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Homiletics: Studies on the Swedish Gospels

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HOMILETICS

Studies on the Swedish Gospels

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 2:23—3:5

The Text and Its Central Thought.—To appreciate the full impact of the two Sabbath scenes related in the text, we must keep in mind what led up to them. The Pharisees and scribes severely criticized Jesus because contrary to their ordinances He ate and drank with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16). Next they took Jesus to task because He and His disciples did not fast according to their ordinances (Mark 2:18). For both of these charges Jesus had an answer which they could not gainsay (Mark 2:17, 19). Then Jesus told two parables in which He likened their false righteousness based upon the keeping of their ordinances, first, unto an old garment; second, unto an old wineskin (Mark 2:21, 22).

Now follow the two Sabbath scenes. *Scene 1* (Mark 2:23-28). On a Sabbath, while Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grain field, the disciples plucked ears of grain, threshed them by rubbing them between the palms of their hands, and ate the grain. When the Pharisees and scribes saw that, they "knew for sure" that they had just cause to accuse and condemn Jesus. As though their every sense of propriety had been outraged, they cried out: "See, why are they doing on the Sabbath what is not lawful?" It was not unlawful for travelers to pluck and eat the grain which grew along a path (Deut. 23:25). However, because the disciples did it on a Sabbath, this act "involved, according to rabbinic law, the double sin of plucking, which was regarded equivalent to reaping, and rubbing in the hands, which was considered to be a species of threshing." In His reply Jesus asked: "Did you never read what David did when he had need and was hungry?" (1 Sam. 21.) When David was hungry, he entered the Tabernacle and requested that the priest give him and his companions of the bread which, according to Ceremonial Law, was to be eaten by the priests only. This was the weight of the Lord's argument: "David's hunger sets aside even a divine regulation—shall not the hunger of the disciples set aside mere rabbinical notions?" David was the great hero of the Pharisees and scribes. Hence they were ready to drop the matter for the time being. Now Jesus takes the offensive. He lays down the divine principle: "The Sabbath came to be on account of man

and not man on account of the Sabbath." The meaning is clear. God instituted the Sabbath for man's good and not for his hurt. The Pharisees and scribes, however, through their ordinances, had lost sight of this fact. Finally Jesus said, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." The entire Ceremonial Law, including the Sabbath Commandment, was given to prepare God's people for the coming Messiah. With His fulfillment of this law, with His death for the sins of the people, with His resurrection, the Ceremonial Law, having attained its purpose, was destined to fall away as no longer needed. "The new covenant without ceremonies would supersede the old with its ceremonies." *Scene 2* (Mark 3:1-5). On another Sabbath (not the same) Jesus entered a synagog. In this synagog there was a man with a "withered hand." It is quite possible that the Pharisees and scribes arranged for this man to be present. They secretly watched to see what Jesus would do. If Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath, they felt that they then would have just cause to condemn Him. Jesus read their wicked thoughts. Calmly He asked the man with the withered hand to arise and stand. Everyone in the synagog felt the dramatic tension of the scene. Instead of healing the man immediately, Jesus confronted the Pharisees and scribes with this twofold question, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do harm? to save life or to kill?" Thus, with one bold thrust, Jesus confronts His enemies with the real issue. The question was not, "Is it lawful to work?" as the Pharisees supposed. Rather the question was, "Is it lawful to do good?" The enemies refused to answer. Their silence was significant. The tension now became terrific. Jesus looked with righteous anger at His enemies—anger mingled with compassion. All in the synagog wondered what would happen next. When the tension became almost unbearable, Jesus said quietly to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch out thy hand." And when he did so, his hand was completely healed.

