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Homiletics: Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

A. R. Riep

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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HOMILETICS

A Series of Sermon Studies for the Church Year

PALM SUNDAY

MATT. 11:25-30

The Text and the Day.— Behold thy King! That is the natural theme for Palm Sunday. If the sermon is to enter into the spirit of this high festival, then it must be adorned with the rich pageantry and with the festive terminology of the regular Gospel for the day. The theme attempts to provide the bridge between our text and the Gospel Lesson for Palm Sunday. The clear and striking passage in the Epistle about the humiliation and the sacrifice of Christ could very well be used in the sermon (see II A of outline).

Notes on Meaning.— V. 25. Jesus uses the unqualified address "Father!" because He is in the true, essential sense the Son of God the Father. Upon this fact rests subdivision I A of the outline, for this is one of the instances in our text pointing out the divine majesty of Jesus.

The terms "wise and intelligent" and "babes" are used to characterize the manner in which these people have reacted to the Gospel, i. e., Jesus here speaks of the two different attitudes of people after (not before!) they have heard the Gospel. The wise and intelligent are all those who reject the message of the Gospel and cling to the Christless views and learning which they have by their own ability. Thus God can give them nothing. Typical of them were the scribes and Pharisees in the days of Jesus. The "babes" are those in whom the power of the Gospel has been able to sweep aside opposing human wisdom, making them as free of acquired godless wisdom and as open-minded as infants for the reception of the riches of the Gospel of grace. Caution: "1 Cor. 1:26 makes it plain that the sense of Christ's word is not that the Gospel is intended only for the ignorant and not for the educated" (Lenski). The words "these things" refer to the Gospel of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ. This revelation of the Gospel of salvation to those who are as babes is, of course, tantamount to bestowing

the gifts of this Gospel to them, for the Gospel does not only reveal and offer the gifts of God's grace, but it also creates at the same time the faith by which they receive these gifts—The sermon outline makes use of one phase of all this. In subdivision II D we have: While He gives us all the riches of His kingdom, He requires nothing of us. Those who receive the riches of God's grace are not required to contribute anything toward the reception of these gifts, neither intelligence, nor learning, nor anything else. Nor could they contribute anything if they would. The only condition which God makes is that the recipients of the gifts of His grace must be as infants who have nothing to offer and everything to receive. And even this condition "as of infants" is not a contribution of the individual, but the work of God through the power of His Word.—The words "I thank Thee" (v. 25) and verse 26 indicate that Jesus fully approves of this method of the Father in dealing with men, i. e., that here as well as in all things His view and the Father's view are one, and that the Father's dealings with men can properly be attributed to the Son, as it has been done in the outline (II D).

V. 27. Πάντα includes everything on earth, in heaven and hell, in time and in eternity. Subdivision II A is based on the words "are delivered unto Me," with which Christ indicates that He is true man, for only according to His human nature did Christ have to be given power over all things; according to His divine nature He always did possess such power.—The fact that Father and Son alone have "an adequate and full knowledge" (Meyer) of each other indicates a most intimate relationship, and thus shows the transmundane majesty of Jesus (see I B).

V. 28. "Ye that labor and are heavy laden": These terms do not exclude the Christian. "All the vain, fruitless striving after peace, contentment, happiness, rest, and joy, which is found the world over, is this constant laboring. . . . Then the suffering, unrest, trouble, fear, grief, pain, an evil conscience, against which men rebel so vainly, adds to the labor and the load" (Lenski).

Vv. 29 and 30. "Yoke" is the guidance and discipline of the Word of God to which Christians are to subject themselves. To encourage us to take this yoke, Jesus says: "learn of Me," i. e., learn through personal relationship with Me that (not "for") I am gentle

(rather than "meek") and humble (lowly) in heart, i. e. I am a kind Friend, not a tyrant who demands harsh and impossible things. "For My yoke is pleasant (rather than "easy"), and My burden is light": the yoke and burden which the Word of God places upon the Christian are the labors of love and gratitude, the pleasant fruits of faith.

