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Homiletics: Sermon Study on 1 Tim. 2:1-6 for the Fifth Sunday After Trinity

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HOMILETICS

WEEKLY OUTLINES TO BE RESUMED IN NEXT ISSUE

With the July issue the publication of weekly sermon outlines, suspended for some years in favor of monthly sermon studies or longer *Studien*, will be resumed. The Synodical Conference Epistles, as published in the Concordia memorandum booklet, will be the texts till the end of the church year; thereupon the Second Series of Synodical Conference Gospels.

A ROYAL PRIEST—IN MY WORLD CITIZENSHIP

The Theme for July.—This month concludes the annual theme suggested by Synod's Co-ordinating Council, "The Priesthood of Believers." The Sunday following July 4, the 4th Sunday after Trinity, provides propers on the Christian's witness of behavior in this present world. The 5th Sunday after Trinity is similar, and the text chosen for the study below co-ordinates with the Epistle and Gospel for that Sunday. The other two Sundays of the month stress chiefly the Christian's personal growth.

Sermon Study on 1 Tim. 2:1-6 for the Fifth Sunday After Trinity

The theme for the month of July is "A Royal Priest—in My World Citizenship." This theme focuses our attention on the worldwide scope of the obligations and sympathies of Christians both in political and in spiritual matters. This theme is clearly reflected and developed in the lections for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. The Epistle urges us to be all of one mind, to have compassion one of another, to love as brethren, to be pitiful and to be courteous. The Gospel lesson is the story of the draught of fishes and the call of the disciples to become "fishers of men." The text which was selected for this study likewise exhorts us to be royal priests in our world citizenship.

To appreciate the full power of this text, we should review the background for the First Letter to Timothy. In all probability it was written after Paul had been released from his first Roman im-

prisonment. He had returned to Ephesus and had begun the work of reorganizing and strengthening the congregations there. Then he had been called to Macedonia and had left Timothy, his trusted assistant, to carry on the work in Ephesus until Paul himself could return. But the Macedonian visit dragged on. Paul knew that Timothy would need advice and guidance on several pressing points, and so he wrote him this letter. In Ephesus, Timothy had been especially disturbed by the heretical teachings of Hymenaeus and Alexander and by the necessity of establishing some form of order in the liturgy and in the general congregational life. Apparently the situation called for prompt and vigorous action.

We should also bear in mind that the times were out of joint. The Roman empire was beginning to seethe, and its massive foundation was cracking. Nero was on the throne, and by precept and example he was encouraging a life which sought forgetfulness in sordid pleasures. Paul's own beloved people, the Jews, were becoming increasingly restless. They were antagonizing the Roman rulers by actions which became more bold and flagrant with each passing day. The time of their destruction was at hand. It needed only the refusal to offer up sacrifices to the emperor to bring their Temple, their city, and their nation crashing down upon them. We can feel the tremors and the tensions of that age since we live in one which has much in common with it.

As an alert Christian citizen, Paul had his fingers on the pulse of Church and State. His purpose in this First Letter to Timothy was to set the Church in order and at the same time to make it mindful of the political situation and the obligations which it owed to that field. We should at all times, then, bear in mind the fact that this letter was prompted by a pressing, practical situation. It is not theory. It is practical advice given by the inspired Apostle to meet a real life situation.

The urgency of the need is strongly emphasized in the text. Paul begins by saying *παρακαλῶ*, "I exhort." A few of the early manuscripts, perhaps sensing this note of urgency, changed the indicative to the imperative. The evidence does not justify the introduction of this form into the Textus Receptus, but the imperative does help us to catch the real spirit of the letter.

The particle *οὖν* also carries this same note. It can be under-

stood in two ways. Commentators generally regard it as resumptive, and if it is used in that way, it would seem best to refer it back to 1:18-19. These verses, according to Phillips, repeat Timothy's ordination vow. The οὖν, then, reminds Timothy of the solemn vow which he made at one time. The memory of this vow was to furnish him with the courage and the determination he needed to carry out the difficult job which faced him at Ephesus.