The Day and Its Theme.—The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity has "The Liberty of the Christian" for its theme. The Epistle (Eph. 4:1-6) emphasizes true Christian living. The Gospel (Luke 14:1-11) teaches that true Christian living begins, not with obedience to human ordinances but in the exercise of Christian liberty in doing good, in showing love to those in need, in being humble. The Introit calls those blessed who in the exercise of their Christian liberty "walk in the Law of the Lord." The Gradual, in my opinion, adds little to the development of the theme of the day. The Collect petitions God to grant His people grace eager to exercise their Christian liberty by withstanding the

temptations of the devil and by following God with pure hearts and minds. The accent of *Parish Activities* for the month, "My Church," fits beautifully into the pattern. The purpose and program of the church is not to hammer away at the dead letter of the law, but to proclaim the Gospel, which makes men free—free, not to do as they please but free to pour out their love for the Savior in devotion to Him and in service to the neighbor.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—To teach the correct understanding of the Lord's Sabbath Commandment.

Sins to Be Diagnosed and Remedied.—A false understanding of God's Law, through abetting unbelief, leads away from Jesus, consequently, to hell.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—Point out how Jesus as our Savior did not destroy the Law of God but redeemed us from its curse, so that by faith in Him we delight in keeping its real demands.

Illustrations.—Use the dramatic incidents and scenes found in the text.

Outline

Many are of the opinion that our Sunday is the same as the Old Testament Sabbath. That opinion is incorrect. However, because it is so common and because when followed through it always leads to confusion and error, it is important that we, through the study of God's Word, attain

The Correct Understanding of the Lord's Sabbath

I. The wrong understanding of the Pharisees and scribes.

- A. Their wrong understanding *revealed* itself in the criticism hurled against Jesus.
- B. Their wrong understanding *originated* in their rejection of Jesus.
- C. To this day all who reject Jesus as their Savior, in part or entirely, inevitably misunderstand God's Law.

II. The correct explanation of Jesus.

- A. The Sabbath was commanded to help man, not to hurt him.
- B. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath Commandment was given to prepare God's people for the coming Messiah.
- C. To this day men understand the full meaning and purpose of God's Law only after they accept Jesus as their Savior.

San Antonio, Tex.

ROLAND WIEDERAENDERS

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 10:17-27

The Text and Its Central Thought.—As Jesus was going forth "into the way" which would bring Him to the Cross, a young man of wealth and position, presumably a ruler of the local synagog, came running to Jesus, knelt down, and addressed to Him the important question, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (V. 17.) After a minor correction Jesus said in substance: "If you wish to enter eternal life, keep the Commandments." He listed them in detail, especially those of the Second Table (v. 19). Sincerely, but with a degree of pride, the young man answered, "All these things have I observed from my youth" (v. 20). This is a typical American answer, "God, I have done my best." Our communities and our churches have a goodly number of such respectable sinners. They maintain good homes. They have never been caught in a shady deal. They have never been fined more than \$1.00 for parking overtime or \$10.00 and costs for speeding. They have been baptized, confirmed, and they go to church. But the demands of God's Law are much higher. They require absolute perfection.

In vain we call old notions fudge
 And bend our conscience to our dealing.
 The Ten Commandments will not budge,
 And stealing will continue stealing.

Jesus, beholding the young man, loved him and wanted to save his soul. So He said, "One thing thou lackest." For the purpose of approaching perfection via the Law there was one test he could make: "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven . . . then come and follow Me" (v. 21). Christ was not teaching the purchase of salvation in exchange for poverty. He was giving specific, loving counsel to lay bare the man's deep inner need. But the man failed the test. He went away from Christ sorrowful because he had great possessions (v. 22). While outwardly his life was respectable, inwardly he was at odds with God. His heart belonged not to God but to gold.

Watching the man leave and then turning with a sad heart to His disciples, Jesus said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God. . . . It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." In astonishment the disciples asked: "Who, then, can be saved?" Jesus replied that things impossible to man—for an Ethiopian cannot

change his skin nor a leopard his spots—are possible with God (v.27). It is not the possession of material goods, whether great or small, but the attitude of a man's heart that destroys his soul. And it is the converting power of God alone that can change our worldly, proud, conceited hearts, convince us that we are beggars before God, kindle faith in the Savior and thus change us into new creatures, who say:

In Christ alone my trust I place,
Come boldly to Thy throne of grace
And there commune with Thee.
Salvation sure, O Lord, is mine,
And all unworthy, I am Thine,
For Jesus died for me.