Preaching Pitfalls.—Much of the effect, power, and beauty of this sermon will depend upon the skill of the preacher to base his sermon clearly on the words of the text and yet develop it throughout against the background of the historical Palm Sunday, coloring it richly with the terminology and imagery of the Gospel for the Day and with the powerful phrases of Old Testament prophecies. If the preacher were to make mention of the historical happenings on Palm Sunday only in the introduction to his sermon and thereafter concentrate on the thoughts of the text without further reference to the contents of the Gospel for Palm Sunday, he would not be making the fullest use of a fine opportunity presented by this text to preach a message which, though fully adjusted to satisfy the workaday needs of his hearers, is yet at every turn of thought rich with the atmosphere of those momentous events which are uppermost in the minds of believers at the threshold of Holy Week.

Problem and Goal.—The burden of the sermon is to present to the hearer the Scriptural image of his Savior-King, both in the blazing glory of His heavenly might and majesty and in the soft glow of His gentle love for sinners. In a world hovering on the brink of social and political chaos, in a world in which the name of God is mocked or ignored, in a world which has enthroned man as its stupidly proud yet blindly groping and helpless "god," in a world in which hope itself is dying, in this world the children of God need to be encouraged by new visions of the might and majesty of their heavenly King, who still rules the universe with unhampered omnipotence and who is at the same time the gentle, loving Savior of the individual. Palm Sunday, with its royal entry into Jerusalem and with its proximity to the solemn events of Holy Week, when Christ's love for us drove Him to make the supreme sacrifice, is a most suitable occasion to bring this needed message to the believer.

Illustrations.—There will be little room in this sermon for

illustrations beyond those suggested by the vivid account of the Gospel and by the contents of the prophecies and of the Epistle. Brief comparisons between Christ and earthly rulers will be helpful.

Outline:

BEHOLD THY KING

- I. Behold Him in His royal might and majesty.
 - A. The Lord of heaven and earth is His Father (25 a).
 - B. He and the Father are bound together by the most intimate relationship (27 b).
 - C. Only through Him can man come to know his God (27 c).
 - D. He holds omnipotent sway over all things (27 a).
- II. Behold Him in His gentle love for us.
 - A. Out of love for us He became a humble man (27 a).
 - B. With deep concern for us He calls: Come, and I will give peace to your troubled and burdened souls (28).
 - C. He offers to be a gentle Master, whose demands are pleasant and light (29 and 30).
 - D. While He gives us all the riches of His kingdom, He requires nothing of us (25 b and 26).

A. R. RIEP

MAUNDY THURSDAY

LUKE 22:27-30

The Text and the Day. — The day derives its name from the injunction of our Lord to humility and love as emphasized in the Gospel (cf. also v. 34). The text is associated with the foot washing and thus emphasizes humility through service, but goes a step farther in promising an appointment for all who follow Christ.

Notes on Meaning. — For a background of the text read especially vv. 24-26, with which the words are associated, as well as John 13:1-20, which illustrates v. 27. For a similar occasion earlier in the ministry of Jesus see Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48; and Matt. 18:1-5. "Jockeying for position" is nothing new in the Church.

V. 27. A favorite O. T. title reflected here: Servant of the Lord. Already a paradox. In this service He was truly great. His leadership lies in this service, Matt. 20:28. It was willing (John 4:34;

Luke 22:42), loving (John 15:9), sacrificial of His own will (John 6:38) and person, and complete (through hell and death). All this not for self but for mankind, that it may be fit to serve (Eph. 2:5-10).

The implication from the context is that this leadership through service is the mark of a disciple.

V. 29. This loyalty prompted Jesus to bequeath a royal rule (kingdom) to His disciples. Here is another paradox. In His service Jesus was actually making a conquest. The rule given by the Father to the Son was the power to conquer Satan through His active and passive obedience, and this power or rule Jesus bequeaths to His disciples by the Gospel. V. 30. The disciples as rulers with Christ are intimately associated with their King and by the Gospel judge the world both now and on the Last Day.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The term kingdom as used in the N. T. is often misunderstood to mean a place or a domain. Its primary concept is a royal rule. This rule is the saving activity of the Gospel. We enter into the Kingdom of God when God sets up His rule in our hearts. We in turn rule in this kingdom when we use the Gospel. The emphasis is on the *power* of the Gospel, which routs the devil, Rom. 1:16. It is this rule, so characteristic of true discipleship, which should be emphasized. For a fuller discussion of the term kingdom see F. E. Mayer's essay in the *Proceedings of the Texas District* for 1942, also Luther's Explanation of the Second Petition in the *Large Catechism*.

