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Homiletics: Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

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Homiletics

A Series of Sermon Studies for the Church Year

ASH WEDNESDAY

HEB. 13:12-16

The Text and the Day.—The day is so called because of the custom in the Ancient Church of penitents, to express their sorrow for their sins, appearing in sackcloth and ashes. Formerly, ashes were strewn on the head. Now merely a cross of ashes is marked on the forehead, man being reminded that he is dust and unto dust shall return. Not until Gregory the Great in the sixth century was Ash Wednesday the first day in Lent; he added it to complete the forty days of Lent. In our Lutheran Church calendar Ash Wednesday merely means that it is the first day of Lent, reminding us that we are then entering upon that season of the church year in which we make a special study of Christ's suffering and death, calling us anew to repentance and to faith in our Savior.—It has been customary to observe the Lenten Season as a closed or a quiet season. This, however, is a good custom of the Church and has no divine command.—In the Introit, Gradual, and Collect of the day we hear the sinners cry to God for mercy and forgiveness.

Notes on Meaning.—The "wherefore" of this text refers back to vv. 10 and 11. Reference is here made to the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement, the bullock for the high priest and the goat for the people. The flesh of some sacrifices the people ate; that of the ordinary sin offering was eaten by the priests alone; but of the sin offerings made on the Day of Atonement it is said that they shall be carried "without the camp" and "they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung," Lev. 16:27. Even so Christ was sacrificed on the Cross "without the camp," v. 11, "without the gate," v. 12. The blood of the sin offering was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, and the high priest sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat within the veil and upon the horns of the altar, Lev. 16:14-

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15, 27. Even so Christ, our true High Priest, entered with His blood into the Holy of Holies of heaven to appear before God as our Savior, whose blood cleanseth us from all our sins, v. 12. Besides the bullock two goats were used, one as a sin offering and the other as the scapegoat, which was driven to the wilderness. Christ is the true Antitype of the scapegoat, on which the sins of the people were laid. (For his information the preacher should read the entire chapter 16 of Leviticus).

"We have an altar," v. 10, the Cross. Those who still serve the tabernacle, that is, cling to the old Jewish ordinances as though these were yet to be fulfilled, have no right to eat of the altar. We believers of the New Testament no longer cling to that which only foreshadowed better things in Christ, but have the right to eat of the sacrifice, that is, by faith in Christ to enjoy its benefits. Even in the Old Testament not the performance of certain rites procured God's grace and favor, but faith in the coming Messiah. — The text proceeds to tell us that we should cheerfully bear the reproach of Christ, v. 13, suffer with Him here, that there with Him we may be exalted, 1 Pet. 4:12-19; 2 Tim. 3:12; John 15:18-31; 16:1-4, remembering that "here we have no continuing city," v. 14. — However, we, too, must bring our offerings to God, but they are of a nature different from those of the Old Testament: first, "the sacrifice of praise to God continually," v. 15; secondly, what we confess with our lips we should manifest in our attitudes and deeds toward our fellow men, v. 16.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The preacher may be tempted to ignore the Old Testament reference in the text and really fail to preach the text; on the other hand, he may be tempted to spend so much of his time in describing in detail the Old Testament sacrifices that the real purpose of their fulfillment in Christ is not sufficiently stressed and impressed upon the minds and hearts of the hearers.

Preaching Emphases. — The real emphasis must be given to Christ's work of redemption, v. 12, and should make us willing cheerfully to study anew the Passion story. Is. 53:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13.

Problem and Goal. — The study of Christ's Passion should recall to our minds our sinfulness and our sins which nailed Christ to the Cross (Hymn 140, v. 3), but also strengthen us

in our faith, that through Christ we have a gracious Father in heaven and forgiveness of all our sins, v. 12. The words, v. 12, "that He might sanctify the people with His own blood" speak of the purpose which is to be accomplished in the individual sinner when by faith he accepts Christ's redemption and thus makes it his own.

Outline:

**WHEN HAS THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF OUR SAVIOR
BENEFITED US?**

- I. When we understand the meaning and purpose of His suffering and death, v. 12 (vv. 10-11).
- II. When in true repentance and faith we have accepted Christ as our Savior, v. 12.
- III. When we give evidence of our faith in our daily life, vv. 13-16; Is. 53:11; Gal. 2:20.

Hymn after the sermon: 156.

