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## Homiletics: Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

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## HOMILETICS

### Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

#### NEW YEAR'S DAY

LUKE 12:4-9

#### Introduction: A YEAR WITHOUT FEAR

Is such a thing possible? Are we indulging in a bit of hopeless dreaming when we talk of a year without fear? The text apparently leaves the issue in doubt. On the one hand, Jesus says: "Fear this"; on the other, He says: "Fear not." What does the Savior really mean? He says:

#### I

If you *must* fear, at least fear the right thing.

#### A. There is ground for fear.

##### 1. The insecurity of our economic situation.

Higher taxes, danger of depression, fear of "socialism."

##### 2. The insecurity of the world political situation.

Struggle of democracies with totalitarian states.

##### 3. Physical insecurity.

Threat of destruction by atomic war; atomic weapons race.

These are all causes of fear . . . fear, as Jesus says, of things "that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." But let us not minimize them or brush them aside as imaginary. They are real.

#### B. But these fears do not touch upon our real danger.

##### 1. Behind all these surface problems lies our real problem.

Our economic, political, and physical insecurity comes from trying to build security outside God.

##### 2. If we are going to fear at all, let us at least have a wholesome fear of our real danger. Therefore —

#### C. Satan is the one to fear.

##### 1. He would have us concentrate on the things which can destroy the body.

##### 2. He would have us build our security on our own strength and resources.

## II

Jesus says, however, that it is better not to fear at all.

**A. Is it possible not to fear at all?**

1. Jesus tells us: "Fear not."
2. Would He bid us do the impossible?

**B. How is this possible: to fear not at all?**

1. Trust in God (vv. 6, 7).
  - a. All things are in God's hands, even the smallest creatures (v. 6).
  - b. He cares for them all in love (v. 6).
  - c. He cares for us more than for them (v. 7).
2. Confess Him before men (vv. 8, 9).
  - a. To "confess Him before men" means more than to proclaim Him by word of mouth or to strive for the pure doctrine.
  - b. It means to live in a deep and abiding trust that God is our Father and that all things are in His hands; that nothing can destroy us . . . either in body or in soul . . . when we are in His hands. Such a life of trust is the most effective witness, the highest confession of Him before men. And it is the antidote to fear.

**Conclusion:**

Is a year without fear possible? Yes! But we cannot bring it about by an effort of the will. New Year's resolutions will not do it. Only if we are fervent in prayer, attentive to the Word and Sacrament, is it possible. Only a year spent in God can be a year without fear.

H. C. DUWE

**THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR**

LUKE 13:18-24

We are still not used to writing 1953, still busy making plans for the new year. The plans we know can have little detail. We cannot forecast the future. But we can plan to use the right source of power. We can aim to increase in the life which God would have us live, day by day, for as many days as God will give us. The text sets before us the object of such planning and desire:

## OUR DESIRE FOR THE NEW YEAR—TO GROW IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The kingdom of God is not a visible realm, a collection of people (Luke 17:20). But it is a rule, an invisible rule in people that produces visible results; it is God ruling the heart and directing the will within (cf. Second and Third Petitions). That rule of God in the heart we desire to possess and to grow in, through this year.

### *I. To possess it as a growing thing, v. 19*

A. Growing in the individual. Think of the first coming of the Kingdom, e. g., at Baptism in an infant, in the first glimmerings of faith at conversion. But then the life and power of the Spirit in the heart grows. It becomes the origin of fruits; cf. Mark 4:26-29; or Mark 4:8, 20. These fruits become a blessing also for others, for they are fruits of love. Cf. Gal. 5:22-24. Those we need this new year.

B. Extending over many individuals. We like to use the term "kingdom of God" with reference to people in groups, the "growth of the kingdom of God" with reference to the increase in the numbers of believers. Certainly that is valid, particularly when we use the metaphor for the Church dear to St. Paul, the body of Christ. The growth of the Kingdom, then, means this, that the life of the Spirit should penetrate more and more people, extend from person to person; and that we certainly pray for and desire for our own congregation at work in the community; for the Christian Church throughout the world.

### *II. To possess it as a pervading inner power.*

A. Why another parable? What do vv. 20 and 21 say that 18 and 19 have not said? The text gives a clue to the answer in v. 23, which is not in organic connection with this parable, but nevertheless presents the question which many halt with as they consider the Kingdom. Why are there not more? Shouldn't everybody have the Kingdom and be "in the Kingdom"? Why don't I as an individual see more fruit?

