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Homiletics: Outlines on Ranke Epistles

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on Ranke Epistles

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

COL. 1:16-23 (KEY VERSES, 21-23)

The deep longing and joyous anticipation of Advent is like the longing and hope of parents who lay plans for the welcoming home of a son or daughter who has been in danger far from home. Better still, it resembles the expectation of people suffering hardship, loneliness, or separation and therefore planning hopefully for a joyous restoration.

Our text emphasizes that the hope of the Gospel is seen in Him through whom all things were created, the Head of His church, who rose from the dead, who through His death willingly reconciled us to God, from whom we had been alienated by sin. Through faith in Christ we have eternal salvation if we remain steadfast in this hope of the Gospel.

The Hope of the Gospel

- I. For us the Advent emphasis is on accomplished, thrilling facts concerning Jesus Christ and a future hope, vv. 16-20. These facts constitute the Gospel.
 - A. For Old Testament times it was different; fulfillment lay in the future (Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:3; Is. 7:14 and 53:2ff.; Micah 5:2; Rom. 16:25-27).
 - B. Christ did come according to God's eternal intention to rescue man (v. 20; Eph. 1:3-6).
 - C. He comes and dwells in our hearts and in His church (v. 18; Rev. 3:20; Eph. 2:19-22; Matt. 18:20).
 - D. He has promised to come again to take us to glory (Matt. 26:64; John 14:3; Col. 1:5; Titus 2:13).
- II. In Him we have hope through the Gospel in spite of our tendency toward alienation by sin (vv. 21, 22).
 - A. Born dead spiritually we have no power to live, in God's sense, until we are born again. We were without hope (v. 21; Eph. 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:13).
 - B. Alienated from God at the outset and inclined to wicked works, we were hopeless without divine intervention ("enemies," v. 21; Eph. 2:1).

- C. God's intervention to establish reconciliation was on His initiative and through His mercy in Christ (Eph. 2:13-17).
- D. By Himself becoming man and dying, Christ made us holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable before God. We have a sure hope (v. 22; 1 Peter 1:3).
- III. The hope of the Gospel and our human tendency to sin underscore by contrast the need for becoming grounded and settled in the faith (v. 23).
- A. The modern "do-it-yourself" emphasis may accomplish much for earthly needs, but spiritually we cannot do it ourselves. Our tendency is to sin (Heb. 11:6; Gal. 5:17).
- B. The miracle of faith receives God's promises as effective for us at once (Mark 16:16).
- C. To persevere in faith and to maintain the hope of the Gospel, we must become grounded and settled (Col. 2:6-8; 2 Thess. 2:16, 17; Heb. 13:5, 6; 2 Peter 5:10).
- D. We become grounded and settled by a consistent and constant use of His Word, to which we respond with faith and which we follow through strength which He supplies (Heb. 13:9; Ps. 112:7; 1 Peter 3:15, 16).

Remain steadfast in the hope of the Gospel. It is God's solution to the death of sin. Become grounded through knowledge of His promises and settled by the experiences through which He leads you in Christ. Remember also that this hope is intended for all.

Portland, Oreg.

OMAR STUENKEL

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ROM. 1:16-25 (KEY VERSES, 16, 17)

The theme for this Sunday is clear: "Waiting for the Salvation of God." We dare not simply wait, however. We must work "while it is day." We must be prepared to receive Christ when He comes. We must resist that prevailing and deadly worldliness which Scripture says will be on earth in the last days (Luke 21:34-36).

Where do we find the power necessary for the living of a consecrated and active Christian life?

The Power of God unto Salvation

Many heathen tried to live righteously. Ancient ethics and philosophy

show evidences of sincere desire for morality. The text reveals the source of this concern.

I. The Law in nature reveals His will, power, and Godhead (vv. 18-20).

A. All people sense His divine wrath against sin and ungodliness (v. 18; Rom. 2:14, 15).

B. Nature itself reveals His eternal power and majesty (vv. 19, 20). Man's conscience generates sober thoughts when he considers His might as revealed in nature (Ps. 19:1-3).

C. Natural man has some knowledge of the Law. We see this when we study non-Jewish life and thought in ancient times, non-Christian religious evidences in our day. Men are "without excuse" (v. 20), since all have a natural knowledge of the Law (Rom. 2:1, 2).