JOHN H. C. FRITZ

INVOCAVIT

GAL. 5:13-18

The Text and the Day. — The first Sunday in Lent brings the Gospel of the Temptation in the Wilderness. The lessons which cluster about this story are highly practical. The Epistle applies them to the minister who succeeds in his labors by the power of God. The Introit and the Collect stress the preservation of God against every foe. This text makes the application to the life of every Christian: he needs the power of the Spirit to withstand the enemies within himself.

Notes on Meaning. — The Gospel of justification by grace can in itself become a cause of temptation. From outside come those who seek to break down confidence in the grace of God (the entire epistle, cf. 3:1). From within comes the presumption of the flesh that the free Christian may become unmindful of his brother. The flesh quotes Gospel on behalf of its selfishness! (v. 13). The Christian man needs to be on the alert against this temptation. Let him ponder the pattern of the will of God and see the demand of love (v. 14). Let him see the practical results of selfishness and recognize the need for the life of God (v. 15). Above all, let him recognize his own nature (vv. 16-17). As a Christian man

he is composed of two principles, two batteries of drives, concerns, and desires opposed to each other, those of the Spirit and those of the flesh. If the Spirit should win, if the will should be at any one moment the Spirit's doing, the Spirit Himself has to lead. That will occur, not when the individual sells out to the codes of the Mosaic or any other law and is driven by their penalties, but when the Spirit of God leads (v. 18).

Preaching Pitfalls.—This extract does not define the source of the Spirit. The sermon is inferior, both in the expression of doctrine and in the provision of the spiritual life, as long as that detail remains unsaid. St. Paul has said it in chapter 2:16-21; 3:26—4:7. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has to be stated explicitly in order that the Spirit be reinforced in the heart.

Preaching Emphases.—In keeping with the day the heart of the text will be the problem of the temptation of the flesh. Verse 14 may tempt the preacher to discuss love; but the highlight of the text remains the problem of the flesh and the power of the Spirit.

Problem and Goal.—The difficulty which the sermon will seek to analyze and remedy is the flesh of the Christian causing him to become sluggish in the fruits of faith. This flesh is a continual temptation, a test of faith. The goal of the sermon is to activate the Christian in gauging the pressure and adequacy of the Spirit at any one time in his life and to reinforce His presence through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This sermon itself will contribute to that process.

Outline:

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT IN CONQUEST OF THE FLESH

I. The temptations of the flesh.

- A. What is the flesh? It is the remnant of unregenerate life, drives and desires of body and mind not under the control of God.
- B. What are its temptations? To use the Gospel of liberty as a pretext for license; to cut off the Spirit as source of behavior and live godlessly.

II. The conquest of the Spirit.

- A. What is the Spirit? God Himself, moving into man and dominating his drives and desires.

- B. How does He conquer? Because of the redemption of Jesus Christ, who has cleared the way for Him to enter; and through the Gospel of Christ, which the Spirit Himself uses as the tool for establishing life.**

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

REMINISCERE

HEB. 2:10-15

The Text and the Day. — We are in the Lenten season, and the Propers breathe the humble, penitential spirit of the child of God, who feels his utter dependence upon God through Christ. Our text, which stresses the humanity of our divine Savior, strengthens us in our faith in the complete work of our Savior Brother. Thus it encourages us, His sinful brethren, as trusting penitents, to approach the Throne of Grace with our sins.

Notes on the Meaning. — V. 10. "It became (was fitting for) Him." The "Him" (*autoo*) refers to God, not to Jesus. Since everything is in the almighty hands of God, everything He does befits Him. — "Bringing many sons unto glory" is the glory of the world to come, v. 10, our coming inheritance of salvation, chap. 1:14. — "To make the Captain (Author — *archegos*) of their salvation perfect (complete) through sufferings." Without becoming one of us as a human being, to suffer death, Jesus would not have been a complete Savior. He could not have brought us human beings to God's glory to become joint heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17) as God's sons. Only the suffering, human Savior could save, Isaiah 53.

V. 11. "For both He that sanctifieth (Jesus) and they who are sanctified (the redeemed) are all of one." That "one" is Adam. Jesus and we are brothers possessing "blood and flesh," v. 14. — "Of one" (*ex henos*) is applied to the Father by some commentators. We prefer to apply it to Adam, since the human nature of Christ is stressed in the entire text.

