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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-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 18:21-22

The Text and the Day.—This text is closely related to the Gospel for the Day. It is the preceding context for this pericope and deals with the same topic. The Introit may be drawn into the sermon since it emphasizes the forgiveness of God. Also the first sentence of the Gradual.

Notes on Meaning.—The text is short and the meaning clear. In verses 15-20 the Savior had told His disciples in detail how Christians are to deal with fellow Christians who have trespassed against them. Now the question arose in Peter's mind, "*How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?*" V. 20. To him it seemed that no Christian could be expected to continue to forgive if his brother persisted in sinning against him no matter how often and how sincerely he had been granted forgiveness. According to the Rabbinical Law a person was required to forgive three times. Peter goes far beyond that, "Till seven times," perhaps having in mind the Savior's instruction Luke 17:3-4. By asking this question Peter revealed that he had not yet grasped the fundamental principle of Christian life and conduct: Love, also to our fellow men, particularly to our fellow Christians. His conception of Christian forgiveness was legalistic rather than evangelical; a duty according to the law instead of a privilege bestowed upon God's children through the Gospel. As a result, he was not fully aware that the motivation of Christian forgiveness must always be love and not merely an earnest desire to fulfill an ethical obligation. Neither did he seem to realize that the purpose of Christian forgiveness must always be the salvation of the erring brother rather than the putting at ease of one's own conscience. In short, Peter still had not learned that a Christian who forgives his brother actually conveys God's full and unlimited forgiveness to him.—The Savior's answer clears up the whole matter in a few words, v. 22. While Peter had set a definite figure (7), He stresses in the

strongest possible terms that a Christian must forgive his brother as often as he sins against him and repents, no matter how often that may be, how close these sins may be to one another, or over how long a period they may extend. The God of love for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior forgives to the uttermost. He can never and under no circumstances refuse to forgive because "God is love," 1 John 4:16.

Preaching Pitfalls. — It goes without saying that the preacher must work with the context, but in this case he should be careful not to preach on the context, for instance, the Gospel for the Day, but on the text itself. Moreover, the preacher must be on his guard lest he make the same mistake which Peter made. In that case his sermon would degenerate into mere moral instruction without any Gospel content. Care must also be exercised lest the presentation become too abstract, merely a set of rules. It should be concrete, down to earth, with examples and illustrations. Finally, don't be too hard on Peter.

Preaching Emphases. — The chief emphasis should be placed on the fact that it is a privilege rather than a duty to forgive, so that the members of the congregation, as well as the preacher himself may experience that it is a joy to forgive and not a drudgery forced upon us by the law. Prov. 19:11 b.

Problem and Goal. — As usual, the greatest problem lies in the stubbornness and the selfish pride of the human heart, vices of which even the Christian heart has not been fully cleansed. This should be freely acknowledged in the sermon. With this background, the goal is not hard to find. The preacher must aim at persuading his hearers, with the help of God, to cultivate the sacred art of forgiving for Jesus' sake no matter how hard this may be or how often it may become necessary.

Outline:

"HOW OFT SHALL MY BROTHER SIN AGAINST ME,
AND I FORGIVE HIM?"

I. What this question reveals.

- A. A false conception of Christian forgiveness;
- B. A false conception of its motivation;
- C. A false conception of its purpose.

II. How this question is to be answered.

- A. Christian forgiveness is a God-given privilege, and not the mere discharge of an obligation.**
- B. Christian forgiveness is always motivated by love which, patterned after the love of God, is inexhaustible and knows no limits;**
- C. Christian forgiveness has as its objective the salvation of the offending brother.**

Conclusion: Luke 17:5. _____

E. J. FRIEDRICH

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**MARK 10:23-31**

The Text and the Day.—“The theme of this day’s teaching is our heavenly citizenship, which requires standards of life and conduct worthy of that high estate but which does not free us from meeting the normal obligations of our earthly citizenship.” (Reed.) The present text may well make use of that setting.