D. Decent and well-meaning people still have a high regard for the Law of God, or the Ten Commandments. Consider the new movie on the subject! There is universal praise for the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, and the goals of world brotherhood. The ideal of a life lived "by the level and on the square" (Masonic usage) is universally acceptable. Many feel that sincere attempts to keep the Law will assure them salvation.

See what happened to the ancients, who also had these ideals and who tried to live by them!

II. The heathen knew His natural revelation, but they did not follow righteousness (vv. 21-25).

A. They had a certain knowledge of God (21a; Acts 17:22, 23).

B. Yet, in spite of this, they became "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Professing wisdom, they became fools (vv. 21 b, 22).

C. They fell into horrible idolatry (sins against First Table) and loathsome and unnatural immorality (sins against Second Table, vv. 23-25, 32). Cf. the Kinsey Report for modern parallels. Those of highest culture often fall into the worst vices. Natural knowledge of God and His Law is not enough. It does not bring grace and power.

St. Paul knew the pagan world and its need of salvation (Rom. 1:14; Eph. 2:12).

- III. The Gospel of Christ is His great power unto salvation (vv. 16, 17).
- A. The Gospel is efficacious everywhere and among all (v. 16). Its dynamic power will manifest itself even at Rome, capital of the empire and center of worldly might and vice. Paul is not ashamed to go there with nothing but the Gospel.
 - B. The Jew, with his divine Law, and the Greek, with his human philosophy and wisdom, are equally in need of the Gospel. Paul addressed all mankind, in a fervent plea and with perfect confidence (Acts 13:46).
 - C. God's righteousness in Christ is *revealed*, not earned, merited, or learned (v. 17). The Gospel reveals perfect righteousness, not a way of life or the epitome of human wisdom. Righteousness is God's gift in Christ, His only Son, or the forgiveness of sins.
 - D. This righteousness is revealed "from faith." It becomes ours as a result of faith. It is "to faith." It is prepared and intended for faith. Faith is the hand which receives the proffered gift of God in Christ (Rom. 3:28).
 - E. This is the old doctrine of Israel. The prophets taught it (Hab. 2:4; Luke 24:27). Christ and the Scriptures are closely connected. We cannot have Christ without the Scriptures, and if we truly hold to the Scriptures, we shall have Christ! The Gospel comes to us in the Word (1 Peter 1:25).
- IV. The dynamic power of God should be at work in our personal life, parish, Synod, and the world.
- A. Christ is our personal Savior from the guilt and power of sin. Through Him we are free from sin's guilt, and in Him we conquer the devil's power (Phil. 4:13). His holy Word creates strong faith and fosters holiness in life (Col. 3:16). Consider this basic truth in connection with every personal problem and question.
 - B. Christ's Word and Sacrament give life and power in congregational life. Therefore church and Communion attendance, Christian education in day and Sunday school, Bible classes, etc., are of primary importance. The Word of God builds and sustains the church. Mere "activism" will accomplish nothing. The "church activities" of our day must ever be evaluated in this light.
 - C. The Gospel is the power of the church in its witness to the world. The early church grew and prospered without wealth

and buildings or worldly prestige and recognition (Acts 2:42). The church becomes weak and flabby, devoid of power and even lacking in appeal, without constant attention to faithful and united proclamation of Law and Gospel. We are truly engaged in a great "Venture of Faith" in Synod. Let us all work and pray that our voice in Christendom and in the world may continue to glorify Christ and the power of His Word and stress the real work and witness of the church.

The time is short. The days are evil. The individual Christian and the church at large constantly need renewed strength. Fields are white unto the harvest. Many even in external Christendom are confused concerning the real power and work of the church. We have much to do, and our emphasis is sorely needed. There is only one power unto salvation. May all hold to this Gospel, and use it faithfully in our life, work, and witness to the world!

Chicago, Ill.

JAMES G. MANZ

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

1 PETER 1:3-12 (KEY VERSES, 3-5)

All too often Christ is set forth and accepted as the Fulfillment of men's hope only for the present life. Particularly true of the social gospel. How often aren't we, pastors and flocks, guilty of reducing the Christian hope primarily to a this-worldly expectation! But see 1 Cor. 15:19. The ultimate goal of our hope is not the temporal but the eternal. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:18. "Could I hope no more, I would live no more."

