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Homiletics: Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

(All of the outlines are furnished by Professor David S. Schuller, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. The suggested general theme is "Lent: Life Under the Cross.")

ASH WEDNESDAY

LUKE 23:32-34

Relation to Day: The goal of Ash Wednesday is framed by the accents of the O.T. lesson and the Gospel. The cry comes in the moment of another passing present: ". . . return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping . . . and rend your hearts and not your garments." Our Lord reminds us that we are to fast, not that it may be seen by men "but by your Father who is in secret." We must beware of the danger of destroying the rhythm of this worship cycle by dwelling on the Passion during the Sundays of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, however, holding the Christ of the Cross before us with His Word of forgiveness can provide an opportunity to sharpen the entire purpose of this period. Many worshipers will need the help of their pastor to avoid sentimentality. The sensitive person may "feel" with our Lord in His dying and still miss the redemptive purpose. All will need the reminder that our contrition during this period is not something we offer to God in order to make us worthy of celebrating Good Friday and Easter.

Introduction: It is fearfully easy to forget the Cross. We take it for granted to a point where its tremendous message is overlooked. A mist of familiarity covers it. A parallel is in the practice of people in small European towns to build war memorials after the First World War. A solemn moment of dedication filled all with a deep surge of emotion. For a long time they were struck by the

memorial's presence. Soon women rested in its shadow on the way to market, laughing and chattering, unaware of its presence. It became a part of the landscape. The Cross may become a part of our mental landscape.

Lent has to do with the Cross. Goal: to make it real. It has been real all along. Gives grace and power. But our dullness and callousness may come before it. We may have been looking but not seeing. This is the period when we are to see again that God lays His claim upon us. The Cross is to cover every hour, become real and awesome as the mystery of God's love and mercy. Focus upon center: Insight into heart of God as He reaches out to us with

The Word of Forgiveness

I. The setting of forgiveness

A. The Cross as climax. We view the drama of Golgotha. Stand beneath the Cross. Watch body wracked with pain. Then first word is spoken: "Father, forgive them . . ." From these words we know what is going on in His heart. This is goal toward which entire life was directed. Words of teaching and miracles were but a prelude. This was the climax. A divine act. Drama of redemption.

B. The plan of God. Forgiveness is always remarkable. We see human examples of forgiveness. Miracle here is the spirit in which it was done. Jesus has already begun to face full agony. Crisis of the Garden. Suffering and pain. Realization of "being made sin for us." Such depth of suffering that He would have avoided death if possible. Final prayer: "Not My will, but Thine be done." He forgives. "For they know not what they do." Looking beyond the will of

the crazed mob, He saw the will of the Father. Beyond the plan of the Sanhedrin was the plan of God. They would destroy Him on the cross: God would restore us through the Cross.

II. The need for forgiveness

A. Face reality of sin. The Cross begins with word of forgiveness. To have significance for us, we must face our sin. Not until it becomes appalling will forgiveness have meaning. If sin is but petty display of temper and irritating bit of selfishness, then drama of redemption becomes a farce. Must see sin's reality, in its full dimensions. Men underestimate the significance of sin by picturing God as sitting on a sunny mountain and regarding man's gravest offenses as the naughtiness of puppies playing on a hearth rug. To face sin, we must look not only at actions but at motivations behind them. View goals and direction of whole life.

B. Sin measured by Cross. We need a true measure for our sin. We have been using wrong yardstick all along if we have measured self by actions of others — not much better or worse. Must measure sin by the Cross, not in terms of its action but in light of the One against whom the action is committed. Differences between slapping a youngster, resisting an officer, rebelling against God. Look at the Cross. God is not smiling at naughtiness, but sacrificing and giving His all, for all is needed.

III. The flow of forgiveness

A. Source is the Cross. Forgiveness and the Cross are forever combined. Only from the Cross can these words be spoken with meaning. What happened there makes forgiveness possible. It is wrong to think that it is the result of human action and that, since men repent, God must forgive, as a parent is shamed into forgiving a child. Not so here. Men are not repentant; they are angry and screaming. God takes the initia-

tive. Forgiveness begins with Him. The removal of sin eliminates the barrier between God and man. Restoration of original relationship.

B. Flows to us through the Gospel and Holy Communion. When at times our dullness is great or we find that the pathos of the story does not touch us, God overcomes this difficulty too. He assures us that the power of the Gospel does not depend on our emotions. It is the channel of His action. Its words bring to us His forgiveness. In receiving the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrament the power of forgiveness flows in the words "My body, given for you, My blood shed for you."

