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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 Church Year

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#### MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

HEB. 4: 9-13

*The Text and the Day.*—To discover the full scope of this text, we must consider it not only in its immediate context, but also against the background of the entire Epistle. The Epistle was addressed to Jewish Christians who, living in a world of tensions, temptations, and troubles, had grown spiritually weary, largely because they were losing the vision of the Christ and a true appreciation of the blessings of the Gospel and the Christian way of life. Disappointed in their expectations, they had begun to surrender to a paralyzing nostalgia for ancient Judaism. In order to combat this trend and to restore them to a vital and triumphant faith and hope, the Epistle portrays the true significance of Jesus and His work as well as the benedictions of heaven which come into the life of a Christian through faith in Him. The text is taken from a passage which glorifies Christ as the perfect Mediator, far surpassing all mediators of the Old Covenant.—The text is in harmony with the name of the Sunday. The Gospel for the day furnishes the doctrinal basis for its teachings, particularly in the light of Psalm 23.

*Notes on Meaning*—The key word of the text is “rest,” the rest prepared by Jesus for the people of God. Not a mere cessation from labor, but a hallowed Sabbath rest, patterned after the rest enjoyed by God Himself. Neither only a rest prepared by God, but a rest in God, a participation in that rest which is God’s own. “His rest” (v. 10) refers to God’s own rest. This rest “remains” for us, not in the sense that we cannot obtain it in this life because it is restricted to heaven, but because it exists even now as a blessed and permanent reality which no man can ever take from us. However, it belongs only to “the people of God,” to those who have become His very own through faith in Jesus. But even though this rest remains for us, it is possible that we may

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never enter into it, for we are in danger of following in the footsteps of the ancient Israelites, 3:16—4:2. Through unbelief man forfeits this rest, through faith he shares in it, 4:3. Accordingly, it behooves us to strive diligently to obtain this rest, v. 11. Carelessness in this respect may lead to eternal tragedy. Only steadfast "partakers of Christ" are entitled to it and qualified for it, 3:14. The hypocrite, no matter how holy he may appear, is forever barred from it, for his unbelief and ungodly character are exposed and judged by the living (quick) and penetrating Word of God (v. 12) and, above all, by God himself, whom no man can deceive, v. 13.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — Two dangers must be avoided: 1. Restricting the sermon to a mere exposition of the text; 2. Choosing a topic such as "rest" and ignoring the characteristic details of the text." — This text is commonly used for a discussion of the everlasting rest of the saints in heaven, but such a treatment violates both text and context. The rest spoken of here begins on earth the moment faith is kindled in the heart, but reaches its perfection in heaven. — Be careful not to omit Christ and His atonement. Cf. 2:14-18. — Since vv. 12-13 are a part of the text, the warning they contain must receive due consideration. — A theoretical discussion is not enough. The truths of the text must be presented in terms of present-day problems and their solutions.

*Preaching Emphases.* — The primary emphasis must be given to the fact that the rest craved by the human heart is not a Utopian dream, but an ever-ready blessing of God in which all may share by faith in Christ. The secondary emphasis belongs to the warning and exhortation in vv. 12-13.

*Problem and Goal.* — The problem is the Christian's natural lack of interest in Christ and His Gospel promises and His evil inclination to seek rest (peace of mind and happiness) elsewhere, concentrating on visible and temporal things and thus losing the vision of the unseen and the eternal. — The goal is the solution of this problem by persuading the hearer to strive diligently and according to the Gospel for genuine rest in God, 4:1. Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

**Outline:****OUR REST IN GOD****I. What a wonderful rest it is.**

**A. A sharing with God in His divine rest, v. 10.**

1. Peace of mind and heart in this life;
2. Everlasting rest in heaven.

**B. A present and enduring reality ("remaineth"), v. 9.**

**II. How we entered into it.**

**A. By the grace of God the Gospel was preached to us. Cf. v. 2.**

**B. By the power of the Holy Spirit we were brought to faith ("people of God"), v. 9. Cf. v. 3 a.**

**III. What we must do to abide in it forever.**

**A. Recognize that we may still lose it, v. 11. Cf. v. 1 f.**

1. Through unbelief we forfeit it, v. 11;
2. External piety cannot hide an unbelieving heart from God, v. 12 f.

**B. Strive diligently and continuously to possess it even though we already have it, v. 11 a. Cf. 3:14.**

E. J. FRIEDRICH

**JUBILATE**

1 JOHN 4:9-16

**The Text and the Day.** — This Sunday has been appointed in Eastertide to impress upon our minds that the Christian religion is a religion of joy. Our joy in the risen Redeemer causes us to rejoice even in tribulations (Gospel) and is reflected in our relation with our fellow men (Epistle). Hence the Introit, Collect, and Gradual. Likewise, the text before us fills us with grateful jubilation and urges us to make manifest our joy in our love toward our brethren.

