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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

SEPTUAGESIMA

LUKE 14:25-33

The Text and the Day.—The Lenten season approaches. Few confessing Christians fail to observe this period in some special way. Even the wavering and weak usually make a more open confession of discipleship during this period. The text presents the Savior's attempt to lead all His followers to a thorough and sincere self-examination. Septuagesima an especially fitting time for us.

Notes on Meaning.—Place the Savior's instruction in its proper chronological background. Cf. Luke 13:32-33. — "Hate" — cf. Matt. 10:34-37; Matt. 6:24; Eph. 5:29. Circumstances may occur in which conflict between duties of discipleship and natural love is inevitable. Then — "hate father, etc." — "Cross" — not all suffering is included, but suffering for Christ's sake. — "Tower" — a sumptuous structure, palace, demanding great resources. Failure of completion would bring ridicule. — "Desireth conditions of peace." — Not to be construed as wishing to avoid battle at all costs, but to be prepared for war when it comes.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The text does not present Jesus as scolding backsliders. He is, in deepest love, portraying the demands of conscious acceptance of Himself and His message. Our message must be directed to those who "are with Him." The Savior's approach, though in somberly earnest words, is the approach of burning love. — Numerous "local" illustrations of human inaptitude at properly evaluating true discipleship will readily come to the mind of the preacher. It might be well to remain with the more general illustrations of the Savior's choice. — A study of a number of outlines and sermons on the text reveals a tendency to go far afield in the allegorical treatment of the "tower" and the "war." It is suggested that the more accepted application of the tower as a symbol of internal growth and the battle as a symbol of external development be used merely in a general way.

Preaching Emphases.—In applying our Savior's instruction it is essential to stress the "any" of v. 26. A sincere self-examination is as necessary for the 12 as for the multitude.—The text gives no direct answer to the question: What happens if the self-examination discloses a lack of resources to build or fight? The answer *must* be given. It cannot be: Give up! The tower must be built, the battle must be fought. Suggested answer: Matt. 19:25-26; John 1:16-17.—Although the text itself does not mention the "Reward," surely the framework and contextual material demands its inclusion in our message.

Goal—Luke 15:1 and 15:7.

Outline:

IF YOU WOULD FOLLOW JESUS

- I. Count the cost.
 - A. Subordination of all other love to Jesus.
 - B. Renunciation of self and all you have.
- II. Consult your abilities.
 - A. John 15:5.
 - B. Philippians 4:13.
- III. Accept your responsibilities.
 - A. To plan.
 - B. To build and fight.
 - C. To continue to completion and victory.
- IV. Remember the reward.
 - A. Matt. 28:20.
 - B. John 8:31-32.
 - C. John 12:26.

H. B. ROEPE

SEXAGESIMA

JOHN 16:33

The Text and the Day.—As we approach the season of Lent, let us bear in mind two striking statements from our text: "that in Me ye might have peace. . . . I have overcome the world." Throughout His suffering and even into death itself our Savior was and remained *Christus Victor* and the Prince of Peace.

Notes on Meaning.—"These things": includes everything stated by Christ from John 14:1 to the words of our text. Note the

close relationship existing between John 14:1 and John 16:33. Jesus knew throughout that He would be betrayed (13:21), suffer, die, and depart from His disciples (16:16). He told all this to His disciples not to ruffle and excite them, but that "*in Me* ye might have peace." While *en emoi* and *en too kosmoo* represent opposite poles, they are, at the same time, the two spheres in which every Christian lives on this earth. John 17:15. However, in Christ we have peace, in the world we have tribulation. Hence the Christian life is a life of conflict and peace. As we tie up the oncoming season of Lent with our text, we realize why this blessed season in particular is referred to as the *Militia Christiana*. *tharseite*: be of good cheer, be confident and unafraid. Why? "I have overcome the world." Note well, Christ said this already before Gethsemane and Golgotha. While the verb *nikan* occurs 22 times in the Epistles and the Apocalypse of St. John, and four times in other books of the New Testament, it occurs only this one time in the entire and lengthy Gospel according to St. John. This points to the singular and climactic character of our text. The frightful and pernicious assaults of the world can be overcome and need not be feared by the Christian and the Church. We are privileged to benefit from the triumph of the victorious Christ, and through Him we overcome the world and all its allies.

