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Homiletics: Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

REMINISCERE

JOHN 15:18-25

To be willing to suffer for the sake of convictions is one mark of strength of character. Daniel 3; Acts 4:19; Heb. 11:25. A distortion of the quality of being willing to suffer for the sake of convictions occurs when the suffering is endured for misguided or worthless convictions or when the suffering is endured not for conviction's sake, but for martyrdom's sake.

Every Christian is a martyr in the sense that in seeking the good of the world he is misunderstood, maligned, and persecuted. The ill will he encounters from the world is not always of equal vehemence nor of one kind, but it always occurs. Consequently a Christian is always faced with the problem of responding to ill will as he encounters it from the world.

The central thought of the text is: Every Christian may expect to encounter ill will and hostility from the world, even as his Lord did, since he calls Jesus Lord and follows Him in ways that show he is not of the world.

RESPONDING TO ILL WILL

I. We can respond to ill will with understanding.

A. We know why ill will comes, whether it be veiled or open, subtle or violent, v. 19.

1. Ill will comes to Christians from the "world" (in distinction to "one another," v. 17) because people do not see God as He is, v. 21b. Knowing this helps us endure, James 5:10.
2. Ill will comes because Christians show men their sin, vv. 19, 20; cf. John 3:19-21.
3. Ill will may become violent. Cf. ch. 16:2. It ought not be unlooked for, therefore it ought not overwhelm us. Matt. 10:21, 22.

B. We are to take ill will calmly and serenely. Cf. Matt. 5:11.

1. Jesus tells us it will come, v. 20.
2. Witness what happened to Him, v. 18.
3. In the measure that we recall and portray Christ to those of the world, we shall be persecuted, v. 20.

C. Beware if the world loves you, v. 19a.

1. Popularity with the world is the kiss of death for a Christian; yet do not seek its ill will, v. 19.
2. Love by the world for you indicates a need for repentance, 2 Cor. 6:14; Amos 3:3.
3. Our lives must be a testimony against sin; yet they must give no just cause for hatred. Cf. pride, self-righteousness, callousness. 1 John 2:15, 16; 1 Peter 2:19-25.
4. The world reacted to Christ and the Father with hatred without cause, vv. 24, 25.

II. We can respond to ill will with constructive action.

A. Remember that ill will comes to us for Jesus' sake, v. 21.

1. Take comfort in your Savior, who endured much for you. Because He suffered much for our sakes, we are forgiven. Rom. 8:17; 1 Peter 3:17, 18.
2. His response to ill will sets the pattern also for our response, 1 Peter 2:23; 1 Cor. 4:12, 13.
3. Encountering ill will can draw you closer to your Savior. Such tribulation will serve to strengthen you, 1 Peter 4:1 and 12-16.

B. Respond to ill will with forgiveness, vv. 20, 25. Cf. Jesus' example.

1. The Christian never returns evil for evil but rather blessing for evil, 1 Peter 3:8, 9.
2. The object in forgiving is not self-gratification or self-imposed martyrdom, but the expressing of God's love in an intelligible way to testify and to reclaim, Luke 17:3, 4.
3. Having been forgiven much, we cannot but forgive, Col. 3:12, 13.

C. Respond to ill will with love, v. 20. Cf. Jesus' example.

1. God loved you even when you showed ill will toward Him, Eph. 2:4, 5.
2. Let love be the motive in your deeds of kindness and help in the face of ill will, 1 Cor. 13:3.
3. Warning, testimony, pleading, kindness—all must follow from the response awakened in your heart by the love God has shown to you, Acts 5:27-41.

Conclusion:

The Christian responds to the ill will and persecution of the world with steadfastness because he understands its necessity and with forgiveness and love because God has, in like circumstances, shown love to Him.

Portland, Oreg.

OMAR STUENKEL

OCULI**MARK 10:35-45**

The problem of the human heart is the supreme problem of mankind. Physicians can heal many wounds and are able to control many diseases. On the civic level it is possible to "clean up" the government. Nations can to some extent abolish injustice and wrong.

