "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," i. e., because of the atonement, and through the Gospel of that atonement, God summons man to this resurrection of the entire self and to an eternity of communion with Him — a prize beside which every other goal of life fades into insignificance. (Cf. v. 7.) This also implies "forgetting those things which are behind." In the context this implies levels of spiritual excellence which might cause pride or self-satisfaction. (Cf. 3:3-8.) But it is not beyond the Apostle's thought to include also the shortcomings and sins which might cause discouragement. (Cf. 4:12-13.)

**Preaching Pitfalls** — Our outline suggests a paradox for the sake of emphasis — what dare we not forget, what must we forget, as we review the past year? The danger must be resisted of leaving the main point unclear. — The core of the

text is expressed in very general terms — “things,” “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The sermon will achieve its purpose only as the pastor conveys very clear concepts of the life in Christ and of the way of pursuing it as a goal.

**Problem and Goal.** — To give the Christian a final insight into the meaning of the year which he is closing, namely, a march and drive on to the fuller life in Christ and to refresh in his mind the techniques for continuing that progress.

**Outline:**

**WHAT SHALL BE OUR ATTITUDE TO THE YEAR  
NOW ENDING?**

- I. Our spiritual attainments during this past year we shall forget.
  - A. The excellencies: growth in Christian living, trust and faith in God, richer prayer, etc. We shall forget them; for they were imperfect, far short of the great goal to which God would have us attain in Christ.
  - B. The shortcomings: our sins, pride, godlessness, succumbing to the world, fear of the trials and tests of faith. They were there for a purpose, they have done their work. Now God offers us full pardon in Christ (Holy Communion to be stressed, if celebrated in this service) and power to move on to new fruits of grace.
- II. The great goal of life in Christ is still before us.
  - A. The resurrection of Christ in our hearts, the greater and greater possession of the Spirit of God; and the final resurrection of body and soul with God in eternity — these in their fullness are still ahead.
  - B. Hence we press on toward it. How? By holding before us the atoning Christ; by making His Word the tool toward genuinely “knowing” Him; by making progress each new day toward fuller life in Him.

**RICHARD R. CAEMMERER**

