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Homiletics: Outlines on Hannover Epistles

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HOMILETICS

SAINT MARK THE EVANGELIST'S DAY

April 25, 1954

EPHESIANS 4:7-16

[Mark (full name: John Mark) was not one of the twelve Apostles. He is known rather for his association with Peter and Paul and for the second Gospel, which bears his name. Not so well known is the fact that Mark was very likely brought to the Savior by Peter, who calls Mark his "son" (1 Peter 5:13), and that it was at his house that the disciples were gathered when Peter was released from prison by an angel and came to them (Acts 12:5-17). Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (RSV, Col. 4:10) and went with Barnabas and Paul from Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria (Acts 12:25). These three, Paul, Barnabas, and Mark, also set out together on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-5). But for some reason Mark turned back at Perga in Asia Minor. The reason must have been more than a slight misunderstanding, because Paul later refused to take Mark along on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:38). Instead, Mark and Barnabas went to Cyprus on a missionary journey of their own. There we lose sight of Mark for about 10 years. Next we hear of him in Rome, with Paul again (Col. 4:10; Philem. 24). Apparently there was a complete reconciliation between Mark and Paul. In fact, the two men drew so close together that Paul later called for Mark by name during his second imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11). As for the rest of his life, tradition tells us that Mark founded the church in Alexandria, Egypt, and that he met a martyr's death there. It is said that his bones were removed to Venice, Italy, and there put into the Cathedral of St. Mark.]

The Church has set aside April 25 in its calendar as the day on which to set forth the memory of St. Mark, that we may follow his faith and good works (Augsburg Confession, Article XXI). As we review his life, the one feature which perhaps stands out in sharpest relief is his *spiritual growth* from the time of his conversion to the time when he took his place among the Evangelists to give us one of the only four accounts we have of the life and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and finally to his death by martyrdom. The Epistle for today is from the pen of St. Paul, who knew Mark very intimately. It is highly appropriate for this day, because it speaks of *spiritual life and growth*.

GROWING UP SPIRITUALLY

I

Spiritual Life and Growth Is God's Work in Us

St. Mark was not always a faithful follower of the Lord. He was once not a *saint*, but a lost and condemned *sinner*. It has been said that every saint has a "past" and that every sinner has a "future." The grace of God, which brings salvation (2 Tim. 2:11), kindled the flame of saving faith also in the heart of John Mark. Apparently he was won for the Savior by the efforts of Peter (1 Peter 5:13), but it was *God* who did the converting. It was *God's* gift of grace, "the gift of *Christ*," which made and kept Mark a child of God (Eph. 4:7). An evangelist is a gift of *God* (v. 11).

Indeed, after he became a child of God, Mark still had his moments of sinful weakness. There is some reason to believe that he was the unnamed young man who took to his heels in flight in Gethsemane (Mark 14: 51, 52). And then, years later, there was his failure to continue with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. In view of Paul's judgment (Acts 15:38), this may be set down as the result of sinful weakness on the part of Mark. But the *grace of God* turned his weakness into such strength that still later we see him doing what he could for Paul, the prisoner in Rome, and finally suffering a martyr's death for the Christ!

Application: No Christian is a self-made man. He is a new creation of *God* in Christ Jesus, our crucified, resurrected, and ascended Lord (2 Cor. 5:17). "By the grace of *God* I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). That very thought is comforting and strengthening and should keep us both humble and thankful!

II

Spiritual Growth Leads to Spiritual Maturity

Both Peter and Paul, close companions and co-workers of Mark, were not satisfied to see growth in spiritual things level off or come to a halt. 1 Peter 2:2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may *grow* thereby!" Eph. 4:14, 15: "That we henceforth be no more children . . . but . . . may *grow* up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ!" See also Heb. 5:14:

"Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

A normal person does not remain a child all his life. It is to be feared, however, that in spiritual matters many never do "grow up." They halt at about the confirmation-age level. And when in later years they come face to face with larger spiritual problem situations, they become confused, like children suddenly projected into an adult world. They take to their heels when Christ or His Church seems to be in trouble. Like some of the disciples of old, they walk no more with the Savior (John 6:66). Like Mark, they turn back when they come to their Perga and have a taste of the rigors of the way.

