

2-1-1958

Homiletics: Outlines on the Swedish Gospels (Alternate Series)

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Recommended Citation

Goerss, William E. (1958) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Swedish Gospels (Alternate Series)," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 29, Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol29/iss1/11>

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Swedish Gospels (Alternate Series)

REMINISCERE

MARK 9:14-32 (read vv. 20-32)

After His transfiguration, Jesus descends from the mountain with the three disciples. What a contrast! On the mountaintop the three with Jesus view the glory of heaven. On the earth the nine that wait view sin with its misery and curse.

The waiting disciples try to cast out the evil spirit from the lunatic son but are forced to admit their impotence. As the debate with the scribes grows in bitterness, Jesus arrives. He upbraids the people for lack of faith, heals the boy as a demonstration of His power, and instructs His disciples. Today we want to learn with the disciples that

Our All-powerful God Gives Strong, Victorious Faith to Powerless Men

I. Men are powerless alone

A. Satan's power makes men weak.

1. Sin is powerful (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 4:3).
2. Illustrated by afflicted boy. Here use text (vv. 17-22).
3. Realized by the father (Matt. 13:19; 38,39).

B. People of the world are impotent.

1. The crowd is curious: looking for something new, exciting, and startling (vv. 14 a and 15).
2. The scribes are antagonistic; Jesus is different, not what we're used to (vv. 14 b and 16).
3. This contrast illustrates the world's rejection from two opposing points of view; each results in weak response to Jesus.

C. Weak Christians are powerless because they lack strong faith (vv. 17 and 28). The disciples are unable to heal the lunatic. Their unbelief causes Jesus more grief than the hostility of His enemies. Peter: Matt. 14:31. Disciples in storm: Mark 4:40.

D. Realize your own weakness: lack of faith retards the work of the Lord. Collect: "no power of ourselves to help ourselves."

II. *God is powerful and gives victorious faith*

- A. God's power in Christ smashes Satan's power (vv. 30, 31).
1. Overthrows the power of Satan (vv. 25-27); the miracle (Acts 10:38; 26:18; 1 John 3:8; Luke 9:42).
 2. Crushes the power of sin (v. 31 a); the cross (Heb. 2:14).
 3. Erases the fear of death (v. 31 b); the resurrection (John 8:51; John 11:25, 26; 1 Cor. 15:54).
 4. Puts the world in correct perspective (Matt. 6:33).
- B. Christians are powerful by faith (v. 23; Heb. 11; Dan. 3:17).
1. Become part of God's victory by conversion.
 2. Bring forth fruits of the Spirit (Epistle for the day; Matt. 17:20; Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6; John 11:40).
 3. Live to the glory of God no matter what the circumstances. Job.
- C. Weak Christians can receive stronger faith by God's help (vv. 23, 24).
1. Gain new understanding that God has won the victory in Christ for you (v. 32; 2 Chron. 20:20; John 3:16; John 5:24).
 2. Receive Him more by faithful hearing of the Word and frequent receiving of the Sacrament of the Altar (Eph. 4:26, 27; James 4:7).
 3. Ask God for strong faith by prayer. The lunatic's father in v. 24 illustrates this as does the Syrophenician woman in the Gospel for the day.
- D. Recognize the power of God and receive stronger faith through His Word (1 Peter 5:8, 9).

Maplewood, Mo.

WILLIAM E. GOERSS

OCULI

JOHN 7:19-31

No matter how clear, how firm and deep our Christian convictions may lie, we shall always find ourselves surrounded by unbelieving people to whom these truths mean nothing at all. What to us is sound and undeniable truth, is foolishness to unbelief (1 Cor. 2:14). What we accept by "spiritual discernment," unbelief rejects because of natural blindness. The two are miles apart. What can Christians do to help unbelief? Is the situation hopeless? Shall Christians simply ignore

unbelievers? Shall Christians permit themselves to be drawn into religious arguments? Is there room for polemics in church? Let's watch the Master in our text, as

Christ Confronts Unbelief

I. *By boldly challenging unbelief's behavior and objections*

- A. Although unbelief hates and rejects everything bound up with Christianity, faith and life, it always makes its attack upon some particular phase of it. While Jewish leaders sought to kill Jesus (vv. 1 and 19), yet the text makes it clear that in this instance they tried to discredit Jesus because of His healing on the Sabbath (v. 23; ch. 5:8, 9). Show here how unbelief today, completely at odds with Christianity, will attack some phase of the church, e. g., worship, prayer, liturgy, or some particular doctrine of the church.
- B. Jesus did not ignore unbelief's behavior and objections. He deliberately confronts them with their desire to kill Him, and singles out their objection to Sabbath healing (vv. 19 and 23). Meet unbelief on its own ground. Evasion will only strengthen unbelief. Facing up to unbelief will at least shake its confidence. But how can unbelief be faced?

