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## Homiletics: Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

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**3. We Are Saved**

This is important for us. The righteous Servant made us righteous and holy. We are among the blessed spoils, thanks to God's grace and mercy.

We have often repented and strengthened our faith by gazing at this suffering and now victorious Servant of God. We trust in His redemption and righteousness.

May this meditation upon the suffering Savior draw us closer to Him and heaven.

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

### THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

2 PET. 3:11-15 a

*The Text and the Day.*—Following the suggestion of Dr. Martin Luther, the Reformers Bugenhagen and Veit Dietrich appointed the story of the Transfiguration for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany as a proper close for the Epiphany season, which deals with the manifestation of the glory of Christ. Since this Sunday is the last Sunday after Epiphany for this year, we follow the Lutheran custom of concentrating on a text that magnifies Christ's glory, particularly at the end of the world.

*Notes on Meaning.*—The end of the world is inevitable. The present heaven and earth will be destroyed (see context). But Christians need not fall into terror when they recognize the many signs which point to the dissolution of all things (Matt. 24:3 ff.). The Day of the Lord, which will bring consternation on all unbelievers, will be a day of peace and joy in which righteousness will reign for all believers (Is. 11:5 ff.; 25:7 f.; and ch. 35). In fact, believers in Christ look forward to the coming of the Day of the Lord, convinced that the promise of new heavens and a new earth cannot fail (Is. 65:17 ff.; 62:22). The exhortation of the Apostle to constancy in faith is very much in place. Satan will give neither mind nor conscience rest, and the world can easily deceive the Christian and seduce him into sin. Therefore the Apostle urges diligence in clinging to God's Word (regular reading of the Bible; regular attendance at church services and at the Table of the Lord; daily prayer) so that faith can in-



crease in strength and the believer be without spot and blameless (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 3:13). Then the believer will understand that the long-suffering of our Lord is not a sign of impotence or disinterestedness (chap. 3:3-4), but evidence of His love to save as many as possible.

*Preaching Pitfalls.*— Looking at our present world, a preacher could lose himself in painting a lurid picture of the disintegration of family, ecclesiastical, national, and international life. His utterance could be true to the core; but if he dwells too long on the ungodliness of our modern age, he has not enough time to emphasize the Gospel message in the text, and he leaves the individual hearer untouched.

*Preaching Emphases.*— Our time is not much different from that of St. Peter. The Apostle found it necessary to urge his fellow believers to stand fast in the faith and resist temptation to sin and apostasy, even if such steadfastness should lead to loss of life. In our country there is no persecution entailing bloodshed. Yet there is insidious ridicule of Scripture and open denial of the faith once delivered to the fathers. Our members are exposed to this poison. It comes to them through the movies, the printed page, and the radio. This is subtle persecution and leads some of our people to the brink of apostasy. Therefore we shall have to emphasize the necessity of circumspection, the nearness of the Day of the Lord, the renewal of faith, the beauty of the new heavens and the new earth, and the Lord's desire to save.

*Problem and Goal.*— A growing number of our people are not taking God and the Bible too seriously. The preacher must strive to get at the conscience of his members, rouse his people out of their lethargy, lead them to the Cross of Jesus, and urge them to believe that the new heavens and the new earth will be a reality through faith in Christ.

*Outline:*

**HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD?**

- I. By recognizing and repenting of our sins.
- II. By believing in Christ as our Savior.
- III. By earnestly striving to lead a life dedicated to God.
- IV. By thanking God for the promise of citizenship in the new heavens and the new earth.

**ALEX WM. C. GUEBERT**



## SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

ROM. 3:27-31

*The Text and the Day.*—Septuagesima Sunday is numbered among the Sundays which the Lenten Cycle comprises. The blessed, holy Passiontide once again presents to us an opportunity to devote intensive study to the work of redemption by Christ Jesus. So the Propers for this Sunday emphasize man's helplessness, the versicle reading: "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" and God's gracious helpfulness, the versicle concluding: "But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." Our text fits admirably into this cycle, summarizing briefly how our helplessness is solved by God's helpfulness.

*Notes on the Meaning.*—The burden, the heart and soul, of our text is, of course, v. 28. Since we are justified by faith without the deeds of the Law, man has nothing whereof to boast. V. 28 is a summary of the doctrine of the sinner's justification as set forth in the preceding context, vv. 21-26. Man himself is described in v. 23. Paul's argument is this: If man had fulfilled all the works of the Law to do them, he would have whereof to boast. But since he is justified not by the law of works, but by the law of faith—*law* here being used in its wider meaning of *rule*—all boasting is excluded, aye, would be presumptuous. Nay, rather, God justifies the sinner by grace through faith for Christ's sake. Thus, and thus only, is heaven again opened unto the sinner, regardless of his racial background or origin, whether he be Jew or Gentile. V. 30: "One God," hence there is only one way of salvation. Finally we have the remarkable statement that only he who has been justified by God establishes the Law, lives according to the Law, v. 31. Faith wrought by the Spirit of God takes hold of justification. But faith is not something inactive, lifeless, or dead. Luther: "The nature of faith is that it is something living, busy, active, mighty, so that it is impossible for faith not to be constantly active in doing good. Neither does faith ask whether there be any good works to be done, but does them without being told and is constantly busy." St. L., XIV:97 f.