Οὖν can also be taken as an intensifying particle. In the papyri it is frequently used in the sense of "by all means." Mantey finds this usage in the New Testament in about sixty-five places. In that sense it fits nicely into the spirit of this passage, and the first words then would read: "I command that by all means. . . ." To emphasize the importance of what he is about to command, Paul also told Timothy that it must be done *πρῶτον πάντων*. This phrase does not in itself say that the prayer which Paul was about to command must always be the first concern and the first duty of a Christian congregation. It rather means that there were special considerations in that situation which induced Paul to give it first place in his directions to Timothy.

And so in the phrase *παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων* we find clearly outlined the spirit of pressing urgency which characterizes this passage. "I command that by all means, and as the first thing, there be made prayers. . . ." The Church's chief duty in a time of political disturbance is public, congregational prayer. Paul does not blush or hesitate when he calls his people to prayer. He does it rather in the spirit in which youngsters hail the landing of the Marines in the Saturday matinee. Prayer is *the thing* which can help. We note that Paul did not urge the Ephesian Christians to make their influence felt through various community organizations, such as the Kiwanis, the P. T. A., or ward political groups. These are all good, of course, and they all have their place, but Christians make their greatest contribution through the congregational prayer. From this section we gain a dramatic insight into the overwhelming strategic importance of general prayer in meeting a threatening situation. Jeremias calls this congregational prayer the high point of congregational life and the truest expression "*eines lebendigen Gemeindelebens*."

Paul, then, is calling the people to prayer services in much the

same manner that most Protestant denominations assemble their people at regular intervals today. But Paul does not say that this liturgy is to be the basic form. Other passages in the New Testament indicate that various liturgies were in use. We should keep in mind the point that this liturgy was developed to enable a specific congregation or group of congregations to meet a specific need. It was not borrowed *in toto* from another age, nor was it set up as a rigid pattern for later generations of churchgoers to follow.

Paul says that δέησεις, προσευχάς, ἐντεύξεις, εὐχαριστίας, are to be made for all men. Much has been written about the four different words for prayer which Paul uses here. Augustine found a very clear-cut distinction among them, comparing them to the four different prayers used at four different points in the early Communion liturgy. Luther translated "*Bitte, Gebet, Fuerbitte und Danksagung.*" Generally the following distinctions are maintained. Δέησις approximates our word "petition" and here refers to prayer in general. It is also used of secular petitions. Kittel says that δέησις can mean either a general expression of one's piety or a specific prayer which springs from a specific situation. He gives it the latter meaning in this passage. Προσευχή refers to general prayers, but, in contrast to δέησις, it is used only of prayers for religious things. Ἐντεύξις is a striking word. It is derived from ἐν-τυγχάνω and means, etymologically, a falling in with a person, a drawing close so as to enter into familiar communion with him. Ἐντεύξις, hence, implies a free and familiar prayer in which the petitioner draws close to God. We think of Abraham's prayer for Lot and of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel as striking examples of ἐντεύξις. Εὐχαριστία, according to Trench, expresses that which ought never to be absent from any of our devotions, namely, the grateful acknowledgment of past mercies, as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future. It is the highest form of prayer, he says, for only it will continue in heaven and in increased measure when we fully appreciate how much we have to be thankful for. Trench feels that these four words do not contemplate four kinds of prayer, but that rather they permit us to view prayer from four different sides and under four different aspects. He urges us not to stress the differences too strenuously.

Some of the force of ποιῆσθαι is lost in the English, where we

have no choice but to read it as a pure passive, as, incidentally, most commentators do take it. Alford and Winer suggest that it be taken as a genuine middle. This prayer is to be a real manifestation of our genuine self-concern. We are to put our whole beings into the situation for which we are praying. Chrysostom understood it in the middle sense, as is clearly revealed in the following passage in which he commented on the Church's practice of general prayer: πῶς ὑπὲρ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου καὶ βασιλείων, κ.τ.λ., ποιούμεθα τὴν δέησιν.

