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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

PENTECOST

HEB. 8: 8-11

The Text and the Day.— Pentecost (Acts 2:1) was also designated as the Festival of the First Fruits. Fittingly Pentecost now is dedicated to the thought of the fruits of the work of the Holy Ghost. The text describes those in whom this fruit is to be found and how it is grown.

Notes on Meaning.— The burden of chap. 8 is that Christ's ministry has fully replaced the Aaronic priesthood. We live in the Gospel era, the last that God will give to men. In this era the promises of the Gospel are better than the demands of the Law. Since the old covenant of the Law could not meet all demands for the salvation of man, God made provision for a new covenant that could (v. 7). The text establishes this fact by a long reference to Old Testament revelation, Jer. 31:31-34.

V. 8: "with them," those who lived under the old covenant. "New covenant," the Gospel. — V. 9: The old and new covenants stemmed from the mercy of God, "took them by the hand." — V. 10: "Mind," understanding; "heart," loving memory. — V. 11: "not teach every man his fellow citizen." The new covenant is not for a single people or race where special teachers or priests were necessary whose instructions were essential as mediatory actions. The wide dissemination of the Gospel light no longer requires such intermediate action.

Preaching Pitfalls.— Beware of spending too much time on an explanation and description of the old covenant that the real message of the text and of Pentecost is overshadowed. — A comparison of the two covenants must be made, if made at all, on the basis of the old as a symbol of the new. — God is not finding fault with His own action in giving the old covenant. — By quoting from Jeremiah the author of Hebrews establishes that God in the Old Testament stressed the essential needs of a real forgiveness of sin and genuine communion with God. — Although the entire chapter speaks of the great

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high-priestly office of Christ, the assigned text section does not directly refer to the Atonement. The appended sermon outline takes for granted that this will be stressed under IV, B on the basis of v. 12, which, we believe, should have been included in the text.

Preaching Emphases.—As introduction the writer used Acts 2:38 and attendant circumstances as the lead to the thought: Why Pentecost?—Starke: "How blessed are we in the New Covenant! Is it not our shame that we still remain under the dominion of sin?—God adheres faithfully to His covenant and promise; men are the covenant-breakers.—Perceivest thou that the law of God has been traced by the pen of the Holy Spirit upon thy mind and heart?"—Rieger: "Those who were under the Old Testament said: We will! and did not know that they *could* not. Now that the grace of the New Testament has made it possible, many shield themselves under the pretext of a *cannot*, but there is a real *will not*."—Heubner: "The old covenant is past. Would to God that the old spirit of slavish service were gone with it, and the new spirit of willingness and love reigned in all."

Problem and Goal.—Heb. 2:1-4.

Outline: THE MESSAGE OF PENTECOST

- I. Its Content.
 - A. A message of forgiving love.
 - B. A message of promise.
- II. Its Author.
 - A. The unchanging God.
 - B. The loving God.
- III. Its Address.
 - A. Is direct.
 - B. Is universal.
 - C. Is personal.
- IV. Its Desired Result.
 - A. Recognition of the insufficiency of man.
 - B. Recognition of the sufficiency of God.

H. B. ROEPE

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TRINITY

TITUS 3:4-8

The Text and the Day.— While a discussion of the work of each of the three persons of the holy Trinity based on our text would hardly be far-fetched, the text does better serve the purpose of exhorting Christian people to be mindful of their blessed estate and of their sacred obligations throughout the long and ensuing Trinity season. The season will be neither dull nor uneventful if throughout we will but heed our text and its message.

Notes on Meaning.— V. 4: The two Greek words here used for *kindness and love* usually go together. The word used by Paul for "love" is *philanthroopia*, which, unlike its English derivative, originally almost always meant the love of a god to a human being, rarely love of people for people. *Of God, our Savior*: really, "of our Savior God," refers to the Trinity, especially the Father, who sent His Son and the Comforter. The same applies to the pronoun "He" of verse 6.— V. 5. There is a human *dikaiosyne*, but it has no saving value. *Dia loutrou*: by the washing; Baptism, which is performed in the name of the Trinity. "Regeneration": defines the nature of the washing; the washing of a new birth. *Anakainooseos*: "renewing," a subsequent process which follows birth and operates constantly. Baptism is not merely a symbol, but an active and effective means of grace.— V. 6 "Shed on us": e. g., at Pentecost, through the Word, through the Sacraments. All gifts of the Holy Spirit that come to us are a continuation of the Pentecostal outpouring. Relationship of Trinity Sunday to Pentecost.— V. 7: "heirs"; the highest point to which man can attain in this life. "Being justified": the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.— V. 8: *Diabebaiousthai*: to assert with utter confidence and to affirm constantly. *Phrontidsoosin*: to be very anxious and concerned about something; *proistasthai*: to occupy yourself (in good works), to be deeply concerned about these.

