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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

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Rom. 14:4-9

The Text and the Day. — There are no points of contact between the text and the Day or the Epistle, Gospel, or Propers for the Day. Hence the preacher may proceed untrammelled with the exposition and application of the text.

Notes on Meaning. — In this part of Romans, St. Paul speaks to two groups of Christians: Those who are "weak in the faith," 14:1, and those who are "strong," 15:1. He defines the proper relationship which should exist between them and what their attitudes toward one another should be, as well as their mutual obligations. Their fellowship should be one of genuine and active Christian love, 15:7; 14:19 b.

"The weak in faith" were still ensnared in certain errors. They had not yet attained to a full understanding and appreciation of Christian liberty, but thought it necessary, or at least better and more God-pleasing, to observe certain remnants of the Jewish Ceremonial Law or to impose upon themselves an asceticism obtained from other sources. They were overscrupulous in observing certain days and abstaining from meat and wine, 6:21. These weak Christians inclined toward Pharisaism and sinned by their loveless and unjustified judgment of their stronger fellow Christians who exercised and enjoyed their Christian liberty, 3:4. "The strong," on the other hand, sinned by becoming impatient with the weak and regarding them with contempt. The Apostle admonishes the weak to refrain from judging in matters in which they are not qualified to judge and to recognize the fact that the stronger Christians among them were simply enjoying their spiritual freedom. The strong he exhorts to bear with the failings of the weak, to deal patiently and charitably with them, and to assist them in their spiritual growth, 15:1; 14:19.

Preaching Emphases. — The chief emphasis ought to be placed on the harmonious and mutually helpful fellowship between the weak and the strong — a fellowship motivated, sustained, and rendered fruitful by Christian love.

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Problem and Goal. — In preaching on this text, the real problem lies in the fact that those who are the weakest in faith usually regard themselves as strong and that the strong frequently feel very weak. Prayerfully try to design your applications so that every hearer may take to heart the particular message intended for him.

Outline:

**HOW MAY CHRISTIANS ON VARIOUS LEVELS OF
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT LIVE TOGETHER
IN HARMONIOUS FELLOWSHIP?**

- I. By strict obedience to the Word of God.
 - A. Since God is our Lord, we ought to be governed by His Word, 4.
 - B. Every Christian is, in the presence of God, to judge himself in this respect, 5 c, 10.
- II. By cultivating mutual understanding.
 - A. The weak over against the strong, 4-6.
 - B. The strong over against the weak, 4-6.
- III. By remembering that God is our common Father.
 - A. Every Christian must do everything "unto the Lord," 6-9.
 - B. The judgment of the weak and the strong is in His hand alone, because He is their Savior, 4, 9.

E. J. FRIEDRICH

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JAMES 5:7-11

The Text and the Day. — Rejoicing in the forgiveness of God (Gospel and Introit), the sinner exhibits a like attitude of forgiveness (Gospel). In fact, confident of God's "performing" His work in him, the Christian abounds more and more in love (Epistle). Forgiving love comes hard (cp. context), hence our text appeals strongly for patience, warns against "grudging," encourages by referring to the "end of the Lord" and the soon "coming of the Lord." Strong eschatological tone in Scriptures and text, appropriate to end of church-year.

Notes on Meaning. — "Brethren" stands in sharp contrast to context. "Be patient," *makrothymeo*, be long-tempered, not

"giving way to passion," restraining yourselves from retaliating; same word in 7 b, 8, 10. But in verse 11 the word is *hypomenee*, lit., remain under, endure through, do not easily succumb, as under *any* distress. Accordingly, the sermon may be limited to patience with our fellow men, or, better, include every kind of trouble.

"Coming of the Lord" is expressed in the technical *parousia*, so confidently expected, it had become a regular phrase, somewhat as "Second Coming" has to us today. Have we lost it? "Waits," *ekdechomai*, eager expectation. "Precious," "dear to the farmer because of his toil for it." Early rain in October or November for germination, the latter in April and May for maturing.

V. 8. "Stablish, *steerixate*, render constant, firm. "Draw-eth nigh," has come near (perfect), and so is near.

V. 9. "Grudge," lit., groan, sigh; R. S. V., grumble, thus taking judgment into our own hands. "Standeth," has arisen, taken his place, stands near, ready to enter the Great Assize.

V. 10. "Example," copy to be imitated. Examples encourage. *Kakopatheia*, a *hapax legomenon*; lit., suffering evil. Though coming in the Lord's name and with His revelation, they were permitted of God to be afflicted by men. Yet patient, because of trust in that Lord. Cf. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Elijah, modern examples.