Application: Like Mark, we need to go further, to grow up to spiritual maturity. He established a "fine record as missionary and evangelist" (Reed). He risked adverse public opinion and possible danger to stand by St. Paul in a Roman prison. In other ways also he labored faithfully for the Gospel, proving himself to be spiritually a *man*, a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Let us not fail to pray God for the grace and strength to "*grow up* into . . . Christ!" — that we "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like *men*, be strong!" (1 Cor. 16:13.)

III

Spiritual Growth Is Reflected in Christian Life

Shakespeare has one of his characters say: "They do not love that do not show their love." That applies here also. Growth in love to God, faith in the Savior, and knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures lets itself be seen. Paul speaks of that at greater length in the verses following the text (17-32). But it is also included in the picture of the Church in the text: each part contributes to the whole according to ability.

Application: "Just as the human body increases in stature and strength in the measure that its members function properly, so also the body of Christ will thrive 'according to the effectual working

of every part' (v. 16). The Church is not to be a loosely constituted organism, but one 'fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.' Not only the pastors, but the laymen as well are to build the Church (Eph. 2:10). "To this end Christ would bring every Christian to a realization and fruitful exercise of his particular gifts" (*Concordia Pulpit*, 1934, p. 283). Cf. also the text, vv. 12, 13: the goal to strive for. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Almighty God, by whose power and Spirit sinners are made saints and the weak made to grow strong in faith and love, we beseech Thee of Thy mercy to give us grace, that as Thy children we be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, but may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; through the same, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

Pitcairn, Pa.

LUTHER POELLOT

Outlines on Hannover Epistles

JUDICA

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

Are you spoiling? You cannot tell what I mean by that question. Apples in a basket may appear just as you do this morning, neatly arranged, and yet there may be among them a slow rot spoiling all.

Soldiers may be in rank just as you are this morning, neatly arranged, and yet be on the way to spoil the enemy.

This text, in the King James version, uses the word *spoil* in both senses (v. 8, v. 15).

SPOILING CHRISTIANS

You are spoiling Christians—Not being spoiled, God grant, but spoiling!¹

¹ This cannot wait until after Easter. If there is present now within you the weakness that will cause the attendance of worshipers to decay after Easter, now is the time to cull it. Basketed in the midst of Lent, the message of Judica Sun-

In his Letter to the Colossians St. Paul wrote against those who taught that *Christians were not complete in Christ*. In our day's religious atmosphere, cautious of doing too much, his message reminds us that *Christ must be complete in the Christian*. We can be spoiled by failing to heed either of his warnings.

The message of this text then cries out

I

Don't Be Spoiled Christians

A. By adding requirements for the Christian's salvation vv. 8-10.

The Colossian heresy claimed to be a philosophy of higher value and truth than Christianity; it insisted on certain ceremonial laws; it exaggerated the powers of angels as intermediaries; it advocated ascetic rules.

Forms of this heresy in our day make sins of things that the law does not condemn or require deeds for a salvation God gives to believers without works.

An artist would resent an amateur's attempt to add new or different colors to his masterpiece. All additions to the masterpiece of salvation (v. 8) are not after the true artist, Christ. We are completely saved in Him (v. 10).

A sculptor would insist that no whittler take jackknife in hand to improve his statue. So Christ (v. 11). The artist Christ, by His circumcision and active obedience, has carved out the new man. Jesus is the Master Artist — a carving made without hands, yet we are perfect!

Even more indignant would be the artist who sees the statue itself take chisel in hand to make changes in his figure. Permit no other, not even yourself, to spoil the beauty of your salvation or to make of you a spoiled Christian.

day comes to us, "Judge me, O God!" "Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me!" (Cf. Gradual.) The Collect: "We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and *preserved* evermore both in body and soul."

