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Homiletics: Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels Second Series

Arthur C. Nitz
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels, Second Series

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 20:27-40

Life in its journey from birth to death is like the course of a great river flowing from its headquarters to the ocean. Sometimes its course is straight and true, sometimes it meanders now north, now east, now west, now south, apparently without direction. Sometimes it is placid, sometimes turbulent, now it is shallow, now deep and able to carry commerce for those who live on its banks. It serves also by furnishing the waters for irrigation and the fish that provide men with food and sport. Is your life like that? It should have direction. It should be reasonably placid, and it should serve the world through which it passes.

How Can Your Life Be the Good Life?

I. *It is right when you trust God*

A. When our Lord used the term "worthy to obtain that world" (v. 35) He meant faith in God's promises.

1. This is not a personally achieved worthiness. There is no such worthiness possible for men (Eph. 2:8,9).

2. But it is a bestowed worthiness (Rom. 6:23) apprehended by faith (John 3:16).

3. Made ours through means of grace, Word and Sacrament (1 Cor. 2:12,13).

4. This results in a new heart and a new direction in life (Rom. 12:1,2).

B. The new life is different.

1. Not a preoccupation with the things of this life: marriage, begetting children and rearing them, and the pursuit of personal pleasure, in general (vv. 34,35).

2. But its great concern is the Kingdom and its furtherance. Levirate law was to make

possible the principle of inheritance with its overtones of keeping the Messianic line intact.

3. Our prime purpose in life, too, is to aid the completion of God's purposes for men. Even in our marrying and giving in marriage and in rearing our children this must be obvious. Caution against mixed marriages. Rearing our children to be concerned for God's business. Prepare them not only to prepare for eternity but to prepare others for eternity.

4. Avoid the drives of the world: sex for sex' sake; money for money's sake; fun for fun's sake.

5. Service to humanity not an end in itself but a means to draw the attention of men to Him who is our Life. "Glorify God in your lives."

6. This will give us the so necessary one-foot-in-heaven character (v. 36). Have you these interests? Or are you pursuing your own pleasures and concerns, with "religion" nothing more than a way to secure God's help?

II. *It is right when your new life is guided by Scripture*

A. The way of this new life must be established by God's Word.

1. The Sadducees rejected the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as untenable because it contradicted their conclusions. Assumed erroneously that there would be a continuance in heaven of sex relationships. Mohammedans, Mormons, Jehovah's witnesses. Hence their view one wife for seven husbands was immoral.

2. So many today become guilty of "not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29).

3. Since the first chapters of Genesis seem to be contradicted by the assured conclusions of modern scientists many are ready to discount God's Word altogether and to compromise its plain statements.

B. The intellect is to make Scripture plain and relevant to our times. It is not to establish what in Scripture is true. It is to accept, not to reject, what is palatable to man's pride.

C. We use Scripture correctly when, as Christ does here, we use it to interpret Scripture (v. 37).

D. Men are to live unto God (v. 38). These truths must be applied to life.

Concl.—Such is a happy life, a good life, and a blessed life, for it will lead right into heaven, as it did Enoch, who walked with God . . . for God took him (Gen. 11:5; 5:24).

San Francisco, Calif. ARTHUR C. NITZ

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 12:1-8

One of the major conflicts in our day is between nations which have different ideas about the role and function of government. Should the people serve the government or the government the people? Is it a government of the people, by the people, and for the people? Or is it a rule of the governing, by the governing, for the governing? I think that every American, regardless of political affiliation, would agree that government is for the people, not the people for the government. It is right here, however, that some people become confused as to the purpose and function of God's rule and government of His people. Many people believe that mankind has been made to fulfill God's laws rather than that God has given His

precepts for His creatures. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were so confused. To set them as well as us right as to our attitude toward His Laws, the Holy Spirit has preserved today's Gospel. I speak to you on

The Law Behind the Law

I. *The Pharisees regarded the Law as means of salvation*

A. The account of our Gospel story. Jesus and His disciples are walking through a grain field on the Sabbath. The Pharisees accuse the disciples of working on this day, something strictly forbidden, because they rubbed out the grains and ate them.

B. To be sure, the Law of God forbade work on the Sabbath (Ex. 31:12 f.). Story of the stoning of the first violator of this precept.

C. Not understanding the spirit of the Law, or the law behind the Law, the Pharisees felt that a literal fulfillment, not only of this Sabbath law but also of all of God's laws was all that was required. Externally they observed God's laws to the letter.

D. Because of the literal observance of the Law, they felt justified in God's sight. Not knowing or understanding the true meaning of the Law, or the law behind the Law, they became satisfied with themselves, e. g., the Pharisee in the temple at prayer. Brazenly they could come up to the Lord with a smirk of self-righteousness and ask, "What lack I yet?" and in substance reply, "Oh, that—that I have kept from my youth." There was no feeling of sin. No crying out, "I, a poor miserable sinner!"