Preaching Pitfalls.— The present text is directed against preaching and living in such a manner that the impression is given that good works should not concern us too greatly. "Affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works." Thus not only James, but even Paul stresses the importance of good works.

Preaching Emphases.—The lessons appointed for the Trinity season point out to us the kindness and love of God toward man, shed on us *abundantly* through Jesus; by being careful to maintain good works we, as children of God, show that we are appreciative of the saving mercy of God and that our lives reflect, though necessarily in small measure, the kindness and love of God our Savior toward us.

Problem and Goal.—The Cretans, to whom Titus preached, were steeped in sin and iniquity, particularly in self-deception and pride. Hence they likely found it hard to understand the meaning of Paul's words. May God keep us from steeping ourselves in spiritual ignorance and corruption to the extent that we fail to grasp God's message to us and hence fail to solve our problems on the basis of God's Word and fail, too, to reach our goal.

Outline:

RICH HARVESTS IN A BLESSED TRINITY SEASON

1. We are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
2. Our good works are good and profitable unto men.

W. E. BUSZIN

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Rom. 8:5-11

The Text and the Day.—This text fits most appropriately to the thoughts of the propers for this day: *Epistle*, God's love to us prompts love to our neighbor in us; *Gospel*, selfishness of a carnal-minded man and his eventual doom; *Introit*, "trusted in Thy mercy, rejoice in Thy salvation"; *Gradual*, "Blessed is He that considereth the poor"; *Collect*, "We can do no good thing without Thee."

Notes on Meaning.—"Mind": center one's interest and desire on something . . . "flesh": natural man, Gal. 5:19 f.; "spirit": regenerate man, Gal. 5:22 ("spirit" should not be capitalized as in Authorized Version). . . . "To be carnally minded is death" means not only that it ends in death, but that it is even now carrying death in its bosom, 1 Tim. 5:6; Eph. 2:1, 5. . . . "Life and peace": the soul's deepest repose and true bliss and contentment. . . . "The Spirit of Christ" is, of course, the Holy Ghost. We have here a definite proof of

the doctrine of the Filioque. . . . "Righteousness in v. 10 is Christ's righteousness, which is imputed to us. . . . It is interesting to note the Trinitarian reference in the last verse: "that raised up Jesus": the Father; "Jesus": Son; "Spirit of Him": the Holy Ghost. . . . If we consider 2 Cor. 1:22 and Eph. 1:13-14, we shall have to prefer the accusative "because of His Spirit, who dwelleth in you," instead of the genitive, as the Authorized Version has it, "by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." There is no analogy in Scripture for the latter view.

Preaching Pitfalls.—It is important that when we use this text in a Christian congregation, though we recognize the possibility of a number in the audience being carnally minded (hypocrites), that we emphasize especially v. 9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." . . . The phrase "Spirit of Christ" in v. 9 b must not be interpreted as meaning the spirit or the likeness of Christ, but must be applied directly to the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling will produce the likeness or spirit of Christ in our attitude toward life.

Preaching Emphases.—This text strikes at the very root of Pelagianism, which makes man his own savior by character and conduct, the basic doctrine of Freemasonry. It likewise disproves the Semi-Pelagianism of the Catholics, who try to meet God half-way. . . . We must point out most emphatically that there is no middle ground between the flesh and the spirit. There is a fundamental difference and an absolute cleavage. . . . What a marvelous occasion to emphasize the *sola gratia!*

Problem and Goal.—In the light of both the Epistle and the Gospel for this Sunday it should be our goal to show the people the real difference between a God-filled and a "God-less" person and thus between Lazarus, "who was after the spirit" and went to heaven, and the rich man, "who was after the flesh" and went to hell.

Outline:

**THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN
UNBELIEVER AND A CHRISTIAN**

I. In his thinking and planning.

- A. The goal the unbeliever sets before himself is selfish and carnal, v. 5; Phil. 3:19; whereas the goal of the Christian is to glorify Jesus, Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31.**
- B. If the thinking and planning of an unbeliever ever**

seems to coincide with God's Law, it is never intentional, because he is against God always, vv. 7-8; whereas the Christian's whole thought and plan is to please Jesus and be as He is, vv. 9-10.