V. 12 is Ps. 22:22, quoted to prove v. 11. This quotation is more effective, because this is the Psalm which also shows the bodily suffering of the Messiah.

V. 13 quotes Is. 8:17, where Jesus expresses His com-

plete trust and dependence upon God, according to His human nature.

V. 13 b quotes Is. 8: 18 again to stress the human nature of Jesus, His brotherhood with man. This last quotation leads logically into v. 14.

Preaching Pitfalls.— In preaching on this text, self-evidently, we will not stress the humanity of Christ to the exclusion of His deity. Christ's humanity can be understood, in its full significance, only as we consider it in the light of His deity. To see our text in this light, our sermon preparation must include a careful study of chap. 1 and the rest of chap. 2.

Preaching Emphases.— In our sermon we have the opportunity to show why it was necessary that Jesus should be true Man. We will stress that "He took upon Himself the form of a man," though He was the Son of God. His boundless love for sinners is thereby demonstrated. Furthermore, it is shown by the O. T. prophecies referred to in the text that He glories in becoming our Brother. Though He is not ashamed to call us His brethren, we realize that He might well be, because we are damnable sinners. His humiliation is thereby accentuated. On the other hand, the purpose of His humanity and humiliation stands out more clearly to show us the complete and perfect Savior. Therein is comfort, to know that the sinless Son of God humbled Himself, became our Brother after the flesh, to save us.

Problem and Goal.— Natural man takes offense at the suffering and death of Jesus for man's sins. That He who claims to be the Son of God dies like a common criminal, and for that reason took on our human nature, does not sound reasonable. Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. 1: 23. Doubts would also creep into our enlightened minds. Our text dispels every doubt as to the "why" of the Savior's humanity. It brings our Savior very close to us, as our "blood and flesh" Brother. His taking on our form makes Him very dear to us. He would save us by dying man's death. In dying He destroyed the power of the devil. Because of our sins Satan held us bound in the fear of death. Jesus, our divine Brother, freed us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Who would want a different Savior?

Outline: JESUS OUR DIVINE BROTHER

- I. He is our Brother after the flesh, v. 11.
 - A. Like us, He is a Son of Adam, v. 11 a, but sinless, 1 Pet. 2:22.
 - B. He is not ashamed to call us His brethren, vv. 11 b-13.
- II. His purpose in becoming our Brother.
 - A. To die as man for mankind, v. 14 a.
 - B. To destroy our archenemy, the devil, who had the power of death, v. 14 b.
 - C. To free us from the bondage of fear of death, v. 15.
- III. He is the complete, perfect Savior, v. 10.

 F. E. SCHUMANN
OCULI

2 COR. 1:3-7

The Text and the Day. — With thoughts on this third Sunday in Lent already reaching out to the Passion of Christ, who “hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Epistle lesson); and with the Introit fixing eyes (oculi) upon the God of grace, pleading: “Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me,” what could be more appropriate than discussing that great theme “Comfort in Affliction” and focusing attention upon “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”

Notes on Meaning. — The key to this text lies in Paul’s exclamation of joy and praise “Blessed be God!” Paul is full of wonder and praise that God feels with, sympathizes with, man in his afflictions and tribulations. But marvelous as it may be, knowing God to be the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” a God who sent His Son into this world out of love and grace for the sinner, it does make sense; a God who has grace for the sinner, can “sigh with” (Is. 66:13) man in his tribulation. And, oh, the bigness of this, to have God aware of man’s many troubles, to have God sigh with man in them! Anyone who has experienced its comfort, felt its effectual strengthening power in enduring sufferings, will not only join in that praise “Blessed be God!” but will commend that comfort to others. — And there we see God’s wondrous pattern in the

afflictions of life. There is purpose and design in the afflictions and crosses placed upon Christians. By afflicting them and proving His Comfort effectual in the enduring sufferings, "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" would commend Himself to others so that they, too, might be drawn to Him and join the chorus of Christians in the praise "Blessed be God!"

Preaching Pitfalls. — Although it is true that "we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), and that "suffering with Christ" is a common picture of a Christian life (2 Tim. 2:12; text, v. 7), care must be taken that hearers draw not the false conclusion that until they suffer severely, they have no part in Christianity. Not only are we living in America, where many never learn what it means to suffer much for Christ, but there are young Christians, sheltered Christians, who have had little experience in life's trials and afflictions. Rather so picture the "God of all comfort" and so impress the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" upon the mind of your hearers that they will instinctively turn to Him when the hour of suffering overtakes them.

