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Homiletics: Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels Second Series

A. W. Schelp
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels, Second Series

TRANSFIGURATION

JOHN 4:27-42

Wherever Jesus is transfigured before men, wherever people see Jesus for all that He is, they become so absorbed in Him that other interests in life are forgotten. On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter was ready to forget life at the foot of the mountain and said: "Let us make three tabernacles here" (Matt. 17:4). So everywhere the discovery of Jesus will so completely change man's sense of value that all other interests become secondary. See it in text!

The Forgotten Waterpot of the Samaritan Woman

She came to fetch water for her domestic needs, but when her conversation with Jesus was interrupted, "the woman then left her waterpot" (v. 28). Why?

I. *It was forgotten over startling discoveries*

A. When she found Jesus at the well, her commonplace thinking was soon drawn into higher realms. Her need for common well water quickly led to the discovery of her need for living water.

She quickly felt the truth that mere well water cannot satisfy the needs of life. You "thirst again" (v. 13). Jesus' promise of "never thirsting again" (v. 14) stirred deep longings within her. Did she now set down her waterpot? Is there anyone that does not feel with her? Do not all people, in a manner, go through life with waterpots, seeking to fill them with the needs, comforts, and pleasures of life? And when they have filled them with "what shall we eat" and "what shall we drink" and "wherewithall shall we be clothed," the filling has not really answered

their needs. Ah, for this "never thirsting again"!

Jesus sensed this thirst in the multitudes. As if the woman's forgotten waterpot reminded Jesus of the empty pursuits of men everywhere, He bade His disciples, "Lift up your eyes . . . the fields . . . are white already to harvest." He sees multitudes pacing to and fro with their waterpots, yearning for something that will leave them thirsting no more. Should they discover that there is "living water" that has the promise of "never thirsting again," would they not all come with the Samaritan woman and plead: "Sir, give me this water"? (V. 15) And that would lead to another startling discovery.

B. The discovery that something within her kept the living waters from springing up to eternal life. Upon her request for living water, Jesus said, "Go call your husband!" So *that* was it! "Five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thine" (vv. 16-18). Living waters were there for her, but like the source of a spring it lay hidden for her beneath a mass of accumulations—a hard rock of impenitence, many layers of daily sins and transgressions, many deposits of unholy thoughts. These first had to be dug through, and "Go call your husband" was the first strike of the pick breaking up the surface, revealing the foulness of life beneath.

There lies the ripeness for the harvest. Everyone has deep yearnings for living water that will leave them thirsting no more. And although this living water, the full Gospel, flows all around them, material interests, selfish preoccupations, wicked habits, lie piled up within, keeping the living water from springing up to everlasting life. The crust need but be broken up to reveal the filth

beneath, and the waterpots will stand forgotten over the shocking discovery.

But lest it end in despair, they must make another great discovery with the Samaritan woman.

C. The discovery that Jesus is the promised Messiah, her Savior, who had living water for her.

This discovery, "I that speak unto thee am He," sent the woman on her way, with the waterpot (v.26) left at the well and completely forgotten. With thoughts of sin and grace, thoughts of being lost and being saved, thoughts of guilt and forgiveness, throbbing within her, all former aims and purposes in life were momentarily forgotten. So with all! Let men discover Jesus as their Savior, and there will well up within them a surge of faith, hope, joy and elation, that will leave their empty pursuits in life all but forgotten.

But there is one other thing that accounts for the woman's forgotten waterpot.

II. *It was forgotten over a new drive within her*

A. This drive was automatic. "Come, see a man. . . . Is not this the Christ?" (Vv.28 and 29) A well of living water bubbles over. How could she keep such wondrous things to herself? The apostles (Acts 4:20); the early Christians (Acts 8:4). What is more—

B. This drive overruled all handicaps. Although this woman's reputation was not the kind that would inspire confidence, she boldly and joyously went and told, and was believed (v.39). This drive overcomes all shyness and hesitation. Living waters must be shared. If the heart is full, the mouth runs over. Because

C. This drive springs out of heart conviction (vv.29, 39, 42). Has your meeting with Jesus wrought this change in you? If not, is there some accumulation of worldliness, some pet sin, that keeps the living waters from springing up? Or is yours

a mere casual acquaintance, one that has not yet settled into a deep heart conviction? Go to the well—to His Word—and talk it over with Him.

Corvallis, Oreg.

A. W. SCHELP

SEPTUAGESIMA

LUKE 10:38-42

Many things are needful for life. In his explanation of the Fourth Petition Luther lists 23 separate items he thought needful. We today would not shorten but rather lengthen his list. However, needful as many things may be, the Bible, with its simple message of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, is the most needful among all the needs of man. This truth is emphasized many times in Scripture. The Lord Jesus Himself underscores it in our text with the words

"One Thing Is Needful"

I. *Martha thought she knew what was the one thing needful*

A. (V.38) Jesus was passing through Bethany. As was His custom, He entered the home of Mary and Martha to tarry a while. To this day Jesus passes through the cities of our land. To this day He enters the homes of His people. What blessed people are we, His people! How great the honor when Jesus enters our homes!