The Problem and Goal.—According to the world's standards, rulers are those who rule for themselves, whether in government, business, or society. Whatever service is given is usually for personal benefit. This standard is constantly seeping into the church. The infection to "run things" is not a modern disease. The devil has a way of making us proud of our "humility" and "service."

The goal will be to emphasize that true greatness is in service as exemplified by Jesus: readiness to do His will, impelled by a love born of faith (Rom. 12:1), regardless of the consequences. Peter caught the significance, v. 33. This is a service of the total self and thus has many ways of expression. Service as a Christian parent, citizen, witness bearer, bread winner, etc.

But this service is also given a responsibility, namely, to rule

with Christ by the Gospel. This rule helps the Christian overcome sin in his own life. As he uses it in bearing witness, he extends the rule of Christ into the lives of others. Note how this promise is effected in the small group of disciples. The rule of God through them was extended over many people. Christians still have this power to rule through the Gospel. "Our good works are, on the one hand, a glorious triumph of Christ in us and at the same time a tribute to Him who by His great salvation has established His kingdom in us." While the complete conquest of Satan will not take place until Judgment Day, the "mopping-up job" is left for His disciples until that time.

This same Gospel which rules in the hearts of Christians becomes a standard for judging the world, Mark 16:16, both now and on that Day.

Outline: THE PARADOX OF DISCIPLESHIP

I. Rulers who serve.

- A. Christ, the Example in this paradox, the Servant of the Lord.
- B. True leadership lies in a life of service.

II. Servants who rule.

- A. By His service Christ destroyed the powers of darkness and set up His kingdom.
- B. By the Gospel He bequeaths this rule to His disciples.

ARTHUR C. REPP

GOOD FRIDAY

MATT. 27:45-51 a

Text and Day.—Two liturgical traditions obtain for Good Friday. The first is penitential, the climax of mourning. Preaching that purports to be Christian in such a session of worship must be effective in knifing through sentiment and establishing clear concepts and insights into the atoning work of Christ. The second liturgical emphasis, by contrast, focuses upon the completed work of Our Lord. Such a service reflects the joyous confidence of the Christian in the consummated Atonement. This text provides for also that emphasis.

Notes on Meaning.—St. Matthew assembles an account of the

climax of the Passion story, which lends itself well to a review of the outstanding theology of the Crucifixion.—The portents of nature were not merely a physical hint of spiritually significant events, but they were in the divine plan for penetrating the apathy of the onlookers.—Vv. 46 and 47 mark the apex of the redemptive work, "the atoning ingredient in the death of Christ" (F. Pieper). The reference to Psalm 22 makes this Word from the Cross a hint as to the further pondering of Christ in the Passion. The life of the Savior had been arduous, and the Savior had stood every test. The conspiracy of the leaders of the people, the inconstancy of His disciples, the miscarriage of civil justice, the physical pain of the Passion, heightened the agony of His need. Now He cries to His Father for help, counting on the prerogative of every child of God since Creation, namely, that God would hear. And He would not. The sinless Son of God is left to face the aloofness and the wrath of God as though He were the chief of sinners. Cf. Isaiah 53 and 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Heb. 4:15; 5:7-9.—The bystanders are uncomprehending. Cf. John 1: 10-11.—V. 48 presents the item without the word from the Cross "I thirst." Matthew likewise omits the word "It is finished"; unless he supposes to include it as well as "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," in v. 50. At the start of the crucifixion the Savior refused the drink, which was mixed with an anodyne and was a vestige of humaneness in the barbarous procedure. Then He wanted to face the full consciousness of His task, of His obedience for the sins of the world. But now the task is done. He has tasted death for every man. The Godforsakenness was the climax. Now the task is finished, and the Redeemer inclines toward the goal, satisfied.—Matthew twice speaks of the "loud voice" of the Savior. These are proclamations, interpretations, of an inner event; they are not sobs or ejaculations. The Priest is simultaneously Prophet. The supplement by the other Evangelists describes the Savior's yielding His spirit to the Father in physical death. "I go to the Father," He had told the disciples a few hours before; John 16:5. He had quailed at the thought of the intervening road. But now the task is done; and it is done in such a way that we can see it and rejoice in it.—The incident concerning the Temple veil must have been deeply stirring to every Jew in the days of Christ and to every Jewish reader of St. Matthew.