Who, however, can control man's heart? It is the source of all human ills. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21).

THE MASTER OF OUR HEARTS**I. *We are not the masters of our hearts*, vv. 35-41.**

- A. James and John were leading disciples. They are mentioned after Peter and Andrew in the enumeration, Matt. 10:2. John is the disciple whom Jesus loved and is noted for humility and gentleness, John 19:26.
- B. Yet even these great and holy men are typical of all of mankind. Their hearts, like ours, were full of wild, strange, and evil emotions.
- C. James and John came to Jesus with their *own desire*, v. 35. Their desire and request was:

1. Foolish and proud, vv. 36, 37. This was just before Christ's Passion, and they were thinking of themselves.
 2. Thoughtless, vv. 38-40. They did not realize what they were saying. The request was entirely out of place. God alone can decide such matters.
- D. Yet the hearts of the other disciples were just as evil. The ten were too ready to criticize their brethren, v. 41. No human being is the real master of his heart. We are all weak and confused.

So is the human heart, even in the best of men! The hearts of all are by nature confused, weak, and misdirected. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

We have all sinned. There are foolish and evil thoughts in all hearts. Some of the evil in our hearts can be outwardly suppressed. Much of this evil finally issues in sinful talk and words.

II. *Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, alone can rule our hearts,*
vv. 42-45.

- A. Jesus is the Redeemer, the Ransom, v. 45. He paid the full penalty on the cross for these sins of the heart and for all sins (John 1:29).
- B. Jesus is Master and Lord. He alone can give us the true values for living. He called the disciples together, v. 42. He alone could save them from themselves, from Satan, and from all evil. He alone could calm their wild emotions and set their hearts aright.
- C. Jesus is the Almighty Lord. He alone can give the necessary grace and strength to think and live rightly. His Word strengthens us so that we can follow His example, vv. 43, 44. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

If the world my heart entices,
 On the broad and easy road
 With its mirth and luring vices,
 Let me think upon the load

Thou didst carry and endure,
 That I flee all thoughts impure,
 Banishing each wild emotion,
 Calm and blest in my devotion.
 (Hymn 144: v.3)

There is only one answer to the evil which always confronts us and presses in upon our inmost life, our heart: Jesus is the Savior, who forgives, and the Lord, who leads and strengthens us. He alone is the Master of our hearts.

Most people see only a part of life. They consider only the outward aspects—work and play, politics and government, etc. But it is the inner life of the individual which is most important. How about your heart? There is only one answer to man's greatest question. There is only one solution to his greatest need. Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls, is the only Master of our hearts!

Chicago, Ill.

JAMES G. MANZ

LAETARE

JOHN 17:1-16

A great moment, as the monitor ticks off the seconds. Observers, technicians, tense for the great moment—the release of atomic energy. *A greater moment* when God said, "Let there be." This is the *greatest moment*—the Son of God to release *Himself* (explain). The energy effecting salvation. Most stupendous, momentous hour, "Father, the hour is come."

THE GREAT MOMENT

I. For Him

II. For them

It is His hour, we are spectators. Salvation entirely in the hands of God. The *moment* of sacrifice to commence, v. 1. His glory: He who is holy is made unholy by assuming unholiness—sin. Final phases of saving man rushing to completion. Though inglorious, love glorifies Him. The Son glorifies the Father, 1b. His glory is holiness, justice over sin. His glory, love, *now* revealed by sacrifice. *God's great moment.*

The *moment* further explained, v. 2. Fate of all men hangs on

Him. God's omnipotence and grace meet here. *This moment* — into the hands of His Son.

For what purpose? Give "eternal life," vv. 2b, 3. The *great moment* for man, know Christ, know God. Ch. 1:18; 14:6. *Every moment a great moment* for a Christian, knows God. Summary of His work, vv. 6, 7. "Now."