Preaching Pitfalls.—People often mistake complacency and apathy for peace. As preachers of the Gospel we should call attention to the fact that the peace referred to in our text comes from our Savior (14:27); complacency and apathy are creations of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God and which seeks to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. Rev. 3:16, 19. Victory in Christ, the Prince of Peace, does not convert life in this world of tribulation into a nirvana. Acts 14:22b is still true today, and it is well to bear in mind that only through Christ living in us and activating us can we overcome the tribulation and sorrows of the world. Being of good cheer is not of our own making; it is the result of the workings of the Holy Spirit and has its roots in Christ and His evangel. 1 Pet. 1:8.

Problem and Goal.—The peace and victory granted the Christian are by no means artificial in character. They must come from Christ (cf. text, "*in Me*," "*I*"). Very much of the revivalism of

our day is artificial and centers in man, in emotions, and in the sensuous; it does not reflect the peace of God, but rather the neurotic and excitable frenzy of our postwar age and of man's craving to express himself rather than let God speak to him in the quiet, reassuring words of Holy Writ and its precious and soothing Gospel.

Illustrations.—The life and experiences of Jesus in particular. The lives of the disciples, of St. Stephen and other martyrs, St. Paul, Luther, Paul Gerhardt, and of countless Christians of our own day.

Outline:

CHRIST, OUR VICTORIOUS PRINCE OF PEACE

- I. The victorious Christ is able to offer real peace.
 - A. He was sent by the Father as the Prince of Peace.
 - B. He overcame sin, death, and hell and, as Conqueror, is in a position to offer peace.
 - C. In the name of our victorious Christ the Father sent us the Comforter to teach us the Gospel of Peace.
- II. The world can offer no competent substitute as a prince of peace.
 - A. The world can offer no peace because it knows not the Prince of Peace.
 - B. Most forces in this world are enemies of the Prince of Peace and hence are fundamentally opposed to peace.
 - C. Unlike the Prince of Peace, the world offers tribulation and hence becomes a vale of tears.
- III. The victorious Prince of Peace has overcome the world and offers an enduring peace.
 - A. Amidst the tribulations of this world the Christian enjoys a peace which the world does not know.
 - B. This peace has been established by Christ, who has overcome the world.
 - C. The victorious Christ offers a peace which is blended with cheer.
 - D. This peace and cheer endure through time and tribulation into eternity and glory.

WALTER E. BUSZIN

QUINQUAGESIMA

LUKE 13:31-33

The Text and the Day.— This Sunday has two names: *Quinquagesima* (fifty), indicating in a round number the days until Easter, and *Esto Mihi* (Be Thou to me): the opening words of the Introit, which strikes the keynote for Lent. Our text, even as the Standard Gospel, points directly to the opening of the Lenten season as it gives definite statements about the suffering and death of Jesus. The text should, therefore, be treated homiletically in the light of Lent.

Notes on Meaning.— "The same day" ties this incident in point of time with that which immediately precedes it. Jesus was still in Perea, east of Jordan, part of Herod's domain. . . . What induced the Pharisees to come? Some think Herod actually sent them; others believe these Pharisees were trying to use a threat they had heard Herod make to good advantage for themselves; still others maintain these Pharisees had falsely concocted this threat because they wanted to frighten Jesus. The text doesn't tell us. However, since Jesus' answer is directed to Herod, it seems that Herod must actually have been involved. The Herodians and Pharisees worked together against Jesus a number of times, Mark 3:6; Mark 12:13; Matt. 22:16. . . . "Fox": Jesus most likely refers to the foxlike cunning and craftiness of Herod, because the fox appears in Greek and Roman literature and also in the Talmud as a type of cunning and deceit, although nowhere else in Scripture. There may be also a reference to "the little foxes that spoil the vines," Song of Solomon 2:15. . . . Was Jesus disrespectful to the government here? As a Prophet it was His duty to expose iniquity in rulers; furthermore, as the King of Kings Jesus was far above Herod. . . . "Third day": not to be taken literally, but denotes a brief period of time, previously fixed, Hos. 6:2. . . . "I shall be perfected": (present passive, not the middle) "I shall be perfected in the way appointed by the Father through death." . . . "It cannot be": this is no sarcasm or irony, as some have claimed; nor is it an absolute dictum, because some prophets, like John the Baptist, were killed outside of Jerusalem; but legally the judgment and murder of prophets occurred in Jerusalem as the religious center of the nation and the seat of the Sanhedrin.