It was a barrier which only the High Priest could traverse; and the passing through it betokened the forgiveness of sins through the blood. Now it had been passed once for all time. Cf. Hebrews 9 and 10.—Now the great act of the Atonement has spoken of peace to the people of the Old Covenant, and brought its symbols and forecasts to an end. Now Christ has brought peace to us all.

Preaching Problem and Goal.—The most readily apparent problem of the worshiper on Good Friday is his assumption that his sense of sorrow, his commiseration with the Savior is a means of achieving forgiveness. This text emphasizes that our Lord faced pain infinitely more exquisite than physical suffering, and faced it victoriously. He, He altogether—not our sense of sorrow, but only He—gained our forgiveness and reconciled us to God.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The incidents of the text need to be grouped in such a way that the doctrinal perspective of the story emerges. The text has been sectioned as it is so that the puzzling detail of the resurrection need not be incorporated into this sermon, and the accent can be thrown on the act of the redemption.—The text should be useful in counteracting the usual pitfall in Lenten preaching, namely, to make the physical suffering of Jesus the outstanding item of the Passion.

Illustrations.—The preacher is tempted to construct analogies and illustrations from justice, buying and selling, Old Testament sacrifices. This text of all in the Bible demands taste on the part of the preacher, that he does not use illustrations which are cheaper than the thing they illustrate. The story is vivid enough; if the setting of the Savior's thought in Psalm 22 be sufficiently explored for concrete values, little more will be necessary.

Outline:

THE CLIMAX OF OUR SAVIOR'S SUFFERING

- I. The climax of pain.
 - A. Physical death by crucifixion.
 - B. The being forsaken by God.
- II. The climax of achievement.
 - A. Finished what He had known He would have to suffer.
 - B. Finished what He had set out to do—redeem us to God.

III. The climax of impressiveness.

- A. The tokens for that day—the darkness, the loud voice, the Temple veil.
- B. The tokens for our day: the Gospel of forgiveness bringing the values of the Cross into our own hearts. May we not callously overlook them in unbelief, apathy, or misunderstanding; but may we focus our hearts on Christ as our Redeemer.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

EASTER SUNDAY

JOHN 20:11-18

The Text and the Day.—Neither subtle nor highhanded tactics need to be employed to bring the text into harmony with the Propers of the Day.

Notes on Meaning.—Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had driven seven devils, was one of the faithful followers who ministered to Jesus of their substance to the very end. Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40 f; Matt. 27:55 f; Mark 15:40 f; John 19:25; Matt. 27:61. She was the first to see and to speak with the risen Christ. Mary had been at the tomb earlier in the morning, Mark 16:1. When she saw the stone rolled away, she left Mary and Salome and ran back to Jerusalem to inform Peter and John. John 20:1-10. Mary had returned and "stood without at the sepulcher, weeping." Mary had gone through grueling experiences. Her faith and her hope were crushed. Angels and her Master appear and speak with her. She neither recognizes nor heeds them, vv. 12-14. She proposes to solve her problem in her own foolish way, v. 15. A faulty knowledge of the Scriptures, a weak faith, doubt, and clinging to their own notions rather than to the Word of God, cut furrows in the brow and wounds in the hearts even of Christians. "Why weepest thou?" vv. 13, 15. What is the real reason for your grief and worry? Not until she heard and listened to the voice of Jesus, who called her by her name, did joy come to her heart, v. 16.

Note the sympathetic treatment of His erring disciples on the part of Jesus.—Study the text for interplay of tenses, especially between aorist, imperfect, and historical present for vivid description.

"Whom seekest thou?" Mary sought a Christ after her own

imagination. This is always a fatal mistake. She thought of a Christ who would resume the old, earthly relations that existed before His death. Jesus corrects this notion with "μή μου ἄπτου," v. 17. "Jesus indicated that Mary must cease clinging to Him," A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 853. He was soon to ascend to the Father and enter also according to His human nature into the full use of His divine majesty. Since His resurrection Jesus refers to His disciples as His "brethren," v. 17; Matt. 28:10. Yet the relation between Jesus, the only-begotten Son, to the Father is not the same as that of His "brethren" to God the Father. He does not say: "Our God, our Father." Nevertheless there is brotherly communion and fellowship of believers with Christ, Rom. 8:16-17. Mary did as she was told, v. 18. It is our sacred privilege to go and tell the story and the blessings of Christ's glorious resurrection.