The Life Everlasting Is Our Living Hope

I. St. Peter's description of the life everlasting.

- A. An inheritance (v.4). An inheritance, not wages. Freely promised and bestowed, not earned. Incorruptible, as opposed to earthly legacies. Undeiled, sinless, separate from sinners. That fadeth not away; eternal as God. (On these descriptions see Luther, St. Louis ed., IX, 1124f., and P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*.) Reserved in heaven. See Hymns 613 and 619.
- B. An inheritance secured by Christ's Passion and certified by His resurrection (v. 3c). "Everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

- C. The salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (v.5b) with the appearing, second coming, of Jesus Christ (v.7b). We do not look for another; this is He that should come again. See Gospel for today (Matt. 11:3; also Titus 2:13,14). "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" (Hymn 370).

II. The life everlasting is *our* hope.

- A. Ministered to us by the inspired writers of the Old and New Testaments (vv. 10-12).
1. The hope in Christ the subject of interest for the prophets, the apostles (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Rom. 16:25,26), and even the angels.
 2. "That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).
- B. Begotten in us by God's mercy (v.3b), the forgiveness of sins, whereby we become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. See Gal. 4:7.
- C. Preserved therein "by the power of God through faith" (v. 5a). Kept, guarded, fortified. A faith that stands in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:5). The power of grace in the Gospel and the Sacraments. Faith that is engendered and nurtured by these means of grace.
- D. The hope and its fulfillment is all God's work, not ours. By His grace we "have a goodly heritage" (Ps. 16:6). So we also confess that He shall "give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life."

III. It is our *living* hope ("a hope to be put to a very prosaic and practical use").

- A. It gives us great joy here and now (v.6a). "Rejoicing in hope" (Rom. 12:12), not only by way of anticipation but also by way of present enjoyment, though only in part.
- B. A hope that is purified of dross by trials and also comes through these trials victoriously (vv. 6b,7). See Phillips' translation. A hope that actually can glory in tribulation because "tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Rom. 5:3-5).
- C. A hope that, here and now, enjoys a very real and blessed fellowship with Christ. "Christ in you, the Hope of glory" (Col. 1:27; v. 8 of text).
1. The fellowship of love. This love expressed in our worship and in our service to our fellows.

2. The fellowship of faith. The blessedness of not having seen and yet having believed (John 20:29).
 3. The fellowship in joy unspeakable and full of glory.
- D. A hope confident in the reward of faith (v.9). The "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8). "Being like Him and seeing Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

"Hoping to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13), let us rejoice in the Lord always (Introit); pray diligently, "Thy kingdom come" (Gradual); and, "threshing in hope," know that we "should be partakers of our hope" (1 Cor. 9:10).

Milwaukee, Wis.

VALENTINE MACK

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ROM. 2:1-12 (KEY VERSES, 1-4)

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans concerns righteousness. He thinks that is the most important thing in the world for the human being: to be righteous before God. Do you think so, too? That you are worshipping in a church this morning seems to say that your answer is yes. Are you really concerned about being righteous? And suppose that you are—how will you be righteous? What is your method? What are your claims? That's the heart of St. Paul's concern, and the concern of Jesus Christ, our Lord, as well, for that matter—the human being can fancy himself to be righteous for reasons other than those of God. Next Tuesday we ponder God's way of giving us righteousness, by sending His Son into the world; and His promise is before us today to send Him the second time to judgment, "the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2). Hence the importance of the question:

How Will You Be Righteous?

I. Do you want to be righteous?

A. Perhaps you don't if you don't know what it means.

1. In common language it usually means "upright," "moral," perhaps even "too good," "nasty nice." You cringe from the latter, but agree that it is important to be good. But "righteousness" means to be under God's favor.
2. Righteousness has to do with judgment; the Latin Bible translated the word *iustitia*; the AV sometimes translates "righteous" simply "just." Whose judgment? Not just that

of people but that of God. God has strenuous concern for our behavior, our carrying out His purposes for our lives (vv. 2, 5, 6-11). His judgment is rendered impartially (v. 11). It searches out every man.

B. Perhaps you don't if you don't like to think about it.

1. Remembering that God judges men and is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) is uncomfortable. Hence it is easy to practice not thinking about it, or weakening it—"I'm as good as the next fellow. . . . God wouldn't be so unloving and harsh as to condemn me, would He?"
2. Yet that does not alter the unalterable, perfect, complete judgment of God. Are you righteous? Can you stand under the judgment of God?

