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Homiletics: Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

LUKE 10:38-42

Introduction: Sir Walter Scott once said: "If all the books in the world ever held a convention and the Bible suddenly stepped into that great hall, all other books would bow in deepest reverence." God's Word, hearing, studying, digesting it, should have the priority in our lives. Means of grace wherein God reveals Himself to us through Jesus Christ.

FIRST THINGS FIRST (OR: DIVINE PRIORITY)

I

The NEED of Putting God's Word First

A. St. Augustine: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." Martha, a demonstration of this. She put other things first. Result: She was "careful" (anxious), and "troubled." Latter means: "tossed about." Her anxiety and troubled mind showed need of the peace which Jesus alone can supply.

Symptomatic of our age. We are a restless people, tossed about with anxieties, worries, drives. When Maxim Gorky visited America some years ago, he was taken to Coney Island. Looking around at all the means of entertainment, he said: "What a sad people you Americans must be!" What he meant was "jittery." We become overwrought with the circumstances of life, get restless; then as an escape, we develop a mania for diversion. Elaborate. Apart from God we are left at the mercy of our guilt, worries, fears. What a sad price we pay!

B. The verdict of Jesus Himself. "*One thing is needful,*" v. 42. Rebukes Martha, who on account of her work neglected the Gospel, v. 40. Apply to our own day. John 15:5b. Jesus, the Searcher of hearts, *knows*.

II

The ANSWER: Hearing, Studying God's Word

Mary a demonstration of this, v. 39. "Sat at Jesus feet." Not at the feet of the god of mammon. "The only music many Americans

can appreciate is the sound of clinking dollars, and the only art they can understand is the picture of American paper money." Not at the feet of the gods of science, pleasure. Emphasize: "Sat at *Jesus'* feet," of her Savior and Lord. "Heard His Word," v. 39. She made Jesus' seat a pulpit, her own place a pew, the room a chapel where our Savior approached her sinful heart with His Gospel of grace. She "heard," listened, drank it in, became so absorbed in the words of eternal life that she forgot all else. Distinguish between *hearing* and mere receptivity where the Word "goes in at one ear and out of the other." First things first.

- a. Church . . . regular hearing, Luke 11:28. As our Lord chided Martha v. 41, so He is displeased with us when we let secondary things interfere. Elaborate.
- b. Home. . . . The picture of Jesus in this home should be the scene in our own home . . . family gathered about Jesus. Luke 19:5.
- c. Personal lives.

III

The BENEFITS

Jesus Himself called His Word the "good part," v. 42. What are its benefits?

A. Brings us to the knowledge of our sin. Jesus directs our thoughts inward so that we see what is going on within our hearts. Matt. 15:19.

B. Brings us to the knowledge of our Savior. John 3:16; 15:3.

C. Gives us strength for quiet, joyful Christian living. The Gospel, conveying the merits of Jesus and His Cross to us, is a power. Rom. 1:16 (*dynamis*), literally, "dynamite." Sir Wm. Osler, famous scientist, man of poise and power, traced his victorious life to this lifelong habit: "I begin each day with Christ. At night as I lay off my clothes I undress my soul too and lay aside its sins. In the presence of God I lie down to rest and to awaken a free man with a new life."

Omaha, Nebr.

A. C. BURROUGHS

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

MATT. 16:13-20

A successful advertising man (Bruce Barton) was fed up with the descriptions and pictures of Christ which he had heard and seen in Sunday schools and churches from his childhood on. He felt that they did not do Christ justice, that they pictured Him as a weakling who could not inspire people. The real Jesus, he was convinced, had been a strong, manly, inspiring leader. So he wrote a book about Jesus entitled "The Man Nobody Knows."

In this book he says some striking things about Jesus, things which may help us get a clearer view of how Christ, as a human being, must have struck those with whom He came into contact. But the real question he has left unanswered: "Who, what is Jesus?" And no wonder! Flesh and blood cannot reveal the mystery of Jesus' person, but only the Father in heaven. And the Father in heaven did reveal Him over nineteen hundred years ago to His disciples as the Christ, the Son of the living God. As such we for our own persons must learn to know Him.

Theme:

KNOW JESUS OF NAZARETH AS THE CHRIST,
THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!

I

This Is How God Himself Revealed and Still Reveals Him

More than half of Jesus' public ministry was over. During this time He had taught His disciples. He had not instructed them much directly concerning His person. But they had heard His preaching, John 4:32ff.; Matthew 5—7; Luke 4:18ff.; Matt. 9:1ff.; 10:5-42; chaps. 11, 12, 13. They had seen His miracles: John 2:1-11; 2:23; Luke 4:33-41; 5:1-10, and many others.

Jesus wants to know what the disciples have learned concerning His person, but asks what others say about Him. V. 13.

V. 14. The crowds realized that Jesus was an extraordinary person of prophetic stature.

V. 15. "But whom say ye that I am?"

V. 16. A better answer than that given by "men." Peter, in the name of all: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The

Christ, the long-awaited Messiah of prophecy. Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:3; Gen. 49:10; Is. 11:1; Is. 53, and many others.