II. *By boldly meeting unbelief's behavior and objections with Scripture*

- A. Jesus not only reminded the Jews that their desire to kill Him violated the law of Moses, on which they prided themselves, but He used the Scriptures to discredit their attack on His healing on the Sabbath. If the Jews would not hesitate to break the Sabbath rest by circumcising their children if the eighth day fell on a Sabbath, how could they reasonably object to His healing on the Sabbath? (Vv. 22, 23). If they applied the spirit of the law in one case, why not be consistent?
- B. Although unbelief may have little or no respect for Scripture, the unfolding of Scriptural tenets is not without effect upon them. Clear Biblical presentation does much "to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (1 Tim. 3:2, 3). An excellent occasion here to remind hearers of the great importance that Christians be at home in their Bible. It will also help Christians to "judge righteous judgment." (V. 24)

III. *By boldly meeting unbelief's behavior and objections with personal testimony*

- A. When the Lord's word-fencing with the Jews resulted in confused thinking as to the Lord's real identity (vv. 25-27), Jesus boldly testified of Himself (vv. 28, 29) and said: "He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not; but I know Him."
- B. There is nothing which carries more power of conviction than such personal testimony, which says: "I know," "I believe," "I am persuaded."—Here lies your only opportunity for Gospel preaching on this text!—Make the most of it! Show the power of such testimony as: "I know that Christ has redeemed me"; "I have experienced the power of His forgiveness." When a Christian was once asked how he knew that Jesus had arisen from the dead and lived, what glowing testimony when he simply replied: "Why, I just talked with Him a half hour ago." Even unbelief must stand dumb before such testimony.

Conclusion.—Thus boldly confronting unbelief is never in vain. It may not overcome unbelief (in the instance of our text it resulted in Jewish rulers sending officers to take Jesus, v. 32), but then it will add the greater guilt to unbelief. Remember, the Gospel works both ways: to one it is "the savor of death unto death" and to another "the savor of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). If such testimony does not cure the blindness of unbelief, it will be a savor of life unto life for the Christian. His testimony will sear his convictions all the more firmly. Defend your convictions with Scripture and personal testimony, and it will become all the more rooted in your heart. Amen.

Corvallis, Oreg.

A. W. SCHELP

LAETARE

JOHN 6:52-66

On U.S. Highway 40 in California, twenty-two miles west of the Nevada border, is Donner State Monument, an eleven-acre tract set apart as memorial to the ill-fated Donner party. Led by George Donner, eighty-one people left Illinois in April 1846 to go to California. Caught in mountains by early October snow. Cattle lost in twenty-foot snow drifts. Meager food supplies soon exhausted. A few men succeeded in getting through to find rescue parties. Many of them were trapped, and over forty starved to death. What these hungry people suffered and the atrocities to which the madness of hunger drove them (e. g.,

waiting for someone to die so they could eat his flesh) are almost too horrible to relate. In our age of plenty, difficult for us to understand what it means really to be hungry.

More tragic than physical hunger is the hunger of the soul, for if this hunger is not satisfied, it means eternal misery. No soul needs to suffer the agonies of spiritual hunger.