In retrospect, finished the purpose for which He had come. Let there be progress which *moment* demands, also in God's kingdom. Appl. Christ was prompt, punctual, in time with God, v. 4, "finished." We are never through, can never be satisfied with ourselves by ourselves. This *moment* never comes, except in Christ. Never up to the minute and moment. Sinners!

"Now." V. 5. Let us to the business, anxious to consummate. Good Friday, a glorification, leading to victory.

As of the *moment*, His ministry complete, v. 8, in the disciples, Expression of faith in ch. 16:30, the reward and goal of His ministry. The assurance needed that He could NOW proceed. The HOUR come, in which He would do them the greatest service, for them to see, though at the *moment* to their great horror. Appl.

Therefore He offers the prayer for them in their hearing, v. 9.

II

This is the hour for Him, it is also the hour for them, v. 10. How much He loved, trusted His disciples! "Mine." Weak, bungling, and inglorious, yet He was glorified in them. Why? They believed, "Thou art the Christ. . . ." Ch. 16:30. We also belong. Great mistakes of unbelief from *this hour* on. *Their hour* had come, not the glory road. They needed to be prayed for.

By anticipation, His work complete. By anticipation He is concerned for them, v. 11. The things that have kept them, also the things that will keep them, v. 12.

It was His *great moment*, but their *great moment* concerned Him, too. One look at Peter NOW, LATER, "O Father, keep them."

A *great moment* for you, when you have denied, slacked, slipped, and slogged. Sever yourself from name of God. In *that moment* Christ is praying. A *great moment*, in a double way. In dreadful hours He would keep us happy in the faith, v. 13; ch. 16:30.

The same word and name of God that unites them with God also

separates them from the world, v. 14. "I have given . . ." the consequences would follow. The WORD separates. When? In *what moment* are you separate? What separates you? Anything at all? Their hour for leaving has not yet come, vv. 15, 16. Many *great moments* yet to live. Between the *last moment* and now lies many a sermon, class, sickbed, etc. Appl.

To make *every moment* a *great moment*, remember the statement, "They are not of the world." Too often the *greatest moment* we think is to be a man of this world. How *many moments* so fretted and frittered away. For all *wasted moments* He wasted none.

The *greatest moment*? When Christ said, "The hour is come." God's *greatest hour*, greater than creation — salvation. His hour — for us. "It is finished," the wasted moments of millions, canceled in a moment. *That moment* fast approaching. For the Son of God — for Us.

Schaumburg, Ill.

F. A. HERTWIG, JR.

JUDICA

MATTHEW 23:34-39

The Introit with its initial cry: "Judge me, O God!" Whether expressed or not, it is the cry of all the living. The self-righteous so cry as a matter of pride in being able to stand on self because of merit. The sinner so cries in despair at the knowledge of certain doom because of sin. The careless so cry in their flippancy as they would have God judge however He will, it cannot greatly affect them. Faith so cries but only from under the wing of Christ's mercy whither is has been gathered by the call of His grace.

CHRIST'S CALL SPURNED IS JUDGMENT

I. Christ calls through the preachers He sends.

1. It should be noted that with the preached Word Christ is sending His various messengers to this day.
2. It should be noted that He sends them in love to call people from their sins to trust in Him.
3. They who refuse to hear them spurn Christ's offered love and are serpents and a brood of vipers, following in the footsteps of their father, the devil, the archserpent, whose brood they are.

II. Christ judges by taking His preached Word away.

1. Turning a deaf ear is the modern counterpart of the killing and crucifying and scourging and persecuting.
2. It is solely man's doing and therefore his personal responsibility.
3. It in itself is Christ's judgment because the very doing of these things is the filling of the cup of wrath. What men *will* not have, they *cannot* have.
4. They involve themselves in the guilt of all rejection from the beginning of the world because they refuse to learn from it and pride themselves besides on the fact that they would not do what they are doing in very deed (cf. vv. 29, 30).

