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Homiletics: Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

justus P. Kretzmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

(All the outlines are furnished by the Rev. Justus P. Kretzmann, Florissant, Mo. The suggested general theme is "The Savior Comes and Reigns.")

CHRISTMAS EVE LUKE 1:30-33

In church on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday!
This is something special in 1962.

Too often Christmas can be buried under tons of tinsel and wrapping papers. Sometimes even the church may be guilty of overemphasis on "the things" surrounding the birth of Christ—the angels, the shepherds, the star, the animals, the inn. The historical events and the setting may overshadow the purpose of Christmas. The words of the Angel Gabriel and of Mary provide the proper emphasis.

The Savior Comes

This is why God gives us Christmas. This is the fulfillment of all God's promises. This is why God drew all historical events and people to the little town of Bethlehem some 19 centuries ago.

- I. He shall be called Jesus—
His name indicates His purpose.
 - A. He will save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).
Man needs a Savior.
The fall into sin
The years of waiting
The prophecies are fulfilled.
 - B. Other Names (Is. 9:6, 7)
He is *called* by these names.
He is all of these things.
- II. He shall be called the Son of the Most High—
His name indicates His person.
 - A. The Son of God
He is divine.
He is God.

B. The Son of man

He is human.

He is man.

III. He comes and reigns

A. He came in the flesh.

B. He comes in Word and sacraments.

C. His kingdom is everlasting.

So much of what we associate with Christmas is very temporary. The tree withers, the lights are put away, gifts wear out.

But not if we have received *the Gift* of Christmas—Jesus Himself. Then life grows and flourishes, lights continue to shine in a dark world, the Gift is everlasting.

May the Savior come into your heart.

May He reign in your life.

May He come and reign for others through you.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1 JOHN 3:1-5

What is Christmas all about? A recent book is titled *All About Christmas*. It tells about the evolution of Santa Claus, gifts, greenery, the yule log, Christmas foods, candles, bells, cards, seals, and finally something on carols. The author admits that in our society we have a rather complicated celebration, one that is "a strange medley of Christian and pagan rites."

How is it with us? Many of the things surrounding Christmas are not wrong in themselves, but we must be careful that they do not obscure our celebration of the reason for Christmas.

The shadow of the cross is cast by the light of the heavenly glory over the manger.

Christmas and Good Friday and Easter are all very close together in the mind and heart of God.

Today we have a message from the heart of God to the hearts of men. St. John sums it up in words from his first epistle

See What Love the Father Has Given Us

I. The love of the Father

We know that Christmas was necessary because of what man was.

We see the great love of the Father for us even when we were His enemies.

A. The Gift of His only-begotten Son shows the great love of the Father. He gave the best He had.

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

He is not merely a baby in a manger but a Savior.

He appeared to take away sin.

He was born to die that we might live.

In Him there is no sin. He was perfect and holy to make us perfect and holy.

B. He makes us children of God.

We are God's children now.

We are heirs of eternal life.

We shall be like Him.

We shall see Him as He is.

II. This love of the Father given to us changes us—we should never be the same after Christmas as we were before.

A. The world did not know Him.

Very few people in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Palestine, were aware of the birth of the Christ.

A few shepherds, the innkeeper, Herod and the Wise Men.

The world did not know Him in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, or on Calvary.

The world—even at Christmas in the year of our Lord 1962—does not know Him.

B. The world doesn't recognize us.

We are the followers of the Christ. Do people know from our celebration of this holy day that we bear His name?

Is our Christmas really so different? Blinded by lights which do not lighten, deafened by music which does not exalt, turned away from the manger by the call of the marketplace, many in today's world do not understand us because they do not understand Him who came this day so many centuries ago from the fullness of the Father's love to the emptiness of man's life.

But that is what we want. We would be children of the loving Father.

Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

REV. 14:1-5

What happens after Christmas? The gifts have been put to use or exchanged. The decorations have lost some of their luster or have been taken down. The special gathering of friends becomes a memory. These are some of the external results of the celebration of a holiday which we all share.

What happens after Christmas for a Christian should be much different and more significant. He may have been a part of all the things which surround Christmas today, but for him it was different because he knew the purpose of Christmas. For him life should never be the same again.

You remember what the shepherds did after they had been to Bethlehem. They returned to their work, "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20). We should do no less.

In the last book of the Bible St. John gives us some direction for the days after Christmas and all the days that God may give us. He writes about

The Lamb and His Followers

In the verses preceding this text St. John was writing of the many terrible, evil things which would come upon the earth. He follows with words of comfort and strength and hope for the followers of the Lamb.

I. The Lamb

A. The Lamb of God

Recall the words of John the Baptist, seeing Jesus walking near the Jordan River, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

He brought together all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Lamb of God.

B. The Savior

He would take upon Himself all sins of all men.

The Baby of Bethlehem is the Christ of Calvary.