Satisfying Bread for the Hungry Soul

I. *Jesus Christ is the satisfying Bread for the hungry soul*

- A. Ever since the fall into sin the soul of man is hungry. Doesn't always feel this hunger. When body is hungry it craves food. But a hungry soul is often like a freezing body—it feels no pain. Yet it is in need. And when it feels its need and seeks to satisfy that need, it labors for that which does not satisfy (Is. 55:2 a; John 6:27 a).
- B. Jesus declares that He is the Bread from heaven, sent by the Father (v. 58 a; cf. vv. 41, 48, 51). Christ is the Bread of Life. Received life from God and gives life in God. He is Food for the soul. God promised food for the soul (Ezek. 34:14). Christ is the Fulfillment. When Israel was going from Egypt to Canaan, God sent manna to feed their bodies. On our way to the heavenly Canaan, He gives us Christ to feed our souls. (Cf. vv. 27, 33)
- C. As living Bread He satisfies the soul (v. 55).
 1. His flesh and blood refer to His atoning work. He will give His life and shed His blood on the cross.
 2. Whoever eats this Bread has eternal life (vv. 54 a, 58 c). He has forgiveness of sin and peace with God now and the assurance of heaven hereafter.
 3. Whoever eats this Bread has the living God dwelling in him (vv. 56, 57). The Father dwells in Christ and gives Him life. They are one. When we eat this Bread, Christ dwells in us. We then have the eternal God dwelling in us. Daily He assures us of forgiveness, helps us overcome sin, strengthens us in our faith and life, leads us on our journey to eternity.
 4. Whoever eats this Bread will be raised on the Last Day (v. 54). Our redeemed bodies will be joined with the soul, and we shall eat of the eternal manna and drink of the river of His pleasure forevermore.

II. *To be satisfied, the hungry soul must receive Christ by faith*

- A. Eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood are a spiritual eating and drinking by faith (v. 35). It means to trust in the atoning work of Christ for salvation.
- B. He who does not accept Christ by faith has no spiritual life (vv. 52, 53). Such a soul will not be saved. The wrath of God abides on it (John 3:36). He who does not believe, who does not eat and drink by faith, will not satisfy the hunger of his soul.
- C. We can receive Christ only with the help of God (v. 65).
1. Our flesh cannot help us here (v. 63b). Human reason is offended at the atoning work of Christ (vv. 52, 53), and at His deity (vv. 61, 62). The flesh is proud and wants to save itself (v. 60). The flesh is helpless (1 Cor. 2:14); opposed to God (Rom. 8:7); and dead in spiritual things (Eph. 2:1). Luther: "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ."
 2. To receive Christ, we must be drawn by the Father (v. 65; cf. v. 44). The Father not only sent the living Bread from heaven; He also gives the ability to receive this Bread by faith.
 3. The Word of Christ brings us to faith (v. 63). This Word tells about the living Bread and carries with it divine power (v. 68; Rom. 1:16). It cleanses the soul (John 15:3); strengthens it (Eph. 6:17); preserves it (1 Peter 1:5).
 4. The Word can be rejected (v. 52). It can even be lost by those who have it (v. 66). Let us beware lest we resist the gracious work of God.
- D. Let us therefore faithfully use the Word, that God may work in us, that we by faith may cling to Christ. Then the soul will be satisfied.

What will you do? Spend all your effort for that which is not bread? And which does not satisfy? Or will you listen to Christ, eat the living Bread from heaven, and let your soul delight itself in fatness? (Is. 55:2)

NOTE: Some commentators feel that the Savior in vv. 53-56 refers to the Lord's Supper. This writer does not believe that the Savior is speaking of the Lord's Supper, for these reasons: (1) These words were spoken before the Lord's Supper was instituted. Why would

Christ urge upon unbelieving Galileans a sacrament not yet instituted? (2) Christ states that the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood are absolutely necessary for salvation (v. 53). This cannot be said of the Lord's Supper. (3) Christ says that the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood are always salutary (vv. 54-57). It is possible to receive the Lord's Supper in a manner that is not salutary (1 Cor. 11:27-29). The eating and drinking here are a spiritual eating and drinking, receiving by faith the atoning work of the Savior.

Riverside, Calif.

WM. GRAUMANN

JUDICA

JOHN 11:47-57 (read vv. 49-52)

"Necessity" has become an important word in our day. There is a necessity for daily food and drink, of clothes and cars and housing. Our country must increase its military strength; missiles and rockets and satellites are a "must," to be placed on a crash program. Imperative needs for our parish include (mention some). The great imperative of Holy Scripture is summed up in John 3:14: "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Absolutely vital for all men was the prophecy which Caiaphas spoke: "One man should die for the people."

