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Homiletics: Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels Second Series

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels Second Series

NEW YEAR'S DAY

LUKE 12:4-9

Purpose: This text needs to be preached in our day. It needs to be preached with courage and with caution—with courage because earthly pleasure and security promise so much and seem alluringly attainable; with caution lest we talk with bravado and do not practice bravery ourselves. Our text is a stirring call to a rugged faith held by humble but indomitable men. Cf. parallel text. (Matt. 10:26-32)

Christmas is a season of joy. But even the Christmas message is coupled with fear. Today's Christmas fears (anxieties) may have been that everything would not be just right to make everyone happy. They should rather have been fear (a solemn sense of awe) at the majesty and glory of God which Christmas demonstrates. The angel appearance to the shepherds at first stirred fear, because men always tremble in the presence of the supernatural. But the angel said, "Fear not." Perhaps fear is as much at the root of New Year's Eve celebrations becoming improper and excessive as anything else; fear of looking back upon a year marred by many weaknesses and imperfections, especially within, even when much material success can be noted; fear also of looking too closely at what we have a right to expect in the new year.

Our New Year's text speaks of fear and seeks to show us what to fear and what not to fear, so that we may courageously live as the forgiven people of God.

Christian Courage in the Face of Fear

I. *Fears will come* (vv. 4, 5)

A. Fear has a useful as well as a harmful place in life. "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear" (v. 5). Fear can help prevent accidents, restrain from crime, and keep us humble. (Psalm 25:12-14; Prov. 8:13; Jer. 32:39, 40)

B. We ought to fear God with terror when we contemplate our sins, but even then we throw ourselves on His promised mercy in Christ. (Phil. 2:12; Luke 1:74, 75)

C. We have reason to fear the devil, for he is strong, treacherous, and clever, but in Christ his power is broken. (Eph. 6:11; Rev. 14:9, 10; 1 Peter 5:8)

D. The experiences of life and the possibilities of the future (the new year also) bring fears to all of us. Our age is an age of anxiety and of compulsions of guilt. We live in precedent-breaking times. (Luke 21:26)

II. *Some things you need not fear if you remember Jesus* (vv. 6, 7)

A. We need not fear that God will send us to hell so long as we trust in Jesus. (2 Cor. 5:10, 11; Luke 12:32)

B. We need not fear that the devil will triumph over God's people in 1960. (Is. 41:10; 2 Kings 6:16)

C. We need not fear what becomes of our body, whether we live or die. (Ps. 23:4; Rom. 14:8)

D. We need not fear that God has forgotten us (v. 7). Cf. the men in the furnace of fire—"Our God is able to deliver us, but if He will not . . ." (Dan. 3:17, 18)

III. *Be strong and courageous to face difficult issues in life as a Christian* (v. 8, 9)

A. Faithfully and fearlessly live your faith as a Christian. Make the new year a real advance in your willingness to confess Christ to others. (Phil. 1:21; Luke 12:12)

B. If we keep our eyes fixed on the eternal heaven in store for us through Christ, our courage will be stronger. (Heb. 13:5, 6)

C. The alternative of faith or fear is set before us. Because of Christ we can show Christian courage in the face of fear. (Ps. 46:2)

Fairbanks, Alaska

OMAR STUENKEL

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR'S

LUKE 13:18-24

We could be on the verge of momentous events in 1960: world, personal. Even the return of our Lord. No events so important as those relating to the Kingdom, and what, finally, does not? The Christian's heartfelt prayer today:

Thy Kingdom Come in 1960

I. *The Kingdom, like a grain of mustard seed, will grow this year; take courage*

A. Definition of "Kingdom." Jesus describes it. Luther in Second Petition. Invisible, gracious rule of God over human hearts, yet when speaking of growth, think in terms of territory (Zahn, Arndt), in sense of more persons reached and controlled thus.

B. It is a growing thing. Parable really prediction. Spectacular: 12; 70; crowds; then "Will ye also go away?" and "little flock" (John 6:67; Luke 12:32); betrayed, forsaken, the King vanishes in death. Yet He is "corn of wheat" (John 12:24), soon fruit: 120; 3,120; 5,000; "turned world upside down" (Acts 17:6); Tertullian to Roman governors: "We can outnumber your armies . . . more Christians in a single province than men in all your legions" (A. D. 197, Dallman, *Short Stories by Jesus*, p. 58). Today. America. Synod. Our congregation.

