

8-1-1960

Homiletics: Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels Second Series

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Recommended Citation

Mahler, Kenneth (1960) "Homiletics: Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels Second Series," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 31, Article 58.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol31/iss1/58>

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels, Second Series

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 9:24-39

(In this text we encounter simple words used at various levels. This device, which is so typical of the Johannine report, must be carefully studied by the preacher. Also, the work of the Holy Spirit, as understood in Lutheran theology, is inserted in the first major section. This is in the light of John 16:8-11 and other sections which assign the continuing work of judgment to the Paraclete.)

We Must Be Careful to See the Lord Jesus When He Discloses Himself to Us in Word and Sacrament, So We Do Not Fall Under the Judgment of Being Blinded by Seeing Too Much.

I. We must be careful to see the Lord Jesus when He discloses Himself to us in Word and sacrament

A. The Lord Jesus discloses Himself to us.
(1) By Word and sacrament. In the text He shows Himself to the "outcast," after the near-ridiculous committee hearing (vv. 24 to 34). This would have been the high point of the man's life. To us He shows Himself in the proclamation, public and private, of the redemptive event on Calvary. His self-disclosure is just as personal in the sacraments. Draw on hearer's own experience.
(2) This is the power of the Holy Spirit at work. This is no less the presence of the Lord Jesus than His "historical" presence. It is a different kind (John 16:12-15). It is now the Spirit's revealing of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that passes judgment, leading those who are aware of their spiritual blindness to see their Savior, and condemning those who will not see Him because they will not recognize their spiritual blindness. Therefore

B. We must be careful to see Him.

(1) We must see through the "means" to the Son of man. This last, from v. 35, is a Messianic designation. The man knew the meaning of the expression, but did not as yet know who held the office. We must find more than *facts about* the Christ. We must come to confront *Him*, hear *Him*, worship and obey *Him*. (2) Seeing is believing. This kind of "sight" is even more than insight. It is the seeing of those who looked upon the brazen serpent (John 3:14, 15).—Jesus substitutes "believing" for "seeing." It is looking to Him, as the O.T. describes faith. Personal dependence on Him for forgiveness and life.

II. We must avoid the judgment of being blinded by seeing too much

A. The seeing that blinds. (1) Seeing everybody's "pitch." This is Mr. Cynic. He looks behind every word he hears to see what the "real" purpose is. Hears the Gospel proclaimed and wonders what the proclaimer is after. Therefore never takes the Word seriously. Modern man is conditioned to this by constant flow of manipulative advertising.
(2) Seeing everybody's compulsion. This is Armchair Analyst. Thinks that "psychological" explanation is final one. Need for forgiveness is admission of flaw in character with him, etc. Analyzes speaker and never hears Word. He is blinded to Word by his own "insight."
(3) Seeing everybody else's error. This is the Pharisee. He believes in salvation-by-being-right. His attitude leads him to see only the mistakes and weaknesses. This is attitude of council in text. This is danger in any church that stresses "rightness" of teaching. Here, as in two others above, we must remember that the Word is pro-

claimed by sinful human beings. We must hear the Word despite this.

B. The judgment involved. (1) This is no neutral matter. If we do not see when our Lord discloses Himself, we are despising Him. We are saying no to God's invitation to believe and live. Gospels are full of texts demanding decision (Matt. 12:30; John 3:19, etc.). (2) This is ongoing process in believer's life (John 16:12,13). We can never stand still. To say no at any point is to fall back. He discloses Himself as Lord of our life in point after point. He seeks to open our spiritual eyes. If we remain blind, we are judged.

Even this threat of judgment is an added appeal for us to see. In all things His great delight is when we do see—and live. Let this be our witness: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see."

South Weymouth, Mass.

KENNETH MAHLER

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 12:28-37

Purpose: To show the high worth of God's Law as a way of living. To show, above all, that all departures from this way have been atoned for by Him who is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and that by accepting Him we find the highest way of life.)