Jesus Must Die

I. *The enemies of Jesus subscribed to the statement: Jesus must die*

A. The reasons for this endorsement.

1. Jesus had worked many miracles. First there was great popularity. Many followed Him, and crowds were happy. Note some of the great miracles. Religious leaders hated Him, for through His work He destroyed the old legalistic religion. No effort was made to deny the miracles. (V. 47)
2. Jesus had raised Lazarus. Recount this briefly. Note especially John 11:43, 44. Lazarus must have been known to many people. Truly one of the great miracles. This was the immediate cause for the meeting of the Sanhedrin in which members incited one another to greater hatred of Jesus. (V. 47)
3. There was hatred against Jesus; for if He fulfilled the popular expectation and set Himself up as a worldly king, Rome might come and "take away both our place and nation" (v. 48). Jesus must die not only to preserve the present status but also to show Pilate a false concern for the welfare of Rome.

4. Jesus was hated because He disturbed the comfortable life. Jesus got in the way of the favorite sins (Matt. 8:29,34; Luke 9:51-56). Jesus was asked to avoid some cities. This continued when the seventy were sent forth (Luke 10:1-16). When the apostles preached about Jesus, the results were the same. (Acts 4:18; Stephen in Acts 8; Acts 13:50)
5. Jesus was hated because of sin. Christ and sin cannot stand on the same platform. No possibility of coexistence.

B. The enemies who endorsed the statement.

1. The scribes and Pharisees were at the head of the list. There was the Sanhedrin (vv. 47,53). These were the religious leaders who should have known better. (Luke 11:53; Matt. 21:45,46)
2. Caiaphas was an archenemy (vv. 49-52). He spoke the prophecy as the high priest. His place in the trials is well known.
3. Many common people also had hatred, possibly incited by the actions of the Sanhedrin. They looked for Jesus to report Him (vv. 56,57). Later they reviled Him and called out: "Crucify Him."
4. Today there are enemies of Christ outside the church. There is reverence at the altar of scientific advancement, etc., and crucifixion for Christ.
5. There are enemies on the inside of the church, who kill Christ and His message by a lowering of His standards and a mutilation of His clear message. Indifference. A desire to give Christ a *part* of life but not *all* of it. (Rev. 3:15)

II. God subscribed to the statement: Jesus must die

- A. The death of Jesus came at God's time, the fullness of the time. The Sanhedrin had spoken through Caiaphas; it wanted death immediately. God wanted the time to be full (v.54). Jesus *gave up* the ghost when all was done.
- B. The death of Jesus was for *all* nations as God had planned. The Sanhedrin was interested only in its own nation (v.48). But God loved the world (John 3:16; John 10:16; Rom. 10:12). The history of missions and God's commands (Matt. 28; Mark 16) bear eloquent testimony to the universality of salvation.

C. The death of Jesus gave life. It gave life greater than the earthly life returned to Lazarus for a time. It also gives purpose to life now. The ultimate purpose of God was that "He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (V. 52)

Conclusion: To show God's plan through the death of Jesus is the only message of the next weeks. Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter show us the fulfillment of the vicarious death and resurrection. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit would enlighten us to understand and believe. The Psalm of the Introit: Oh, send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill.

Fort Wayne, Ind.

JOHN E. MEYER

PALM SUNDAY

JOHN 12:1-16 (read vv. 1-8)

Gold! Gold! Gold!
 Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
 Molten, graven, hammered and rolled,
 Heavy to get and light to hold;
 Hoarded, bartered, bought and sold,
 Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled,
 Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
 To the verge of the churchyard mold;
 Price of many a crime untold —
 Gold! Gold! Gold! — *Thomas Hood*

Name one man in the Bible who wears the tag just read! Would you believe the text when it says, "One of *His* disciples"? So close to becoming an apostle of the Son of God, he is the picture of avarice in its worst and final form. He has written his own tag, for all the world to read, "*How much* will ye give me?" The theme of his life, "*How much?*" the text illustrates. See the face of Judas — framed by a rope of his own making. He loved money. How many strings make the rope? Enough price tags to suspend his swinging body. Neither God nor man will show mercy to cut that rope.

Price Tags — How Much?