We dare not sit passively to watch our Lord's passion, thinking to rise to action after He shall rise. "Now is Christ risen!" Now the blood of Christ should purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God!" (Epistle.)

What of your faith? Is it of the pure color of Christ's shed blood, or have you added brush marks of your own? Are we carved by the power of Christ, or do we think that we are whittling at a great rate? Oh—ye are complete in Him! "Whosoever believeth. . . ." "If He speaks the truth, will ye not believe Him?" (Gospel.)

B. By subtracting from the accomplishments of Christ for our salvation (vv. 12-15).

The Colossian heresy limited the greatness and authority of Christ and the sufficiency of His redemption.

Today's heresy is doubt, insecurity, gloom, worry in the Christian.

The greatest compliment that can be paid an artist is that his figures fairly *live!* By Baptism you are buried and risen with Christ. The sin that killed you has been killed—you live! Before God you live!

What of doubt then? To doubt your salvation is to say that Christ couldn't quite make His characters live. This is the four-day heresy of the friends of Lazarus—and if it abides in your heart, lo! you are spoiling.

You don't feel so sure? You creature of the chisel and brush of the Great Artist! Who is he that condemneth? Who is the critic?

Christ won a notable victory for you, nailing your guilt to His cross. We are invited to the triumphant celebration. Instead of wedding guests, shall we be skeletons at the feast? Could the Son of God merely think He was victorious? "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9:20.)

The doubter, the worrier, the trembler takes his sin down from the Cross and places it in the way again. Then all is spoiled. Lord, we believe! Help Thou our unbelief!

II

But Be Spoiling Christians!

"Only believe" is not all—it is "enough," but not all—of the Christian life. Be a spoiling Christian—look to God who spoiled principalities and powers (v. 15).

A. By plundering temptation of the virtue it took from us.²

Here we mean to strip, to sack, to plunder. God stripped the enemy of His power; now we should spoil the same enemy. More than a mere resistance to temptation. It must be a grasping of what Jowett has called "the privilege of temptation: we can sack it and transfer the wealth of its strength into the treasury of our own will."³

We must spoil the spoiler! That is the reaction to vv. 6, 7.

B. By abounding in the faith for more of the Jesus it has given us! (Cf. ch. 1:27 and 2:2 in the original.)

Now everything has been said except the most important: How shall we be unspoiled? How shall we spoil?

The United States Public Health Service stated that food spoiling usually results from the flouting of two basic rules. The first: "Food handlers should have clean hands." Bring your soiled hands, bring your doubting hearts, bring your unwilling wills to God who in Jesus will cleanse them, ground them, motivate them. He will stablish you in the faith. The unspoiled, clean hands of the Christian are the weapons that will despoil the enemy! The second rule is: "There must be no delay in properly storing food. Food stored promptly in an inexpensive icebox is less likely to spoil than food placed in the most elaborate refrigerator after a few hours' exposure."⁴

Beloved, here the preventative, the strength! Now, with no

² The King James version: "having spoiled principalities and powers." The participle has been rendered so from the time of the *Vulgate*, "a rendering" says the *Pulpit Commentary*, "which is not less a violation of St. Paul's usage than of grammatical rule." See the same participle in ch. 3:9, and the noun in 2:11 — "put off," "in putting off." Here "having stripped." Cf. *Pulpit Commentary* on the entire exegesis of this verse, which interprets principalities and powers in the sense of the holy angels, as also v. 10, and in the sense of showing Himself to be above all angels.

³ "That is life's true victory, not to ignore dangers, but to despoil them. It is possible to take the strength of a peril and enlist it in our own resources." *The Best of John Henry Jowett* (Harper & Brothers, N. Y., 1948), p. 152.

Bishop Charles Henry Brent wrote, "It is quite inadequate to beat off temptation. We must spoil the strong man and possess ourselves of his goods. Freedom in the life of temptation is achieved by meeting every enticement to sin with an upward rise toward virtue." *A Bishop Brent Day-Book* (The Forward Movement, Cincinnati, 1949), p. 7.