Conclusion: In contemplating the Cross in Lent we are not only to feel bad as we think of what they did to Jesus, but we are above all to sense God's action, His plan, His sacrifice, His purpose. All this is framed within this Word of Forgiveness.

INVOCAVIT

2 COR. 6:1-10

Relation to Day: This sermon attempts to place the text into the dramatic setting of the preparation of the catechumens in the early church for their baptism on Easter Eve. Christians today are invited to hear its message with the same sincere attitude of heart and mind. In this way the Sundays in Lent do not become additional "Passion Sundays." For as liturgical scholars remind us, these Sundays are in Lent but are not a part of Lent. The present sermon seeks to develop the idea of "working together with Him," mentioned at the beginning of the text, and suggests for the modern hearer the implications of the pressures Paul faced, as he matches the gifts of God to a list of circumstances which would defeat us. By utilizing the gifts of God's power, we live the life of co-workers with Him, victoriously overcoming the opposition of the world.

Introduction: Let's move back through the history of the church to the period of the early church. As we slip in unseen, we sense deep reverence and worship. Notice the group of catechumens. Hearts are beating faster. They are now nearing the day of their baptism. They have been instructed for some time. Now with the beginning of Lent, they begin daily instruction. Today they are called *profiteutes*, those who profess God. The reading of Scripture takes on greater meaning. As a group they are beginning their Christian profession. We must examine ourselves to see whether we are living the life which proclaims the fact that we are

Co-Workers with God's Power

I. God has made us co-workers

A. By grace God makes co-workers by rebirth. Verse 1 of the text should remind the catechumens that they are not joining merely an earthly organization, a ritual or higher moral life. Through rebirth they make a new beginning. God Himself is active by grace and in love. Conversion occurs.

Such co-workers will prevent the churches, which they join, from becoming institutionalized, merely maintaining the *status quo*, being insensitive to crying needs, inbred, self-satisfied. Breathing the Spirit of God and not of the world, they will carry on the assigned tasks of changing lives, rather than be involved with busy-ness. They will see to it that the crucial task of witnessing to others will not fall by the wayside.

B. Urgency of being a co-worker. V. 2 implies that co-workers are not shy little people being offended, looking for impurities in lives of others, acting sacrosanct. But men of God. Living in boldness. In grace-faith relationship. New center and purpose in life. Reconciled to God; beginning new life. Imagination gripped; emotions stirred; will is reoriented. Urgency. "Now is the day . . ." True when we start with God. At times God seems to be standing by inactive, while we

suffer with personal pains, injustices of the world, enduring and overwhelming evil. Affirmation that in every moment God is active, working.

II. Opposition to co-workers

A. Pressures of life. The goal of being a co-worker is clear. But we must be realistic in looking at the opposition. Let the new catechumens and everyone hear this recital of what Paul faced. The triumphant word he holds up is "endurance" (v. 5). It describes the Christian standing in faith and courage as evil and trouble swirl around him. Paul's hardships which require endurance fall into three categories. First are the pressures of life: "afflictions." Stress is upon the tremendous burden which would crush a man. Second, the "hardships." Original concept suggests these as "necessities of life," the burdens of pain and sorrow that no man can escape. Third, the "calamities." Some suggest "anxieties" of life. Accent is upon a "narrow place," when life closes in and there is no escape.

B. External tribulations. There is far more than internal, mental suffering. The co-worker must be prepared for the external pressures of opposition. "Beatings, imprisonments, tumults." World does not stand by to applaud the Christian. For Paul experienced the agony and torture of all three. Beaten often. One early Christian writer tells us he was in prison seven times. The screaming mob. Sounds so distant. But more martyrs in 20th century than in first. Outlook and attitude is involved.

C. Exhaustion from work. The next three terms describe the life a co-worker lives: "labors, watching, hunger." The first describes toil which wears a man down physically as well as mentally and spiritually. "Watching" reflects the sleepless nights, time spent in watching because of danger or being in prayer. "Hunger," the times when, for lack of work, there was no food.