Preaching Emphasis. — The parallelism between "affliction and comfort" and that between "sin and grace" must not be overlooked. It brings Christ Jesus into the very center of it, as Paul does in our text.

Problem and Goal. — In this world of trouble and tribulation everyone is looking for sympathy and seeks the company of fellow sufferers. Even the godless try to find comfort in the cold fact that if there is a hell, they will have plenty of company there. To turn man away from all the hopeless comforts of the world, and not only to draw them to the "Father of mercies and the God of all comfort," but to have them find strength in fellow sufferers comforted in Christ Jesus, that is the goal.

Outline: TRUE COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

- I. It springs alone from "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - A. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all three persons, are engaged in the ministry of comfort. Text, v. 3; John 2:1; John 14:15-16.
 - B. God's ministry of comfort rests in Christ Jesus,

who has long done something about sin, the root of all afflictions.

II. It has a twofold purpose in God's pattern and design.

A. Comforted of God, we are able to comfort others.

1. Only those who have suffered can feel with other sufferers.
2. Only the Christian, comforted of God, can offer true comfort to others.

B. God's comfort in affliction is designed for salvation.

1. By it *we* are to be drawn nearer to God.
2. By it God would commend Himself to others.

A. W. SCHELP

LAETARE

2 COR. 7:5-13

The Text and the Day.—During Lent our thoughts are turned to repentance. It is a time of meditation, realization of human weakness. We must put all our hope and trust in Christ.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

This Sunday, appointed in the church year for readings which tell of Christ's great miracle in feeding the five thousand, and of the two covenants from Sinai below and Jerusalem above, lends itself well to a text which points the way of joy through godly sorrow over sin.

Notes on Meaning.—Keep in mind that the text indicates a penitent heart, and neither the world nor the old Adam will applaud. Read 2 Cor. 2:1-13 to establish connection with rest of Epistle; for in chap. 2 Paul breaks off his description of journey from Ephesus through Troas to Macedonia and here in text continues that record, beginning v. 5. In chap. 2 he uses the first person singular, "I had no rest." In text he uses the plural, "Our flesh had no rest," probably because Titus and Timothy now shared with him the knowledge and concern about the extraordinary immorality which had been tolerated in the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. 5:1, and to which he refers again in the text, v. 8 (Titus in the meantime had reported

to Paul about the situation in Corinth). Paul rejoices, not that he made them sorry with the First Epistle, but that they sorrowed unto repentance, v. 9, which sorrow is salutary, not damaging. What Paul had written in the First Epistle came direct from God's Spirit in a very sharp castigation of sin, and Paul wouldn't have been human if he had not wondered whether the words had been too sharp. Now, assured by Titus of the wonderful result in godly repentance, he rejoices exceedingly.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Avoid preaching Law severely just for the purpose of making people unhappy. Strive and pray for deep godly sorrow over sin. Let people know and feel, like Paul in text, that you would gladly spare them and yourself if that were possible; but sin is treacherous, and we must be warned of God's wrath.

Preaching Emphases. — Call special attention to v. 6, that our God comforts those that are cast down. Notice the idea of v. 11 that godly sorrow is conducive to real sanctification, "carefulness," and the other fruits mentioned in same verse. Use v. 12 as a test of a preacher's purpose in preaching repentance. "We are comforted in your comfort," v. 13, can be applied for a plea for deeper fellowship within the congregation in the realm of sharing sorrow and trouble as well as rejoicing with them that do rejoice.

Problem and Goal. — You'll never convince the old Adam, but the fact remains that the way to joy is the way of the cross. "Through tribulation into the Kingdom." And the people should never make a mistake about which sorrow is the right sorrow for sins. The way of godly sorrow leads to grace, forgiveness, and joy.

Outline: TWO KINDS OF SORROW

I. Sorrow of the World.

A. Sorrow for the results of sin.

B. Worketh despair and death (e. g., Judas Iscariot).

II. Godly Sorrow.

A. Realizes how God looks at sin.

B. Leads to repentance.

C. Brings comfort and joy of salvation (e. g., Peter).

HENRY GEORGE HARTNER