C. Amazing, considering that it "costs" to belong. But the "germ" of Life is Christ. He lives. The Kingdom *will* come.

D. Courage, then, to launch out locally (local mission goals); give generously for world program; pray courageously, "Thy Kingdom come in 1960."

II. *The Kingdom, like leaven, spreads quietly; be patient*

A. Expect something more spectacular? As in parallel (Matt. 13), Jesus adds second parable to emphasize nature of growth process. (Explain. Who still bakes bread today?)

B. So is the Kingdom. Effective growth and permeating influence, but quiet method.

C. Be patient, then, with mission prospect. Can't hurry the leavening; quiet teaching must be continued.

D. Be patient with self. With Paul want to cry out for new body. God chooses to leaven the old dough.

E. Be patient with the method. Don't rewrite parables: "The Kingdom is like an army, conquering by force; social welfare agency; amusement center; political party to take over government."

F. Patiently keep putting in the leaven, which is Jesus, His Word, His love. His own quiet methods: lowly birth, quiet teaching (v. 22), traveling (v. 22), especially dying ("journeying toward Jerusalem," last time, v. 22). As contact is made with Him, conversions, sanctifications, take place.

G. Illustrations. Darwin's annual \$25 gift to missions after seeing Christian influence in Patagonia (Dallmann, p. 63); gift of his reading room in Kent, England, to Mr. Fegan, Christian worker among boys, after seeing change in village. "Your services have done more for the village in a few months than all our efforts for many years." (*Moody Monthly* [June '59] p. 35)

H. The leaven works. Patiently let it, but be busy putting it into the dough. On the shelf it helps no one. Thus confidently, yet patiently, work, give, pray, "Thy Kingdom come in 1960."

III. *The Kingdom is entered by a narrow door; strive to enter*

A. Curious questions are many, e. g., "How many? Are there few?" (V. 23)

B. Practical answer: See to it *you* don't miss it.

C. "Strait" gate, not small kingdom. What is it? Jesus' first sermon (Mark 1:15): "Repent . . . believe the Gospel." Gate too narrow for luggage of pet sin, secret vice, false love, self-indulgence, pride in own goodness. Also, cannot enter two-abreast or by proxy.

D. Believe. Jesus is "Door," "Way." Look to Him intently. He takes us in.

E. Be deeply serious about this: "strive." The Kingdom must have priority. May it come *to me* in 1960, and *through me* continue to grow like the mustard tree and spread its gracious influence like leaven. For this I earnestly work, give, and pray in 1960.

Honolulu, Hawaii

WINFRED A. SCHROEDER

EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

MATT. 4:12-17

A good Epiphany text, for the "appearance," often limited to the Magi's star (today's Gospel), is broader—the revelation of Christ, "the Star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17). The Collect says it: ". . . didst manifest Thine only-begotten Son. . . ." In our text this Epiphany Lord refers to His kingdom. He, then, is a king. Of the beaten and bloody Jesus Pilate said, "Behold your King!" But today's Introit says, "The Lord, the Ruler, hath come, and the Kingdom and the power and the glory are in His hand." Are these the same Man? Who is this King? What of His kingdom?

Epiphany Says to Us, Behold Your King!

I. *Who is this king?*

A. John the Baptist, whose work is almost done (v. 12), introduced Him to the people. (Matt. 3; John 1)

B. He was promised through the ages. Isaiah (vv. 14-16), standing on prophetic tiptoe, sees the Sun of righteousness rising with healing in His wings over the unhappy and oft-invaded Palestine. The same Isaiah prophesied of Him, "Unto us a child is born [humanity] . . . the government shall be upon His shoulder [He is a king!] . . . the mighty God [Deity]. . . ."

C. So this King is Jesus Christ, the God-man. He is Jesus (v. 12) of Nazareth (v. 13), yet the King of a kingdom (v. 17). He is the Christ Child of Christmas, Mary's Son, yet the Prince of peace. He is known as Joseph, the carpenter's son, but when He begins His public ministry God says of Him, "My beloved Son." John 1, esp. vv. 29, 34, 36: "Lamb of God," "Son of God." Note His miracles. (Matt. 4:23, 24)

II. *What sort of kingdom does the King have?* (V. 17)

A. The roots of this kingdom go far back. The kingdom idea is part of God's eternal plan. Matt. 25:34: ". . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Historically realized at Sinai (Ex. 19:5, 6, "kingdom of priests") when God in grace chose these Jewish slaves to be His own and dwelt with them in a unique way. The Shekinah as the symbol of His presence. *Tabernacle* means "place of meeting." Mercy seat, altar of burnt offerings, altar of incense.