B. The answer to these questions: Don't stop to count noses; but turn your attention to where the Kingdom really works: down inside, pervading and pushing against obstacles, thrusting onward within the person, from person to person, until the Kingdom really

*rules*, really shapes and directs man and men, governs the inner and hidden life. The statistic complex may cause us to look this year for number and outward gains in the Church, for mounting comforts and fruits of the Kingdom within ourselves, and thus we may forget that the Kingdom itself must actually be there, must be at work! As we think of the Kingdom and desire to grow in it, let each look for its power and presence within himself, beginning where he is, v. 24.

C. Hence strive to possess the Kingdom on God's own terms and through His own means. God has to give it, and His Spirit must thrust it onward through the heart. And how shall a man "see the kingdom of God"? Christ's own answer: Gaze upon the Son of Man, lifted up on the Cross that men do not perish, God's own reconciliation and peace, John 3:1-16. Take that Word of the Kingdom, plant it in good ground, that it may bring forth fruit—the Word of the redemption of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Cf. Mark 4:1 ff. Hence our plan: a daily and weekly culture of the Kingdom through Word and Sacrament.

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## THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

MATT. 4:12-17

Epiphany: a showing forth. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, showed forth the Father; cf. John 1:14, or Titus 2:11 ff., Christmas lections. We like to stress the fact that this showing forth was to people which had not yet seen. But those who have once seen can continue to see! This text uses a figure for what we see:

### CHRIST IS THE GREAT LIGHT

I. The light is the kingdom of heaven.

A. The text describes the very beginning of Christ's public ministry. It says where He ministered, but more: what His ministry was. He Himself put it in these words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," v. 17. That is what God wants: that men have that mind and heart in which He and the power of heaven rules. That was the ministry and the business of Jesus: to bring that kingdom to rule there.

B. But this involved a light. The rule of God in the heart was to be palpable; there was to be a change from the past. And so Christ brought a light that made a difference and shone in a dark place.

## II. The light is to come into darkness.

A. Men in darkness are the men without that light of God's life and rule within them. All men are so born, also since that day of Christ; cf. John 3:1-15.

B. The symptoms of this darkness are not pleasant to see. For darkness and death are synonyms, v. 16. This is language borrowed from the Old Testament and used by Isaiah 8:22—9:2. In the early days of the history of God's people they had been brought into contempt through the ravages of war and persecution, and worse—they had turned aside to false answers to the questions of their souls, and the result had been a turning away from God.

C. How similar are the levels of misery and darkness among men today: physical hardship and perplexity in a time of war and the breakdown of civilizations; spiritual turning away to false gods of prosperity or of fear and the forgetting of the true God. And look at the teeming multitudes in darkness!

## III. The coming of the light brings change of heart and mind.

A. The light comes in Jesus Christ. He is the Light. In the Old Testament already men had the hope of His coming and trusted in His work; the rest of Isaiah unfolds the story of this Light, in prophecy.

B. When He came, He made clear that He was the Light of the world, John 1:4; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:36. He was that through His redeeming work, by which He brought men forgiveness of their sins and returned the kingdom of God to their lives, John 3:14-21; 8:28, 29. Thus He brought repentance, the power of the change to the heart; in Him the Kingdom was at hand, in Him the nations could see God's Light, for through His redemptive work life and light could return to men.

C. Hence the proclaiming of that redemptive work continues the Epiphany to men, the saving sight and vision of God at work to forgive and to renew. That is the mission of the Christian Church on the world, to continue the telling of that story and message of

repentance and forgiveness of sins which began already in the pages of the Prophets, Luke 24:25-27, 44-48. As Christians go forth with that message through the power of the Spirit, they shine as lights through which this mighty Epiphany of the Father through Christ is carried on, Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:13-16.

Conclusion: Hence let us cling to the story of the coming of that Light, be ourselves enlightened and renewed, and tell the story on, that the great purpose of the Epiphany come true.

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## THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MATT. 10:32-39

*Introduction:* Especially since World War II began, we have been made to realize that while citizenship confers great blessings, it also entails demanding obligations.

Discipleship, too, gives us blessings of incomparable worth, but at the same time it urges us to be willing to pay the price of discipleship.