*Preaching Emphases.*—The doctrine of justification by faith is the life-giving element, the dayspring from on high, the



all-powerful and only incentive for a Godward life. Only he who is able to say by faith: Ps. 103:2-5, is perfect and thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works, 2 Tim. 3:17. By justification a complete change is brought about in our thinking and will. The powers of the soul are freed from the fetters of sin. The mind becomes enlightened. The will is directed toward God. God is enthroned in the heart. This change, this new life, is ours in Christ, with whom we are united by justifying faith. We are now able to say: "For me to live is Christ," Phil. 1:21. What a marvelous change!

*Problem and Goal.* — We must arouse each member to a burning desire to serve the living God. How can this be accomplished? Through the preaching of the doctrine of justification. Each member must be reminded again and again of the truth that we are saved, we are justified, to serve. It is God's will that we, who embrace by faith the forgiveness of sins, serve God in gratitude by a godly life, 1 Thess. 4:3; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19-20. We must remind our Christians again and again that it simply is not true that the doctrine of justification by faith lulls the Christians to sleep and renders them inactive in the great cause of God's kingdom. Examples: Life of Christian spouses toward and for each other, Ephesians 5; use of our possessions in the service of God. Justifying faith alone makes it possible for a Christian to dedicate some of his earthly possessions to the service of God in the expansion and upbuilding of His kingdom. We have this doctrine in all its pristine purity. Why isn't there greater activity among our Christians? Because of the weakness of their flesh. Therefore perfection in such sanctified service by the redeemed, restored, forgiven children of God is never attained in this life. But that fact should not keep us from urging our Christians again and again to strive for the goal, Phil. 3:12. And the preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith is necessary as the life-giving, strengthening element to incite our Christians to greater sanctification.

*Outline:*

**THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN ITS  
INFLUENCE UPON OUR LIVES**

**I. What does justification by faith mean?**

**A. Description of this act of God. Context, vv. 23-24.**



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- B. Necessity of it. Context, vv. 23, 27.
- C. All-inclusiveness of it (only way), vv. 29-30.
- D. Appropriated by faith, v. 28.

**II. How does this doctrine influence our lives?**

- A. Complete change of the heart and the will.
- B. Enables Christians to establish the Law, v. 31.
- C. Imperfect in this life. Still too often inclined to boast, v. 27. By imperfections covered by the Redeemer's sacrifice and blood.
- D. This doctrine constant incentive to strive for perfection.

Conclusion: Gal. 2:20.

WALTER H. BOUMAN

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**SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY**

1 COR. 1:18-24

*The Text and the Day.* — We are at the threshold of the Lenten season. The proper voice the pleas of God's people — "redeem," "deliver," "save Thy people" — which find their answer in the message of Lent. The texts of various series show the right attitude toward Christ. Others, including the Gospel for the day, call attention to the preaching of the life-giving Word. This thought is also emphasized in our text.

*Notes on Meaning.* — The text becomes more meaningful to us after we have read at least the first four chapters of Paul's letter. Note how often he refers to our important office in these chapters and how definitely he gives all glory to God for whatever is accomplished through our ministry. The A. V. may well speak of the "Word" of the Cross as "preaching" in view of the entire context. Our preaching is foolishness to men as long as they are perishing. To them we are a savor of death unto death (2 Cor. 2:16). Our preaching shows its power by converting men and continues as the power of God in those who are being saved (present participle), among whom Paul includes *us*, pastors and people. Let us learn of Paul to use personal pronouns, always drawing our hearers into our sermons, knowing that God's power works in their hearts and lives through our preaching. During Lent we shall



find them to be especially receptive to our preaching. Let us make full use of our opportunities.

Paul, himself inspired, proves his points by quoting the Old Testament. Do we always furnish Scripture proof for our statements? In v. 20 he applies the Word to his day. Do we? The wise Greek, the Jewish scribe with his technical treatment of the Law, the sophist (Jew and Greek) debating in the schools, had had their day and had produced the skepticism which caused Pontius Pilate to exclaim, "What is truth!" But in the wisdom of God (thanks be to Him for it, Matt. 11:25) man need not and cannot use his own wisdom to know God, i. e., as his God and Lord. Instead, God uses a means which is applicable to all because it demands nothing of man. By the foolishness of preaching He saves those whom He brings to faith through our preaching.

The message of the Cross is not what men think they need. The Jews wanted a sign. On the basis of Daniel 7:13 they were expecting a "Son of the clouds" to appear as their deliverer. They were, therefore, offended at Christ, the lowly servant of man. The Greeks sought the highest wisdom and could see no wisdom whatever in the teaching that death would bring life, that weakness would become power, that shame and contempt would lead to glory. But Christ, the Crucified, actually achieved all of this by His death.