B. The purpose of all this: God in grace (cf. choice of Israel) and love wants to rule in men's hearts. He wants man, who cut himself off from God, to be in fellowship with Him. God wants men to be His now and forever. He wants to convert them, bring them to faith. The text uses the picture of darkness and light. Men are by nature in such darkness (v. 16) that it is called "the region and shadow of death." To them God brings His saving Light, His Son and His redeeming work.

C. How does this Light, this Jesus, this salvation, reach people? By means of the message thereof. Jesus' message (v. 17) repeats that of John (3:2), but Jesus adds (Mark 1:15), "believe the Gospel." It is "the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). The King put on the flesh and blood garments of men (cf. I) so that they might be-

come His subjects. The story of His life, death, and resurrection constitute the Gospel. This good news has in it the power to move men to believe it, to swear allegiance to Christ, their King.

III. *Who are His subjects?*

A. There are no barriers here! No nationality, no pride or deficiency of ancestry, no previous condition of servitude, excludes. The Jews of northern Palestine were taken into captivity. The Assyrians moved in Gentiles from the east. Intermarriage, Samaritans. Later, more of the same when the Greeks erected in the region cities with heathen customs and people. No wonder (v.15) that Galilee, invaded and despised, was called Galilee of the Gentiles. Yet just to this land the Savior comes with the light and life of His Gospel. He makes Capernaum His headquarters, a bustling commercial city, with roads to Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem, and Damascus. But the Gentiles of Bethsaida Julias and Caesarea Philippi walked its streets. Europe, Asia, and Africa were represented in its population; all nations met in its market place.

B. This means joy for us. Most of us are Gentiles. Jesus for the Gentiles means there is room in His kingdom for us too. We are included in "I am the Light of the world." We're glad to hear Simeon say, "A Light to lighten the Gentiles." Cf. today's Gospel and Epistle.

C. But this also means responsibility. The King's command is still ". . . all the world . . . every creature." The world stands in order that the Gospel of the Kingdom may be spread, in order that the King's message (v.17) may be repeated by us, in order that subjects may be brought under His gracious and eternal rule.

Because Pilate once said of the suffering and redeeming Jesus, "Behold your King!" we today can say (Introit), "Behold, the Lord, the Ruler, hath come, and the Kingdom and the power and the glory are in His hand." We can say (Gradual), "Arise, shine, O Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." We can pray . . . (Collect for today).

Quincy, Ill.

E. J. OTTO

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

MATT. 10:32-39

The connection between the propers for the day and the text is a bit obscure at first. It may be that the compiler of this series saw our Lord as the One who devoted Himself wholly to His Father's "business" (translating τοῖς in Luke 2:49 thus instead of with "house"). With our Lord as his example, the Christian, according to the Epistle, should present his body as a living sacrifice. This is done in discipleship as our text describes it and as the sermon sets it forth. There is a beautiful connection between the text and the collect for the day. Christians know what they are to do from our Lord's words, and their great need is for "grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same." The sermon concentrates on the aspect of confession in the Christian's discipleship. The primary accent of Epiphany is subdued but may appear in commenting on v. 32. The Matthean version of these sayings differs slightly from Luke's. The latter reproduces them in three different contexts—not in a single discourse as Matthew does. The sermon seeks to unfold the inner unity of the discourse and thus treats the text as a whole.

All of us who have taught Sunday school know that some lessons are difficult to teach. No matter how much we stress the fact that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, when we ask the question: How does one get to heaven? one or two children will invariably reply, "By going to church." That is our signal to begin again. As we think about it we realize that the answer of the children (and grownups too!) is wrong, but it may indicate an awareness of something quite correct. Churchgoing may be a confession of one's faith, and our Lord Himself proclaimed that such a confession is indispensable to the Christian life.

I. *Christians should confess Christ in word and deed*

A. Text calls for us to "confess" Christ (RSV, "acknowledge"). Usually this word has negative connotations of making known something we would prefer to keep hidden. Here it means something positive: to make known something you want revealed. Bible often uses it thus. Cf. Phil. 2:11; also use in Lutheran history, e. g., Augsburg "Confession." Text tells us to confess Christ, that is, acknowledge our faith and love for Him openly.