The Day and Its Theme.—The Gospel for this Sunday speaks of perfect love being the great requirement of God's Law. The Epistle, recognizing our imperfection in love, offers us the grace of God in Christ, our Substitute, through whose merits we are counted blameless. The Introit and Collect for the day plead for those who wait on the Lord and implore God's mercy for our imperfections. The Gradual extols the blessings of God's house, wherein we find the peace of Christ. "My Church" in the *Parish Activities* theme for the month. . . . The Swedish lectionary suggests "The Way of Perfection" as the theme for this text. We can by no means love God perfectly. But Jesus did so, and in Him we do so also. This is the central message of my church.

Goal and Purpose of Sermon.—To convince the hearer of his utter inability to meet the demands of God's perfection, that outward respectability is merely a subterfuge, and to move him to a deeper trust in the merits of Christ, who by His atonement made the impossibility of salvation possible for all.

Sins to Be Diagnosed.—We cannot serve God and mammon. Jesus said, "He that is not with Me is against Me."—No armored car with valuables has ever followed a coffin out to the cemetery. . . . Earthly goods and pleasures and comforts are blessings of God, but worshiping them instead of God is the idolatry from which we need release and cleansing. Our lack of love toward God, our lovelessness in church and home, our guilt and imperfections all down the line . . . these must be unmasked, painful though it be, and confessed by us so that Christ's saving grace can enter.

Explicit Gospel.—Jesus loved the young ruler. For Him, too, He suffered and died. Likewise, His heart goes out to us. There is no

substitute for Him, the Pearl of Great Price, the garments of His blood and righteousness. Why walk away from Him or follow Him at a distance when, no matter what your sin, He invites: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Looking to Him, God will save us even though our conscience accuse us, our faith falter, and doubt disturb us. With God all things are possible.

Illustrations.— Instead of comparing ourselves with others, we should examine ourselves in the light of God's holiness. A lighted match may look good in a dark cellar, but in the light of the sun it looks pathetic. . . . A copy of an oil painting sold for \$100 in New York. Later art critics pronounced it an authentic original, and its price shot up to \$150,000. Once the Holy Spirit has torn the spiritual blindness from our eyes and we behold Jesus as our Savior and Lord, His value will skyrocket as the one authentic Treasure.

Outline

Encounter with Jesus

- I. The preliminary skirmish
 - A. The young man is concerned about his soul.
 - B. He protests his "perfection."
- II. The real encounter
 - A. Jesus unmask his imperfection to reveal his deep inner lack.
 - B. He offers Himself as the one perfect way.
- III. The final outcome
 - A. The young ruler walked away from Christ, the only lasting Treasure.
 - B. We likewise have encountered Christ. Facing ourselves squarely, we find that, humanly speaking, our salvation is impossible.
 - C. But with God all things are possible. This is the saving encounter with Jesus, to which the Holy Spirit is ever trying to lead us.

Topeka, Kans.

ALBERT C. BURROUGHS

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 7:40-52

The Text and Its Central Thought.—John 7 carries us into the period when His countrymen have experienced the full impact of Jesus of Nazareth. That impact demands a judgment, and the land is astir with clashes of opinion regarding Him. Some in guileless simplicity are inclined to accept the evidence of His goodness (v. 12), His miracles (v. 31), and His teaching (v. 46), as sufficient proof of His Messiahship. Others, seeing certain unanswered difficulties (vv. 27, 41, 42), are hesitant. Still others are inclined to reject Him as a deceiver (v. 12). His own brothers disbelieve (v. 5), and their goading Him to go to Jerusalem seems to indicate that they, like many, are awaiting the judgment of the rulers before making up their own minds (vv. 13, 48, 49). These latter, for the most part (Nicodemus is an exception; cf. also ch. 12:42, 43), have already reached their decision. They are bitterly offended at His stupendous claims (vv. 16-18, 28, 29, 37, 38), His disrespect for their sacred traditions (vv. 21-24, cf. ch. 5:16), His uncompromising accusations (vv. 7, 17-19), His revolutionary doctrine, not rooted in their theological past as they conceive it and therefore to their mind new and without authority (v. 15, cf. ch. 8:13) — and they have united in their condemnation (v. 48). They cite Scriptures to show that His background is out of harmony with Messianic expectation (vv. 27, 41, 42, 52). They dismiss with contempt the opinions of the unlearned (v. 49) as well as of any learned who may question their judgment (vv. 51, 52). So bitter are they that they have already reached the point of plotting seriously to silence Him by death (ch. 5:16, 18; 7:1, 19, 20, 25, 30, 32, 44, 45).