⁴ *Time Magazine*, July 27, 1953, p. 65.

delay, place yourself in Christ Jesus. "Abound in the faith as ye have been taught." The simple means of grace—used now and faithfully—will preserve you blameless and send you out triumphing in Christ unspoiled and spoiling! ". . . with thanksgiving," brethren! With thanksgiving!

Alternate outline:

THE COMPLETE CHRISTIAN

I. Be Complete in Christ

II. Let Christ Be Complete in You

Silver Spring, Md.

GEORGE W. HOYER

PALM SUNDAY

1 TIMOTHY 1:12-17

Christ entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in conscious fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy concerning the coming of Zion's King. The wave of emotion sweeping over the great throng was based on false, misunderstood, ill-defined Messianic hopes and found expression in the chant of "Hosannah to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 21). The fickleness of the crowd is demonstrated on Good Friday. Palm Sunday is Passion Sunday—the gateway to Holy Week. Important for us all to see clearly Christ's purpose in His coming. This journey began when Jesus said: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem . . ." (Luke 18:31-33). This text is a beautifully comprehensive and appropriate statement for this day. On the basis of this text let every Christian say

"WHEN I BEHOLD THE WONDROUS CROSS"

I

I Think of the Greatness of My Sin and Come to a Genuine Sorrow over My Sin

A. V. 15: "sinners, of whom I am chief." *Protos*, public enemy number one, the first on a long list of other sinners, the worst specimen of the whole genus *hamartolos*, more evil, despicable, damnable than Pilate, or Herod, or whomever you may name.—V. 13: "blasphemer, persecutor, injurious." Cf. Acts 8:1-3; 9:1, 13, 14; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Acts 26:11.

B. The experience of every Christian when he contemplates the cross. It is the most powerful reminder of the reality, enormity, and damnableness of sin. If sin were of small moment or ignored by an indulgent God, it is inconceivable that He would have subjected His beloved Son to the shame and torment of the Cross. Thus the Cross with terrific impact brings to the individual sinner the greatness of his *own* sins. Never mind the sins of others. It is *my* sins that concern me, burden, crush, condemn me, and drive me to despair. Cf. David: Ps. 32:3, 4; 51:3, 4; the Publican: Luke 18:13; Paul: Rom. 7:24; Luther: "Mea culpa!" *Lutheran Hymnal*: 140:3, 4; 143:3; 153:3; 172:4.

C. Genuine contrition. Profound sorrow over sin. Ps. 130:1-3; Luke 22:62.

Transition: However, as I behold the wondrous Cross, I think not only of the greatness of my sin, but also and especially

II

I See the Amazing Grace of God in Christ Jesus and Cling to It in Firm Trust

A. The grace of God is the diapason sounding through all of Paul's preaching.

1. It was responsible for the fact that "Christ Jesus came into the world to *save* sinners" (v. 15). Think of the sin of all the sinners in the world, sins against God and man, crimes and outrages crying to high heaven (v. 13). Yet (v. 14): "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant." Cf. Rom. 5:20; Luther (*Galatians*, St. Louis, IX, 369): "Because Christ is the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, He is no longer an innocent person without sin, no longer the Son of God, born of a virgin, but a sinner, who bears the sins of Paul, a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent man; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, an adulterer and murderer, causing the Gentiles to blaspheme the Lord; in short, Christ has and bears in His body all sins of all men." Compare and make use of such precious Gospel gems as the following: Titus 2:11; Matt. 1:21; 20:28; Luke 19:10; John 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

2. It converted Paul. V. 13b: "I obtained mercy." What a con-

version! He who hated Christ and His Church with consuming hatred and violence that knew no bounds became a humble Christian. Because he had acted in sincere conviction that he was "doing God a service," he had not sinned against the Holy Ghost (ignorantly in unbelief"); therefore, his conversion possible. A "model" conversion (v. 16): "for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first. . . ." *Protos* again. "If the number one sinner may become the number one saint, then, surely, I, too, may obtain mercy."