B. In this sense one can confess in a number of ways: in words; in deeds: the Christian life, churchgoing, partaking of the Sacrament (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26), charity toward fellow men.

C. This kind of confession brings great blessing (v. 32b). Why? Confession is nothing less than man's grateful response to God. Man's need is met by God's action in Christ. In affirming this, man appropriates God's gift by faith, and his words and deeds as confession of God's grace indicate that the Christian has seized the offer of God's love in faith. (Develop thought on the Atonement.)

II. *Christians ought to avoid denying Christ*

A. In v. 33 our Lord warns against "denying" Him. He attaches to denial a fearsome penalty. Why? A person who says in word or deed that he does not know Jesus Christ is saying no to God. He is repudiating God's offer of grace. Hence He in whom this offer comes will pronounce the sentence.

B. Denial can be crass and obvious, as in the case of Simon Peter. Or it can be more subtle, as in the case of a person who repudiates Christ by the way he lives. In both cases, however, men get the message: we don't take seriously the Christ we claim to believe in.

C. Our Lord indicates that family ties may be one cause for denying Him. The Gospel will produce tension between those who believe and those who do not (v. 34). This happens even within families. Sometimes the Christian is unable to withstand the pressure and denies Christ.

D. Our Lord indicates that the desire to avoid suffering or difficulty may be another cause for denying Him. In v. 38 Jesus warns us that consistent Christianity will be a demanding thing. In order to avoid the demands, Christ's followers are under temptation to deny Him.

E. These warnings should cause the Christian to re-examine his confession. Have I ever denied my Lord in word or deed? Or have I ever failed to confess Him before men?

III. *Christians will confess and avoid denial because of what they are*

A. Christians are people who experience the forgiving and renewing grace of God. Jesus is speaking in this text to His followers. They know Him and the forgiveness which God offers in Him. His demand upon us always makes us conscious of the gifts which He has given us—daily forgiveness, life and salvation. (Develop thought on Atonement.)

B. The Christian thus is possessed by the Spirit of God, who will resist the downdrag of the flesh and lead to brave, consistent confession.

Concl.—"So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven." Picture that scene. Picture yourself in it. That is the promise we can claim as our own with a faithful, brave, consistent confession of Christ's holy name.

Alternate introduction: Men admire those who have the courage of their convictions, who stand up for what they believe. Cf. *Profiles in Courage* by Senator Kennedy. Our Lord says something good about those who openly set forth their faith in Him. In this, however, there are issues of ultimate importance. We consider them today.

Yonkers, N. Y.

RICHARD E. KOENIG

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 1:35-42

Man has been running away from God ever since the Fall. Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God" (Gen. 3:8). They were ashamed of themselves, afraid to face their Maker. Man is sinful, unworthy of standing in the presence of God. Man is unhappy apart from God, however. Deep within himself he longs for communion with his Creator. Often he does not realize what is wrong. He tries to find happiness in himself, others, things, pleasures. Alone or with others, man always fails to find fulfillment. St. Augustine long ago expressed what many moderns feel so poignantly: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." How do we find Him? Our text tells the experiences of His first disciples.

How a Man Finds God

I. *A man finds God when he hears the truth concerning Jesus Christ* (vv. 35, 36)

A. The ancient Jews knew that they were sinners. They had the Ten Commandments. Their temple worship, with its sacrifices, was a constant reminder of man's guilt and his need of coming to God through a mediator. Jews also knew, however, that their form of worship was not complete. (Heb. 10:1-3)

B. John the Baptist was the herald of the new order. The last of the Old Testament prophets, the first of the new, he has a unique place in God's kingdom (Matt. 11:11). The previous day John had given similar but fuller testimony concerning Christ (1:29). A pious Israelite was immediately reminded of the temple and the Old Testament sacrificial system. The Baptist's testimony connected Christ with this symbolism. The people were reminded of the great Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah. (Is. 53:7, etc.)

C. Man always tries to find God apart from Christ. He thinks that he can save himself. Most of the Jews continued to trust in their sacrifices, worship, works, obedience to divine and human laws. Many people today claim that their religion is that of the Golden Rule. They regard themselves as Christians if they live lives that are outwardly respectable and decent. A common saying: "Whatever religion you follow is good as long as you are sincere." Many believe that "we are all going to the same place." They hope to enter heaven by the

"benefit of the pass of a pure and blameless life" (Masonic ritual). All this merely manifests "self-righteousness."