III. God's power for co-workers

A. God's gifts: qualities of the co-worker. But the co-worker is not simply driven by pressures upon him. He displays the positive gifts which God gives. Listen to description in v. 6: "purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love." Paul displayed these qualities in his life. Prisoner under Nero. Chained to soldier by ankle. Not looking for sympathy. Soldier hears him speak and write. The reactions of ridicule slowly changed. Soldier sensed what gifts and blessings this man had received. Paul can finally write "The name of Christ is known throughout the camp." These qualities to their fullness in "genuine love."

B. God's equipment for co-worker. To be a co-worker involves living close to God and utilizing His strength. Alone we fail. Goal is not to feel inspired . . . or sad about past failure . . . or enthused about doing better. Rather, must use the equipment Paul describes in v. 7. "The power of God . . . the weapons for the right hand and for the left." Means weapons for defense and for attack. Shield on left arm and sword or spear in right. So we. To be a co-worker we must draw this power through hearing anew the proclamation of the Gospel. In morning worship focus again upon Christ who is Savior and Lord.

Conclusion: Brief recap on three major ideas: Co-worker — problems of the world — God's own aid to overcome given through the Gospel of Christ.

REMINISCERE

MATT. 15:21-28

Relation to Day: As a background for the message of this day we continue to keep in mind the catechumens of the early church who were meeting for daily instruction in preparation for their baptism. The general emphasis is on leaving the domain of sin and the devil and entering the new life in

Christ. We all need to start with the plea of the Collect: "O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength." Therefore we too need to "remember"—the power of God, His love in action, the One who gives and sustains faith also in the darkness of trials, and the completeness of God's final blessing. The goal of this sermon is to bring the worshiper to hold to God in faith and trust even in the face of overwhelming discouragement and denial.

Introduction: Many people today wrestle with problems without taking God into account. It reminded a minister of the time he and his young daughter worked an old jigsaw puzzle of which some of the pieces were missing. When they had finished, they had a picture of a group of children rushing toward the center of the scene, but the whole center was missing. The missing pieces would have supplied a house with father and mother standing at the open door. But the children were now rushing toward empty space. So life is a terrifying blank for many people as they look for meaning and security. The text contains a story which speaks to this issue. In it we have a description of what is

A Persistent Faith

I. Faith acknowledges sin and need

A. Jesus had come to a critical point in His ministry. Herod, who had murdered John the Baptist, was turning an evil eye toward Him. Masses of people, eager for national independence, wanted to make Him king. Jesus needed rest. So with the Twelve He journeyed to the far north over rough highlands until they saw, down toward the sea, the city of Tyre, famous for her dye-works, and Sidon, known for her glassworks. This was the land of the Canaanites, who had corrupted the worship of God's people. Some Jews lived in the area. He enters the home of one for a rest. It is cut short, for a woman comes to Him. A Canaanite, a

heathen. Her daughter "badly demonized." Implores mercy on child. Has received repeated brush-offs from disciples. Now even Jesus seems aloof.

B. "Not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." Response, "Truth, Lord." She did not rebel. No challenge that she was as good as any Jew. Accepts place into which she is put. So faith always begins with and, if it is to persevere, must always return to the posture of a beggar before God. We need daily awareness of our need. We must acknowledge sin. More than words in formal confession. Recognition of so much of life — values and basic attitudes — as lying apart from God.

II. A growing faith

A. Second mark of a persistent faith is that it is growing and enlarging. The faith of the woman no doubt was vague in the beginning. Perhaps she had heard some reports about His words and healing. Main concern was with her child. Now she addresses Him: "O Lord, Thou Son of David." Distinctively Jewish form. Perhaps used without awareness of full meaning. Christ does not grant her request. His miracles were meant to be signs. Hence at first He keeps silent. But her faith continues to reach out. "Lord, help me." Even the answer of belonging to a people whom the Jews called "dogs" did not deter her. Grants this: heathenism may stand to Judaism as dogs stand to the master's children. But they too belong to the master; they too are to be fed.

B. Our faith must experience growth. It cannot stand still. Like everything living and vital, it must either be growing or declining. Human experience of not having seen a friend for 20 years — almost gasp to see how he has aged. If we have not taken a good look at our faith, we may gasp to see how it has declined. During Lent we grow in faith as we remember what God did for us. The death of His Son on the cross not merely

the result of the action of men, but God in Christ takes upon Himself what belongs to every man who has rebelled against God. He makes our misery His and overcomes it. He brings us back in love. Cry of the Introit: "Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy loving-kindnesses." The ongoing need for worship and hearing the Word is like the need for food and air.