B. Thus the Cross of Christ preaches the purest Gospel. Through it the Holy Spirit leads me to faith. V. 14: "faith . . . which is in Christ Jesus." V. 15: "Faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." Cf. John 3:14, 15; Gal. 2:20.

Transition: The cross leads me to sincere sorrow over sin and to firm faith in the grace of God in Christ. This change produces a tremendous result in my life. When I behold the wondrous Cross

III

I Acknowledge My Holy Obligation to Christ to Devote Myself to Him in Undying Gratitude and Faithful Service

A. Paul: "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Text, v. 14: "Love which is in Christ Jesus." V. 12: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord." V. 17 is a beautiful doxology. See Paul's Epistles for frequent expressions of adoring wonder and thankful praise of God's grace in Christ. Compare Lenten hymns for scores of expressions of gratitude.

B. V. 12: "Who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (*diakonia*). Cf. Rom. 1:14: "debtor." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 17. Luther, Expl. of II Art.: "I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me . . . that I may be His own . . . and serve Him."

N.B. Palm Sunday is Confirmation day in many of our churches. It will be easy and highly appropriate to give this grand text a confirmation slant. After all, the confirmand's personal relation to Christ is what matters.

Sheboygan, Wis.

H. J. A. BOUMAN

MAUNDY THURSDAY

1 COR. 10:14-21

Introduction: Spirit of worship centers on place of Communion in present health of Christianity. Remember the Church of another day: no church buildings, no elaborate organization or schools. Yet in an age of disintegration it had power. How? Not based upon human brilliance or courage. A secret power. A gift from above. Observe a small group gathered before dawn around the chalice and paten. Listen to the words, "Take, eat. . . ." By torchlight in a Roman cave we discover the secret.

"COMMUNION MEANS FELLOWSHIP"

I

World Has Fellowship with Powers of Evil

A. Tendency toward idolatry (v. 14).

Christians of every age set in midst of the world. Influence of world exerts pressure toward idolatry. Sin is always a forgetting of God and an absolutizing of man. Creatures forgetting the Creator. Exaltation of man. Philosopher calls us to the "habitual vision of greatness" (Whitehead). Educators desire to aid us in adapting selves to life. Industrialist reminds us of a productive system which transforms raw ore into automobiles in three days and seven hours. This nourishing of our souls with a flood of gadgets in which we seek the meaning of life is the modern idolatry.

B. Worship of the world brings us into fellowship with it (v. 20). Participation with the world creates a communion and fellowship with it. Like to think we have the ability to take the good from the world and subtract the evil. Feel we can control the evil. Alluding to the sacrificial feasts, Paul says that worship has the effect of bringing the worshiper into communion with the unseen. Thus the one who sacrifices to demons (v. 20) is in fellowship with them. So the human tragedy is that the world is separated from the God who created it. Entire race under the dominion of, in the grip of, sin. Willingly the world has given itself over to sin, but became trapped. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34).

C. Christian must choose fellowship with world or with God (v. 21).

The world moves toward destruction. In turning its back on God, its very will was conquered by evil; now man willingly obeys the demons of hell. Present signs of self-destructive madness. Earthbound humanity. Can be cynical about it, reject it, curse it; but like an animal, is caught. But in Christ God has given us release. To the Christian comes the possibility for freedom. Under God he must now choose either continued participation with world or a complete sharing with God.

II

Christian Knows a New Fellowship

A. Fellowship with God (v. 16).

God counters man's attack of hate with love. Flesh and lust scream into the very face of God. Yet in Christ He works with His grace. In Him He created a new humanity. The great about-face. Fellowship with world is shattered as He establishes a new fellowship with Himself. Change from sin to righteousness, from law to grace, from death in world to life in God. Change is not trivial, not simply psychological. But cosmic in dimension. Brought into new relationship of faith. A new bond of trust in God.