II. Do you want to be righteous by the route of your own uprightness?

A. St. Paul directed this letter and this text to the situation that there are always people—and the malady too easily strikes the Christian, too—who fancy that since God judges human beings for their thoughts and behavior and holds them responsible for them, therefore they will be righteous if they behave themselves perfectly. This is called self-righteousness.

B. Such a malady of self-righteousness is always coupled with the attitude that good behavior puts us into a position of superiority over other people less moral or "just." Look at Jesus' parable Luke 18:9-14.

C. But if you do, you are arriving at the opposite: condemnation.

1. Actually every one of us is guilty of the same things that we judge in the other (text v. 1 and its reference to ch. 1); hence if we choose the way of judgment to become righteous, we choose the way of judgment to become condemned.
2. Hence on this day of reflection upon Christ's coming to Judgment (Phil. 4:5) self-righteousness plunges us into gloom instead of rejoicing.

III. How will you be righteous?

A. St. Paul's whole purpose in the opening chapters of Romans is to make clear: "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight. . . . But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested." (3:20, 21.)

B. God's great plan for man's righteousness is that it is to be the act of God's own forgiving mercy, of the "riches of His good-

ness and forbearance and long-suffering," which is to lead to repentance, the change of the man from death to life (v.4).

- C. That mercy is in Christ, and hence righteousness is "by faith of Jesus Christ" (3:22), "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24).

As today, then, you look forward to the new anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, you can today plan to see there the one source of righteousness, and you can already today, even in the sight of the impending Day of Judgment, rejoice (Phil. 4:4) that in Him we may be made the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21), and stand in that everlasting relation to God by which He is our Father and our Rescuer.

St. Louis, Mo.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS

HEB. 1:1-12 (KEY VERSES, 1-4a)

Many are the temptations to turn aside from the Gospel of Jesus, from following Him. Many have turned to a religion that they can make conform to their thinking and to that of the world about them.

But on this Christmas Day we turn anew in joy to Jesus and worship Him as our Savior and Lord, because He is God's greatest Revelation to man.

Jesus God's Greatest Revelation to Man

I. Greater than the revelation by the prophets.

A. God has indeed spoken.

1. In times past by the prophets (v.1). This we have in the Old Testament. There we do have the wonderful Word of God, inspired in all its details.
2. In great quantity (v.1). The 39 books of the Old Testament attest the great amount of God's revelation to His people in the past. Many have never read all of that revelation.
3. In great variety (v.1). There are prophecy, history, promises of a Savior. There is prose and poetry; simple enough for the least intelligent, profound enough for the wisest.
4. To the great joy of the Fathers (v.1). This revelation brought great joy to those of old, e. g., David, Isaiah.
5. We might be tempted to think that there could be no greater revelation. The original readers of the Book to the Hebrews faced that temptation. But as great as was that Word of

revelation, greater is the revelation God has given us on this day in His Son.

B. God has spoken His greatest revelation to us.

1. In His Son (v.2). In Jesus we have God's Word of Life for lost mankind. In the story of Christ's birth, in the story of His life and death, we have the manifestation of God's love for those who had strayed from Him in sin.
2. In these last days (v.2). There can be no more, nothing further, from God by way of revelation regarding His love and grace, regarding forgiveness and salvation. If we look for a greater revelation, we are doomed to disappointment and failure. If we cast aside this revelation, we are doomed to eternal destruction.

C. Why are we sure that this is the greatest revelation of God, that there can be no further or greater revelation than that we have in the birth of the Son of God as man? Can we be sure that those who speak of a further revelation (new dogma in the Roman Catholic Church, new groups such as Christian Science) are wrong? We are sure that

II. Jesus is the greatest Revelation of God to us.

A. Because of His Person.

1. Jesus is the appointed Heir of all things (v.2).
2. By Him God made all things (v.2,10; John 1:3).
3. He is the Brightness of God's glory, the express Image of His Person (v.3; John 1:18).
4. He upholds all things by the word of His power (v.3).
5. He is indeed the eternal Son of God (vv.5,11,12).

B. Because of His work.

1. He gave Himself in our place as a Sacrifice for sin (v.3).
2. He purged away sins, both the world's and ours (v.3).
3. He accomplished what the prophets proclaimed. They pointed to Him. There can be none greater.