B. (V.39) As Jesus entered the home of Mary and Marthy, He wasted no time. Almost immediately, so it seems, He began to speak words of truth, peace, and life. It is for the same reason that Jesus enters our homes today. In fact, it is *through* His Word that He enters.

C. (V.40) Martha had not time to listen to Jesus. In her mind there was something more important to do. Jesus was tired and hungry. Instead of listening to Jesus she felt she must cook a meal for Him and prepare the guest chamber. This she thought the one thing needful. Often, too often, we

think the same. In our opinion many things are more important than family devotions in the home, regular worship in church, Bible study in Sunday school. At times we even consider "church work," serving on a committee to investigate the cost of a new carpet for the church aisle, making telephone calls to provide coffee and cake for a church social, etc., as more important than listening to Jesus through Bible reading and Bible study. This, we think, is the one thing needful.

II. *Mary knew what was the one thing needful*

A. (V.39) When Jesus began to speak words of truth, peace, and life, Mary sat down at her Savior's feet to hear what He had to say. She, too, knew that Jesus was hungry and weary. She, too, yearned to cook a meal for Him and prepare the guest chamber. However, when Jesus began to speak, she felt the other matter could wait. She knew that the one thing needful was to hear Jesus.

B. (Vv.41 and 42) It is not sinful to serve on a committee charged with the duty to investigate the cost of a rug for the aisle of the church. It is not sinful to make telephone calls in the interest of cake and coffee for a social evening at the church. However, there is one thing far more important. The one thing needful is the hearing, reading, believing, of God's Word. Nothing dare ever interfere with this. How clearly the words of Jesus teach this truth.

C. This text emphasizes a thought which is basic to Christianity. The important thing in Christianity is not what we say or do. The important thing is always what Jesus did and said. That is the one thing needful. May we, then, do or not do as we please? Certainly not! Having heard Jesus, having accepted in faith what Jesus did for us, we are to prove through our service to Jesus that we heard Him aright and that we truly believe that He is our Savior.

After we have heard Jesus as did Mary, we are to serve Him as did Martha. Never dare we forget that hearing and believing is the one thing needful. Never dare we forget that "Christian doing" is the inevitable fruit of "Christian hearing and believing."

Corpus Christi, Tex.

R. WIEDERAENDERS

SEXAGESIMA

MATT. 16:13-20

(The omission of any reference to the claims of the Roman Catholic Church that this text is the foundation of the power of the papacy comes from the conviction that for the majority of the members of our congregations the positive presentation of the truth of the text will enable them to refute the false interpretations of the text.)

"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" "But whom say ye that I am?" These two questions that Jesus asked of the Twelve form one of life's inescapable questions. The manner of our present life, the hope of our future life, depend on our answer to the question: "Whom say ye that Jesus is?" The abundance of material on the bookshelves regarding a quest for the historical Jesus and the life of Jesus points to the importance of answering correctly

Who Is Jesus Christ?

I. *The content of the correct answer*

A. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am," they gave a variety of answers (v.14). The situation has not changed in 1960. Some look on Jesus as a teacher, as a great example, etc. Others have either hazy or no convictions at all regarding Him.

B. Peter, who spoke for all the disciples, gave the correct answer (v.16). This answer describes correctly the person of Jesus as both the Son of man, true man in every respect, and the Son of God, the Son of the only living God, true God in every

respect. This answer describes correctly the work of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, whom God sent and anointed to be the Savior of fallen mankind.

This is the only correct answer. No compromise. Either Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of man, or He is the world's great fraud.

II. *The source of this correct answer*

A. Not flesh and blood, not human reason (v. 17; 1 Cor. 2:14). The impossibility of man learning the identity of Jesus through human research or human archeology. Even the information of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the study of the Essene community will not give the correct answer.

B. The Lord God in heaven alone can give the answer (v. 17b; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Cor. 2:13). For the correct answer we must go to the heavenly Father and His Word. Through that Word the Father gives His Holy Spirit and through Him a knowledge and understanding of the correct answer. The need to heed the admonition of the Gospel. (Luke 8:4-15)

C. When human reason and scientific research would seem to deny that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior, in that they seem to question the historicity of the Old and New Testaments, and when the devil comes with the temptation to have doubts regarding the person and work of Jesus, we remember the source for the correct answer—namely the Lord God in heaven and His inspired Word. (We may use this occasion to strengthen, if necessary, the faith of the high school and college student who is meeting the claims of human reason and research.)

III. *The blessings this correct answer gives*

A. Simon becomes Peter. The Simon who forgot this answer denied the Christ; the Peter who remembered this truth could stand before the Jewish court in all boldness (Acts 5:17-32). The truth that Jesus

is the Christ will make each individual who makes the same confession a rockman like Peter. Our faith and Christian character will show stability.