B. Fellowship with other Christians (v. 17).

The Spirit which binds us in vertical relationship with God binds us in horizontal relationship with other Christians. Involves more than doing good to other men; rather, loving them in Christ. Not affinity or affection, but love even where these are initially absent. Common communion of all Christians because of a common Lord. Even as they receive fragments of one loaf, they are bound both to Christ and to one another. N. B. ἐκ . . . μετέχομεν: partake from, the mutual common eating which is shared among all.

III

This New Fellowship Is Strengthened Through the Sacrament

A. Communion unites us with Cross of Christ (v. 16).

The Upper Room, Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha. The separation of the events in time is brief. Striking that only in shadow

of the Cross does He give the Sacrament. In Holy Communion the divine drama of redemption comes to us. We become part of the story. Are lifted above the time and space which separates us from the Cross. Recognize our participation in the evil which drove Him to the Cross. Our sins of decency. We become the Judases, the Peters, the young Marks; it is our fear, our pride, our greed that place Him there. But we also become part of His reconciliation. Here God reveals more than His majesty and holiness. Here He pours out His Love. God's desire to save kindles the action in which He is riven by the agony of death. His purpose: our redemption. In Communion the reality of the Cross, its eternal effect, is brought to us.

B. Communion continues to unite our fellowship (v.17).

Communion is never the remembering of something far off. The work of the Cross was completed years ago, but is never distant. Not a memorial to a dead Lord. Body died. Blood was exhausted. But affirmation of Church is that Jesus is alive! Not our going back in spirit. Rather His coming to us. His living Presence is the focal point of our unity and fellowship. He heals us, forgives us, grants us the power to love one another. Again He is at the head of table. Still offering us part of the one loaf, His body, and the cup of blessing, His very blood. Such was the Source of power in the Early Church; so it is in ours!

St. Louis, Missouri

DAVID S. SCHULLER

GOOD FRIDAY

1 JOHN 2:1-6

For sinful men there is no more necessary knowledge than the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whose death upon the cross the world is commemorating today. Sinners need to know Him because He came into the world to save sinners, and all His life on earth, His death upon the cross, His resurrection, and all His activity in His glorified state stand in the most intimate relation to the salvation of sinners. Let us use also this Good Friday meditation to learn to know Him better.

SINNER, LEARN TO KNOW JESUS

I

As the Sacrifice for the Sins of the Whole World

A. The world has its own notions about the cause of Jesus' death by crucifixion. To many he is a martyr to His ideals, as there have been others in the history of the world.

B. Scripture has a far different explanation. V. 2: "He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "Propitiation," a word from the sacrificial language of the Old Testament. Modern translators render it "propitiatory sacrifice," "atoning sacrifice," "expiation." It tells us that Christ died, not as a martyr to an ideal, but as a sacrifice for sin, as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

This is the doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, as found, e. g., in Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

Christ is the atoning Sacrifice for the sins of the *whole world*. No one is excepted. Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, Judas, and every other sinner of deepest dye — all are redeemed by the death of Christ.

II

As the Sacrifice for Your Own Sins in Particular

Being "the Propitiation" for the sins of "the whole world," Jesus surely is, as St. John says, "the Propitiation for *our* sins." Do not let Satan tell you that for some reason or other you are not included in the number of those for whom Christ died. It is an insult to Christ to believe that His atoning sacrifice could not cover your sins. Do Him the honor to believe that He included you personally, and every one of your sins, in His sacrifice, and accept Him in faith as your Savior.

Through faith in Him you will find forgiveness of all your sins, peace with God, and life everlasting (John 3:16; Rom. 5:1).

III

As Your Advocate with the Father when in Weakness You Sin

V. 1. A Christian should not sin. He has received the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:5), and should live as a child of God. Yet he does

sin in weakness. These sins often trouble children of God. Satan torments them with the thought that God will cast them off because of these sins.

V. 2. Jesus, the Advocate, the lawyer, who is called to our side to plead our case with the Father. The Advocate is acceptable as a pleader, because He as a person is righteous, and His plea is acceptable, because He Himself is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, not only for original sin and the sins which we may have committed before conversion, but also for those which after our conversion we commit in weakness.