C. Because of His position.

1. He is now sitting on the right hand of God (v.3). To Him belongs the worship of the angels (v.6). To Him belongs an everlasting kingdom (v.8).
2. He is made so much better than the angels. Whereas the angels must minister, He is ministered unto (vv.4,7). Even

a revelation that came by angels would not be as great (Gal. 1:8).

Because Jesus is God's greatest Revelation of life to us,

1. We must follow Him in His Word, knowing that this is the Word of Life to us.
2. We must worship Him as our Savior and King.
3. We must rejoice in His forgiveness and blessings.

Springfield, Ill.

LEWIS NIEMOELLER

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

HEB. 3:1-6 (KEY VERSES, 5,6)

We want to give the best things to our children here on earth, and we go to great effort to provide them. Our heavenly Father was to give His children the best spiritual things and has gone to great effort to give us His Son.

Central Thought: God wants us, His people, to make certain we share in the glory of Christ which is greater than the glory of Moses by holding fast our boldness and keeping our hope firm unto the end.

- I. The glory of Moses was good but inferior to that of Christ.
 - A. *Moses represented the house or the people (v.3).* The house of God is the organized society in which He dwells. Israel was the type of redeemed mankind (Hos. 8:1; Eph. 2:21 ff.; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17). Moses was a part of the type and not the originator. He received the house of God and administered it (Num. 12:7).
 - B. *Moses was faithful as a servant (v.5).* He freely rendered personal service. His faithfulness is expounded in Ex. 40:16 and Num. 12:17 ff. Yet he was only a man in a sphere of administration.
 - C. *Moses was faithful as an apostle (vv.2,5).* Aaron was the high priest. Moses testified about what was coming. The Old Covenant witnessed to the future and pointed to Christ the Antitype, the Greater. St. Paul's argument in Galatians about the inferiority of the Sinai covenant as compared to the promise fits well here.
- II. The glory of Christ is superior to that of Moses.
 - A. *Christ represented the Builder, God (v.4).* Christ is the Orig-

inator of what He instituted. The relation of Moses to Christ is that of system to Author (John 3:31; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:11).

- B. *Christ was faithful as the Son* (v. 6a). He was over the sphere as sovereign of God's house. He was God and man (John 3:16a; Gal. 4:4).
- C. *Christ was faithful as Apostle and Priest* (vv. 1, 6). The functions of Moses and Aaron were combined in Him. As Apostle He has the authority of the heavenly calling (Gal. 4:4). As the Great High Priest, after the order of Melchizedec, He is the Source of all that is holy (Heb. 9:15; 10:21). Christ fulfills every need we have. The blessings He brings are realized now. Fix attention upon the complete fidelity with which He fulfilled His work. Here the atoning work of Jesus Christ must shine as the work of God which only the Son could perform. Here is the real superior glory: God Himself reconciled the world through His Son (Rom. 14:9; 2 Thess. 2:16).

III. God wants us to make certain we share the glory of Christ.

- A. *We are His people*, "whose house are we" (vv. 1, 6b). We belong to the house of God and are no longer Jews (Eph. 2:19). We have the full blessing of belonging to God as His adopted children (Gal. 4:5; 1 Peter 2:9). We have the heavenly calling (Eph. 4:1; 5:1, 2). The Christian's "calling" is heavenly, not simply in the sense that it is addressed to man from God in heaven, though this is true (Heb. 12:25), but also in the sense that it is a calling to a life fulfilled in heaven, in the spiritual realm. The voice from heaven to Moses was an earthly calling, a calling to the fulfillment of an earthly life.
- B. *We share the glory of Christ* (v. 1). We participate in the common blessing and privileges. The bond of union described in this word "partakers" lies in that which is shared and not in the persons themselves (Heb. 3:14).
- C. We are certain we share when we remain faithful and firm (v. 6c). Spiritual privileges of Christians depend upon their firm hold upon that glorious hope the Hebrews were on the point of losing (Phil. 3:14; Heb. 3:14; 4:14; 10:23; 1 Tim. 2:15). Define hope: Christian hope is courageous exultation and expectation (Heb. 6:18ff.). It lasts until we see, when hope turns into sight (Heb. 6:11; 1 Cor. 13:9-12).

Maplewood, Mo.

WILLIAM E. GOERSS