It is in some ways unfortunate that our society is outwardly so pro-Christian that we can grow up in the tradition of accepting Christ without ever experiencing the offense. When assent to Christian doctrine has become socially acceptable and even expected, true inner religion is in peril. The arguments of the enemy must be heard and felt, the pressures of unbelief exerted, the anguish of doubt experienced, the conflict of interests fought through, before knowledge of mind can be refined into a durable conviction of faith. Let us not be distressed by doubt nor afraid of temptation. Let us magnify the offense of Christ Crucified — that our faith may not rest on the wisdom of men, nor on the traditions of a "Christian" society, but on the power of God (1 Cor. 2:5).

The Day and Its Theme.—The unifying theme for the day, as suggested in the Swedish lectionary, is "The Narrow Way of Faith."

In the Epistle (Eph. 4:22-28) and Collect the emphasis is on faith in its sanctifying power—"Put on the new man. . . ." More closely akin to our text is the Gospel (Matt. 9:1-8, "The Man Sick of the Palsy"), where the determined unbelief of the Pharisees is again in evidence.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—Faith is far more than opinion or pious affirmation. It is an awakening to a divine knowledge and therewith a revolution of attitude produced by the Spirit of the living God, through the impact of His Son. The goal is to lead the hearer vicariously through something of the mental and spiritual turmoil through which Christ's own nation passed, for the purging of his faith and the strengthening of his conviction. Inevitably this will sharpen also his awareness that it is only by the miracle of God that he, or any man, believes at all.

Sins to Be Diagnosed and Remedied.—The greater sin in the text is not the *doubting* of the people, but the *certainty* of the Pharisees—the negative certainty of their unbelief. Study that unbelief: it is born of self-interest; it hears what it chooses to hear, believes what it chooses to believe, interprets as it chooses to interpret; it exalts itself above God, as though the religious judgments of men must be granted validity equal to or higher than God's revelation; it condemns truth as a lie, exalts its lies as truth, and dares to seek sanction in God's Word; it is hypocritical, dishonest, unjust, and yet boasts of its righteousness; and it anathematizes those who in the simplicity of faith would dare to believe otherwise. "From this preserve us, heavenly Father!"

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—Truth is always condemned as the troublemaker. The lie would much prefer to be left alone, to rest secure in ignorance and toleration. Yet we praise God for making trouble, even for causing divisions among people (v. 43) and within them. The great act of grace is this, that God has not let us alone; that in spite of our natural resentment He does disturb our "peace"; that He has sacrificed His Son for our redemption; and that through Him God still calls us out of sin, blindness, and death, to a new life of faith. For such "troublemaking" God does not apologize. It is His grace in action. From resenting, resisting, and despising that grace, "good Lord, deliver us."

Illustrations.—Even the devil must serve the cause of our salvation.

Some elements of chemistry are inert; they refuse to react with other elements and are therefore incapable of producing change (neon, argon, helium). Though Christ enters human society naturally, unnoticed, and without fanfare He is never "inert." Rather He is a violently

active "chemical" (fluorine, chlorine), and the society that experiences His impact seethes and boils over with change. The Lord would have no praise for the peaceableness of inert Christians.