But not a mere human Messiah, but the Son of the living God: Ps. 2:7; 110:1; Is. 7:14; Luke 1:31, 32, 35; John 3:16, 17; 1:14, and many others.

V. 17. This knowledge had been revealed to Peter by the heavenly Father, not through direct, immediate revelation, but through pondering Jesus' word and contemplating His miracles.

II

This Truth Is the Rock on Which Christ's Church is Built (V. 18)

Roman Catholics and some Protestants would make St. Peter himself, his person, the rock on which the Church is built. How foolish! Mark 14:29, 30; Gal. 2:11-13.

The rock on which the Church is built is the truth that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God, Eph. 2:20-22. The Apostles and Prophets are the foundation of the Church, not as persons, but by virtue of their teaching, which is none other than the truth here confessed by Peter.

Let us know and confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then we also shall be built upon the rock, as members of the Church of Christ, against which all the forces of hell shall not prevail.

III

Knowledge of This Truth Gives Men the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (V. 19)

On the basis of this passage Roman Catholicism claims the keys for St. Peter and for his purported successors, the Roman pontiffs. The keys are interpreted as the power to legislate for the Church and to abrogate legislation. So they interpret the words about binding and loosing. A few Protestants follow them in this interpretation.

But Matt. 18:15-20 Jesus gives the power of loosing and binding to all the Apostles, yes (see v. 17), to the Church itself. And John 20:22, 23 He Himself defines this power as the power to remit and to retain sins.

Wondrous power given unto men, for blessing, for healing, for

salvation! This power is given to all who with St. Peter learn to confess Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So let us learn to know Him by diligent study of God's Word. So let us be built upon the rock of the truth as living stones in His Church. So let us exercise the Office of the Keys for the salvation of our fellow men. *Amen.*

Springfield, Ill.

FRED KRAMER

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

MATT. 16:21-28

Quinquagesima is the last of the three pre-Lenten Sundays. This day is in harmony with the Lenten days before us. During Lent we give the Passion of our Lord a prominent place in our increased preaching schedule. Here at the gateway to the Passion we must be very sure where our true values lie if we are to journey with our Lord throughout Lent.

Our text follows the great confession of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Introit cries out, "Be Thou my strong Rock, for a house of defense to save me." Be Thou my *Salvation!* We all need a Cross-centered Lent. This Gospel text gives us

JESUS' PLAN FOR A PROFITABLE LENT

I

Jesus Says: Let a Man Deny Himself (V. 24)

A. This self-denial is not just to give up some fault or to set aside some special desire or habit, e. g., eating meat, smoking, entertainment.

B. True self-denial must say: "I know not that man — myself. I know only that other man — Christ." We must surrender our own pride and self-esteem and confess: "I am a sinner." Gal. 5: 19-21; Eph. 5:3-7; Titus 2:12.

II

Jesus Says: Let a Man Take Up His Cross (V. 24)

A. Peter did not understand the Cross. Peter at first saw no necessity for the Cross even for Jesus, v. 22. He saw the Cross as an impending tragedy. He *began* to rebuke Jesus.

B. Jesus resisted the Satanic temptation of Peter and reminded Peter that the way of the Cross was God's way, v. 23. V. 21: Jesus *must* go unto Jerusalem. Jesus *must* suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes. Jesus *must* be killed. Jesus *must* be raised again on the third day. Ps. 22; Is. 53.

C. God's way of the Cross must be our way, v. 24. Not as Peter misunderstood, but as Jesus explained. "In those days the extreme suffering which a man might expect from the hostile power of Rome was the literal cross; in ours it is suffering not less acute, really, though perhaps not literally a cross." Matt. 10:38; Mark 10:21; John 8:31, 32; Eph. 5:2; 1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 11:23 ff. St. Paul's sufferings; Christians behind the Iron Curtain. Ridicule and slander at our work.

III

Jesus Says: Follow Me (V. 24)

A. We dare not try to save our life. V. 25.

1. Saving an earthly life centers our hope in this world. V. 26. 1 John 2:15.
2. Saving an earthly life for ourselves means we will lose the heavenly. 2 Tim. 2:12 b.

B. We profit by losing our life for Christ's sake. V. 25.

1. Losing our earthly life centers our hope in Christ.
2. Losing our earthly life means we will find the heavenly one. Rom. 13:13; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 2:6; 2 Tim. 2:12a; 1 John 2:6.
3. Losing our lives for Christ's sake gives us the blessing of His favor. V. 27. When He comes as the Lord of life and death, He takes us who have denied ourselves, taken the cross, and followed Him, *by His grace* into eternal life. Matt. 10:32, 33. Introit: "For Thy name's sake lead me and guide me."

Suggested Hymns: 394, 408, 400, 422, 409.

St. Louis, Mo.

WILLIAM E. GOERSS

INVOCAVIT SUNDAY

JOHN 15:9-17

The unique feature in this pericope, setting it apart from similar sections in the Johannine writings, is the saying on friendship. (Cf. 13:34f.; 1 John 2:7ff.; 3:11, 23; 4:10, 18f.) The text itself yields the theme: YE ARE MY FRIENDS. The theme could be stated topically: FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS. The introduction might call attention to the universal hunger for friendship in an increasingly unfriendly world. God's answer is the community of friendship created by the Lenten Gospel.