D. Recently a "renowed American theologian" counseled Christians against trying to evangelize Jewish people! He recommended that Jews "find God" within the framework and traditions of their own faith. This is simply impossible.

E. Christ alone is the Way to God! The man finds God who hears the truth concerning Him. His atonement alone can remove sin and make us spotless in the sight of Almighty God. There is today real need for clear and fearless Christian preaching and witnessing. Regular hearing and reading of God's Word is essential. We must be clear about what we believe and say about finding God.

II. *A man finds God when he accepts Christ's gracious invitation (37-39)*

A. Andrew and John the Apostle had heard the Baptist's message. Their interest was aroused. They were probably still full of doubts and questions. They were not yet fully persuaded.

B. However, they "followed Jesus." He asked them, "What seek ye?" The Lord did not embarrass them by asking, "Whom seek ye?" Christ wanted to keep the way open to Himself. These disciples of the Baptist showed their interest by asking, "Where dwellest Thou?" Christ invited them to "come and see."

C. It was during this momentous visit with the Lord that day that John and Andrew became convinced believers. They accepted Christ as the promised Messiah, the Fulfillment of all the promises given to Israel. The occasion was so memorable that John recorded the time of day when it began: "About the tenth hour," probably 4 P.M.

D. It is not enough to hear and understand the truth concerning Jesus Christ. It is not enough merely to be interested in Him, to follow Him from a distance. A man finds God when he wholeheartedly accepts Christ's invitation to believe and follow Him. (Matt. 11:28)

E. There is now a "revival of interest in religion." Lutherans are in a fortunate position. We are recognized as church people, who are religiously literate. We have had thorough religious training. Yet we must always remember that theological interest and concern are not enough. To really find God a man must come to Jesus Christ and remain with Him. Christ indeed has the answers for our questions. Above all, He gives forgiveness of sin and balm for our hearts. (John 6:35)

F. Some vital questions for church members: Do you really believe in and follow Christ, or are you merely interested in religion? Does the Gospel grip and rule your heart as truly as it interests and stimulates your mind? Are you able merely to "argue religion," or can you also testify to what Christ has done for you? Real commitment to the truth as it is in Christ involves personal faith in the Redeemer as well as the ability to engage in intelligent religious discussion. (Rom. 10:9,10)

III. *A man finds God when he is in the company of Jesus' disciples*
(vv. 40-42)

A. It seems evident that Andrew and John had been disciples of John the Baptist (v.35). John the Apostle, the divinely inspired author of this Gospel, does not mention himself. He modestly remains nameless and in the background, though his personal touch is everywhere evident.

B. Andrew found Simon, his brother, and testified to him concerning the Messiah, who had come and revealed Himself. Andrew is not prominent among the apostles. He is not nearly so well known as others, but he does have the desire and ability to lead others to Christ (John 6:8,9; 12:22). Simon Peter became one of the great leaders of the church.

C. It is also possible that John found James, his brother, and gave the same testimony to him. James and John, sons of Zebedee, are frequently mentioned together. (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14)

D. It is a striking fact that the testimony of weak human beings was effective in bringing others to the Lord even during the days when He Himself lived upon earth.

E. Addressed to Christians in the audience: Never underestimate the value and power of the testimony which you can offer! A child's testimony has aroused sluggish parents. Simple Andrew could bring mighty Peter to Christ. God Himself works through our testimony. He uses us for His purposes.

F. Addressed to seekers and doubters: Are you trying to find God alone? Do you turn away from the testimony of those who already know and believe in Him? Have you ever really spoken, "heart to heart," with a convinced and practicing Christian?

The congregations of our Synod are now preparing for a pre-Lenten and Lenten evangelism effort. E.M.V. Best techniques and methods are being recommended. But let us remember this: Today man finds

God in the same manner as when Christ preached and gathered His apostles. Actually God finds us! Yet He does it through Christ, with His gracious invitation, among His people, by His Spirit!

Chicago, Ill.

JAMES G. MANZ

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JOHN 4:1-14

NOTE: The following outline correlates the text with the general theme for the Epiphany season, the manifestation of Jesus Christ in His person and work as the gift of God for the full supply of human need. The mystery of the God-man, therefore, receives a special emphasis, for it is only as we see God in Christ, the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily, that we find in Him the "living water" of life and salvation.