Possible introduction: Certainty is a rare thing. Wise men are cautious. They say, "I think. . . ." "This is my opinion . . ." not "I know. . . ." Scientists speak of "theories"; doctors and judges render "opinions." Such careful skepticism carries naturally into man's evaluation of religion, the more so since religion is unprovable. All religion is regarded as simply the "opinion" of him who believes it, and faith means no more than opinion. By human standards this is logical, and in regard to most religion it is even valid. But it fails to take into account one possibility. A living, thinking God, if He exists, does not have opinions, but truth; and if that God makes Himself known, that religion which God reveals is not the opinion of man, but the truth of God. Such truth is not captured by man; it captures him. And for a man so captured, faith is not opinion but certainty. The text shows God's truth at work to capture men. May it capture us.

Outline

How Difficult Is Faith

- I. Learn this from those who doubted
 - A. The revolutionary impact of Christ on His society.
 - B. The difficulty of decision. Affirmative: His goodness, miracles, teaching. Negative: tradition, reason, self-interest.
 - C. May God lead you through anguish of doubt to certainty.
- II. Learn it from those who were certain, but wrong
 - A. The Pharisees' judgment of Christ; its ungodly motivation.
 - B. What they lost thereby (Gospel).
 - C. May God deliver you from such hardness.
- III. Learn it from those who believed and confessed
 - A. The miracle—that some believed against reason, pressure, authority (people, officers, Nicodemus).
 - B. Their testimony: understand its necessity, appreciate its difficulty.
 - C. May your faith show itself alive in confession.

New Orleans, La.

PAUL G. BRETSCHER

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 25:14-30

The Text and Its Central Thought.—The words of this text are a part of the long discourse Christ delivered to His disciples on the Tuesday afternoon of Holy Week on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Cf. Matt. 24:3.

In this parable Jesus urges us to faithfulness in the use of our talents, both because we are stewards and because God will call us to give an account of our stewardship. It intends to impress upon us the fact that the new life of the Christian is to be exercised in good works.

The opening sentence is anacoluthic. The Greek has only, "for just as a man. . . ." The γάρ refers us to the Lord's imperative to watch. Τοὺς ἰδίους—his own servants, his bond servants, those for whom he has paid a price. Their time, strength, ability—all are his.

The man distributes the talents according to the ability of each man. Each one, therefore, has as much as he can handle. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:6 ff.; Heb. 2:4; Eph. 4:7; Luke 12:48.) The talents God has given us include both the gifts of His Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and our natural and acquired abilities. Everyone has something with which to do business. A talent is worth about \$1,100. In Christ's day it represented a day's payroll for an army of six thousand men.

The man with five talents and the man with two received the same blessing because both proved themselves to be faithful to their trust. Cf. Rom. 2:6 ff.; 2 Cor. 9:6; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 John 4:17. The man with one talent is cast out because of his unfaithfulness. His is a sin of neglect, a sin of omission. His task is easiest, his responsibility least, his neglect most inexcusable.

Observe the charges the man with one talent levels at his master. He says he is a "hard" man, one harsh, stern, churlish in nature. Moreover, he charges him with reaping the fruit of the labors of others. Both allegations are proved false by the parable itself. The word "strawed" (v. 26) means "scattered" and here probably refers to winnowing.

V. 29 is the law of the kingdom. This law operates with the same consistency in the spiritual world as it does in the physical. ". . . him that hath not," of course, refers to the man with one talent. He really has nothing when he buries his talent. He impoverishes himself.

The Day and Its Theme.—A Swedish lectionary suggests the theme: "Spiritual Indifference." The servant with one talent is a representative

of the spiritually indifferent; the other two picture the spiritually alive and active. The Epistle for the day reflects the theme of faithfulness, as it encourages us to "redeem the time." The Gospel gives us types of spiritually indifferent and shows us their eternal fate. In the Collect we ask God's forgiveness for our neglects of duty and plead for grace to serve Him with a quiet mind. The Introit reflects the righteousness of God in all His works, both of mercy and of judgment. We can use to good advantage the topic "My Church," suggested for this month in *Parish Activities*, since the church is the arena in which the Christian is to be active as a faithful servant.