**Notes on Meaning.** — V. 9: "In this," in this way, refers to what follows. "Toward us," we are the recipients of God's love. We, the believers, are they who truly see what God has done in His infinite love. "His only-begotten Son" attests the deity of Jesus. "Might live," cf. 1:2; 2:29; 3:9. V. 9 as

well as vv. 10 and 14 expresses the Easter note in the text. — V. 10: "Herein is love," love with the definite article, true love, love *sui generis*. "Propitiation," only here and 2:2, not appeasement, rather expiation, to make complete satisfaction. Cf. C. T. M. VIII, 277 ff. — V. 11: "If God so loved us," does not indicate uncertainty, but is a condition of reality. — V. 12: Although no man has seen God, still in a true Christian, who loves his brethren, God, so to speak, takes form and lets Himself be seen. "His love," *gen. subj.* "Is perfected," means to achieve its purpose. God's love reaches its goal in us when God permanently abides in us and molds us to be like Himself. — V. 13: "Of His Spirit," rather, "from His Spirit." God gives the believers His Spirit (3:24), and from the Spirit come spiritual gifts. — V. 16 emphasizes the certainty of God's love.

*Preaching Pitfalls* — We should expect the Apostle to say that since God loved us with such an amazing love, we, in turn, should love Him. He does that vv. 19-21. In our text the Apostle is stressing love toward our fellow believers. They who are united with us in the love of God must be the first object of our love. Since God's love is all-inclusive, our love will naturally include all men. But "love one another" comes first.

*Preaching Emphases.* — The text is designated for Easter-tide. The risen Redeemer is the living Assurance and Guarantee of God's love toward us and of all the gifts of His love. Furthermore, the doctrine of the atonement and resurrection of Christ has a direct bearing upon our attitudes among men. Reconciliation with God prompts reconciliation with men. God's love toward us begets love of the brethren. Our own salvation urges upon us the salvation of others. Easter and all that it implies must not be overlooked.

*Problem and Goal.* — The Christian religion is a religion of joy because it is a religion of love. In our text the word *love* and its cognates occur 12 times. The principle of love is so intimately connected with the Christian religion that Christianity stands and falls with that principle. It is not enough that we call ourselves Christian; we must show and demonstrate our Christianity at all times and toward all men. Genuine Christianity rejoices in the Lord always and urges the Christian to share his joy with others.

**Outline:****REJOICE IN THE LOVE OF GOD**

- I. Consider the gifts of His love.
- A. Redemption, life, and salvation, vv. 9, 10, 14.
  - B. His dwelling in you and His gifts of the Spirit, vv. 12 b, 13, 15.
  - C. Therefore "*Jubilate*."
- II. Manifest your joy in love toward the brethren.
- A. Love toward the brethren is evidence of your union with God, vv. 11, 16.
  - B. Your love toward the brethren perfects God's love, v. 12.
  - C. Your love toward the brethren makes your "*Jubilate*" genuine.

WALTER A. BAEPLER

**CANTATE**

PHIL. 2:1-4

*The Text and the Day.*—This text connects closely with the Propers for Cantate. The Epistle sets forth God as the Author of all Christian behavior. The Gospel speaks of the Spirit as guiding the believer into all truth, practical as well as theoretical. The Collect speaks of the minds of the faithful as being made of one will by God and as being taught to love what God commands and to desire what He promises. The Gradual, setting forth divine power and victory over death through Christ's resurrection, lays the firm foundation for a Christian life.

*Notes on Meaning.*—While there is some exegetical difficulty in v. 1, it is fortunate that it does not affect the thought of the text. Thus for sermon work either of the two accepted translations will serve quite well. The versions and most commentators translate the *ei* clauses as protases to v. 2: "If . . . if, then fulfill my joy." The thought would be, then, that Paul adjures the Philippians by the encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and sympathy that they have toward one another. Von Hofmann, Ewald, Lenski, and others regard vv. 1-2 as separate sentences, v. 2 not at all as the apodosis. Hermeneutical rules would seem to favor this

view. Accordingly v.1 would contain both protases and apodoses, the last *ei tis* being a repetition of the previous one, with an emphasizing of the *ei*. The meaning would then be: "If encouragement, let it be in Christ; if comfort, let it be of love; if fellowship, let it be of the Spirit; if any (fellowship), let it express itself in tenderness and sympathy.