Here is a human interest story so simply told that it belies its depths. With magnetic power it draws us close to Him who seeks and receives and saves the sinner. The wearied and thirsty traveler from Galilee who is also the mighty Lord and Creator from heaven is revealed in His grace as the full supply of our every need. This is Scripture's theme—God's rich supply of grace for every human need, rest for the restless, forgiveness for the sinful, bread of life for the hungry, living waters for the thirsty. With Christ there is

Never an Afterthirst

I. *Jesus offers the living waters of salvation*

A. As the weary and thirsty traveler from Galilee, Jesus was Himself in need of water. Relate the background which occasioned the Lord's journey through Samaria and His thirst at the Well of Jacob (vv. 1-6). Every inch a man. His apparent helplessness (vv. 8, 11). We know, of course, that He could have relieved His wants by a miracle, but His miracles He reserved only for others. Here is the portrait of a Savior who is, indeed, one of us. There is comfort in this.

B. As the Son of God He possessed the living waters of salvation. Recall the conversation of vv. 10, 13, 14. In His Person as the Son of God and Son of man His work was to effect salvation. His presence here, His purpose here, was the mighty act of God's love for us. The righteousness of the God-man was to be the covering for human sin. The death of the God-man was to be the great deliverance from sin's death. The resurrection of the God-man was to be the guarantee of life. This was the mission of His 33 years in the very midst of sordid human history, the purpose of His six wretched hours on the cross, and the

power that changed the death march of humankind into a triumphant procession of redeemed with three glorious words from the dim dawn of the first Easter, "He is risen."

C. As the Savior of the world He offers the living waters. Jesus sought and saved the lost. The initiative at the Well of Jacob was with Him. Remember the enmity between Jew and Samaritan. Remember the social outcast position of this woman, and her surprise when Jesus spoke to her. Kinsfolk of the Pharisees would be as much surprised today to see our Lord associate with the inhabitants of our local skid row and would try to shuttle Him away if a scarlet woman approached. But Jesus seeks, receives, and saves sinners. This was the passion and the thirst of His holy soul.

II. *These are the living waters that satisfy*

A. The need of all mankind is represented in the woman of Samaria. We might wish that it were not; our pride hesitates to be classed with the woman whose career had made of her a social outcast. But the cup of the ego must be drained. Sins this side of the tracks are just as offensive as sins on the other side. There is no difference (Rom. 3: 22, 23). By nature we, as was she, are spiritually empty. No need to fill the vacuum with our own righteousnesses. That's dandruff on our shoulders, not halo dust. The Samaritan woman was conscious only of her physical thirst, interested only in a water that would save the trouble of repeated trips to the well. Conscious, perhaps, of need for social acceptance, she was not conscious of need for divine acceptance. Aware of her deeds, she was not aware of her needs, especially the supreme need for forgiveness. Her cup was really empty.

B. The living water is the answer to our need. The feverish restlessness of life, the gnawing hunger of the soul, the thirst of the parched heart, these find full satisfaction in the living water. But we are children of our times. We hunger and thirst for the wrong things. The commercial world is designed to stimulate our thirst and create new thirsts. The barkers along life's midway promote dissatisfaction with our blessings and make us crave for more of what they have to sell. In the living waters there is never an afterthirst. This is salvation; this is all we need. Life becomes our present possession as well as our future glory (v. 14). Old things, old hungers, old thirsts, are passed away; all things are new.

C. Faith drinks of the living waters. "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Without money or price (Rev. 22:17). Two thirds of the earth's surface is covered with water, but the waters

of life flow freely for all. These living waters are here in your church, in the Word, in the Sacrament. Be emptied of self; be filled with Christ. There is never an afterthirst.

III. *But there is an afterthirst*

A. This does not mean that Jesus meets our needs once and for all so that we need never come again. It is normal health to hunger and thirst. It is normal spiritual health to hunger and thirst for Jesus. But there is always a full supply, more than enough for every need (v. 14). This we learn as we go down the years with Him. The well is full and endless. This is the Epiphany of Jesus we behold today.

B. And there is afterthirst for the salvation of the world. The Epiphany mission theme and our 1960 Lenten evangelism thrust. As Jesus took the initiative, so the church must take the offensive with its Gospel of living waters. We are the witnesses, the "epiphanies" of Christ to the world. Hymn 281.

St. Louis, Mo.