The Goal of the Sermon.—The goal of this sermon is to engender in the hearts of Christians a greater sense of their privilege and responsibility of being faithful in the use of their talents. There is much in this text to warn against unfaithfulness and much to encourage to faithfulness.

Sins to Be Diagnosed and Remedied.—Certainly this text aims straight at the sin of identifying faith either with a loose affiliation with a congregation or with an intellectual assent to a set of doctrinal propositions. This text gives occasion to preach against sins of omission. The man with one talent did no overt wrong; he was denounced because he did no good. All of us must see something of this man with one talent in ourselves so that we repent of our neglects of duty.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—The phrase "His own servants" (v. 14) gives us occasion to remind our hearers of the price Christ paid to make us His own servants. "Ye are bought with a price." Moreover, in the blessing Christ gives the faithful stewards, this text points to the grace of God. They receive eternal life as a gift of grace.

Illustrations.—The law of the kingdom can be illustrated from the physical world. Unused muscles become weak. On the other hand, the student who improves his mind fits himself for advancement. Physical and mental faculties become weak through disuse and strong through use. (Cf. Prov. 11:24). Of course, the text itself is weighted with the dramatic element.

Outline

Be Faithful in the Use of Your Talents

I. Because God has given you talents to use in His service

A. We are God's servants (v. 14).

B. He has given us all our talents (v. 15).

C. He expects us to use these talents in the work of the Kingdom (vv. 16-18).

II. Because Christ will return for an accounting

A. Christ will return (v. 19).

B. Those who have evidenced their faith in the faithful use of their talents will be blessed (vv. 20-23).

C. Those who neglect to use their talents will be cast out (vv. 24-30).

Springfield, Ill.

HENRY J. EGGOLD, JR.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 10:22-30

The Text and Its Central Thought.— John 9—10:18 comprises the incident of Jesus' healing the blind man and the subsequent conversation with the Pharisees who cast the healed man out because of his confession of Jesus. This conversation revolved about the proper spiritual guidance of the people and climaxed in the "parable" of the Good Shepherd. The incident with its teachings precipitated further excitement among the Jews and dispute concerning the nature and work of Jesus (vv. 19-21).— Vv. 22-24: So it is that at a subsequent date, when on account of the weather Jesus did his teaching under the portico of the Temple (December 25!), the Jewish opponents of Jesus confronted Him physically ("ringed Him about") and with the question, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Their question blames Him for leaving them in doubt.— V. 25: Jesus seems to hedge. Why does He not simply say: "I am the Messiah"? His answer is in the words, "I told you, and ye believed not." He had said so in the words of the conversation that precipitated this set-to; cf. 10:11-18, plainly an unfolding of His Messianic office. Furthermore Jesus' works, His miracles and His teaching, were done in the name of the Father and were a sufficient recommendation of His person—to a believer. But to an unbeliever, one determined to reject Him, the most explicit evidence was unavailing.— V. 26: Jesus fills out this analysis of the unbelief of His opponents by repeating the analogy of the relation which He has to the believer to the relation between shepherd and sheep (10:14, 16). Not only does He assert that He is the one true Shepherd; the true sheep hear His voice.— Vv. 27-30: This cue for stating the entire redemptive relation of Jesus and the believer is

pursued all the way. They who truly know and recognize Jesus as the Christ accept His Word with faith; they follow Him; they receive the gift of life, God's eternal kind of life, from Him, which means that they do not perish or fall away from Him. This close relation, involving the act of faith on the part of the believers, is the result of the Father's act; He is wholly concerned in this relation and is actually in the same relation to the sheep that the Son is. "I and My Father are one," Jesus climaxes the statement. It follows logically that the Father and He have the identical relation to the sheep, they are "one in this." But judging by the result of the statement on the hearers, "in this" was less than the scope of His statement; the hearers understood it as a full ascription of deity (v. 33): "Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God."