E. Pharisees are literalists; literalists often tend to be Pharisees. Their lack of knowledge of God's law behind His laws makes them proud, arrogant, "better than thou." "That's what the law says," they reply with haughty air. This attitude can be seen also in the action taken by those who caught the

woman in the very act of adultery. We caught her red-handed—the Law has been violated—she must die. Today's Gospel (Luke 14:1-11), too, shows their spirit.

F. The person who does not understand the law behind the Law finds such a law easy to fulfill. The work religions of man are an easy type of religion. "Taste not, touch not, handle not," this is easy. This breeds smug self-satisfaction.

G. Such literalists plagued Jesus. The gospels are full of the accounts of such as watched His every action. They still plague the church today, not only the sects who forbid everything from the use of lipstick to the color of your clothes but also those who can think of any of God's precepts only in the literal manner. They have never heard that the Law of God enjoins love, joy, peace, long-suffering, patience, hope.

II. *Jesus taught them the real spirit and purpose of the Law*

A. Jesus used a number of illustrations to show them the real purpose and spirit of the Law.

1. The account of David eating the show-bread (vv. 3, 4).

2. The priests working harder on the Sabbath than on the other days of the week (v. 5).

B. Flatly Jesus tells them the real purpose of the Law was the good of man. "The Sabbath was made for man." The reverse is not true (Ex. 31:14). This is true not only of the Third Commandment but of all of God's laws (2 Macc. 5:19). "God did not choose the people for the place's sake but the place for the people's sake."

C. Therefore the important thing behind the Law is its spirit. As in Matt. 9:13, so also here (v. 7) the Lord lays bare the real spirit of the Law: "I will have mercy and

not sacrifice." "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," love to God and love to our fellow man. This law behind the simple letter of the Law, they did not understand. Few do.

III. *This law behind the Law becomes apparent only when you know the Law-giver*

A. The reason for the Pharisees' narrow and wrong concept of the Law was simply this: They did not know Jesus, v. 6 (whether the Greek is a person or a thing, we must of necessity understand it of our Lord Himself. Only in the latter case we must suppose Him to point to His own body, as He did when He said, "Destroy this Temple").

B. Before them stood the Lord of the Sabbath. If the priests in the Old Testament could work on the Sabbath in the presence of the Lord, His disciples working for Him, standing in His very presence, could rub out a few grains on the Sabbath.

C. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He had come just because man could not fulfill the true spirit of the Law. He, the God of love and mercy, fulfilled this Law for man; in man's stead He bore the punishment which such breaking of this Law naturally brought with it.

D. Now because of His redemptive love and mercy, we once again also learn the real meaning of the Law, the law behind the Law, so that He now says to His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Thus did our service begin this morning: "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments. Deal with Thy servant according to Thy mercy. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord" (Introit for the 17th Sunday after Trinity). "Teach me Thy precepts, O Lord!"

FREDERICK E. GESKE

Minneapolis, Minn.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 6:5-15

(The current abuse and misuse of prayer will make the preacher doubly glad for every opportunity to instruct his people in the right use of this privilege. The goal of this sermon is that the hearer will look to the Lord to shape his prayers.)

Prayer is not a gimmick. It is not a tool for prying loose some of God's riches. Prayer is not a lever for budging a grudging God. It is not a means for getting "things 'n stuff" that my less adept neighbor does not acquire because he is not a clever pray-er. If I follow the instruction of my Lord, I will never regard prayer as a maneuver for trying to bring God into a position where He has no alternative but to bless me with earthly gifts. Rather my prayer life will be turned more and more in the direction of

Making the Lord's Prayer My Prayer

I. First, a twofold word of caution from our Lord

A. Against theatrical, street-corner prayers (vv. 5, 6).

1. There is a place and a need for public prayers and public worship. Jesus called the temple a house of prayer. The Christian is glad, as today's Introit suggests, to "go into the house of the Lord." But prayer is ultimately an affair between the suppliant and his Maker. Therefore "into thy closet!"

2. Prayers are not for display. They are not to impress, but they are to express what is in our heart. Prayers are not for showing men our faith but for asking God for faith.

B. Against vainly repetitious prayers (vv. 7, 8).

1. Prayer is not a matter of telling God over and over what we need. From eternity He has known of these needs, especially of our need of salvation. God does not need our repeated reminders to keep abreast of our daily needs. Prayer is not for me to

inform God but to ask God to re-form me and my will.