God's Law is an expression of His love for us. In revealing His will and asking us to follow it, God is acting in love. He has created us in such a way that we cannot function properly unless we love. Our text offers us an opportunity to consider

God's Way of Life

I. *Our duty toward it*

A. Not majoring in minors. Doing the will of God does not primarily consist in the petty piety of "I don't drink, and I don't

smoke." Jesus had just silenced the Sadducees regarding their erroneous attitude toward the resurrection. Thereupon one of the leading scribes asked our Lord, "Which is the first commandment?" (V. 28) The rabbinical school, of which this man was a member, had spun a fine web of lesser regulations around the Mosaic Law. They had laid down 613 minor ordinances, the number of Hebrew letters in the Decalog—"Straining gnats and swallowing camels," they were pitifully weak in showing *love*.

B. But loving God—not 50 per cent or 90 per cent or even 99 per cent, but with "all thy heart—soul—mind—strength" (v.30). This is our highest duty. There is only one God (v.29). He is a God of love. He is the Source of all good (1 Cor.4:7); His mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:23); above all, He redeemed us and made us children of God (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 3:26). As such He is deserving of our highest love and adoration.

C. Loving our neighbor (v.31)—God also wants us to love our neighbor. This includes all people, regardless of skin color or on which side of tracks they live. (With the Gospel of the day illustrate here the story of the Good Samaritan.)

D. "As thyself" (v.31). This is the degree of love which we should show to our neighbor. "Loving ourselves" is the measure of what we want true love to be. Loving is God's way of life, and it includes ourself. The story of the cross is the story of God bending down in mercy to accept and forgive our messed-up lives. Since God now accepts us for Christ's sake, we are to accept and love others.

II. *Our failure*

A. Loving God and neighbor with all of heart, soul, mind is a noble goal. It is better than rites and sacrifices (v.33). But it is an impossible goal. To exclude all rivals

and give God alone the throne of your heart—to love your neighbor as yourself, this is a standard before which we fall pitifully short (James 2:10; Eccl. 7:20; Is. 64:6; Luke 17:10). A recent survey among Lutheran youth shows that 75 per cent of those interviewed believe they are "justified before God by trying to live a good life, rather than by faith." How impossible!

B. Confession—Let's frankly admit it (1 John 1:8). A new car, our pleasures, a beautiful home, a large bank account—aren't these rivals with which we share our love of God? And our neighbor: Do we never envy him? Hold grudges? Fail to forgive? Wither him with our hostility? This is not God's way of life. Let's admit it as the publican in temple (Luke 18:13).

III. God's answer

A. Jesus Christ—Jesus now directed them to Himself as Savior (v. 35). The Pharisee was close to surrender (v. 34), having inquired into the great commandment of the Law, Jesus hoped he would inquire into the great news of the Gospel. Or that, having seen his inability to keep the Law, he would surrender to the Cross.

B. Who is He? He asked them the question of Matt. 22:42: "What think ye of Christ?" He is not merely David's son but Son of God; not merely human but divine. This He proved by (a) divine glory (John 1:14); (b) divine works (Mark 4:37; Matt. 15:32, etc.) (c) divine sacrifice (Col. 2:14). And through Christ God is continually acting in love toward us.

C. What do you think of Him? He is the ultimate Way of life. Going after empty idols, we become empty ourselves, but Christ tells us: John 10:10. Receiving the love of His Cross into our hearts, we have not only peace but power enabling us to love God and our neighbor, imperfect though our love may be. Moreover, He is not only the Way

of life but also the Way of eternal life, in whom all sins are forgiven and heaven is our home.

Topeka, Kans.

ALBERT C. BURROUGHS

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 12:9-21

God is quite anxious to have us look at someone this morning. For this is His word to us:

"Behold My Servant!"

I. Behold!

This is a big word, an important word. Indicates something miraculous and spectacular. For example: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a child and shall call His name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Is. 65:17); "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10); "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). "Behold" is a big word. Tells us: "Hold your breath! Something amazing and important is on the way!" So here in this text. This is an amazing servant, an out-of-this-world servant.