III. Christ lamenting the lost means that Christ would still have the lost to be saved.

1. Whatever you have been or done (v. 37), Christ loves you still, as the simple and even tearful repetition, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," clearly shows.
2. He wants you in order that He might save you from the fate which you are preparing for yourself. Under His wing, whatever the judgment, it will not strike you. Here it should be shown that being under His wing is trusting in Him; the full judgment of God's wrath actually did strike, but it struck Him under whose shelter you are by faith; and while it killed the hen, the gathered brood escaped. Here the full appeal of grace, the Cross, its bloody suffering and protective, vicarious death.
3. Reject His offered love, and your house will be left to you desolate, as desolate as Calvary and as waste as hell.
4. Accept His offered love by blessing Him as having come in the name of the Lord, and you will see Him again as He comes to gather His own unto Himself forever, when every tongue shall confess as every knee bows: Jesus is the Christ, the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Minneapolis, Minn.

WILLIAM A. BUEGE

PALM SUNDAY

JOHN 12:1-11

Contrast the Hosannas of the first Palm Sunday with the "Crucify Him" of the first Good Friday. How may we avoid following in those footsteps of fickleness and disloyalty? By placing ourselves

AT THE FEET OF JESUS

I. *What does it mean to be at the feet of Jesus?*

From a study of the various people in our text we learn that to be at the feet of Jesus means

A. That we honor Jesus as did Lazarus, who had been blessed by Jesus, v. 1. Lazarus had learned to know that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. By his presence at the table with Jesus, Lazarus confessed that Jesus is his Lord, who had blessed him. Also Lazarus honored Jesus by influencing many to believe on Jesus, v. 11.

Like Lazarus, we have been blessed by Jesus in the same manner. With Lazarus we know Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. With Lazarus let us honor Jesus by being in the company of Jesus' friends — in church services, in church meetings, in the company we keep — thereby confessing Him as our Lord and King.

B. That we serve Jesus as did Martha and those who gave the supper in Bethany. It was an act of love and gratitude. They put their possessions, abilities, and time into the service of the Lord.

All those today who serve Jesus in the work of the Church — missions, teaching program, administration — join Martha at the feet of Jesus.

C. Above all, that we worship Jesus as our crucified Redeemer, as did Mary. Mary surpassed Martha and the others in dedicating her possessions to Jesus. She surpassed Lazarus in honoring Jesus, for her act of anointing the feet of Jesus and wiping His feet with her hair was one of complete consecration to Jesus.

Above all, she acted because she had understood what Jesus had said about His suffering and death. Of her act Jesus could say, vv. 7, 8.

When we with Mary worship Jesus as our Crucified Redeemer and see in His death and burial the price of our redemption, then with Mary we are at the feet of Jesus.

II. *Whom will we find at the feet of Jesus?*

A. Evidently we shall not find people like the chief priests, who sought to kill Lazarus, who in their ungodliness would do anything to maintain their earthly positions of power and honor.

Likewise today all those who value material wealth and power and position more than all else will never congregate at the feet of Jesus.

B. We shall not find the curious at the feet of Jesus, v. 9. These came to see Jesus and Lazarus out of curiosity but never honored nor served nor worshiped Him.

We must beware lest our coming to see Jesus is only curiosity, only a desire to go along with the crowd.

C. We shall not find the hypocrite at the feet of Jesus. Judas was indeed one of Jesus' disciples, but we do not find him at the feet of Jesus. Actually he was a thief, v. 6, who was also a hypocrite, who sought to cover up his thievery with a show of love for the poor.

In Judas we have a strong warning to avoid all hypocrisy in our practice of religion and all deception in our religious life. No hypocrite is ever at the feet of Jesus.

All these we shall not find at the feet of Jesus,

D. But we shall find all those who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Lazarus, Martha, and especially Mary. They believed in Him. In the realization of their sinfulness they turned to Jesus. Mary is outstanding in her faith because she believed that Jesus would die and be buried for her salvation. Her faith is a living faith that shows its life by its actions. — Faith in Jesus, a living faith, will place us likewise at the feet of Jesus.

On this Palm Sunday I ask you to place yourselves at the feet of Jesus.

Glendale, Mo.

LEWIS C. NIEMOELLER