How important that we, who daily sin in weakness, should know Jesus as our Advocate with the Father.

IV

As Your Source of Strength to Overcome Sin and to Do God's Commandments

A. To overcome sin, and to do God's commandments, that is the ideal for which everyone who has come to know Christ by faith must strive. V. 1.

1. By the keeping of God's commandments a Christian may be known. Vv. 3 and 5.

2. Disobedience is a sign of unbelief. V. 4.

3. Who is sufficient for these things? Of ourselves we cannot shun sin nor obey God's commandments, but "to them that believe on His name He giveth power to become the sons of God," not in name only, but in deed, and this sonship shows itself by putting off the old man and putting on the new.

Thus does Jesus free sinners, not only from the guilt and punishment, but also from the power and dominion of sin.

Truly, there is nothing more necessary for sinners than to know Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Springfield, Ill.

FRED KRAMER

EASTER

REVELATION 5

Introduction: On this day we usually speak of the events of the first Easter. The Gospel tells the story of the empty tomb, the risen Lord, the happenings among the Apostles and disciples.

Today's text is somewhat different. This text, taken from the last book of the Bible, transports us to heaven. We are given a vision of the risen Christ and God, His Father, who together rule in the heavens.

We know how it appears on earth on Easter. Now let us lift up our eyes to heaven!

THE HEAVENLY VICTOR

I

The Heavenly Victor Controls and Reveals the Destiny of His Church (vv. 1-7)

A. God Himself holds the sealed book. A divine bequest has been prepared (v. 1).

B. Christ is also in heaven (v. 5). Here He is spoken of in terms of Old Testament prophecy. See Gen. 49:8-12; Is. 11:1.

C. It is clear that Christ had to fight a great battle (v. 6). He is said to be "a Lamb as it had been slain." We are reminded of His sacrificial death for the sins of the world. He still bears the marks of the cross. Easter is a glorious festival, yet it follows closely upon Good Friday.

D. Christ alone was worthy to open the testament (Vv. 2 and 7 and 6:1). Christ controls and reveals the destiny of His Church. He bears the marks of the cross, yet He ever lives, with the symbols of strength and life. Seven horns, seven eyes (v. 6).

E. Let us remember this truth today. We hail our eternal Victor over sin, death, and hell. Easter does not commemorate a victory whose effects have long been past and forgotten. Christ lives now, and rules the destiny of His Church and the world. Christians should never lose heart because there is still evil on the earth. Christ was Victor on the first Easter, He is now and ever shall be Lord and Ruler, together with His Father in heaven.

II

*The Heavenly Victor Has Redeemed His People
and Has Made Them Kings and Priests (vv. 8-10)*

A. Christ has finished His work of redemption. The angels and saints in heaven and on earth praise His work in their song.

B. The heavenly Victor has a real kingdom and countless subjects. Among those who worship the Lord are many who originally were subjects of another master, members of another kingdom. It was Jesus who conquered Satan, their tyrannical and evil master, and made them "kings and priests" in His kingdom (v. 10). Christ's subjects are from every nation upon earth (v. 9 and 1 Peter 2:9).

C. Easter does not merely observe a great cosmic victory, far removed from any earthly people or meaning. The results of this victory are offered to you! You, too, share in this victory, or you still may share in it. He would have all in His kingdom!

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head.
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

Lutheran Hymnal 193:5

The heavenly glory of Easter is to be reflected in the joyful hearts of the redeemed.

III

*The Heavenly Victor Will Someday Receive Universal
Homage (vv. 11-14)*

A. The angels in heaven now worship the Lord and render due homage (vv. 11, 12).

B. Someday every creature on earth will have to acknowledge God, and His Son, the Lamb of God (vv. 13, 14). Christ lives and rules forever with His Father.

C. Worship is the highest privilege of the Christian upon earth. When we praise and worship the true God, we join "with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven."