II. Behold MY Servant

A. God said this of Christ. (1) Jesus came not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38). That will is our faith in the Son (John 6:40); our remaining true to Christ (John 6:39); our resurrection (John 6:40). (2) Jesus literally lived by obedience to His Father's will. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me!" (3) This servant obeyed unto death (Phil. 2:7-9). Thus He paid for and obtained pardon for all our disobedience as well as enabled us to disobey sin (Rom. 6; 8:1,2) and to disobey death. On the Last Day, Death commands, "Do not rise!" But we disobey that order as Christ's

reviving voice raises us. (4) Christ was *God's* Servant exclusively. He did not allow Himself to become the slave of men, to be used by them (John 6:15). He departed to the hills when He saw the people wanted to make Him their slave. It is still the same today. It is not our wills that He obeys. He is *God's* Servant and not ours. He still "departs to the hills by Himself" when we would "come and take Him by force to make Him our king," our miraculous bread supplier. Remember, we call Him *κύριος*, not *δούλος*.

B. God says this of you. (1) You are God's "bought-with-a-price" slave. The blood of a slave has purchased you for God. The Servant's blood, the Servant's death—for you (Is. 53:1-11). (2) This is God's will for you servants: that you *see* the Servant Jesus (John 6:40); that you believe in this Servant (John 6:40); (a life-or-death look, John 3:14; faith is our greatest "good work," John 6:29); that you love one another, 1 John 3:23 (you can't have a body without breath, James 2:26); that you, like Servant Jesus, live by obedience to God's will (make this your food); that you, like Servant Jesus, be God's slave exclusively (you can't serve two masters, Matt. 6:24).

III. Behold My SERVANT

A. He broke a law to obey a law (vv. 9 to 14). He "broke" the Sabbath law as envisioned and set down by the church leaders in order to obey the supreme law—love! Sometimes we must do the same. When? After we have asked and honestly and sincerely answered this question: Lord, how can I best serve the temporal and eternal interests of all involved? This is the supreme question that must control and govern all our conduct and decisions.

B. Although God's Servant, He is the Lord of disease and misery (vv. 9-16). (1) The purpose of Christ's healing miracles: not simply glorified "publicity stunts" designed to attract attention to Himself; nor only

proofs of His divinity; rather an essential part of His task and mission (vv. 17-21). Our Lord *had* to heal, it was a vital part of His Messianic mission as Matthew here shows.

(2) A picture of Christ's healing. He is like a tenderhearted man who carefully avoids crushing with his foot a bent blade of grass that he stumbles upon (v. 20). The comfort of this: you may be bent with suffering, but you'll never be broken. He is like a man who blows on a dying ember and fans it back to life again. Comfort of this: the "dying ember" of your little faith will never go out completely. Christ is always there to blow on it and fan it back to blazing life again!

Richmond Heights, Mo.

H. E. HOHENSTEIN

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 14:12-15

Dinner with Jesus. That would be interesting! Then come along to the house of a prominent Pharisee. It was strictly a business dinner. Plain what the business of the Pharisee was, to destroy his Guest. The honored Guest, the honored Victim. A dinner not from the generosity of his heart, but to make it pay off. A dinner not to give Him but to get Him. The guests not congenial diners, but planted witnesses to gather damaging evidence (v. 1): "they watched Him," maliciously. It was an

Invitation to Dinner—with Corners
Without Corners

I. Invitation to dinner—with corners

A. The cornered Guest

Wonder of it is that Jesus said anything, went at all. Not only did He keep up His corner, but He lavished His words, time, teaching despite the treachery of the whole

crowd. How would you like to eat, much less talk, under such auspices? When you go to dinner with Jesus, you learn things and not just table manners. Stretched out, relaxed, feet off the floor, leaning on the elbow, Jesus addresses His host. While they are all wearing their daggers, let's say their butcher knives, see your Lord cut His corner with the gentle stroke of a butter knife. No matter how belligerent, negative your attitude, He will not cut that corner with you. If you ask Him, He'll come, even if your name is Pharisee. He will eat your food. What He says is the part you remember. Appropriately (v. 12) there is table talk. Jesus talks about how people invite one another; we call them