B. The church has a sure foundation (v. 18b). The foundation of the church is this Christ, as confessed (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11). The church may at times seem frail and powerless in the face of its enemies; the testimony of its members may be misunderstood and become silent as a result (v. 20), yet the church will stand firm and continue. That is our confidence and hope in difficulty, yea, also in persecution.

C. To those who make this answer and confession is given the office of the keys. These receive the power to proclaim the Gospel and to open the doors of heaven to the penitent and believing as well as the power to proclaim the Law and close the doors of heaven to those who heed not the call "Repent and believe the Gospel." What joy and comfort the repentant children of God have received from this blessing in time of sorrow and difficulty and contrition! Those who have cried out in the words of the Introit this blessing has indeed caused to sing out in the words of the Gloria Patri.

May we in this day of the quest for the historical Jesus rejoice in the answer which Peter voices and proclaim this truth, which comes from the heavenly Father to the blessing of those near and far.

Springfield, Ill.

LEWIS C. NIEMOELLER

QUINQUAGESIMA

MATT. 16:21-23

How would you feel if Jesus, the Lover of souls, called you a Satan, an enemy of God and of God's people? Possible! Jesus called one of the Twelve that. Could do the same today. Not only Khrushchev and Communists, but you and I could be called Satan by Christ. Jesus called Peter Satan

when He began to turn His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem and to explain in more detail His suffering for the sins of the world. Sunday before Lent. Announce Lenten services and theme. Observance of Lent not commanded by God, yet faithful study of things endured by Christ can draw us closer to God, strengthen faith and deepen love.

How Can We Get the Most out of Observing Lent?

I. *Get the facts concerning Christ's work for us*

A. Jesus gave His disciples the facts (v.21). Had spoken of His work before (John 2:19; 10:11; Matt. 12:39,40). Now He spoke more plainly. Specified that He would suffer many things, be killed, and be raised again.

B. He wants us to have the facts. What Jesus did, He did not for Himself but for us. He wants us to know what He did for us.

C. We need the facts. Some of us have not yet learned them. Others have forgotten some of them. Religious novels, movies, and plays popular in our time. Often much fiction mixed with facts, "make a story." We need the facts most of all because we are sinners (Rom. 3:23) and have separated ourselves from God by our sins (Is. 59:2). Only what Christ has done for us can bring us back to God. (John 14:6)

D. Let us therefore get the facts. Facts of Christ's work for us will be presented in Lenten services. Announce Lenten plans.

II. *Avoid human mistakes in judging the facts*

A. Peter made mistake of judging according to human reason the facts revealed to him by Christ. Loved his Lord and had made a fine confession (Matt. 16:16). Therefore rebuked Christ for thinking and speaking of suffering and death. By this act Peter showed he still had carnal ideas of the Messiah and His kingdom (John 6:14,15).

Jesus' firm rebuke shows how wrong Peter was. Though well meant, his thoughts were not heaven-born but earth-bound. Opposed to God's plan of salvation for mankind. Christ would not fall into the "death trap" which Satan had once set for Him (Matt. 4:10) and was now setting for Him through one of Christ's own disciples.

B. We could make the same mistake. If we doubted that Christ died for our sins and rose again, then we would be opposing God, regardless of what other pious thoughts we might have about Christ. Or if we looked upon the suffering of Christ only as an example of devotion to a cause and a commendable submission to suffering (and nothing more), we should misunderstand the very purpose for which He came. (Mark 10:45)

C. Therefore let us not look at Lent through the lens of our human reason, distorted by sin. Thereby we would both harm ourselves by losing what God has to offer us and set up ourselves as "Satans," enemies of God.

III. *Believe God's plan of salvation*

A. This part of God's eternal plan, "the things of God" (v.23). From eternity God had planned to redeem man by the suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son (2 Tim. 1:9). Throughout Old Testament, God promised a Savior. When time was full God sent His Son. (Gal. 4:4,5)

B. Jesus carried out God's plan. Because Jesus knew it was God's plan, He felt "that He must go unto Jerusalem" (v.21). Not a must of unwilling submission but of divine love. As a 12-year-old lad He said, "I must be about My Father's business." During His ministry He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." (John 4:34; see also Mark 10:45)

C. God's plan and Jesus' work are for us. God sent His Son into the world, not for His own sake but for ours (John 3:17). When Christ died, God was in the act on

our behalf, reconciling us to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). When Christ lived a perfect life under God's Law and when He died on the cross for sins, this was not for His own sake but for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus died on the cross—that's history. He died for us—that's salvation.

D. Let us therefore believe these things with all our heart. Of course, we don't get a stronger faith merely by wishing for it or saying, "I'm going to believe this." Faith and the strengthening of faith are gifts of

God through His Word. Therefore hear the Word in the Lenten services. Ponder the facts of Lent. Ask yourself, "What does all this mean for me?" Take time to meditate upon what Christ did for you, and ask God's blessing on your meditation.

Concl.: During this Lenten season let us get the facts of Christ's work for us, avoid error in judging these facts, and ponder them for the strengthening of our faith. Then it will truly be a blessed Lent. (Hymn 140:1)

Riverside, Calif. WILLIAM GRAUMANN