III. Faith holds on in the face of seeming defeat

A. Woman faced what seemed to be repeated rebuffs. First, when Jesus was walking outside, she confronts Him. He ignores her; she continues to follow with her wailing request. The Twelve ask that she be sent away. Second, she follows Jesus into the house and renews her plea. Answered that children must be fed first. Not deterred by seeming harshness of this. Third, she continues with her appeals: "Yes, Lord, but even dogs eat." She conquers. The commendation: Great is thy faith.

B. Is our faith strong when gentle winds blow — and does it fade when northern blasts strike it? We can understand why Luther seemed so fascinated with the strength of this woman's faith. He was delighted to observe how she held on and turned even the words of Christ back as weapons. Contemporary illustrations. Humanly, one would have expected Niemoeller to have become discouraged as he sat in prison during the last war. In dark days wrote to his congregation in Berlin: "Let us thank God that He upholds me as He does and allows no spirit of despair to enter into cell 448. Let the parish office know that in all ignorance of what is coming I am confident, and that I hope to be ready when I am led along paths which I never would have sought for myself." When faith centers in Christ, it has this quality of strength even in darkest days.

C. The woman's faith holds on to victory. She received her reward. "And from that

moment her daughter was restored to health." That was all she wanted originally. At the end she is left with strong faith in Him as Lord. So often our requests of God are imperfect or partial. Blessings He grants are greater than the needs we present. A persistent faith: it begins with honest looking at sin and need and ends with blessings of heaven.

OCULI

LUKE 11:20-28

Relation to Day: This week marked another stage in the preparation of the catechumens of an earlier day. After an examination of understanding and life, they publicly renounced the devil. They also moved closer to the life of the worshiping church in observing the discipline of the Lenten fast. — Life under the Cross must take evil seriously. Through Baptism the individual is set over against Satan as an implacable enemy. One of the subtle tactics of the evil one is to blur the absoluteness of this line between God and himself. Our text is selected from the last half of today's Gospel. Sin as a persistent problem is portrayed with exceptional clarity. The means for relating the Gospel is found in verse 20: ". . . the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Introduction: A recent change has taken place in the recognition of evil. A generation ago people denied its reality. But the lid is now removed from the cauldron of evil. It manifests itself today in many ways. It has been suggested that many in modern society are both religious and agnostic — only about the wrong things. They approach a stock report with reverent awe, yet turn a calculating eye upon the church. Will not be taken in by the Gospel, but will by a racing form. Intone platitudes as litanies in defense of every political and economic move which they support. Scorn as sentimentalists those who suggest a program of aid for the poverty-stricken, but deluge home-run hitters with

gold beyond the dreams of ancient kings. This morning we do not look at obvious sins of the world but at subtle ways in which they threaten to infect our lives as Christians. In order to know

How to Overcome Evil

we need to be aware of three things.

I. The persistence of evil

A. The parable. Savior tells story about man who had a devil living in him. Grew tired of being dominated by this tenant. Drove him out. Cleansed house of his soul. Repaired plaster, put up new curtains, planted garden, and sat back and admired how clean it looked. Meanwhile the evil spirit trampled about wilderness lost and alone. Finally wandered back. Amazed to see how beautiful it was. Above all, everything was open. He got seven of his worst cousins; they all came back to live in the cleaned house.

B. Tactics of evil. The Savior is not discussing the whole problem of evil; rather telling about tactics of evil. It is persistent in its struggles for the possession of a soul. It will not give up after the first try. Like the great wall of China. A gigantic structure built at an unbelievable expense of time, money, and labor. When finished, it seemed like a magnificent way to gain security. But in only a few years the wall was breached by enemies three times. But notice how: not by breaking through or climbing over or tunneling under it, but by bribing the gatekeepers. Describes so well the tactics of the powers of evil. When they find that we have built walls against evil, they seek to get us to open the doors by bribing us with pleasure, prestige, wealth, power, achievement.

C. Evil persists unto death. We cannot dismiss the Savior's warning at any time, because He is describing a process which ends only at death. Evil lurks at every point, attempting to draw man back into its clutches.

Of all created beings, only man chooses to ally himself with evil. Stars and atoms, trees and dogs fulfill God's plan for them. But man revolts. Man knows the revealed will of God, but he turns, flies into the face of God, houses evil, defies God, and destroys His plan for us. He finally destroys us — if the pattern is not broken.