With the phrase ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων, we pick up one of the chief motifs of this passage. The entire passage emphasizes the universality of the Christian's concern for mankind. We find that thought repeated in ὑπὲρ . . . πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων, πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς γὰρ θεός, εἰς καὶ μεσίτης, ὑπὲρ πάντων. We are taken up to the pinnacle of a high mountain so that we may survey all peoples of all times and feel a sincere love for them being kindled in our hearts. Provincialism, geographical or temporal, has no place in the Christian outlook. The scope of his concern for his fellow man must be as wide as Christ's own love. Though we rightly object to the loose use of the term "Fatherhood of God," we Christians do have an obligation to love all men and to "do good unto all men."

We are to pray for kings and for all that are in authority. This does not limit the universal command of verse one, but merely illustrates its application in a specific field, in this case, government. And, as we shall see, the prayer for kings is designed to benefit all men. This universality of interest is good (absolutely or relatively?) and acceptable in the sight of God, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. The will of God is all-inclusive; ours can be no less. What God wills, we will. God's will is that the human race should be one in every respect, just as He is One, and the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus, is also One. According to the revealed will of God, there is to be no discrimination among men. All are of equal worth, all have the same origin, all should have the same ultimate destination, and therefore the Christian manifests equal concern for all men. Jesus gave Himself a ransom *for all*, and therefore our concern must be *with all*.

What is the object of this petition which we are to address in behalf of all men, of kings and of all that are in authority? Paul answers this question in the second half of verse two: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." That is one aspect of the Christian's concern which Paul here considers.

The Christian is to pray for a concrete and external result, not for an attitude which should be present in his own heart, namely, a quiet and submissive spirit which keeps him from becoming contentious and a source of trouble to the State. Ellicott explains the ἵνα clause as follows: "That through their good government we may enjoy peace. . . . The blessing the powers that be will receive from our prayers will redound to us in outward peace and tranquillity." The blessing which this prayer seeks is the still, quiet life. The direct result expected from this prayer is an increase in the political skill and social acumen of the rulers so that those conditions may more generally prevail which are conducive to the leading of a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Ἡρεμὸς brings to mind the tranquillity which arises from without, and ἡσύχιος brings to mind the tranquillity which arises from within.

Εὐσέβεια καὶ σεμνότης describe fully the life pattern of the ideal citizen. Although both words stem from the same verb, σέβομαι, and although they are frequently used almost interchangeably in profane authors, dictionaries commonly do make an important distinction in their meaning in this passage. Εὐσέβεια is explained as the true reverence toward God, which comes from proper knowledge. Σεμνότης is explained as "a grace and dignity not lent him (the citizen) from the earth, but which he owes to that higher citizenship which is also his; being one who inspires not respect only, but reverence and worship." Tertullian summarized the word in this phrase: "*Ubi metus in Deum, ibi gravitas honesta.*" The crying need in America today is for public and private citizens who are εὐσεβεῖς and σεμνοί in all walks of life. (Cf. "This Is Our Greatest Danger," *Reader's Digest*, January, 1952.)

What is the relationship between the world peace which is the center of discussion in verses one and two and the world salvation which is discussed in vv. 4-6? Mosheim felt that prayer for all, and specially for kings, serves only to maintain the peace without

which the spread of Christianity would be hindered. Most commentators argue that the true point of the universal prayer which is here commanded and the noble concern for all men which this passage reveals is obscured and weakened if this thought is introduced. They say that Paul commands us to pray unselfishly for the betterment of the world in general. Regular repetition of that type of prayer is the major contribution which Christians can make toward world betterment. The $\delta\zeta$ clause, as is frequently the case with relative clauses, may indeed have the sense of ground or reason.