Preaching Pitfalls.— By all means keep Jesus as the center of

the sermon and don't lose yourself in details about the Pharisees and Herod Antipas and Jerusalem, the murderess of prophets. . . . The term "I shall be perfected" must not be limited only to the thought of Jesus' death, but should include the fact that He reached His goal completely. All the opposition and trickery of His enemies did not hurry His death in the least, nor did the slightest bit of Jesus' work remain undone.

Problem and Goal.—In the light of the approach of Lent, it must be the speaker's aim to show that Jesus knew His death was inevitable and that He was not in the least afraid of it nor trying to escape it; but He also would not let it come one day too soon, because He had so much work to do before it would come. This will allow numerous applications.

Illustrations.—Bible stories to show that no enemy of God could ever harm Jesus or any of the followers of Jesus at any time or in any way contrary to the permission of God: Joseph, Gen. 50:20; Elijah, 1 Kings 19:2; Daniel, Dan. 6:22; Jesus at Bethlehem, Matt. 2:14; at Nazareth, Luke 4:30. . . . Jesus lived His life with death always before Him.

Outline:

THE THIRD DAY I AM PERFECTED

- I. Until that appointed time no one, not even Herod, can kill Me.
 - A. Herod and the Pharisees and others may hope for My death.
 - B. They may even threaten and plan it.
 - C. But prophets perish in Jerusalem.
 - D. Jesus' death was set, not by men, but by God. So is ours, as we hide ourselves in Jesus.
- II. Therefore I shall fearlessly continue in My work.
 - A. I continue to show my power over even the devil.
 - B. I continue to show love for people and cure them.
 - C. I walk on each day deliberately closer toward death.
 - D. What a wonderful Savior: powerful (A); helpful (B); confident (C); even to the death of the Cross. As we believe and absorb that, so let our lives reflect it.

W. W. STUENKEL

INVOCAVIT

JOHN 12:23-30

The Text and the Day.—Applying a pedagogical principle credited to Martin Luther, "Learning begins only then when that which is to be learned touches the experience of the learner," the contact point of a sermon on this text may properly be the Lenten season itself, for we may take for granted that almost all our hearers are minded to observe the Lenten season in a God-pleasing manner. As this text hardly touches any of the Propers, it would be best not to attempt a tie-in with them. It would be acceptable to point out that Lenten time is a heart-searching time, in which we are to discover anew the futility and emptiness of life centering in self and our frequent failure to live under God and in true obedience to His will. Also, to help us against sin and strengthen us in godliness, Lent is a time in which we are to "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of the glory of Christ; it is a time to learn what is the "hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

Notes on Meaning.—V. 20. Greeks came to the Passover to worship. Probably they did not come to sacrifice, but only to pray, as these were "proselytes of the gate," true Greeks, not merely Hellenistic Jews. V. 21. They approached Philip because Philip was of the city adjacent to Syria, where the Greek thought was dominant. Their petition, "We would see Jesus," reveals the "thoughts of their hearts." V. 22. Andrew must have had quite a reputation as a "bringer." He first brought his brother Simon Peter; he now is interested in bringing these Greeks to Jesus.

V. 23. We would all enjoy to see Jesus, but the main thing is to hear Him. That will lead to the vision glorious hereafter. Jesus' answer: "The time is near for the glorification." Through the Resurrection, the Ascension, the planting of the Church of the First-Born on the earth, the Son would be glorified. "God shall also glorify Him in Himself." John 13:32. The world can't see it,

but the greatest glory of all is the glory of God's work perfected in Christ—the redeeming, restoring, glorifying of the human soul. This is the glory that excels. There is nothing like it in all the earth: God became one of us, that we may be glorified in Him and He in us. Cf. 2 Thess. 1:10, 12.

V. 24. The glory must come through death. Some commentators find in the picture of Jesus a reference to the Eleusinian mysteries, with which the Greeks were conversant. It is simply a reference to a fundamental law in nature, the death of the seed and its rising to life. Paul applies it to the resurrection of the body in First Corinthians 15. The seed cannot be multiplied except it dies and brings forth new growth and fruit.