II. In his activity and destiny.

A. The unbeliever's activity is rooted in death and leads to such an end; the Christian's activity brings life and peace, v. 6.

B. The unbeliever sinks from temporal death into eternal death, the Christian is sure of a glorious resurrection unto life, v. 11.

WALTER W. STUENKEL

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 JOHN 1:5—2:2

The Text and the Day.—The day concerns the life of faith as it confronts spiritual obstacles—the antipathy of the world (the Epistle), the apathy and materialism of the flesh (the Gospel). Hence Introit and Collect remind of God's provision for continued faith. This text outlines the major obstacle and the central provision for faith.

Notes on Meaning.—The theme of the Epistle is that the men of God love one another, for God is Love. V. 5: The light of God, His Spirit, is pure and produces completely pure results. V. 6: Hence ungodly living puts the lie to our claim of belonging to God. V. 7: The behavior and thinking which stems from the Spirit of God implies that we love one another and that we continuously draw upon the redemption of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. How can a person who is in the light speak of sinning at all? V. 8: The answer to that problem is that obviously we do have sin; this side of the grave marks of godlessness will always appear in us. The flesh lives side by side with, and in competition with, the Spirit, Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:17. The fellowship with God implies especial sensitivity to sin and flesh within us, recognition of its scope and remains. Hence we acknowledge and recognize it. V. 9: This acknowledging and recognizing of sin in the man who is in fellowship with God counts on His faithfulness and His justice for forgiving our sins and for helping us

conquer sin. That faithfulness is in the love of God (1 John 4:7); His justice in forgiveness lies in the fact that He redeemed us through Jesus Christ (v. 7; 1 John 4:9). V. 10: Hence a person oblivious of sin within himself distorts and negates his whole faith in God; for God is the Forgiver of sin. Our fellowship with God is simply this, that we draw on Him for forgiveness; negating our sin means negating God. Chap. 2:1, 2: As we ponder this forgiveness, we do so not simply to escape the bad conscience for past sins, but to get the ability to stop sinning. Every sin turns us to the Lord Jesus, who is our Helper (*Parakletos*) in our relation with the Father; for He died for us and for all men and thus is the one Way by which we find forgiveness of sins with God and find the power of God to stop sinning.

Preaching Pitfalls. — This text is unworkable without adequate expression of the fact of the flesh existing side by side with the Spirit in the Christian. The significance of the text is not exhausted with a mere review of the Atonement in chap. 2; the conquest of sin, to which the text directs, involves the awareness of sin and the look toward God for the remedy. — The picture of "Advocate," 2:1, is in our speech limited to the forensic concept of the Atonement; in the original it has a wider bearing: not only He who applies forgiveness, but also He who helps to conquer sin.

Problem and Goal. — The problem to which this text alerts is the Christian's situation that his own sin may either lose significance in his mind because of complacent acceptance of the redemption or loom so tragic in his thinking that he is afraid to count on God for help. Hence the chief shortcoming of the Christian to which this text alerts is the insufficient insight into the meaning of the forgiveness of sins; and the goal of the text is to clarify that significance, not only mentally but practically, as both the end of guilt and the beginning of the life of love.

Outline:

THE CONTINUING ANSWER TO OUR NEED FOR GOD:
FORGIVENESS OF SINS

I. Our need for God is continuous.

- A. God's plan for man is that he be completely in His light — in fellowship with Him; and hence that he will completely love the brethren and walk in light.

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- B. Any darkness in thought and behavior marks a break of that fellowship, a frustration of the plan of God. Cf. Eph. 5:1-6.**
- C. If a man overlooks the presence of this sin in his life,**
- 1. He is deceiving himself; for the flesh will exist side by side with the Spirit to the grave.**
 - 2. He overlooks the nature of God and the truth of God; for God's purpose and nature is to forgive sin and to meet this continuous problem.**
- II. God has continuous forgiveness in Christ.**
- A. God meets the problems of our sin through Jesus Christ.**
- 1. He is the *Propitiation* for our sin; He suffered and died for the sins of the whole world; because of Him God does not impute sin to the sinner. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21.**
 - 2. He is our Helper against sin; for through His Spirit and His indwelling in the believer sin can be replaced progressively with godliness.**
- B. Hence the Christian believer, under the continual threat of sin,**
- 1. Realizes that it is the aim of his life to stop sinning and to walk in the light.**
 - 2. Counts on Jesus Christ as his Helper and draws His power by contemplating His redemption.**

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