Notes on Meaning.—Vv. 17-22 provide the setting and occasion of the text. However vv. 13-16 with their emphasis on childlike humility and complete dependence on God cannot be ignored.—Note the tenderness and deep concern of Jesus as He must uncover the helplessness of mankind and the naive concepts of men: v. 23, “looked round” (cp. v. 21); v. 24, “children”; v. 27, “looking upon them.”—V. 23: “how hardly” amplified in v. 24: “them that trust in riches,” and finally declared impossible in v. 25.—V. 25: Not merely a figure of speech. The Jewish saying is used to express an impossibility.—V. 26: Disciples are dumbfounded because the salvation of the world appears to be in jeopardy. They knew that it was the part of human nature to trust in mammon.—V. 27: Jesus says it is impossible, but (blessed “but”) it is possible through the saving power of God. Only thus. Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 12:3. Cp. *Formula of Concord*, Article II. Man’s way is closed. The door of grace is open to all.—V. 28: Peter’s unfinished question. Let us not forget that Peter and the others had really broken away not merely from their trade but their service to the world. Peter’s question was not all bad and therefore Jesus answers

with the good first.—Vv. 29-30: God will bless those who have gone the "grace way." Peter is reminded that others will also leave all. The reward is not always *sub specie aeternitatis*, but there are rewards of grace which reach into eternity. "The common joys of life will be multiplied." Note even the persecutions are included among the rewards, though they will not extend into heaven. See Matt. 5:10; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 3:14 and 4:12-16.—V. 31: But there was something dangerous in Peter's question. The way is not finished. Those who have gone through the proper door may still be led astray by a false sense of satisfaction which may well border on smugness.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The text should not be limited to the rich. Both they who have riches and they who aspire to them are in the same danger. 1 Tim. 6:9, 17; Ps. 62:10. In fact the text must not be limited to monetary wealth although the immediate context points to it. There are riches of all kinds: economic, social, intellectual, physical, etc. To trust in the earthly and especially in the "ego" is man's first sin. Trust in these and it is impossible to enter the kingdom.

Problem and Goal.—The text points out the impossibility of entering heaven when men trust in the earthly and that those who have entered the kingdom will share in the true blessings of God, though these may include persecutions. The text warns against the basic sin of self-trust and a reliance on the secular. It continues to warn even those who have put their trust in Him.

Outline:

THE DOOR INTO THE KINGDOM

- I. Barred by man's self-trust.
 - A. The futile trust in possessions.
 - B. Barred for all comers.
- II. Opened by the power of God.
 - A. The open sesame of grace.
 - B. The promised blessings.
 - C. The earnest warning.

ARTHUR C. REPP

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 16:5-12

The Text and the Day.—The Propers for the Day describe the fashion in which the Christian worshiper belongs completely to God because of Christ. The text singles out one phase of the Christian's life in Christ which comprises all the rest—his faith in God as Sustainer both of the physical and spiritual life.

Notes on Meaning.—Context: After the Feeding of the Four Thousand the Savior and the disciples set sail for a locality probably southward of the Sea of Tiberias but outside of Jewish territory (cf. Edersheim, II, p. 67 ff.). Here a delegation of Pharisees and Sadducees came and challenged Jesus' claims by asking for more miracles. This challenge revealed the basic unbelief and godlessness of these people; for they sought to negate the teaching of Christ that He was Savior; note the burden of the remainder of the chapter. This fact filled the Savior's mind also after He had departed for the other side of the Lake and the disciples began to discuss their lack of provisions (Mark 8:14, they had only one loaf).—V. 6: Just as Jesus had done on a previous occasion, He seeks to turn thinking away from physical concerns and petty worry to spiritual concerns and trust in God; John 6:26 ff. The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees was a mixture, an alien intrusion, of flesh into ostensible godliness and true religion. They assumed to trust in God, but actually sought to trust in themselves for their righteousness with God; cf. Gal. 5:9, and the other analogies, Matt. 9:14 ff. Behind seemingly insignificant fretting about provisions could lurk basic lack of trust in God, loss of communion with Him.—V. 7-12: This connection between their worry for provisions and the religion of self-reliance of the Pharisees and Sadducees the Savior Himself now constructs explicitly. He calls their worry "littleness of faith." He reminds them of the great feedings in which He had demonstrated Himself to be the great Provider for life. Then He points out, v. 11, that their chief defect and His chief concern for them was not simply lack of bread, but lack of faith, operating with "the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees," the doctrine of self-righteousness and self-reliance.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The preacher has no time to go into great