V. 25. Christ did not love His life, but freely gave it for us, that through His death His family might be multiplied and He, the First-Begotten of the dead, might give eternal life to uncounted millions who as the saints in glory will make heaven musical forever. He did not love His life, but gave it. We should not love our life, but give it in the interest of life eternal—our own eternal life and the eternal life of others. To win the eternal life we must largely lose this life.

V. 26. We are the servants of Him who gave His life into death in order that life might be multiplied. Let the servant, like the Master, give his life in loving, self-abasing service. The reward is to be with Christ forever, for the Father will honor those who honor and serve the Son in faith and love.

V. 27. The dark waves of the coming pain and conflict were beating on the Savior's soul. He had a foretaste of His suffering. But He inquired of those standing by: "Shall I now say: 'Father, help Me, save me from this hour'? Shall I ask Him to remove this cup of sorrow and conflict? Shall I ask Him to spare My life? No, indeed, for that is My purpose in coming into the world, to redeem sinners by My death." Though He did pray later, under the overpowering burden of the world's guilt, that "if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him and the cup might be taken away from Him," He did not pray so now. That prayer came when the full fury of the storm began to break over His holy soul.

V.28. He is resolved to stay true, and He asks only that the Father be glorified through Him. This is the end purpose of our Christian life, that we may glorify God. To strengthen the Son, there came a reassuring voice from heaven. This voice had already been heard at the Baptism and again at the Transfiguration. Now, a few days before the grievous trial, it came once again.

V.30. Jesus explains that the voice came for their benefit, that they might know that He is the Son of God even in His great humility which they were to witness. They were to learn the lesson which the disciples had to learn on the Mount of Transfiguration, that the Kingdom of God cannot come save through the suffering and death of Christ, that it would come in power through "the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Preaching Pitfalls.—In liberalistic circles the tendency is to discover life principles which have only ethical value and meaning. It would be tragic and thoroughly unbiblical to fall into the liberalistic trend by suggesting that we have here nothing more than a natural principle at work which shows that life emerges from death. We find much more than a principle here. It is the holy magnitude of the self-disclosure and the self-impartation of God in Christ, dying in love that He might win life for us. This love on His part begets love on our part.

Preaching Emphases.—The essential and radical truth is that life emerges from death. This is true in the case of Christ, and it is true in the case of His followers. In the case of Christ we must have in mind the overpowering truth that God became Man. We have a physical Christ, a physical, personal Christ, who is just as real to us as wife, son, daughter. This God came "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He died because the wages of sin is death. The Father glorified Him in His obedient death and made Him the Author and Source of life. Even as death meant denial for Him, so denial for us means that we are willing to die as to the interests of self, the desires of the flesh, and out of love for Him, out of the resolve to follow His example, and out of the desire to do His work we will endeavor to die to all the things that hinder His work and His way with us, and out of such dying we rise and live to all the things that promote His work and His way.

Problem and Goal.— Aim of the sermon is to make us ashamed for still having so many carnal views of the Kingdom and being "slow of heart" to believe the great mystery that life emerges only out of the death of Christ and that, similarly, the healing of life and the lifting of it proceeds out of those who, like their Master, hold not their life dear but give it freely, not to Satan, self, and sin, but to a self-effacing service to humanity.

Outline:

LIFE THROUGH DEATH

I. Christ died to give life.

A. To "see Jesus" we go to Calvary.

B. God mightily glorified His obedient Son.

II. We must die to live.

A. To have life full of self is to lose it.

B. To give life away in service is to find it.

C. The end purpose of the whole Christian life is to glorify God.

C. W. BERNER

Our New Type Face

With this issue CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY appears with a new type face. A note on the type may be of interest. It is called Garamond, after Claude Garamond, a celebrated French type designer, often called the "father of type founders," since he was the first to establish a type foundry separate from a printing establishment. Very little is known of him save that he was the first "on purpose" designer of type at a time when the old gothic type faces were hard to read. At the command of King Francis I, he made the new Greek type for the printing house of Estienne in Paris. His roman and italic type soon became popular in Italy, England, Holland, and Germany, and found many imitators. He died in poverty in 1561. Garamond (sometimes written Garamont) is characterized by French gracefulness and elegance. Clear cut, easy to read, the type presents a pleasing and agreeable appearance, not only individually but also in mass effect, combining both beauty of design and fine delicacy of execution.