B. The cornered guests

V. 12: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper," who gets the invitations? The people who are in the same corner with you. Four general categories of people usually get our attention. "Friends, brethren (immediate family), kinsmen (relatives), rich neighbors." Prominent people whose company may improve our position, prestige, etc. There is nothing particularly instructive that people remember to make this kind of dinners for this kind of guests. Nor is Jesus forbidding it. What He is pressing between the lines: that it often leads to a great deal of artificiality, as He is hinting when He mentions the "rich neighbors" (v. 12), "lest they also bid thee again and a recompense be made thee." To summarize: "Today I'll eat your food, and next week it's your turn to feed me, and make sure it's every bit as good as what I have spent on you." "They never invite us any more, why should we invite them?" "It's their turn now." Guests indeed, cornered guests. An atmosphere of reciprocity. The behavior Jesus is portraying.

C. Dinner with corners

What we define under the theme suggested by the text as corner invitation, a corner dinner: waiting around the corner to get the invitation back. Instead of tasting, enjoying,

relaxing, there is estimating, calculating, figuring an angle to corner him into some favor, privilege. The business card is stuck between his teeth. There is not much blessedness in that, is there? You understand the phrase: Invitation to dinner—with corners? The Pharisee is beginning to feel a little warm.

II. Invitation to dinner—without corners

A. No corners

You want to do better than that? You want adventure, something interesting, blessed, relaxing, no pressure, no corners; something, let us say, Christian? "But" (v. 13), says Jesus. Underline that word 20 times, and can you hear Him dwell on that word as He clips the corner on His host and guests. "But! when thou makest a feast." By all means I want you to be feast-minded, I want you to be inspired right now to do it up right. Fill your life with such activity. V. 13: "Call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." You don't need Me if you will only entertain friends and relatives—let Me show you a different corner. But why should I call them? They have no claim, corner on me! Yes, just because they have none, when you listen to Me, they will corner you. Do it for Me, because I said so. I want it. You want to know what I teach? Isn't that why you invited Me? That's exactly what I am doing. By now the eyes of the Pharisee were bulging at this nonsense. And not only that, says Jesus, but I'll make you a promise:

B. No-corner blessings

V. 14: "Thou shalt be blessed," happy. Lord, You don't mean happy, You mean robbed. That costs money, never get it back. Jesus says you don't even want it back. "For they cannot recompense thee." Where is the blessing? When you give My kind of dinner to that kind of guests, Jesus says, you won't be all excited whether the guests will be satisfied; no anxiety whether you did enough: what is there is there, and it is all appreciated. You enjoy every part of giving it. There is

no calculating if you will get it back. This is a dinner that has no corners on anybody. As a host you do not claim anything, except that the guests take your food, sit at your table. They are your opportunity to give a dinner without corners. "No recompense."

Am I the sort of person Jesus here describes? Lord, help me to turn that corner more often. If you are going to dinner with Jesus today, it is this corner that He is waiting on. Sometimes He waits a long time. With what is your life mostly filled, with or without corners? Are you more of the v. 12 or the v. 13 variety? Which is better, more blessed? To say it once more: "You give me, and I'll give you; and if I don't see anything in it for me, clip him off!" Our trouble is we don't believe Jesus, "Thou shalt be blessed!" No corners on that promise.

C. A cornered guest

One of the guests so impressed (cornered) by what Jesus said that he said with some insight (v. 15): "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Dinner with God! Say it often to yourself, "I am on my way to dinner" (Rev. 19:9). I carry the card

in my pocket. It is my identification. I belong to the people of v. 13, the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. There are no corners on that invitation; Christ has taken all the corners on Himself. Cornered with nails to the cross. That makes me a Christ-cornered guest, glad to be cornered. I am now that kind of person; on my way to dinner with God.

Concl. — You still find it hard to give out invitations without hedging for corners? Jesus says, I have one more thing to say (v. 14b): "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Acts 24:15). Take the long view more often. Look what is waiting around the corner for every card-carrying, invited guest. Recompense? Looking for someone to pick up the tab? Look at the dinner, look at the guests; who paid for all that? Look at the head of the table. He is the answer. Look at that scene more often, and God the Holy Spirit will fill you with a real yearning to fill your life with giving invitations to dinner — without corners. (Luke 22:15)

Edgerton, Wis.

F. A. HERTWIG, JR.