Preaching Pitfalls.—Don't lay yourself open for a libel suit by identifying Mary Magdalene with the woman of the city, Luke 7:37. Neither is it profitable to enter a theological speculation on the successive stages in the progress of Christ's exaltation, nor on "the process of glorification through which His body was passing," nor on His "bodily and spiritual transition."

Problem and Goal.—The tear-drenched earth must be given the assurance of Christ's resurrection. See Catechism, Question 152.

Illustrations.—When Jesus comes to us in our daily lives by His manifold visitations, we are prone not to recognize Him. John 1:26; Luke 24:16; John 21:4.

Outline:

The watch, the empty tomb, angels proclaim: "He is risen!" The heavens are ablaze, celebrating Christ's triumphant resurrection. Yet at His first appearance on earth His first recorded utterance was the question

"WHY WEEPEST THOU?"

I. To whom is the question addressed?

A. To Mary Magdalene, a faithful follower of Jesus, in agony of soul.

B. To all who are torn with their doubts, griefs, sufferings in this perplexed world.

II. The question demands an explanation.

- A. Mary betrays her neglect to remember and believe the words of Jesus, v.13. Luke 18:31-33; John 11:25; Matt. 26:32; John 2:19. — Is that the reason why we weep?
- B. Mary tries to solve her problems in her own way. V.15.
- C. Mary fashioned a Christ in her own image. "Whom seekest thou?"

III. The question is asked to achieve an intended purpose.

- A To bring Mary to a better understanding of the Scriptures, to increase her faith, to bring her to enjoy the blessings of His resurrection, vv. 16-17. Catechism, Question 152.
- B. To make her a joyful witness of Christ and a willing messenger to proclaim His resurrection to others. Vv. 17-18.

HERMAN W. BARTELS

QUASIMODOGENITI

LUKE 20:34-38

The Text and the Day. — The glorious Easter message of our Savior's resurrection is properly followed either by stories of His own post-resurrection appearances or by other Scripture lessons regarding the resurrection life of believers.

Notes on Meaning. — Consult parallel passages, Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27. Jesus, replying to a specific question of the Sadducees, restricts the discussion to the covenant people of God. Hence, "children of this world" and "children of God" are not two opposite groups, but one and the same, the contrast being between their life on earth ("sons of this age," R. S. V.) and their post-resurrection life in the presence of God ("sons of God," R. S. V.). — V. 35 — "accounted worthy"; this phrase must, of course, be interpreted in the light of many clearer passages that rule out all merit on the part of man in obtaining life eternal, which is God's free gift of grace. The meaning can only be: those whom God "according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5) counts worthy. Similarly St. Paul in Philippians 3: "attain the resurrection," while disclaiming in that very passage all personal righteousness and stressing the righteousness of Jesus Christ obtained by faith. The

believer, while resting wholly on God's grace in Christ, nevertheless is exhorted to "strive to enter in," "to endure unto the end," "to work out his salvation with fear and trembling."

Vv. 35 b-36.—The spiritual nature of eternal life is here emphasized. We must frankly admit that we are here confronted by a mystery and a miracle. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," 1 Cor. 15:44. The Sadducees rejected the doctrines of the resurrection, angels, and spirits (v. 27; Acts 23:8). Having spiritual bodies, the resurrected believers are "like" (Matt. and Mark), and in this particular respect are "equal" (Luke), unto the angels. Being spiritual, freed from all the limitations of a material body, they, like the angels, will neither marry nor continue to live in the married estate in which they lived on earth. And as there are no deaths in heaven, there is no need for replacements by propagation. The God-given purpose of matrimony, the propagation of the human race and helpful companionship, have been fulfilled in this life.