detail on the difference between Pharisee and Sadducee. Here they are very much alike in several essentials: their hostility to Jesus, their unbelief of His Saviorhood and Lordship, their self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. — The text is negative; the essential answer to its indictment must be supplied from the hints in vv. 9 and 10, Jesus' self-demonstration as Provider and Savior, as Bread of Life, John 6; in so doing, man's problem of sin and separation from God, and Christ's answer of redemption through the Cross, must be stated explicitly.

Problem and Goal. — The text is rich in analysis of the problem: littleness of faith, which becomes apparent in seemingly harmless worry over provision for daily bread, but which shows itself most bitterly in rejection of Christ as the Way of Life. The goal: to bring the hearer to a working realization that Jesus Christ, His Lord and Savior, guarantees forgiveness of sins and life with God, and thus contrives and protects that relation of the hearer to God by which the hearer can be confident of God's supply for every need.

Illustrations. — The text is rich in practical and homely detail, which should be exploited. The preacher need not go into applications to war and the atomic crisis merely, but should utilize the simple bread-and-butter littleness of faith of his hearer for analogies to the text. — The evil thing about the Pharisees and the Sadducees was that their system was a doctrine; they sought to impart it to others. Describe modern doctrines of self-righteousness; not merely Modernism and Religious Liberalism, but confidence in physical well-being, education, material comforts, which cause men to imagine that they do not need God. — Current fears, of war, sudden death, illness, etc., are a sort of leaven of the Sadducees: we are in danger and discomfort and think there is none to help.

Outline:

LITTLENESS OF FAITH — ITS DANGER AND CURE

I. Littleness of faith.

- A. Shows itself in petty worries about daily life. The disciples; our varieties.
- B. Shows itself in self-reliance for righteousness toward God;

self-righteousness; rejection of Christ. The Pharisees and Sadducees; current varieties.

- C. The danger of littleness of faith: it cuts off from the One Help, God; it turns to fear and death.

II. Christ's help for littleness of faith.

- A. He bids us turn to Him and away from our self-reliance.
- B. He has won life for our souls, through His suffering and death and resurrection. He is the Bread of Life.
- C. He guarantees to provide and protect us physically, as we need Him and as we go about our task in His name.
- D. Let us understand that first we need faith, and His righteousness; then the earthly items follow.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 13:47-50

The Text and the Day.—The emphasis in the Parable of the Dragnet is on the final separation—an appropriate subject for the last Sunday of the church year.

Notes on Meaning.—"The kingdom of heaven": the Church in its present condition.*—"Net": a seine, the largest of nets, sometimes half a mile long. "Leaded below, that it may sweep the bottom of the sea, and supported with corks above, it is carried out so as to enclose a large space of sea; the ends are then brought together, and it, with all it contains, is drawn up upon the shore." The net is the Gospel.*—"The sea": the world. Mark 16:15. Matt. 24:14.—"Of every kind": not only "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," but also good and bad, useful and useless, sham Christians and true Christians.—"When it was full": the last of the elect enclosed.—"They drew to shore":

* ED. NOTE: The interpretation of our esteemed contributor is a frequent one and produces an edifying sermon, particularly if his suggestions are followed. Another interpretation takes the definition of the text more literally: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net." As God works in the world, through the Gospel drawing men to Himself and implanting His life in them, some are outwardly gathered in who inwardly do not possess that life at all, and whose unbelief will be made apparent at Judgment.—The applications are thus very similar, but the basic definitions of the text somewhat different.—R. R. C.

now, at last, the content of the net is exposed, and the bad may be separated from the good. "The 'sheet fish' is the one most often cast away from the haul of the dragnet, as dog fish are by Cape Cod fishermen. Eels and unscaled water animals are 'unclean' to Hebrews (Lev. 11:9-12)." (*Encyclopedia of Bible Life*, Miller.) — "Gathered the good into vessels": "the just." "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness," etc. — "Cast the bad away": the eternal damnation of all sham Christians.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Chrysostom called this "a terrible parable," and Gregory the Great said that it is "one to be feared rather than to be expounded." You are a *Gospel* preacher. Your preaching on this parable will be worse than useless unless it culminates in that message which alone can bring forgiveness to the bad and transform them into such as are good.