V. 11. "Call blessed," R. S. V., call happy, felicitate. Job, the proverbially patient, even today. A good man (Job 1:1, 5, 8, 22), yet what suffering, also in part from human agencies! But patient, 1:21; 2:3. Further affliction. Temporary lapse, but at last from further revelation of God (ch. 38—39) the "end of the Lord" is accomplished, ch. 42. "Full of pity," a *hapax*; R. S. V., "compassionate," lit., "much boweled"; we'd say "bighearted," very kind. "Tender mercy," really, "full of pity," as in Luke 6:36.

Preaching Pitfalls.—While the sermon might stress patience under affliction generally, we ought not to miss the underlying thought of the human agency in certain troubles that come to us. Here is opportunity to instruct on the hearer's personal "gripes and grudges." . . . Then, as elsewhere in James, we find the thought of the Atonement presupposed; yet we must not presuppose it in our hearers. Develop the

closing phrase of the text by pointing to the most graphic demonstration of all that the Lord is very pitiful, namely, in what the Lord Jesus bore both from men and from God in our stead. Refer to the day's Scriptures.

Problem and Goal. — The riddle of suffering. Man's eternal questions of "Why?" and "How long?" Both dangerous, because undermining trust in God. Yet both constantly bobbing up. The Word solves the riddle, encourages faith and patience, even where the affliction results from the carelessness, thoughtlessness, or animosity of our fellow men. Look to the Lord, then, trustingly, see His purpose of love. Our goal in this sermon: Increase the hearer's confidence in his Lord, and so cultivate the soil in which patience grows.

Outline:

"Patience is a flower that grows not in every garden," esp. in this age of speed, selfishness, materialism. Yet, impatience forfeits many blessings of God, undermines faith. We must

LEARN PATIENCE *

Learn it by considering that trouble

I. Serves the Lord's purpose for us.

- A. The eternal "Why?" exhausts patience toward God and man.
- B. But consider the Prophets and their example.
- C. And Job.
- D. And the farmer. Any harvest without patience?
- E. Never fear: The Lord is "very pitiful" in what He sends you. The plan of your redemption, gift of Son, suffering of Jesus in your stead. Now affliction, so you do not miss the benefit.

II. Will not last long. "Lasting but not everlasting."

- A. Especially when trouble comes through human agency, we cry out "How long, O Lord?"
- B. Warning: judgment is coming. Grudge not! Judge is at the door.

* Wiener (*Predigtentwuerfe*, 474 ff.) develops analytically. Learn patience by considering I. Nature, 7, 8. II. People around us, 9. III. The faithful in church history.

- C. Yet that Judge is our Lord, coming for our "redemption," release.
- D. Can we not be patient "unto the coming of the Lord"? Only a little while longer. Then, Rom. 8:18. "Happy they who endure." Stablish your hearts in patience!

WINFRED A. SCHROEDER

THANKSGIVING DAY

REV. 1:5-6

The Text and the Day. — The prime purpose of our National Thanksgiving Day is the thought that our people might be given occasion to acknowledge the *material* blessings which God has again showered upon our Country and Nation. But while material blessings may make people happy, considered alone, they can never move people to a true spirit of thanksgiving. True gratitude towards God demands a knowledge of the love which God has shown us in Christ Jesus. Remember, our National Thanksgiving Day is really an accident. Had it not been introduced by Christians, America would have no Thanksgiving Day. This is evidenced by the manner in which the majority of our people observe the day. For that reason the text is so fitting for the day. It points to a God of love, a concept which alone can move the heart to true thanksgiving.

Notes on Meaning. — The key lies in the opening words: "Unto Him that loved us." That thought is vital to Thanksgiving Day. No one can feel thankful to his God when to him God is some stern and rigorous Judge and Ruler before whom he must live in constant fear. Man must, therefore, begin with this thought, that "God is love." And I like it when many of the original texts give that word "love" in a different tense, so that it actually reads: "Unto Him that *loveth* us." There is the explanation for all the blessings, also the material blessings, which God has bestowed upon our country and people. No one could possibly be so blind as to think that America is worthy and observing of its luxury. The answer, then, to America's prosperity can only be found in "Him that loveth us." We have a God whose heart is set on saving sinners and drawing them unto Himself. To that end He has "washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings (No longer

serfs and slaves to sin, ruled and dominated by the lusts and drives of the flesh, but loosed from our sins by Jesus' blood, we have been enthroned and given power to rule as kings over ourselves and, in Christ, to overcome the world.) and priests (who now without further mediation have direct access) unto God and His Father." What a love! That alone can stir up a warm gratitude within, which is not only ready to exclaim: "Unto Him be glory," but eager to take such a God of love into one's life and ready to give Him "dominion forever and ever."