Vv. 37-38. Since the Sadducees had appealed to Moses, Jesus quotes him only; otherwise He might have referred to even clearer passages on the resurrection, such as Job 19:25-27; Is. 26:19; Daniel 12:2.—Jesus, according to Matthew and Mark, rebuked these religious philosophers for not knowing the Scripture and hence being much in error on this doctrine. Though the O. T. Scripture had taught the resurrection of the body, it had nowhere declared that the *mode* of existence in the future life would be the same as in this present age. Hence their speculative question was baseless.—Jesus also rebuked them for not knowing "the power of God" (Matt.). Shall the Creator who formed the first human body out of the earth not be able to reorganize a disintegrated body?

Problem and Goal.—Christ's endorsement of the O. T. doctrine of the resurrection and His emphasis on the spiritual nature of the life in heaven must receive the chief attention. The preacher should be conscious of the fact that the exposition and application of this text may bring a real disappointment to some who, having been happily married here, and deeply grieving over the loss of a Christian spouse, are hopefully looking forward to a "reunion" in heaven as a continuance of their married state. The correction must be made gently and sympathetically. The possible present

disappointment should be offset by the comforting assurance that there will be no disappointment in heaven; that the joys of heaven, the presence of God and the angels, companionship with the saints made perfect, will supersede all the satisfaction found in the marriage state on earth. Reference may well be made to such passages as Psalm 73:25-26; John 14:1-3; Phil. 1:23; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 2:1-4. That there will also be recognition of those who were members of a family on earth may safely be deduced from the account of Christ's transfiguration.

Preaching Pitfalls.—Bear in mind the limited scope of the text. Only the people of the covenant are here under consideration. There is no reference to the future state of heathen and unbelievers.—V. 38—"all live unto Him." Possibly an editorial gloss. In any case it is better not to use the pulpit for dwelling on the various possible meanings of this highly condensed statement.

Outline:

CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION LIFE

I. There is a resurrection of the dead.

A. Moses spoke of the Lord as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom had been dead for centuries. In the accounts by Matthew and Mark, God is quoted as the Speaker. Cf. Exodus 3.

B. Jesus declares that the Lord is not the God of dead men (they cannot know Him), but of the living.

II. Some aspects of the resurrection life.

A. Those with the Lord in glory will be like (equal to) the angels.

1. They will have *spiritual* bodies, and yet be recognizable.
2. They will not die, being now in life everlasting.

B. There will be no marriage.

1. No deaths, hence no need of replacements.
2. No contention as to marital relationships as they existed on earth.
3. Hence the problem posed by the Sadducees will never arise.

Conclusion.—The divine wisdom here displayed by Jesus must be reassuring to our faith. His compassion with the bereaved is expressed in John 11 and elsewhere. He will comfort us until we are with Him in glory and need no more comfort.

MARTIN WALKER

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

JOHN 3:16-21

The Text and the Day.—With the "Compassion of the Lord" (Misericordias Domini) so eminently extolled in our text, one need not at length explain the fitness of our Text for the Day. Rejoicing over this very thing, the Introit chants about "the goodness of the Lord," while the Epistle lesson tells about His "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness," and the Gospel speaks of His Shepherd love, "giving His life for the sheep." It is, then, a most fitting text, inducing us to pray all the more fervently with the Collect for the Day that God make men partakers of so great a salvation.

Notes on Meaning.—Nothing but mad unbelief can mistake the meaning of God's love set forth in v. 16. But to make doubly sure that no one will mistake it, v. 17 is added. This sin-ridden world might well have supposed that God sent His Son to condemn it.—But—and here is the marvel of God's love—God sent His Son "that the world through Him might be saved." In fact, now that His Son has come and removed the world's sin and its curse, God's principle of judgment deals no more with sin but with His Son. V.18 sets forth His principle of judgment in unmistakable language. So completely is God's judgment now centered in His Son that the believer in spite of his sin is literally excused from judgment, (οὐ κρίνεται), while the unbeliever has been judged "already" (ἤδη), not because of his sin, but "because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There is, then, no escaping this pointed truth, that judgment hangs on the accepting or rejecting of God's love offered in His Son. Vv. 19 and 20 not only supplement this thought; but since these words are prophetic, they give us a picture of rubbing elbows with people still living, who are already judged because of their unbelief. A most solemn truth! All the more emphasis, then, on the hopeful ring in v.21. "He that doeth the truth" (ποιῶν—He that not only

accepts but acts upon the truth of God's love) will escape, not because of what he does, but because of what God in His love will do with him. He will be brought out of darkness to the light; will have his sin revealed, and be cleansed and purified through the redeeming work of the Son; all of which are works that "are wrought in God."