Problem and Goal. — To shock the sham Christians out of their security, and to bring them to repentance and faith. To comfort the real Christians with the prospect of a pure Church in glory, and to exhort them to cultivate a genuine inward religion.

Outline:

THE FINAL SEPARATION

1. Don't let the present mixture of real Christians and sham Christians *deceive* you. You may be *in* the Church, yet not *of* the Church. Others may not suspect your hypocrisy, but "the Lord knoweth them that are His." And on the Last Day all that are not His will be exposed and condemned. Seek forgiveness in Christ, and become a genuine Christian.

2. Don't let the present mixture of real Christians and sham Christians *offend* you. The Lord told you that the visible Church would be like that. But He also promised that this condition will not last forever. There will be no hypocrites in heaven. Let it be your chief concern to avoid all sham in your religion and to remain a genuine Christian.

OSWALD RIESS

THANKSGIVING DAY

LUKE 11:17-19

The Text and the Day. — The history of our national Thanksgiving Day is most interesting. On the occasion of the first celebration the blessings were meager. What a lesson for us today

with all our abundance and wealth! The Propers for this day bring emphatic reminders of our obligation to thank God. Our text drives home this lesson most forcibly.

Notes on Meaning.—“Were there not ten cleansed?” V. 17. Christ’s marvelous miracle, the healing of the lepers, must be presented. Note the location: “He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.” Ten lepers—a regular colony in a pathetic condition. These men were not merely banished from all society, but also were doomed to die a terrible death.—All ten had some knowledge of Christ’s power to heal and His willingness to show mercy. They knew that Jesus was passing through this section. They “lifted up their voices” (the hoarse cry of a leper).—Christ had *mercy* on them. He saw and acted. He tested them. He tried their obedience. “Go show yourselves unto the priests” implied positive promise of a cure. Other examples of such tests, Naaman, the centurion, the Syrophoenician woman, etc.—Jesus healed them while they were en route; whether gradually or instantaneously does not matter. The healing furnished evidence of Christ’s omnipotence.

There can be no doubt that the cure was miraculous. The priests had to pronounce the men healed. Thereby they virtually declared Jesus to be the miraculous Healer.

A marvelous blessing such as this miraculous cure surely called for profound gratitude.—Yet only one “returned to give glory to God.” Christ’s: “Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?” is a bitter complaint, an awful indictment. Where are the nine? Are they so occupied with the gracious gift as to forget the gracious Giver? Are they at home with relatives and friends? Have they so soon forgotten their Benefactor? What base ingratitude!

“Save this stranger.” “And he was a Samaritan” implies that others were Jews who knew better. They had been taught.—Samaritans were considered inferior, yes, enemies. The twofold mention of “stranger” and “Samaritan” makes the return of this man stand out in bold relief. A sharp contrast indeed: Ingratitude where you would not expect it. Gratitude where you would least expect it. *One out of ten*—what a disappointing ratio! Christ keenly felt this.

"Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." — What tender dealing with this "stranger!" Christ recognizes gratitude. It fills His heart with joy. — The Savior likely said many things to this man. Here we have the record of His most important statements. What wonderful encouragement! Note the emphasis on *faith*. This contact with Christ must have been of incalculable value for this "stranger."

Preaching Pitfalls. — Thanksgiving Day preaching must not deteriorate into a mere boastful recital of America's greatness and accomplishments. True, we North Americans have experienced wonderful blessings lavishly showered upon us by a gracious God. This should lead us to deep humility and heartfelt gratitude. — We should never overlook the *one* of the ten. A mere scathing denouncement of the nine ingrates will not suffice. The *one* needs encouragement and strengthening.