When meditating on v. 23, first place the accent on the name "Christ." Get the full implication of the title. Then note the word "crucified." See how it magnifies sin and wrath as well as forgiveness and grace. Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God *for us* only as the Crucified. "Christ crucified." Here are the mysteries of God of which the Lord has made us stewards; here are the treasures with which we are to enrich men's lives; here is the sole reason for our ministry; here is the guarantee that our preaching will not be in vain. Christ crucified! He is seemingly helpless, yet in that weakness He destroys him who had the power of death. What a proof of His deity and of His redemptive power! He is seemingly a contradiction in Himself, yet He affords a plan of salvation which is applicable to all men, regardless of race, color, nationality (v. 24), with no criticism resting either on the result or on the manner of reaching it Rom. 9—11,



esp. 11:33). What a proof of His wisdom! Christ crucified — as such He will be praised throughout eternity (Rev. 5:12).

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — We may be tempted to devote a good portion of the sermon to the presentation of the theories of the leaders of thought (vv. 20-22), forgetting what Paul says in 1:17; 2:1-2; and in our text. Again, we may be tempted to seek to make the message of the Cross reasonable to men, hoping to convince the learned, forgetting 1:17.

*Problem and Goal.* — We, as the called ministers of Christ, are to consider the preaching of the simple Gospel truths our highest office, since only through this message the power and wisdom of God becomes operative in the hearts and lives of our members. Our preaching should fill them with such a longing for the message of the Cross that they will feel impelled to attend the coming Lenten services for the strengthening of their faith, hope, and love. In the theme suggested below the wisdom of God is mentioned. In each part of the sermon this wisdom of God should be clearly shown.

*Outline:*

GOD'S WISDOM IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION

- I. He requires nothing of man, since man can offer nothing.
- II. He provides everything in Christ, who is our all-sufficient Savior.
- III. He makes it our duty and privilege to preach the Word of salvation to all mankind.

Springfield, Ill.

MARK J. STEEGE

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

JAMES 3:13-18

*The Text and the Day.* — The day is the Sunday before the beginning of Lent. Since the text is Law, not Gospel, it can be used as a preparation for the Lenten season in the sense that it is a call to repentance, an Ash Wednesday theme.

*Notes on Meaning.* — The Epistle of James deals mainly with the Law; as such it condemns the sinner, but it also is a rule for the Christian. The immediate preceding context



dwells on sins of the tongue. This text has as its theme "Wisdom." This "wisdom from above" is a grace possessed by one who is a Christian.

"Conversation," ἀναστροφῆ, does not refer to mere speaking, but has the wider connotation "manner of life." V. 13 refers to the fact that this wisdom from above is characterized by the quality of meekness. The wisdom from below shows itself in the opposite: strife, bitterness, etc. This wisdom may even glory in the fact that it puts up a fight and an argument and feels proud at having bested and humbled an opponent. — V. 14. "Truth" in this verse may be taken as the equivalent of "Gospel." The meaning then is: Do not try to justify your personal strife and enmity as though required by the fact that you have the truth, since such conduct belies the Gospel. — V. 15. "Earthly" refers to the fact that such wisdom from below is of the cheap kind which may appear impressive, but is really shallow and of a low level. "Sensual," ψυχική, does not mean "spiritual," but "on no higher level than that which animates the physical body." — V. 17. "Easy to be intreated," or "yielding," just the opposite of a persistent claiming to be right. — V. 18. The meaning is that the harvest which righteousness ("righteousness" taken here as a quality of a Christian) is to produce must be sown in a peaceful way by those who love peace; such a harvest is never produced by strife and envy.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — The text is a text of Law and must be preached as such. The "wisdom from above" in the Christian is a fruit of faith, not faith itself; not to be confused with "wisdom unto salvation." The preacher will add a discussion of the source of the "wisdom from above," namely, the Spirit of God.

*Preaching Emphases and Goal.* — The emphasis of the text is on peaceful conduct among Christians as opposed to envy and strife. The former flows from the wisdom from above, the latter from the wisdom from below. That peacefulness, gentleness, and an attitude of yielding in a controversy is wisdom is often unbelievable to our selfish and proud hearts.

The text can be brought into relation with the season as a call to repentance at the beginning of Lent.

**Outline:** **WHO IS A WISE MAN?**

- I. There is a wisdom from below.**
  - A. It delights in envy and strife.**
  - B. It even lies against the truth.**
  - C. It is earthly, sensual, devilish.**
  - D. It results in confusion and every evil.**
  
- II. There is a wisdom from above.**
  - A. It shows itself in meekness.**
  - B. It is pure, gentle, easy to be intreated, etc.**
  - C. It works for peace.**

**H. O. A. KEINATH**