I

Friendship with Jesus Is a Gift

The Society of Jesus founded some 400 years ago. By prescribed spiritual exercises Ignatius Loyola proposed to lift his followers into fellowship with Jesus. Many successors. The man today who says: "Jesus is my Ideal. I keep the golden rule. . . ." A little of this man in each of us. Therefore, necessary to note, first of all, that *friendship with Jesus is a gift*. We do not found a society of Jesus. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," v. 16. Call of the Twelve an example (John 1:35-51; 6:70). Has it been any different with us? Illustrate.

II

The Gift of Friendship Means Freedom

Does Jesus, then, force Himself upon friends of His choice? No. *When He makes them His friends, He bestows upon them a wonderful freedom.* V. 15.

A. Slaves we were. A slave takes orders but does not know mind of master. Master plan a mystery. Example of construction worker to whom blueprint is a mystery. Picture of slavery under Law. Man receives commands but remains separated from God who gives them. (Gal. 3.) Law when broken, enslaves further to fear. (Rom. 8:15; Heb. 2:15.)

B. Now He calls us friends. Real friends those with whom we feel completely free. Jesus such a Friend. Free and open with us. (See Gen. 18:17 and Ex. 33:11 for interesting O. T. parallels.) "All things . . . I have made known," v. 15. Revelation of God's love in Christ frees from old bondage. (Gal. 3; Rom. 8:3f.) We

are now free to approach God. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He may give it you," v. 16. (Cf. Heb. 4:13-16.)

III

But the Freedom of Friendship Implies Obedience

A. Freedom destroys itself if not guarded by sense of responsibility. Example of basic American freedoms and illustrations of abuse from daily press. Principle holds good in spiritual sphere. First Corinthians rich in illustrative materials of freedom running wild (e. g., 6:12ff.; 8:9).

B. The freedom of friendship is guarded by the call to obedience. "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you," v. 14. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2:16, 17.) "If" clause does not set up condition for friendship. (See Part I.) Rather, Jesus is describing His friends. "My friends are obedient — free to obey Me in love."

IV

The Obedience of Friendship Is Love

A. Love is the motive for obedience. Vv. 9, 10. Note that love here spoken of is Jesus' love, not ours. Note also that the motive power of Jesus' love pushes and pulls, impels and attracts. His love for us the push; our determination to abide in His love the pull.

B. Love is the expression of obedience. "This is My commandment that ye love one another," v. 12. (Parallels listed in introduction; see also Rom. 13:10.) Does not ask that we love Him. Need He? By our love for one another He will know that we are His friends. *

V

The Love of Friendship Demands Sacrifice

A. The example of Jesus. Vv. 12, 13. Jesus not stating a general truth. (Mother. Soldier.) Recall time of speaking. Clearly means Himself. "Such love is required of you." Natural love selfish, a quest for richer and deeper life. This love marked by sacrifice, a loss of life. (Cf. ch. 10:11-18.)

B. The response of Jesus' friends. We are friends for whom Jesus died. ** We are now in the real society of Jesus. Our love, rooted in Him, is an extension of His love. Has the same object, the

world of sinners. We must love even those whom every natural impulse tells us we cannot even like. Consider the good Samaritan, who sacrificed a bit of himself for his natural enemy and counted it all joy (Luke 10:33-35). Applications to contemporary life will readily suggest themselves.

VI

The Sacrifice of Friendship Portends Joy

A. V. 11. There is the joy of self-sacrifice. Nonsense! Yet Jesus experienced this joy in life of obedient self-sacrifice. V. 10. Those who dare to be like Him experience it as they dedicate obedient lives to Him in service of others.

B. There is the joy of achievement. Jesus experienced this when the sacrifice was completed. (Heb. 12:2.) We experience it when our little sacrifices bear fruit that remains and when our prayers are heard. (V. 16; cf. 16:24.) We shall share it fully when we enter the joy of our Lord in the reunion of all His friends. (Matt. 25: 21, 23.)

The following alternative outline covers much the same ground in the more familiar two-part framework:

YE ARE MY FRIENDS

I. *Through an Act of Love*

- A. Jesus' love has chosen us
- B. His choice rests upon His sacrifice
- C. His sacrifice sets us free

II. *For Acts of Love*

- A. Our love is the goal of His choice
- B. Our love is an extension of His sacrifice
- C. Our love sets a limit to our freedom

NOTES

* If we really abide in His love, if His love is, as it were, the element in which we live, then that love of His must seek expression through us. His command to love is thus not a new law to which we are enslaved, unless by law we understand the very law of our being in Him.

** St. Paul says: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. 5:8. That does not contradict what is said here about Jesus' death for His friends. For Jesus is the Friend of sinners, and it is just by His death that He won for sinners the right to be the friends of God.

Burlington, Colo.

WALTER BARTLING