I. *Judas' answer to "How much?"*

A. "Too much!" "The house was filled with the odor" (v. 3). We well know there is some perfume almost priceless (illustrate). In a matter of moments a houseful of guests stopped what they were doing: eating, talking, visiting, etc. Stopped

cold. Did a millionaire just walk in? Get a whiff of that expensive odor! Hardly a one had ever seen so much at one time and on one person. What they were all thinking, with glowering eyes, Judas would say out loud. He would express the resentment of all, "*Too much!*"

- B. "How much?" Watch this man Judas put the price tag on it (his specialty): "Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence?" (V.5). Ah, Judas, probably many thought, what a man you are, how well you have said it! I should say so! I wish I had said it. Why, that's how much a laboring man makes to support a whole family a whole year. Everyone knew it was expensive, but who would be so indelicate, blunt, and price it so loud in dollars and cents? Do you look for the price tag when gifts are made? Handy with the string? He not only thought it, he did it.
- C. For whom? The string becomes a switch to insult the giver and the given-to. Suggests what might have been done instead: "and given to the poor" (v.5). Judas was more than a boob or a boor. Even cheapskate and skinflint are terms too weak. He was all that and more. A moneymonger. He loved money, not Mary, not the Master, nor the miserable, but money! Money spent on the Lord's feet he wanted in the money box, where he could get at it (v.6). Was he ever wrought up! "Foot money, indeed!" If Judas had only asked himself before he threw the price tag, "Whose feet are they?"

II. *Mary's answer to "How much?"*

- A. "Not much." No one knew the price better than Mary. It was her money. Nothing too good for the Lord Jesus Christ: one look at Lazarus, back from the dead, what value money when you have Him? Does the Lord need anything I can give Him? Did she think herself splurging, overdoing a good thing, extravagant? Was she trying to show up the others?
- B. No price tag. It is for Him! Just Mary, all by herself, asking advice from no one. No one else thought of it. Bold, rare action. Her gift was not to satisfy any practical need, such as a new suit (He may have needed one), transportation as was given the next day (this being Saturday evening), Simon the host, Martha the waitress, the song singers, the palm pickers—each did what he wanted. (Vv. 1, 2, 13, 14)

III. *Jesus' answer, "Very much!"*

- A. I accept. He said what He had already done. You say no good, I say very good. What good is perfume? Does anyone here today associate a thing so impractical with Jesus? You are all attacking her. You think a person like Me, of simple and ordinary, straight habits—to say the least, Mary has shown ridiculous taste. You're all wondering how I can ever find Myself accepting it. "Let her alone!" (V.7). That's the imperative voice, a command.
- B. I accept all gifts. Where the wisdom to make something out of this disappearing gift? What to do with it? Somebody suggest something quick. \$60.00 have evaporated. Don't ever worry that the Lord won't know what to do with anything you or any other Mary might bring Him. He'll accept it with thanks. If anyone knocks your gift, hear Him say, "Let her alone!" (V.7). Any expression of love, let it be done. That's giving. No strings, no price tags.
- C. Very appropriate, exactly right. While all stood in embarrassed silence against her, only One agreed with her, beyond her humble thoughts and imagination (v.7). "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this." A week from tomorrow morning some of you will come to the cemetery with your perfume, but you will be too late. You won't believe it now, but it won't be a week, and you'll be at My funeral. What seems to you so inappropriate, most of you will wish you had thought of yourselves (v.16). She might seem a little early.
- D. Why hesitate? So do many church givers who regard the gifts of some as ridiculous, out of proportion in time and money. It even angers them. Explode how much better it might be used, etc. Look out! Judas and his price tags! No matter how farfetched, incongruous, impossible, Christ will accept it. We are so conservative minding the dam, so careful holding back the lake of liberality. Man, let the hoard roar through the sluice once in a while.

Conclusion.—Too much time spent on the hesitation stump. While we are fingering our pennies, the time has elapsed, the Lord's cause with it and the opportunity. Who is the loser? What an expense that is! The church is built, the school is dedicated, the missionaries are paid,

the Gospel is preached. But you spend your life footing household bills. You never have anything to give. You are dead.

"For whom is it, this foot money?" Christ Himself asked when they put the nail to his feet.

"If Thou be the Son of God, step down."

"My feet stay right where your sins have put them. My dear people, I am the Son of God, your Savior. I give my all for you and am not complaining that it's too much. Hang your tag on Me."

Some day we'll be at the feet where we put the perfume.

Schaumburg, Ill.

F. A. HERTWIG, JR.