II. Danger in spiritual neutrality

A. Danger of dealing with symptoms. Normal human reaction is to rid oneself of the immediate problem but to show less concern about preventing the problem from arising again. A man, satisfied to rid himself of the guilt or shame of a particular sin without probing into the malady itself, may be in danger of harboring "a house swept and put in order" and of creating the possibility that "the last estate of that man becomes worse than the first."

B. Danger of compromise. Pressure of surrounding community exerts strong influence upon Christians today. They are tempted to take on color and attitudes of surrounding world. The story is told of wagon painter in Pennsylvania to whom a farmer brought wagon to be painted same shade as certain bean. When the finished wagon did not match the bean, he painted the bean the color of the wagon. Thus we are in danger of compromising with evil by changing standards. Dye our lives the color of surrounding world. Empty houses attract devils. Must serve master. Ultimately compromise also ends in death.

C. Special dangers for Christians. To wage war against evil, we must look honestly inside ourselves. A Christian in effect may spend much time barricading doors and boarding up windows at the front of the house and leave the rear entirely open. While guarding the front, renouncing obvious evils of lust and drunkenness, evil walks up behind and seeks to make him fall victim to pride, smugness, or greed. Having over-

come past pattern of not worshiping, he is beset by apathy within church. As evil is persistent, our vigilance against evil must be constant. But we need more than vigilance.

III. Overcoming evil through Christ

A. Christ overcomes evil. The initiative in overcoming evil lies with God. Scripture reminds us that by ourselves we are dead in sins. Have a vivid reminder in today's Introit, words from Psalm 25: ". . . for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." Bird catchers of ancient Palestine fashioned very fine nets and spread them between two trees. When they beat brush, birds would fly into nets. So constructed that the harder a bird would struggle, the more firmly it would become entangled. To be released, someone from outside had to free it. So with evil. Power of evil was first broken by Christ. Verse 20: "By the finger of God." He performs the liberating action. "Kingdom of God" comes through Him. Evil was defeated decisively in His work on the Cross. Now through His power and rule in our hearts, we too can cast out evil.

B. Firm holding to Christ. Remember our goal: to overcome evil. Involves an ongoing process of drawing on God and His strength. The life of faith cannot grow if we do not seek God in His Word and so become conscious of His presence. We can have the conviction of Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." We receive this assurance in our very worship as we receive the power which God would give us. The way to avoid having houses haunted by devils is to have the house occupied by God.

LAETARE

JOHN 6:47-57

Relation to Day: As we arrive at the Sunday which marks the middle of Lent, we discover a change of tone. "Rejoice" becomes

the theme. Historically it reflects the fact that in many areas the rigors of the Lenten fast are lifted somewhat for the day. Theologically, it provides a necessary reminder of the fundamental purposes of Lent. The Collect shows the relationship. Over against our "evil deeds" we pray that "by the comfort of Thy grace" we may be relieved. We keep the catechumens in mind as the Introit is read. "I was glad when they said, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Our text is taken from the same chapter as the Gospel for Laetare. It speaks of the feeding with bread and fish; in this text our Lord gives Himself as the living bread.

Introduction: A generation ago Professor Bergson suggested that our bodies have grown too large for our souls. He pictures man standing as a colossus spanning the continents. Science has enlarged his body. Telescopes and television have enlarged his eyes; telephones and radio, his ears; motors and planes, his legs and feet; and guns and bombs, the power of his fists. But while the body has grown, the soul seems to have diminished. The powers of these dimensions are being placed into hands of a generation of lowered spiritual capacity. "The inmost necessity of mankind," he wrote, "is a spiritual life adequate to handle its new acquisitions." This need is supplied by the

Living Bread from Heaven

I. Fundamental need for living bread

A. Desire for earthly bread. The text follows the account of the feeding of the five thousand. Unhealthy craving for the miraculous among the Jews. Expectations were carnal. They wanted a kingdom of food and pleasure rather than of righteousness, joy, and peace. Less interest in God than in themselves. Sensuous realism in Messianic expectancy: fruit trees to yield weekly; grain to grow as palm trees that would be reaped without labor. While more sophisticated, we have the same tendency: to use God for

ourselves. We want only our earthly bread — or our cake.