*Preaching Emphases.*—This text obviously stresses the necessity of exhibiting the Christian virtues not only over against the enemies of the faith (1:28) but also toward the brethren. The latter need encouragement, probably because of the terrifying conduct of the adversaries. This encouragement is to stem out of their union with Christ. His patient suffering and death is more than an example. It is a source of strength, since by it they are made His own. We can therefore be sure of His guarding and keeping. When comfort is given, let it not be perfunctory or actuated by mere sentimentality or humanitarian feeling, but let its source be genuine Christian love which is both intelligent and purposeful. This requires also supplying the necessities of life. See James 1:22 ff. and 2:15-16. Where there is fellowshiping, let it be that which results from the fact that we are all temples of God's Spirit. Hence the nature of the fellowship must be spiritual in tone and character. Christian fellowship must be on a higher plane than the get-togethers and parties of worldlings. Dances, card games, raffles, beer bouts, cocktail parties, are scarcely such fellowshiping. Nor are luncheons, dinners, and bazaars whose purpose is to "make money" for the church. Instead there will be real tenderness and sympathetic pity. See *Lutheran Hymnal* 464:3.

*Problem and Goal.*—Christians will be truly joined in soul and will exhibit a common mind and purpose. Natural selfishness will be replaced by unselfish furthering of the brother's welfare. When we note how often a factious spirit invades our congregations, how cold love sometimes is, one can readily perceive how great the emphasis must be on true sanctification. But only the redeeming and sanctifying love of Christ can make the heart willing. Paul shows that with his "in behalf of Christ" (1:29), "that is of God" (1:28), "in Christ" and "of the Spirit" (2:1). Note how Paul shows his personal interest by speaking of his joy. We, too, must bring our whole being to bear on leading our hearers to see the

importance of sanctification. Fervor in presentation and personal consecration are prime requisites. Such sanctification will always bring joy to the heart of every pastor and Christian, as it did to Paul.

*Outline:*

**"LOVE'S LABOR NOT LOST"**

- I. Love's labor is *Heaven born*.
  - A. Established by our union with Christ in *faith*.
  - B. Maintained by the indwelling Spirit.
  - C. The means of grace must be faithfully used.
- II. Love's labor is earth centered.
  - A. Directed toward adversaries and brethren.
  - B. Meets their physical and spiritual needs.
- III. Love's labor tends heavenward by bringing deep and lasting joy.
  - A. Pastors and all who love God's work know heaven's joy.
  - B. Advertises Christianity and so brings joy of heaven to those who accept it.
  - C. Continues into eternal life.
  - D. Causes joy in heaven before God and angels. Only hell is despondent.

ARTHUR C. NITZ

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**ROGATE**

1 TIM. 2:1-6

*The Text and the Day*—The name "Rogate" does not come from the Introit for the Sunday, but from the Savior's promise concerning prayer in the regularly appointed Gospel. The text is eminently suited for this "Prayer Sunday."

*Notes on Meaning.*—V. 1: These are not four types of prayers but an emphasis on various aspects of the same type. Paul is speaking of intercessory prayer. According to the original terms, "supplication" emphasizes the need of our prayer (Bittgebet); "prayers," the devotional attitude; "intercessions," the confidence and trust of our prayers as we approach the heavenly Father; and "thanksgiving," as the



translation indicates, the thankfulness of the suppliant. (Cp. Thayer.)

"For all men"—the universality of our prayers, which is based on the universal redemption, is the beautiful thread that runs through the text. Cp. vv. 4, 6.

V. 2: The Apostle lifts out from among "all men" for particular emphasis the rulers and governmental authorities. Humanly speaking, so much of the welfare of men, also the spiritual, is in their hands. Their responsibility invites the Christian's prayers. Not only are we to pray for our rulers, but the rulers of all nations. This is particularly important in a world so interdependent as ours. One faithless ruler can set the fires of war. Peace among and within the nations is conducive to the growth of the Church. Government hostility and political disturbances do not further the general welfare of the Church. The few real "foxhole conversions" are pitifully small when compared with the harm done to the moral and spiritual life of the military and civilians.

V. 3: Here we have the reason why Christians should extend their privilege of prayer to all men. It is good in the sight of God, the Savior of all men.

V. 4: God loved all, hence wants all, redeemed all, and now is anxious that all are sanctified. Our prayers must make common cause with God's will in behalf of all.