Jesus never concealed the cost of continuing in fellowship with Him. When He sent out His first disciples to preach, He frankly told them what the price would be, but urged them to remain faithful in spite of it. This is the burden of our text for today, for here

### CHRIST PREPARES HIS FOLLOWERS TO FACE PERSECUTION

I. He tells them to expect persecution, vv. 34-36.

A. Christ came to bring a sword, not peace, v. 34.

1. Christ is indeed the Prince of Peace.

a. He came into the world to establish peace between man and God, Is. 9:6; 11:6; Luke 2:14.

b. He established peace by His death and resurrection, Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:14-17.

2. But Jesus is here speaking of the effect His coming would have in society.

a. Society would be divided into two camps, Matt. 12:30; 1 Peter 2:6-8.

- b. His coming would give rise to persecution which would be evident even in the circle of the family, vv. 35-36; cf. also Matt. 10:21; Ps. 41:9.

**B. This prediction of Jesus has been and is still being fulfilled.**

**1. In the experience of His followers in past generations.**

- a. Old Testament saints: Daniel; three men in the fiery furnace.
- b. Apostles and early Christians.
- c. Martyrs through the centuries.

**2. Today.**

- a. Persecution in countries dominated by Communism.
- b. Persecution by the unbelieving world about us, Phil. 1:29.
- c. Persecution of Christians by members of their own family.

*Application:* When persecution does come, let us not think it something strange, but rather remember these words of Jesus, 1 Peter 4:12.

*Transition:* Persecution places Christians in a position that calls for decision, either to deny or to confess Christ. In order to urge us to steadfastness in the face of persecution, Christ sets before us the two alternatives and shows us the consequences of each.

**II. He urges them to be steadfast in spite of it.**

**A. They are not to deny Him to escape persecution.**

**1. Some may do that.**

- a. Those who deny Him to escape the cross, v. 38; cf. Peter: Matt. 26:70-74.
- b. Those who deny Him for their love of father, mother, son, or daughter, v. 37.
- c. Those who deny Him to save their life, v. 39.

**2. But they shall be denied by Christ, vv. 33, 37-39.**

- a. By denying Christ they fall from grace, Heb. 10:38; Luke 14:26; 1 John 2:23.
- b. They shall be denied by Christ before His Father, vv. 33, 39 a.; Matt. 7:23; Luke 12:47; Mark 8:38.



**B. They are rather to confess Him in spite of persecution.**

1. The Christian calling demands that we confess Christ even in the face of persecution, v. 33.
  - a. Certainly we are to confess Christ at all times, Rom. 10:10; 1 John 4:15.
  - b. But especially in the face of persecution, Acts 4:19, 20; Paul's steadfastness; Luther; Rom. 8:17.
2. To encourage us to steadfastness in confessing Him, Christ gives us a glorious promise, v. 32; cf. also v. 39 b.; 1 Peter 4:13; Matt. 5:11-12; Rev. 3:5; 2 Tim. 2:11-12 a.; James 1:12.

*Application:* Strengthened by this glorious promise, let us daily confess Christ before the world, for "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. 8:18.

Springfield, Ill.

HENRY J. EGGOLD, JR.

**THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

JOHN 1:35-42

**Introduction:** During His entire ministry, individuals and multitudes came time and again from far and near to see Jesus. However, many who looked upon Jesus were just as poor after they saw Him as before.

In our text we meet a man, Andrew by name, who saw Jesus aright. His seeing Jesus enriched his life beyond measure. This prompts us to ask:

**WHAT DID ANDREW SEE IN JESUS?**

The answer is simple:

- I. He saw in Jesus his own personal Savior
- II. He saw in Jesus the Savior of his brother

**I**

John the Baptist preached and baptized. His voice was heard throughout Judea. Many came from far and near. One day Jesus came to be baptized.

On the following day, John pointed to Jesus and said: "Behold the Lamb of God." As Andrew, a disciple of John, looked up and beheld Jesus, what did he see?

At first glance he saw nothing startling or attractive. He saw a humble man from Galilee whose garments were coarse and whose hands revealed that they were accustomed to hard labor. However, he saw much more.

The words of John, "Behold the Lamb of God," were highly significant. The Jews understood "Lamb of God" to be the name of the Messiah. Their entire system of sacrifices pointed to the "Lamb of God," who was to come in God's time to sacrifice Himself in atonement for the sin of the world. Accordingly, Andrew saw in Jesus the Son of God and his personal Savior from sin.

That Andrew saw this is proved by his subsequent action. Also it is evident from the words he addressed to his brother: "We have found the Messias."