A. F. WEDEL

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

JOHN 4:15-26

The text is ideally suited to the Epiphany season because it shows the Christ manifesting forth His glory in the very way He does today, not by visible miracles as in the Standard Gospel lesson (the stilling of the tempest) but by His speaking, His personal address, showing us what we are (not loving, when judged by the interpretation of the Law in the Standard Epistle lesson) but above all revealing Himself in such a way that both the introit and the gradual find their fulfillment and the collect for the day is answered.

The theme is obviously formulated as a direct application of Rom. 10:17. Its purpose is to remind us of what we are as preachers of the Gospel and how God to this day does what He did that day so long ago through Christ for this woman at the well of Samaria.

**Faith Cometh by Hearing
and Hearing by the Speaking of Jesus, Who Is the Christ**

I. *He speaks to our real need and not necessarily to our request (v. 15)*

A. Even though Jesus had made the most glorious promise to this woman (vv. 13 and 14), she still did not understand, because she

thought in terms of temporal inconvenience only (v.15). The temporal remains largely the same, unlike what faith-healers and Pentecostals would have us believe, even poverty and cross and death, because the Christ did not come to make things more pleasant for us but to save us from our sins and the power of the world (the temporal) to dominate us.

B. Often our motive is earthly (not evil), as was this woman's, who was trying to get out of doing some work she felt to be unpleasant. The worst is always our attempt to use God to get us off some hook, to get us out of some jam. When He doesn't do this, some people feel this is sufficient reason to deny Him.

C. But in spite of all our misunderstanding and our very earthly hopes with regard to God, Jesus, because He is who He is, continues to speak, and His speaking is the giving of the water of life, the higher gift which we despise until we have it by His speaking.

II. *He speaks in order to expose and destroy our sin*

A. That is our real need, because sin separates us from God, makes true worship of God impossible, and keeps us from that hearing of Jesus which alone creates faith. (Vv.16-18)

B. Jesus does not speak to this woman or to us in this way merely to embarrass us but to show us what we really are in order that He might be to us what He really is.

C. He never does this merely to show how superior He is. It is true that here He revealed His omniscience, but the woman came up with no better response than that He was a prophet, essentially a Law representative. If this had been His sole purpose with this woman and us, He would have left this woman and us as soon as He had made this point. But it is only the opening for speaking what He really had to say.

D. He always proceeds thus in order to destroy what is destroying us. This woman was ashamed even to face her fellow man and thus came to the well at this odd hour. It showed that her sin was destroying her in her relation to her fellow man. Jesus had to show her the deeper shame which was destroying her relation with God in order that He might remove the shame and restore the broken relation with God.

III. *He speaks to make our approach to God right*

Our worship should be worship in Spirit and truth and not merely theory, expression of ideas, interesting discussion. (Vv.19-23 a)

A. Here Jesus exposes the difference between mere religion as religious expression and Spirit. We may know all the places of worship and may even know the words of worship, but unless it is Spirit, relating man to the living God by faith in the salvation which comes of the Jews, we still worship we know not what.

B. Here Jesus exposes the difference between mere formalism and truth, determining God from our views and binding God to our approaches instead of being bound and determined by His revelation, which alone is truth, this speaking Jesus, who is the Truth, so that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him.

IV. *He speaks in order to reveal Himself so that the Father may do His seeking of such true worshipers by Him*

A. Jesus speaking in just this way, with this very human voice and this very human body, to this woman, and in precisely the same way (through my very human voice and very human body) to you, is the manner of the Father's seeking His worshipers. (John 6:44)

B. We know God (so that we can worship Him at all) by hearing Him who speaks. This is the hour now come. This is our salvation, that God has bound His revelation of Himself so fully to Jesus, so that we are bound to Jesus' mouth, Jesus' body, Jesus' person, and Jesus' doing (sp. His suffering and death and resurrection).

C. We know all things (v.25) pertaining to God, our relation to God, our salvation of God, our righteousness before God, only through Messiah, who has come and whom we know as Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Crucified, Jesus the Risen One. Even now in His speaking to us (His Word) He would have us hear from His own lips: "I am He, I who am even now speaking to thee." (V.26)

So then faith (which is worshiping God in Spirit and in truth, the Father Himself seeking us and finding us) cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (the speaking on God's terms of God, of sin, of Jesus as Savior from sin). This is Messiah coming to us, because it is literally the speaking of Jesus, who is the Christ, the Savior of sinners.

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