2. Prayer is not a matter of wearing God out and nagging Him into submission.

3. God is not like a U.S. senator who is always influenced by the number of letters he receives from his constituency.

4. Beware of hucksters of religion who tell you to keep on saying to yourself certain prayer formulas.

5. Paul counted the times he prayed for relief from so great a trouble as his "thorn in the flesh."

6. Persistence in prayer is, indeed, taught by Jesus. We should keep on praying for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13) and growth in faith that we may be ready to meet the Judge (Luke 18:1-8). But an insistent demanding of temporal favors is not sanctioned by our Lord. It is "folly to measure prayer by the yard" (Lenski).

II. The petitions of the Lord's Prayer give me the cue for the contents of my prayers (vv. 9-13)

A. Spiritual matters have priority. Even as the first three commandments (cf. Gospel: "the first and great commandment") have to do with man's relationship with and duty toward God, so the first three petitions focus prayer's thoughts not on self but on God.

B. There isn't an ounce of selfishness in the Lord's Prayer. What a far cry from the notion that if you learn to "use" prayer you can get practically anything your heart desires!

C. The only petition for temporal blessings asks for bread, not for cake; for necessities, not for luxuries; for food "for the day," not for security for tomorrow.

D. The child will continue to beg for things he does not need and so will the childish pray-er. The adult Christian who has learned to pray after the manner of his Lord will outgrow such childish prayers and

learn more and more to dwell also in his prayers on the spiritual and the eternal.

E. The desired outcome of an adult Christian's prayer is not that a man should change God but that God should change man! Cf. today's Collect: "mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts!"

III. *A forgiving spirit is prerequisite to praying the Lord's way (vv. 14, 15)*

A. The Lord's emphasis on our willingness to forgive is not just to reinforce the Fifth Petition but to explain the attitude necessary for praying aright the entire Lord's Prayer.

B. God Himself is the supreme Example of the forgiving spirit. The whole story of His relationship to us, the whole Gospel of our blessed Lord, is a message of forgiveness.

C. From the first "our" to the last "us" in the Lord's Prayer we are to pray as brothers and sisters in the circle of God's children — forgiven and forgiving! (Cf. Epistle, v. 9)

My Lord's payment for sin becomes my payment. His life becomes my life. His home will become my home. May His prayer also become my prayer!

Cleveland, Ohio

BERTWIN FREY

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 6:19-23

What things are important to you? What are you striving for? What are your main ambitions? For the typical American these goals are tied in with money and material possessions. A man is judged by the money he makes and the social level he has attained. A wife judges her husband's success or failure by the size of the pay check he brings home. In this text from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus bluntly states that

earthly possessions are not enough in themselves to make a man happy and satisfied with his life. Something more than earthly things is needed.

If You Want to Be Well Off

I. *Do not settle for earthly treasures*

A. Earthly treasures are not lasting treasures (v. 19). Moth and rust corrupt them. Moths destroy clothes, rugs, tapestry, etc. The "lifetime" of such products is short. "The fashion of this world passeth away" (James 5:1-3). Rust corrodes and destroys products of metal.

B. Earthly treasures have only temporary value (v. 19). Thieves may steal them. The wealthy fear thieves, must constantly be on guard. Riches fleeting. Prov. 23:5: "Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle" (Job 20:28; Ps. 49:10). At death nothing is left. 1 Tim. 6:7: "We brought nothing into this world, etc."

C. Desire for earthly treasures leads to spiritual blindness (v. 23). The "evil eye" looks for the wrong treasures. Greed destroys faith, e.g., Judas (Matt. 26:15 ff.). His money brought misery and sorrow; his greed left no room for Christ. As greed progresses, the darkness becomes more intense. No other darkness compares with that of the condemned in hell. Governor Felix (Acts 24) interested in Paul's message of Jesus, more interested in ransom payment, sent Paul away, waited for a "convenient season" that never came.

D. Avarice leads to family troubles (Prov. 15:27); disappointment (Eccl. 5:10); folly (Jer. 17:11); apostasy (1 Tim. 6:10); misery (James 5:3). Achan (Joshua 7:21-26) disobeyed God's orders when the walls of Jericho fell. He buried his treasure. When his sin was exposed, he was buried with his treasure.

E. A man and his money tell the story of his life (v. 21). Luke 12:13 ff.: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the

things which he possesseth." The rich man is called a "fool" (v. 20). Then, what about money? We need money, but we must look upon it as a gift of God and upon our material possessions as blessings of God. Our first objective must not be money but gratitude to God for His goodness and mercy. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." (Matt. 6:33)

II. *Seek heavenly treasures*

A. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (v. 20). They will not be destroyed, for our almighty God has promised to preserve them. They are everlasting. Rev. 2:10: "Be thou faithful unto death," etc.; "incorruptible, undefiled" (1 Peter 1:5); will not be stolen. (Matt. 10:28)

B. How do we get these heavenly treasures (v. 21)? We must give first place to God in our hearts. How? Come like the publican (Luke 18:13): "God be merciful to me, a sinner"; lay your burden of sin down on the altar of divine grace and mercy, and plead with God for forgiveness; listen when God assures you, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Cf. today's Gospel (Matt. 9:1-8). You cannot buy pardon, love, happiness, or peace. The only way to get them is to accept them from Jesus, your Savior and Redeemer.