Preaching Emphasis. — Blessings bestowed should move us to gratitude. God expects gratitude. He has commanded it. — The text furnishes excellent opportunity to stress the great undeserved blessing of health of body and mind. A sound mind in a sound body — what a gracious gift of God! We do not thank God for it as we ought. In this connection emphasize "food and drink, clothing and shoes," etc., by which God preserves our health. Preserving a healthy body is as great a gift of God as healing our body from sickness. — The text certainly exposes the common sin of ingratitude, of which only too often also Christians are guilty. — Christ speaks of faith and its wonderful effect. Let us emphasize faith, faith in Christ, the effect of faith.

Problem and Goal. — The aim of the sermon should be to lead people to true penitence where they have failed to be truly thankful. The chief aim must be to instill an eager desire to "glorify God." Our worshipers should wholeheartedly join the Christian poet and sing:

We'll crowd Thy gates with thankful songs
High as the heavens our voices raise, etc.

Outline:

WHERE ARE THE NINE?

I. What prompted Christ's question?

A. Ten were leprous and were healed, but only one thanked Him.

- B. He expected gratitude and keenly felt this ingratitude.
- C. He wanted to acknowledge the "stranger's" gratitude (by contrast).
- D. He wanted to emphasize and encourage the faith of the Samaritan.

II. What lessons are we to learn from Christ's question?

- A. We should recognize the boundless blessings which God has graciously bestowed upon us (both temporal and spiritual).
- B. We should earnestly examine our attitude toward the Giver and repent of our ingratitude.
- C. We should humbly and fervently thank God.
- D. We should appreciate it that we receive God's gracious blessings by faith in Christ.

J. W. BEHNKEN

TEXTS FOR THE CHURCH YEAR 1950—1951

For the coming Church Year the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY proposes to furnish helps on some of the Eisenach Old Testament Series texts. Contrary to past practice, each issue will bring the treatment of only one of the four or more texts of the month. This treatment will be an extended study of the text by a specialist in the field, which we hope will be stimulating not only for that text, but also for others during the year. We give the list of suggested texts and append to each, not a sermon theme, but the central thought of the Service for the Day according to its Propers. The contributors will furnish material on one of these texts for the month related to the respective theme for the day.

Dec. 3	1 S. in Adv.	Jer. 31:31-34	(The Christian's Faith for the New Church Year)
Dec. 10	2 S. in Adv.	Mal. 4	(Sure Hope and Faith)
Dec. 17	3 S. in Adv.	Is. 40:1-8	(Christian Courage Toward the Judgment)
Dec. 24	4 S. in Adv.	Deut. 18:15-19	(Expectant Joy at the Incarnation)
Dec. 25	Christmas	Is. 9:2-7	(The Savior, True God and Man)
Dec. 31	S. a. Chris.	Is. 63:7-16	(God Our Redeemer)
Jan. 1	N. Y. Day	Ps. 121	(The Lord Our Protector)
Jan. 7	1 S. a. Ep.	Ps. 122	(God's Help for Witness)
Jan. 14	2 S. a. Ep.	Ex. 3:1-6	(Christ's Glory Revealed)
Jan. 21	Sept.	Jer. 9:23, 24	(God's Deliverance from Sin)