Andrew saw in Jesus his personal Savior. What do we see in Jesus? Many see in Jesus a good man, a teacher, a preacher, a noble example. If that is all we see, then we do not see enough. Because of our sin, we need more than a teacher, preacher, a noble example. We need a Savior. We need the "Lamb of God," who was wounded and bruised for us. (Is. 53:4 ff.)

As we look at Jesus, let us see in Him what Andrew saw: Our personal Savior.

## II

However, Andrew saw in Jesus more than his personal Savior. Andrew saw in Jesus the Savior of his brother Simon Peter. The joy of having found his own personal Savior, and the knowledge that Jesus was the Savior also of his brother, moved Andrew to action. (John 1:41-42.)

Do our hearts burn for joy because we see in Jesus our Savior? Is the salvation which is ours through faith in Jesus worth more to us than anything this world can offer? Do we see in Jesus the Savior of our fellow men? Do we believe that if our fellow men found salvation through faith in Jesus, this would mean as much to them as it does to us? If so, then nothing will keep us from doing what Andrew did. We shall make bringing others to Jesus our "big business" in life.

Have we opportunities to bring others to Jesus? Yes, we have many opportunities. Sunday school. Adult class. Mission offerings. Personal witnessing. However, all these opportunities will mean nothing to us if we do not see in Jesus what Andrew saw.

Conclusion: Andrew saw in Jesus his own personal Savior. He saw in Jesus the Savior of his brother. Friend, what do you see in Jesus?

San Antonio, Tex.

R. WIEDERAENDERS

## THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 4:27-42

On the last Sunday after Epiphany we ponder the Transfiguration. That is certainly Epiphany, showing forth glory. What of this story — poor village, misunderstanding disciples, a Christ who got thirsty and had to be reminded to eat? There is a connection, for the Epiphany today comes only as men

### SPEAK THE WORD OF CHRIST THAT HE IS SAVIOR

I. This speaking is the task of the Epiphany.

A. Christ likens the world to a harvest field that has to be reaped for God, v. 35. Cf. Mark 4:28 ff. That means people who are gathered for eternal life in contrast to the present and physical, v. 36. This also implies that some men are not so gathered; hence the great importance of this harvesting.

B. Christ sends men — disciples and all Christians — to this task of reaping, v. 38; Luke 24:44 ff.; Matt. 28:19, 20.

C. The method of this reaping is to say a message. This message disengages the individual from the world and gathers him with heavenly power into the presence and life of God. The message is that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, v. 42. "The Christ" is He who has been anointed from before the foundation of the world by the heavenly Father to be the Redeemer; He through whom the sins of the world are taken away. Context, vv. 25, 26. This story has to be told: that in Jesus Christ the Savior has actually come, the work of redemption is complete, God and man are reconciled, Text, vv. 40, 41. This message has the power to give faith and life, 1 Pet. 1:22 ff.

## II. Christ Himself suggests the method for speaking this Word.

A. It must be said to people, whether they are friendly or unfriendly, noble or ignoble, v. 27. The Christian can find in Christ and His redemption the love to carry out this purpose.

B. It has to sound like a message directed to the inner life of the person, v. 29, and yet not be forbidding and censorious.

C. It has to be pursued with the intent of a man about a central task—one that not just burns up energy, but that actually produces energy in the speaker, vv. 34, 36; a task that brings results both for the speaker and for those that are helped. Thus the Savior guaranteed the Spirit of God for the task of witnessing, Acts 1:8; cf. 1 Tim. 4:16.

D. Many together labor at the task. The idea is not that there is a separate reaper for each grain; but one plants, and another waters, and a third harvests, vv. 37; 1 Cor. 3:6 ff. Good that it is so: many of us elaborate on the task, the Christian witness reaches people through many media and in many situations, and others pick up from there; the individual Christian is the product of much nurture from many different sources.

E. Ultimately the method is that the Word of the Gospel strikes the hearer as the Word of Christ Himself. In the text He Himself followed up the invitation of the woman who had been at the well, v. 42. But it is that same word of redemption which we ourselves are privileged to take into our lips, for we are ambassadors for Christ and speak as though He spoke, 2 Cor. 5:18 ff.

Conclusion: Thus the Epiphany goes on and on, through all generations, until the end of the harvest. For Christians young and old, great and small, are bringing the Word that Christ is Savior and Lord out to their world, and men are believing, are being harvested for eternal life.

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