Preaching Pitfalls. — With such a lovely text there should be no pitfalls. While many a thanksgiving sermon will, no doubt, hold forth alone on the material prosperity of our country, and say nothing about the Gospel of God's love in Christ Jesus, that pitfall is boarded up to the preacher who chooses this text and preaches it.

Preaching Emphases. — The sermon must open the fountain of real gratitude. Only a Christian, who rightly understands that pardoning, cleansing love of Jesus, which has loosed him from the bonds and fetters of sin and made him a king and priest before his God, can turn to God in the true spirit of thanksgiving. Illustration: Criminals, who have been sentenced to death are given a special delicious meal before they are executed. Think you that a condemned man is grateful for that meal, knowing that he will shortly hang by his neck until dead? But let the Governor of the State serve him a full pardon with that meal, and it will loosen something within him that wells up in true joy and gratitude. As God's ambassador, then, serve the people a full pardon in Christ Jesus on this Thanksgiving Day, and they will observe the day with a new heart and a new glint in their eyes, gratefully acknowledging the fresh air, the warm sunshine, the prosperity, the freedoms and liberty of our great country and nation.

Problem and Goal. — Natural man cannot celebrate Thanksgiving Day at all. As he reflects upon the blessings of life, he may indeed experience a joy in himself, but he cannot have a "joy in the Lord." But give him a glimpse of "Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood," and the Spirit of God can tune the strings of his heart for a real Thanksgiving hymn. And while the Christian knows this love of God, he, too, still carries with him so much of the old

carnal nature that he must be served a full pardon with his Thanksgiving meal. Only then can he lift his heart in true thanksgiving, even if that meal consists of but a crust of bread.

Outline:

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING DAY

- I. It sees in all blessings a God of love who gives solely because He loves.
 - A. Did He not "wash us from our sins in His own blood,"
 - B. And make us "kings"
 - C. And "priests unto God and His Father"?
- II. Viewing all blessings in the light of the full pardon served in Christ Jesus,
 - A. It is ready to chant "To Him be glory" over the smallest fortune,
 - B. And anxious to give Him "dominion forever and ever. Amen."

A. W. SCHELP

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

REV. 21:1-8

The Text and the Day. — This Sunday has an Epistle to tell us that our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the coming of our Lord, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. It also has a Gospel to remind us that on earth we have obligations to God as well as to Caesar, therefore this text in perfect harmony with the standard Lessons, since it lifts up our eyes to the new heaven and the new earth, the goal of our life of faith down here.

Notes on Meaning. — Context important. The previous chapter ends on the sad note of telling where those go who do not believe on Jesus. "Were cast into the lake of fire." Then follows the picture of the text showing the beautiful place of those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. . . . "The first heaven and earth were passed away," in harmony with 2 Pet. 3:13. . . . Compare v. 2 with Rev. 3:12 regarding the New Jerusalem and also with v. 14 of text chapter about the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; for here you have

the culmination of all prophecy, as indicated in v. 3. . . . Note v. 4 in fulfillment of Is. 25:8 and 65:19. Likewise v. 5, the culmination of God's comfort promised to His people in Is. 43:19.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Avoid any carry-over of anything from this world to the next. This text in perfect harmony with the Scriptural principle that the new life arises only out of the complete death and destruction of the old.

Preaching Emphases. — "Alpha and Omega," not only the everlasting God, but pointing to His works: in the beginning He made heaven and earth, and here a new heaven and a new earth, wherein *dwelleth* (ever-present tense) righteousness. Aside to the evolutionist, "If we cannot believe God to tell us the truth about where we came from, we should be most foolish to trust Him to tell us where we are going." Our theology must ask for faith and trust in every word of God's revelation as it may relate to the past, present, or future. . . . This picture of heaven most beautiful, comparison of a woman in the hour of her most attractive loveliness, "A bride adorned."

Problem and Goal. — The retired preacher who said, "If I had my preaching to do over again, I'd preach more about heaven." People need the comfort of this text in a world of sin. . . . No matter whether Christians are young or old, the best in life is always ahead — where Christ makes all things new.

Outline:

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

I. Old Things are passed away.

- A. The first heaven and the first earth.
- B. Sin, death, sorrow, crying, pain, etc.

II. All Things are become new.

- A. A New Jerusalem.
- B. We shall drink of the Water of Life freely.
- C. We shall experience new and greater joys.

Conclusion: God keeps His promises: "I will Give."

HENRY GEORGE HARTNER