This text is one of many, particularly in John (but cf. also Rom. 1:16) accentuating the necessity of faith in order to comprehend the full nature of Jesus as the Son of God and of His work of redeeming the world to God and giving life. But it is also a straightforward statement of the relation that the believer has to God because of that work of Jesus. "Through Jesus we belong forever to the Father."

The Day and Its Theme.—*Parish Activities* suggests that the month revolve about the idea of the church. The 21st Sunday after Trinity is well suited to emphasize the concept and the faith which is essential to membership in the church. Eph. 6:10-17 and John 4:46-54 both emphasize faith in Christ as basic for the life with God. Any improvements on the central thought above might be made in the direction of stressing the nurture of faith. "As we listen to the voice of Jesus, we belong forever to the Father."

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—Through this sermon the hearer should feel himself thoroughly bound to God and confident of life with Him forever. This is not to be a carnal security—once a Christian always a Christian—but a faith that can be fostered by recognizing Jesus' redeeming work and surpassing love.

Sin Diagnosed.—This is a great text on the nature of unbelief, the fact that it resists the one thing that can work faith, the observance of the work of Christ. The sermon is preached to believers, and hence it must, on the one hand, warn of unbelief on every side, belittling the person and work of Jesus into a moral example; and, on the other hand, point out the inner temptations also in the believer to turn eyes away from Christ and ponder the fashionable doubts whether Christ "ever said He was God." Such unbelief has in its wake blindness and the inability to discern Christ and the life that He gives. Cf. 9:41.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—These come in the term "the Christ" (v.24); "works that I do in My Father's name" (v.25); "I give unto them eternal life" (v.28); and the implied restatements of vv.7-18, one of the most outright statements from the lips of Jesus of His redemptive death, commissioned by His Father and producing the life of those who believe in Him.

Illustrations.—The skepticism toward great and good people on the part of those who do not want to believe—animus for Abraham Lincoln (Gettysburg Address story), refusal to try electric lights, crop rotation, vaccination. The people of the text as an illustration that faith itself is a miracle, a truly superhuman thing, for they were able, learned, moral—yet unbelieving.

Outline

As We Listen to the Voice of Jesus, We Belong Forever to the Father

- I. The world's great need—to belong to the Father
 - A. Anything else means that it perishes. God's wrath for wayward man.
 - B. But we don't belong to the Father by offering Him the fruits of our waywardness.
- II. Listen to the voice of Jesus
 - A. He came from the Father, carries out His commandment to lay down His life for men.
 - B. He speaks to men—the Word of Christ. He tells men that He is their one Good Shepherd; that He dies for them; that He does the works that the Father sent Him to do.
 - C. The person who listens to His Word, views and ponders His redeeming work by which God forgives our sins and lays aside His wrath, finds the power to believe.
 - D. Hence the tragedy of men who will not listen, turn away in preconceptions of hostility or in the neglect of apathy, and whose faith thus grows cold and whose eyes remain or become blind.

Conclusion: The Father wants to possess us. In Christ He has life for us. Let us keep safe in the fold of the Father by heeding the voice of the Shepherd, for we know who He is.

St. Louis, Mo.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

Texts for the New Series of Homiletical Studies

For the church year beginning November 27, 1955, the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY will present studies on Old Testament texts for the Sundays and festivals of the church year. The texts comprise no one pericopic system, although such selections are represented in some cases. The texts have been chosen to correlate with the Propers of each day. The contributors will again draw attention to possible correlations with the monthly themes of *Parish Activities*.

Many pastors by-pass Old Testament texts, particularly by the year, for various reasons—weakening skill with the Hebrew language, the assumption that the great New Testament themes, such as Atonement, church, Christian love, are obscure. This is unfortunate. For it was to the Old Testament to which St. Paul directed Timothy for its ability to make "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Over half of the projected series of texts come from the Psalter and the Book of Isaiah, in which the fellowship of the worshipping church and the plan of the atonement through the Messiah and its message are most explicit. The King James Version, with its special preaching values, is particularly useful for Old Testament texts. As the preacher follows these studies, he will notice that often fewer, or more, verses of the context and text are useful for preaching. Often the preacher will develop the message from a longer section of Scripture, while depending on a brief text for reading to his hearers and developing his outline.