C. How do we keep these heavenly treasures (v. 22)? Keep looking to Jesus, through eyes of faith. When the eye is sound, the body is sound and healthy. Keep looking to Jesus by responding to His love. Commit yourself to God's way of life; be grateful for money, possessions; be guided by the Spirit of God through the Word and prayer; be filled with peace and contentment; be devoted to the service of God and man. Look to Jesus, if you want to be well off, and He will give you His heavenly treasures prepared for you in the mansions of glory. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. (Matt. 6:33)

Omaha, Nebr. ELMER E. MUELLER

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY MATT. 7:24-29

(The illustration of the house builders is the conclusion to the Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The text is an illustration of the blessing that comes to those who hear the words of Jesus and "do them" and the judgment that befalls those who hear His words and "do them not." The pitfall in this text are the words "do" and "do them not." The temptation to moralizing is no small one. To avoid this pitfall the preacher must come to grips with the words *ποιεῖ μου τοὺς λόγους*. Jesus here refers to His preceding words in the sermon. The sermon is a condemnation of the morality by the Law as the Pharisees taught it. In the sermon Jesus calls for trust in the heavenly Father, who has sent the Christ to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. In Christ the believer surrenders Himself to God completely, not in simple outward conformity and morality. In Christ the believer obtains the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.)

Today we reflect much confusion about our goals in life. This is true of young people choosing a vocation. Equally true of older people wondering what they are doing with their vocations. True of us as a nation. All of this is related to the deeper problem of what we build our life on. Jesus tells us that we must build our lives on Him. Let us see how

Jesus Is the Foundation for Our Lives

I. *We must build our lives on the words of Christ*

A. We build our lives with all that we think, say, or do.

1. Jesus condemns simple outward morality. This was behavior of Pharisees. Strict outwardly. No inner commitment. Hence Jesus' condemnation in the sermon (ch. 5: 21—6:23).

2. Jesus calls for the complete surrender of the total man to God. Highlight the contrasts with the above. The Law bores down to the minutest details of a man's life. The Law exposes him. This leaves man with only alternative of surrendering to the full mercy

of God. In the sermon: the Lord's Prayer (ch. 6:24-34; ch. 7).

B. We must build our lives on the foundation of all that Christ thought, said, and did.

1. We are always building on the foundation of someone else. Nothing in our lives is completely original. We inherit life, speech, culture. Real problem is that we also inherit sin and death. Whole business is colored by death. We are children of Adam (Rom. 5). We inherit disobedience and the whole mess that goes with it. This language of death, the philosophies about it, the confusion in history of it, is the sand (v. 26).

2. When we build on Christ we build on the original foundation for life. He is the Rock (v. 24). He is the Return to the original in the creation, the Second Adam (Rom. 5). He provides the righteousness and the obedience. He assures us that the Creator is friendly to us (ch. 6:24-34). Jesus is the Return to the original in the prophets (ch. 5:17-20). He is the Second Moses. He reinterprets the will of God. He gives the new commandment (John 15). He works the new creation in the resurrection (Rom. 6; 1 Cor. 15).

II. *Our lives built on Christ will survive the ultimate test*

A. Our lives are filled with crises and tests.

1. We face these crises every day. They

come in all shapes, forms, and sizes (vv. 25, 27). The varying intensity of the storms. No one escapes them. They are common to all men. We have become used to talking about it: "that's life!"

2. We may face these crises in different ways. Even the lives built on the sand of above (B, 1) can weather many of these crises. Sometimes a little humor can get people by. A sentimental poem or song. The peace of mind cult. Christians rely on the words of Christ.

B. Our lives face an ultimate test.

1. This test and crisis not everyone passes (vv. 26, 27). The storm is death. Death destroys. Death is the Judgment. The fall is great. Without Christ there is nothing to uphold it. This is final. The life has been wasted. It has been foolishness.

2. Those who build on Christ stand the test (v. 25). The storm comes for them, too. But the life stands (1 Thess. 4). The Christian life is built upon the resurrection. We live in the now in this confidence.

Concl.: Daily we should note how poorly people put their lives together, how poorly they are equipped to face the ultimate test. Let us heed the words of Christ, build upon Him that we may rest secure in the face of the inevitable.

HARRY N. HUXHOLD

Minneapolis, Minn.