Jan. 28	Sex.	Amos 8:11, 12	(Our Helplessness Without God)
Feb. 4	Quinq.	Jer. 8:4-9	(The Repentant Look to Christ)
Feb. 11	Invoc.	Gen. 22:1-14	(Christ's Obedience for Our Salvation)
Feb. 18	Rem.	Ex. 33:17-23	(God's Mercy Our Help)
Feb. 25	Oculi	Jer. 26:1-15	(Accept God's Grace for All of Life)
Mar. 4	Lactare	Is. 52:7-10	(The Glad Supply of God's Grace)
Mar. 11	Judica	Num. 21:4-9	(Life Through Christ)
Mar. 18	Palm S.	Zech. 9:9-13	(The Humble and Powerful Savior)
Mar. 22	M. Th.	Ps. 111	(Forgiveness of Sins in Communion)
Mar. 23	G. Fr.	Ps. 22:1-19	(Christ Died for Us)
Mar. 25	Easter	Ps. 118:14-24	(Our Resurrection in Christ's)
Apr. 1	Quasim.	Gen. 32:21-30	(Hold Fast to Life in Christ)
Apr. 8	Mis. D.	Ps. 23	(Christ the Good Shepherd)
Apr. 15	Jubilare	Is. 40:26-31	(Certainty and Power in the Merciful God)
Apr. 22	Cantate	Ps. 98	(The Christian's Triumphant Praise)
Apr. 29	Rogate	Is. 55:6-11	(The Seeking Heart of the Saved Man)
May 3	Ascension	Ps. 110:1-4	(The Triumphant Christ)
May 6	Exaudi	Ps. 42	(The Redeemer Fills Our Whole Life)
May 13	Pentecost	Ezek. 36:22-28	(God Converts Men to Be His People)
May 20	Trinity	Is. 6:1-8	(God Our Creator, Redeemer, Guide)
May 27	1 S. a. Tr.	Deut. 6:4-13	(Use God's Word for His Sake)
June 3	2 S. a. Tr.	Prov. 9:1-10	(The Life of Christian Prudence)
June 10	3 S. a. Tr.	Is. 12	(God's Care for the Lost)
June 17	4 S. a. Tr.	Is. 65:17-25	(The Life of Trust)
June 24	5 S. a. Tr.	Lam. 3:22-32	(God's Blessing on Christian Witness)
July 1	6 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 1	(The Life of the New Man)
July 8	7 S. a. Tr.	Is. 62:6-12	(The Fruitful Christian Life)
July 15	8 S. a. Tr.	Jer. 23:16-29	(The Importance of True Teaching)
July 22	9 S. a. Tr.	Prov. 16:1-9	(God's Help Against Temptation)
July 29	10 S. a. Tr.	Jer. 7:1-11	(The Grace to Overcome Evil and Serve God)
Aug. 5	11 S. a. Tr.	Dan. 9:15-18	(God's Mercy Our Sole Support)
Aug. 12	12 S. a. Tr.	Is. 29:18-21	(The Glory of the Gospel)
Aug. 19	13 S. a. Tr.	Zech. 7:4-10	(God Fits Us for Work in His Service)
Aug. 26	14 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 50:14-23	(The Fruits of the Spirit in Worship and Behavior)
Sep. 2	15 S. a. Tr.	1 Kings 17:8-16	(God's Unfailing Help)
Sep. 9	16 S. a. Tr.	Job 5:17-26	(God's Help for Every Trial)
Sep. 16	17 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 75:4-7	(Forsake Self-Righteousness)
Sep. 23	18 S. a. Tr.	2 Chron. 1:7-12	(The Supreme Importance of God's Gift of Himself)
Sep. 30	19 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 32:1-7	(The Greatest Gift: Forgiveness)
Oct. 7	20 S. a. Tr.	Prov. 2:1-8	(God Gives Ability for Service)
Oct. 14	21 S. a. Tr.	2 Sam. 7:17-29	(Because of God in Christ Our Life Grows)
Oct. 21	22 S. a. Tr.	Prov. 24:14-20	(Forgiveness Begets Forgiveness)
Oct. 28	23 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 85:8-13	(The Battle of Flesh and Spirit)
Oct. 30	Reform.	Ps. 46	(God Our Sole Help)
Nov. 4	24 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 39:4-13	(God's Healing for the Believer)
Nov. 11	25 S. a. Tr.	Job 14:1-5	(Time and Change Drive to God)
Nov. 18	26 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 126	(God Will Save Through Every Trial)
Nov. 25	27 S. a. Tr.	Is. 35:3-10	(The Deliverance of God's Saints)
Nov. 29	Thanksg.	Ps. 34:1-8	

R. R. C.