II. The Followers

A. Mount Zion, symbolic of the holy Christian church throughout the world.

B. The 144,000

This is a vision. This is symbolic and figurative language. 144,000. One thousand gross. A large number, a number of completeness.

They are the believers.

C. The music of heaven. Strange, marvelous, wonderful.

An echo of the Christmas music we have heard.

A new song, never heard on earth. Beyond ultra high fidelity, stereophonic.

D. The redeemed

They are the followers of the Lamb.

They are the firstfruits for God.

They serve God.

Persecution may come again also for us. It may be by fire, imprisonment, or the sword. It may be by the attitude which people take toward us when they see that we are followers of the Lamb.

As we approach the close of another year of grace the words of Rev. 7:9-17 have special meaning.

NEW YEAR'S EVE Ps. 102:27, 28

Time is a strange thing. We can't stop it, much as we sometimes might wish we could. A child grasps the pendulum of a clock and shouts, "I've stopped the time." He has only stopped the clock, and it will always show the wrong time until it is started and regular again. But time has continued.

We have set up various periods of time in minutes, hours, days, and years. So much of life is regulated by clocks and calendars. We really should try to use time and not let time use us.

Certain events like birthdays, anniversaries, and the change from one year to another make us more aware of the rapid passage of time. These occasions give us special opportunities to pause and reflect.

Even though this is New Year's Eve, we shall be tomorrow pretty much what we are tonight unless we reexamine ourselves and reevaluate our goals.

God's Word has something to say to us in these closing hours of the old year.

In the prayer of Psalm 102 the psalmist addresses the Lord and says

Thy Years Have No End

Everything that we know in life on earth has a beginning and an end. But not God.

Everything that we know in life on earth changes. But not God.

I. The years are God's

This we must know and remember.

The years really don't belong to us. They belong to God.

They are loaned to us to use. This fact should determine our use of minutes, hours, days, and years.

Are you satisfied with your use of this past year?

Are there things you did which could point to this as God's year? Or must we not again, as always, say we have been unprofitable servants? "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

A. Only God is eternal.

He always was, He is, and He will be. Years come and go, but God *is*.

B. Only God is always the same.

He is unchangeable in the midst of change.

This is comfort and hope and security.

The Epistle for New Year's Eve (1 Peter 1:22-25 RSV) reminds us that "all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord abides forever." The Gospel (Luke 13:6-10) brings us the story of the fig tree which did not bear fruit. The suggestion is made that it should be cut down. The Lord answers, Let it alone this year, and see if it will bear fruit next year.

II. We are God's

Important to remember that as the years are God's, so we are God's own.

A. As His children we dwell secure.

In a time of uncertainty and insecurity here is something certain and secure.

Made His own by creation, by redemption, by sanctification.

B. Our posterity shall be established before God.

Our example for our children in word and deed.

The security which spans the years in time.

The year ahead uncertain and forbidding in many ways.

We do not know the future. But God does. We walk by faith, remembering that His years have no end.

THE CIRCUMCISION
AND NAME OF JESUS

ROMANS 8:24-32

Happy New Year! Who knows how "happy" it will be? What makes a new year "happy"? Will this year be for you a "better" year than last year?

Today, if God so wills, we write on the first of the 365 new, clean pages of the book of 1963. Can we find a word of dedication for this new book, a motto which will affect and influence everything else that will follow?

This can be a good year — a happy year — a blessed year — if we will day by day remind ourselves: If God is for us, who is against us?

If God Is for Us

I. In everything God works for good with those who love Him

who are called according to His purpose

These are good words at any time, but especially at the beginning of a new year of grace.

There are no exceptions. In everything God works for good. Are you worried about the future? Are you concerned about yourself, your family, the world? As a child of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, made His very own for time and for eternity, you can safely put all the days of this year in His strong and holy hands.

God has known you from the beginning.
He has chosen you to be His child.
He has called you.
He has justified you.
He will glorify you.

II. The Spirit of God helps us in our weakness

How often we long and yearn for help!
God has it and wants to give it.

He brings comfort and strength and hope through His Word.

We are weak in our prayers, but the Spirit intercedes for us.

We have the hope of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ created and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

III. God will give us all things in Christ

He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. In Him we have forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation.

Will He not also give us all things with Him? Who knows what this year holds for us? It may bring sickness and sorrow; it may bring physical and material reverse,

but we can be sure that in these things— or especially also through these things— God works for good with those who love Him.

Knowing God and believing in Jesus Christ makes all the difference in the world.

How many people are in church this Tuesday morning? Or where were they last night? Or how many churches have services today when we celebrate the circumcision and the name of Jesus?

Maybe this year would also be better and happier if they had heard the words of the Epistle for today (Gal. 3:23-29), with its emphasis on the fact that we are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Many things and many people seem to be, and are, against us. But for the first day of a new year and all the days and years that God may give us we should remember: "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?"

This is the key for a blessed new year.