Vv. 5-6: This is but natural for God, who is God of all. He has the same will for all. Furthermore, He has engaged an Advocate for His court who is prepared to plead for one and all. This Advocate is not only prepared to plead our case, but One who has paid the full punishment, so that His plea has weight. As Christ is the Christian's Mediator, so the Christian mediates for all men in his prayers. Of this He gave witness at the proper time.

*Preaching Emphases.*—Christians have the blessed privilege of prayer. Unfortunately they are so slow in using it, even for themselves. Still less often do they use this powerful plea for others. More often the "others" are a very small circle. Like Jonah, we are prone to keep the blessings for "our people." But God did not plan this gift for the benefit of a closed group. Christians are to pray for all men, as He so clearly emphasizes in the Lord's Prayer. Nowhere else is

the magnitude of the Christian's intercessions so well emphasized as in the plurals of the Lord's Prayer.

The Christians are to be mediators, advocates for all men. They alone are at peace with God. This peace is not simply a cessation of hostility to turn into a "cold war." We are His intimate friends; yes, part of the family of God. We "have something," and this must be used in behalf of all.

God wants us "to do good unto all men." We cannot reach all men, but we can all reach God. Even those whom we do reach receive pitifully little help unless it is done prayerfully so that God becomes the partner in our venture.

Yes, all men. It's easy to pray for friends; easier still to pray for the perfect stranger. It is hard to pray for those against whom we are prejudiced; it is harder, almost impossible, to pray for our enemies. But there it is, "all men." God's universal love, which found even us, is the dynamic which can make it possible.

Our prayers are international, not merely for our rulers. God is the first Internationalist, for with Him it is "one world"; the Christian should be the first citizen of this "one world."

Such prayers bring results. They help lead the good and peaceable life. This is especially so since we must follow through with our prayers unto all men by doing good to all men.

This obligation to intercede for all naturally rises out of the very person of God. He is the God of all. As such He has an intense love for all in spite of man's enmity, a love that was active in the universal redemption and the desire for a universal salvation. It is still active, for His Spirit seeks out men to generate faith in their hearts.

*Problem and Goal.* — The first mention of prayer brings to mind *our* needs, and we quickly go to God for relief. But the privilege of prayer goes beyond that. It has greater magnitude. It carries with it the directive to use this "address" in behalf of all so that piety and peace may come upon all men.

*Outline:*

**THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S INTERCESSIONS**

**I. The obligation.**

**A. Christians are mediators.**

**B. They intercede for all men.**

**C. So they bring blessings upon all.**

## II. The basis

- A. Their God is the God of all.
- B. Their God is the Redeemer of all.
- C. Their Christ would be the Mediator of all.

ARTHUR C. REPP

## ASCENSION

COL. 3:1-4

*The Text and the Day.* — The Ascension Day message not only presents the fact that Christ ascended, but lays special emphasis on the fruit of His ascension. The Lord works with and through His disciples and directs their attention to His second coming. Our text shows what the ascension of Christ means to His Christians.

*Notes on Meaning.* — "Risen": through faith, ch. 2:12-13; Rom. 6:4. This resurrection is the beginning of spiritual life within us. "Above": heavenly treasures, things pertaining to eternal life, 1 Pet. 1:4-6. "We should neither love nor seek anything more than God and His Word." Through faith we even now possess the treasures of heaven, John 20:17; so should we after our spiritual resurrection. "Christ sitteth": Christ ascended to the right hand of God, Mark 16:19. Cf. Form. Concord, S. D., VIII, pars. 28 and 12. "Affection": intellect and will. Things on earth are present. There is no occasion to seek them, but there is danger of setting our mind on them. "Above": Christ calls us up to Himself. No man can serve two masters, Matt. 6:24. "Dead": to this world and to our flesh. As through faith we have communion with Christ, so also with His death. We died in and with Christ. "Hid": as Christ rules invisibly after His ascension, so our life is hid in Him. 1 John 3:2; 2 Cor. 4:5. The Church is invisible. Christians are persecuted and mocked. Their weakness and sinfulness very visible. "While they live on earth, they are not adorned with the color of God, but that of the miserable devil." Luther, St. L. XII, 730. "In God": Our spiritual and eternal life is safely placed in God's hands. Observe the deep mystical meaning. "Our life": He is the Source of our life and sustains it. "Appear": Acts 1:11. "In glory": We shall not only be raised from the dead, but also ascend with Him into glory.

**Preaching Pitfalls.**—The “raised with Christ” (v. 1), must not be neglected. The Apostle speaks to Christians. Only on the basis of our justification can the sanctification stressed in the remainder of the text be properly presented. Christ’s ascension and His sitting at the right hand of God must not be treated as museum antiques, but as motivating and energizing forces in our Christian life.