Preaching Pitfalls.—The preacher, faithfully using and teaching this text, will find every pitfall so flooded by the outpouring of God's love in these verses that no matter where he should slip or falter for a moment, he will find himself swept back by that tide of love and left standing before the Son, whom God in His love gave to the world.

Problem and Goal.—The finest theme for this text has long been worded by the Apostle in Heb. 2:3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" The preacher's problem and goal must be nothing short of nailing up every door of escape for his hearers, leaving only the Son standing with His outstretched arms, pleading: "Come unto Me!"

Illustrations.—I am afraid that all illustrations—whether picturing a man on a sinking boat, despising the only life belt, or showing a man in a burning house with every escape cut off, refusing to jump into the saving net spread for him—fall short of describing the folly and stupidity of the sinner who neglects the salvation which God has spread for him in His only-begotten Son.

Outline:

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE JUDGMENT?

I. Christ prepared the escape. V. 16.

A. God sent Him for that purpose. V.17.

B. Man needs nothing more. V. 18.

II. Accept this! V. 21.

A. Neglecting to do so will keep man in darkness with no escape. Vv. 19-20.

B. Doing so will reveal God's work of love, effecting man's escape. V. 21.

A. W. SCHELP

JUBILATE

JOHN 11:1-16

The Text and the Day.—This Sunday underscores the truth that we Christians can rejoice amid tribulations. The risen Redeemer has overcome all our enemies, including death, so that we need fear nothing. The text is an illustration and application of the Gospel, and throughout the account of the events at Bethany runs the Jubilate of the Introit and the Gradual.

Notes on Meaning.—V. 1. Lazarus means "whom God helps." Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. The illness of Lazarus was of a serious nature, as is indicated by the repeated references to it.—V. 2. Mary's deed is reported by John in the next chapter, vv. 1-3.—V. 3: Note that the sisters do not say that Lazarus loved Jesus, but that Jesus loved Lazarus. Lazarus is Jesus' friend, v. 11.—V. 4: "Not unto death"; Jesus does not say that Lazarus will not die, but only that the final result and outcome of his sickness is not death. "For the glory of God" expresses the purpose of Lazarus' illness, viz., to make manifest among men God's power and to lead many to believe in Christ, the Savior Vv. 6-7: Jesus and His disciples were in Perea, east of Jordan, whither Jesus had gone to escape from the Jews, 10:39 ff.—The meaning of v. 9 is that while Jesus' day as appointed to Him by the Father lasted, He must continue to work, and no one could hurt or hinder Him.—V. 11: The Christian way of looking at death. Luther: "To speak of sleeping is to indicate secretly the resurrection from the dead, since they who sleep have the hope of rising again."—V. 15: Emphasis on "for your sake." Why? "That ye may believe." The sorrows at Bethany are intended for the spiritual welfare of Jesus' disciples.—V. 16: "With Him" refers to Jesus.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The text does not address itself to sick people in general, but only to those sick people whom Jesus loves, and especially to Christian sufferers whose sickness is unto death.

Preaching Emphases.—We are still in Eastertide. The great truths of Easter impress upon us the lesson of Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 15:53-57, et al. Therefore, Jubilate.

Illustrations.—Luther's seal. The Christian walks among roses even when he walks under the cross.

Problem and Goal.—Although sickness and death come to all

men, yet very often the Christian is perplexed when suffering and sorrow strikes him. He is disturbed by the thought that though he is a friend of Jesus, yet he must lie sick, grow helpless, and die, as if Jesus had forgotten. The goal must be to develop in our hearers the Christian view of sickness and death, so that they will bear their trials with fortitude, yea, even rejoice, although afflicted.

Outline:

WHEN SICKNESS ENTERS OUR HOME

- I. We go to the Lord in prayer and patiently await His help.
- II. We firmly believe that our illness is for God's glory and for our own welfare.
- III. Even if the sickness is unto death, we sorrow not as they who have no hope, but rejoice in the knowledge of the Resurrection.

WALTER A. BAEPLER