D. Someday we hope to join in the heavenly praise. Let us now lift up our hearts while we are still on earth, and worship our Lord who rules with His Father in the heavens!

Jesus lives! Let all rejoice,
 Praise Him, ransomed ones of earth.
 Praise Him in a nobler song,
 Cherubim of heavenly birth.
 Praise the Victor-King, whose sway,
 Sin and death and hell obey—*Lutheran Hymnal* 188:2

Conclusion: Less than 10 years ago we conquered our enemies in World War II. Now a new enemy has arisen. Yet, is there anyone who thinks that defeat of the Communists would solve our problems and right the real injustices on the earth?

The victory which we hail on Easter is that eternal victory of God over the devil and all that he does. Christ conquered our real enemies: Satan, death, and hell.

Hail Him, then, on this great day of His victory! He is *the* heavenly Victor, and by God's grace He is *our* heavenly Victor.

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JAMES G. MANZ

QUASIMODOGENITI (The First Sunday after Easter)

2 COR. 5:1-10

Introduction: The word *desire* cannot be separated from any part of our lives. This is easily illustrated and demonstrated in the realm of the physical. Life is largely a process of learning to recognize which things should be desired most. The realization of these desires has a profound effect upon all of our life.

In the afterglow of Easter, with its thrilling message of a living and triumphant Savior and Lord, with its strong emphasis upon the sure and certain things of eternal value which it offers and furnishes us, our text leads us to think about those high desires and longings which should pervade our thinking at this time. Broad in its scope, marvelous in its detail, it leads us to speak on the topic:

OUR MOST GLORIOUS EASTER DESIRE

I

The Lofty Nature of This Glorious Desire

A. To realize the fullness of eternal life in every detail (v. 4c). The idea of "mortality being swallowed up of life" is common in

Paul's writings. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:54. Phillips puts it this way: "We want our transitory life to be absorbed into the Life that is eternal."

B. To experience the permanence of the heavenly assurance which is ours (vv. 1 and 2).

Make the application direct and personal by showing that this desire is not always as concrete and real in us as it should be. Demonstrate from the words of the Apostle how brightly this desire should glow in us when we consider the transitory nature of our lives, when affliction and trial distresses us. No desire of our life should be stimulated more than this. Show how meditation upon the Word of God can lead to an accentuation of this desire. It can readily and impressively be shown that there is not much of this desire manifest round about us.

II

The Positive Certainty of Its Full Realization

A. It is the consequence of certain knowledge (v. 1). Christianity is not based on hearsay, experience, speculation, opinion, but upon knowledge. Easter, Christ's work, God's Word has furnished us with that knowledge.

B. It is the consequence of the Spirit's work in us (v. 5). We have advance guarantee that we shall truly see the full realization of this desire. Here is an opportunity to demonstrate the practical power of the Spirit's work in us. The Spirit makes it so real to our hearts that we feel within our hearts that we already have it in its fulfillment.

C. It is based upon an inner confidence (vv. 6 and 8). The glorious nature of glowing Easter faith can be illustrated by the Gospel lesson for the day, by the journey of disciples to Emmaus and by the certainty to which the Apostles give expression in their Epistles.

Application and Illustration could well speak of the concrete nature of each detail of this full realization to show that we have it already here on earth.

III

The Noble Expression of This Desire in Our Lives

A. Keep this desire alive (vv. 1 and 2). Paul's desire and the desire of these Corinthians was a living desire. He talked about it. Discussed it. Emphasized it. Glorified it.

What can be done to keep this desire alive and vigorous?

B. Keep faith alive (v. 7).

This desire and its effect depend largely upon the nature and strength of our faith.

C. Labor to be accepted (v. 9).

We live our lives as though the desire were already realized. Strong application of this desire in all areas of life can easily be made.

Conclusion: What are the strongest desires of your life? How are they asserting themselves? Has the celebration of Easter stimulated in you an appreciation that this desire so glorious in its nature and power should overpower your life? So each day will be an Easter Day in our lives.

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