**Problem and Goal.**—Ascension Day is a “forgotten festival” and frequently neglected, not so much because of economic conditions as rather because of our proneness to forget what the ascension of Christ means to us. The sermon is to inspire us to live in the presence of the ascended and glorified Christ and to serve Him with a triumphant life. The final point of the sermon may well include a note of comfort.

**Outline:**

**Introduction:** Story of Ascension. The crowning of the Savior’s work of redemption. This made a tremendous impact upon the disciples.

**THE IMPACT OF CHRIST’S ASCENSION UPON CHRISTIANS**

- I. Turns their thoughts (affections) from earth to heaven.
  - A. Text is addressed to Christians, v. 1 a.
  - B. Let us seek the things above.
  - C. Let us set our affections on them. *Lutheran Hymnal*, 214: 5.
  
- II. Deepens their spiritual life on earth.
  - A. Life hid in Christ. Ascended Lord stands in intimate union with us.
  - B. A blessed activity—dead unto sin, alive to God.
  
- III. Fills them with the hope of sharing Christ’s glory, v. 4.
  - A. The ascended Lord will manifest His glory to all.
  - B. We shall share in this glory.
  - C. The goal of our life: Through faith in the Lord we serve Him here in time, and we shall share His glory in eternity.

VICTOR MENNICKE

## EXAUDI

EPH. 1:20 b-23

*The Text and the Day.*—Ascension focuses our attention on the exalted Christ, Pentecost on the founding of His Church. This text for Exaudi, the Sunday between Ascension and Pentecost, fittingly brings the two foci together by showing us what the exalted Christ does for the Church, which He founded.

*Notes on Meaning.*—“God set Him [Christ] at His own right hand.” God’s “right hand” is where God is, everywhere. Being at God’s right hand, Christ, yes, the Man Christ— for He ascended according to His human nature—is everywhere. More, since God is a spirit, His right hand is not of flesh and bone; it is a symbol of His almighty power. Therefore the statement that “God set Christ at His own right hand” means that Christ not only is everywhere, but also rules everywhere with God’s almighty power.

This majestic truth is now amplified: “*In the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.*” Christ rules over the heavenly angels. These are many and mighty—note the heaping of names implying authority and power. “*One angel,*” says Luther, “is mightier than the whole world.” But Christ is “*far above all*” angels—“*And every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet.*” Ps. 8:6-8; Heb. 2:7-9. Christ is Lord of all in heaven, earth, and hell. Kings, dictators, planets, atoms, the very devils—everything is subject to the exalted Christ. He reigns supreme; “and He shall reign forever and ever.”

And now we come to the heart of this great text: “*And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church.*” First God gives the rule of the universe to Christ; and then God gives Christ, this Christ, who is the Ruler of the universe, to the Church as her Head. So we arrive at the breath-taking truth that Christ rules the universe in the interest of His Church. The world continues and world affairs are being regulated by Christ for *one* purpose: “This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world . . . and then shall the end come,” Matt. 24:14. Examples of the ruling and overruling providence of Christ in behalf of His Church:

Roman highway system and Greek world language at the time of Apostles; discovery of America and invention of printing press shortly before Reformation; advanced means of transportation and communication (automobile, aeroplane, radio, television) today.

But Christ does still more for His Church. He is her Head; she is "*His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.*" The Christ, who mightily fills all things, is the gracious Fullness of His Church. He is her Life, her Strength, her Hope of glory — her All.

*Preaching Emphases and Goal.* — The text emphasizes the greatness, the security, and the assured success of the *Una Sancta*. All these are hers through Christ, her Head.

The Church shall never perish!  
Her dear Lord, to defend,  
To guide, sustain, and cherish,  
Is with her to the end.

Our people need to catch this vision glorious of the invisible Church. To be and remain members of this Church, and to spend and be spent in her extension throughout the world, these are the only worth-while purposes of our lives.

*Outline:*

"THE CHURCH SHALL NEVER PERISH"

or

WHAT THE EXALTED CHRIST DOES FOR HIS CHURCH

- I. Christ mightily rules the universe in the interest of His Church.
  - A. God has given the rulership of the universe to Christ.
  - B. God has given Christ, the Ruler of the universe, to the Church as her Head.
- II. Christ graciously fills the Church with His fullness.
  - A. He is her Life.
  - B. He is her Strength.
  - C. He is her Hope of glory.

OSWALD RIESS