The staff hopes that these studies will stimulate readers to zestful exploration and vigorous preaching of the Old Testament.

TEXTS OF SERMON STUDIES FOR 1955—1956

Date	Day	Text
November 27, 1955	1 Ad.	Psalms 24
December 4, 1955	2 Ad.	Zeph. 3:14-20
December 11, 1955	3 Ad.	Mal. 3:1-5
December 18, 1955	4 Ad.	Is. 40:1-10
December 25, 1955	Chris.	Is. 9:6, 7
January 1, 1956	N. Y.	Ps. 33:17-22
January 6, 1956	Epiph.	Micah 5:2-4
January 8, 1956	1 a. E.	Eccl. 11:7—12:1
January 15, 1956	2 a. E.	Ps. 104:14-24
January 22, 1956	3 a. E.	Ps. 50:1-6
January 29, 1956	Sept.	Ps. 18:1-6
February 5, 1956	Sexa.	Is. 55:6-11
February 12, 1956	Quinq.	Ps. 40:7-10

February 19, 1956	Invoc.	Deut. 8:1-6
February 26, 1956	Rem.	Gen. 32:24-29
March 4, 1956	Ocu.	Ps. 77:7-15
March 11, 1956	Lae.	Ex. 16:4-9
March 18, 1956	Jud.	Lev. 16:15-22
March 25, 1956	Palm S.	Zech. 9:8-12
March 30, 1956	G. Fri.	Is. 53:3-6
April 1, 1956	Easter	Ps. 118:17-24
April 8, 1956	Quas.	Ezek. 37:9-14
April 15, 1956	Mis. D.	Ezek. 34:11-16
April 22, 1956	Jub.	Ps. 119:49-54
April 29, 1956	Cant.	Psalms 98
May 6, 1956	Rog.	Prov. 2:1-9
May 10, 1956	Asc.	Psalms 110
May 13, 1956	Ex.	Ps. 27:1-6
May 20, 1956	Pent.	Joel 2:28-32
May 27, 1956	Tr.	Jer. 10:8-16
June 3, 1956	1 a. Tr.	Psalms 13
June 10, 1956	2 a. Tr.	Psalms 32
June 17, 1956	3 a. Tr.	Jonah 4:6-11
June 24, 1956	4 a. Tr.	Joshua 24:14-22
July 1, 1956	5 a. Tr.	Ezek. 2:1-5
July 8, 1956	6 a. Tr.	Psalms 1
July 15, 1956	7 a. Tr.	Deut. 32:1-9
July 22, 1956	8 a. Tr.	Ps. 119:105-112
July 29, 1956	9 a. Tr.	Prov. 16:1-9
August 5, 1956	10 a. Tr.	Psalms 48
August 12, 1956	11 a. Tr.	Psalms 130
August 19, 1956	12 a. Tr.	Is. 62:6-12
August 26, 1956	13 a. Tr.	Jer. 31:31-34
September 2, 1956	14 a. Tr.	1 Sam. 7:7-13
September 9, 1956	15 a. Tr.	Micah 7:18-20
September 16, 1956	16 a. Tr.	2 Chron. 7:12-16
September 23, 1956	17 a. Tr.	Ruth 1:11-18
September 30, 1956	18 a. Tr.	Is. 54:7-10
October 7, 1956	19 a. Tr.	1 Kings 19:4-12
October 14, 1956	20 a. Tr.	Psalms 42
October 21, 1956	21 a. Tr.	Is. 59:17-21
October 28, 1956	22 a. Tr.	Psalms 123
November 4, 1956	23 a. Tr.	Is. 44:6-8
November 11, 1956	24 a. Tr.	Is. 8:9-17
November 18, 1956	25 a. Tr.	Psalms 126
November 22, 1956	Harv.	Deut. 28:1-10
November 25, 1956	26 a. Tr.	Zeph. 3:8, 9