But, in opposition to most commentators, we must say that there is no clear-cut distinction between the physical and the spiritual thoughts of this passage. Paul proceeds smoothly from a discussion of world peace to a discussion of world salvation. Nor should that absence of a clear distinction surprise us. The Lord has but one revealed will, and that is that He would have all men to be saved. Every aspect of His will as it manifests itself in the lives of human beings is directed toward the accomplishment of that goal. The universal concern of the Christian for all men should not be itemized and broken down into concern for their physical well-being and, as a separate item, concern for their spiritual well-being. The two go together. The prayer of vv. 1-2 is a prayer for political well-being, but it should not be divorced in spirit from the grand thoughts which are expressed in vv. 4-6. Because the Christian prays for the highest good for all men, he is also desirous that they should enjoy every other good. But the secondary goods which men enjoy are to contribute in some measure to their being blessed by the highest good. Paul says this same thing in Romans 13. There he tells us that the powers that be are ordained of God and that they are God's ministers to us for good. The end of their governing should be that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty and that we may "cast off the works of darkness and . . . put on the armor of light." Magistrates may do this without ever having a personal religious thought and without ever being aware of the fact that they are serving religious purposes. With eternal souls as the prize, all our prayers must be related in some way to their eternal happiness. Temporal happiness is a highly desirable by-product, but it is only a by-product. Our prayer for world peace,

then, is an integral part of our prayer for world salvation. We disagree with Mosheim, who makes world peace only the means to the end and with the majority of the rest of the commentators who make it an end in itself.

How are these two goals, world peace and world salvation, to be obtained? The world peace which Paul describes can be obtained only through the preaching of the Law and the Gospel and through prayer. These are the same means by which world salvation is to be obtained.

In his *Letters to Young Churches*, Phillips makes an easy transition from verse two to verse four. He translates verse three: "In the sight of God, our Savior, this [i. e., the ἵνα clause of verse two] is undoubtedly the right thing to pray for; for His purpose is that all men should be saved" and should come unto the knowledge of the truth. What is the real relationship between σωθῆναι and εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν? Hofmann says they are identical. Heydenreich says that ἐπίγνωσις is the means by which God would accomplish the salvation of all. Meyer says that ἐπίγνωσις is the goal to which the rescue (σωθῆναι) leads. Robertson points out that the ἐπίγνωσις ἀληθείας or its equivalent is used ten times by Paul in the sense of the full intellectual apprehension of Christianity. He prays for this for his people so that they will not fall prey to the speculations of the Gnostics. It is true that the Church does advance only as it grows in edification. (Cf. Caemmerer, *The Church in the World*.) There is yet another intriguing alternative. Liddell and Scott, Passow, and Moulton and Milligan cite numerous examples from profane authors and from the papyri in which σώζομαι is used in the sense of saving or preserving someone from material and physical harm and danger. Preuschen-Bauer find that it is used in this sense also in the New Testament. This verse could then be understood as an effective drawing together of the themes of world peace and world salvation. The sense might be rendered in this way: God will have all men to be preserved from danger and to be maintained in at least a reasonable degree of security so that He might have the opportunity to bring them to the knowledge of the truth.

We have had occasion to comment on vv. 5-6 already in another connection. These verses give additional reason for the uni-

versality of the Christian's concern, but they also describe for us the oneness of the will of God by which He will have all men to be brought from darkness into the light. V. 6 is one of the clearest statements of the doctrine of the vicarious atonement to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Trench suggests that we lean more heavily on this passage than on the word ὑπὲρ alone, as is customary.

As is so frequently the case in the New Testament, καιρὸς ἰδίος indicates a period of time which began with the fullness of time and which is still continuing today. Christ's death on the Cross is the testimony that the time has come for Him to come unto His own. We are bearing witness today in καιροῖς ἰδίους.

The theme of the Christian's sincere concern for his fellow man might be developed in several ways. One might speak on "Our Three-fold Obligation." 1. Toward God, who will have all men to be saved. 2. Toward the neighbor, who is the object of God's loving will. 3. Toward myself—How do I discharge these obligations? The outline followed in this sermon study might also be used. "Congregational Prayer." 1. Its Nature. 2. Its Scope. 3. Its Basis. 4. Its Object. The relationship between world peace and world salvation might be treated in a very profitable manner on the basis of this text. 1. World Peace—Its Nature and the Means of Achieving It. 2. World Salvation—Its Nature and the Means of Achieving It.

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