B. Our need for living bread. While man has increased his knowledge and strength, the basic questions of meaning and significance of life are becoming more pressing today. Cannot satisfy self with earthly bread alone. Jesus made reference to the early fathers eating manna, but this could not avert death (v. 49). By our creation we need God. This need cannot be filled with material things or human happiness. Cannot tear worship from human heart. Will worship something: money, state, power, knowledge, if not God.

II. Christ as bread from heaven

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . ." (v. 51). Scene begins in heaven. Living bread seen as very God of very God. Does not cease to be God in incarnation. The redeeming God does not begin in Bethlehem, but comes into the world as man at a point in time. Takes flesh upon Himself to do a job. Mission is as man to meet a human need. Humanity is real. No make-believe; no masquerading as man. He becomes man without ceasing to be God. The living bread is the living God! Means He is able to communicate the life of God.

III. Bread is His flesh given for world

We moderns have difficulty with the images of this text. We feel rather uncomfortable especially as we take the next step in talking about the "flesh" of Christ. The word describes the fact of total humanity. Thought of His death already lies in the word. Above all when His blood is spoken of (v. 53 f.). Therefore, even on this Sunday in which we note the predominance of rejoicing, we worship under the shadow of the Cross. As we react negatively to crass and earthly forms of the discussion, the Jews reacted violently against the thought of death on a cross, the Roman method of execution.

The Jewish way was stoning. There was an ancient curse upon anyone hanging on a tree. Jews felt this such a degradation that it was a stumbling block. How could the Messiah die in this way? Meaning: there is nothing to which God did not stoop in order to give us life. To break the grip which evil had upon us, Christ grappled with it. To give us life He offers His death. ". . . My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (V. 51)

IV. Eating that bread, we live!

A. Eternal life. We eat to sustain life — both physically and spiritually. "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life" (v. 54). Difficulty is that we usually begin by thinking of heaven as "above," with golden streets and pearly gates. Thus eternal life is always removed one level. It becomes something that will happen. But in these final verses Jesus is describing a process of life which begins now. He says: "He who believes has eternal life." Again: "This is eternal life, that they might know Thee." Life is knowing, grasping, apprehending God. God becomes the impulse of life which beats in a person who has been revived from his condition of being "dead in trespasses and sins." Means entering into a special fellowship which continues with God.

B. Eating the bread. But the big question in the spiritual life is: "How?" In answer, Jesus talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (vv. 55, 56). Strong echo of Golgotha for us. His death had meaning. You may remember Heartbreak Ridge in Korea; named by a young G.I. sobbing as he came back from the blood and death: "It's a heartbreak, it's a heartbreak." Because there was no meaning. Futility. Death without purpose. But not Calvary! Overcoming of sin, conquering of death, opening of life. All this comes to us as we eat the bread from heaven.

JUDICA

MATT. 27:28-31

Relation to Day: Traditions vary on how much of the Passion story should be utilized before Holy Week. If the events of the crucifixion occupy the Wednesday services throughout Lent, the worshiper often approaches Holy Week and Good Friday with a sense of anticlimax. The following sermon was prepared for a mission congregation whose worship, because of a lack of facilities, was confined to Sundays. Thus the accent on the Passion is probably stronger than would be commended for this Sunday where services during Holy Week will be able to develop this scheme more adequately. The sermon relates to the cry of the Introit: "Oh, deliver me . . . for Thou art the God of my strength." It furthers the petition of the Collect, that God look upon us mercifully that we may be "preserved evermore both in body and soul." Theme: In His redemptive suffering we find the answer to our suffering and fear.

Introduction: Mrs. Marty Mann had been an alcoholic. Her tragic story is known to many. She describes her fear; you sense she was suffering alone. So intense that twice she tried to kill herself. "For in the depths of suffering I came to believe . . . suffering is universal." She was able to win — at a point where so many are defeated — because in her despair and suffering she was not alone. When she recognized her need for help from outside, a change began. We come to this Passion Sunday to view the Christ who suffered for us that He might conquer for us! We will find continued help and strength in the

Symbols of the King

I. Symbols of His suffering

A. Turn from self to Christ. Basic insecurity of human existence — a sapping anxiety — is felt by all today. This feeling is so intense that some are unconsciously

turning to illness as a protecting wall. Escape from harshness of life. Dislike sickness but seems preferable to many of the pressures of life. There is an unconscious fleeing to the imaginary world. In place of escape we turn from present problem to view Christ in final period of His life. Pilate tried in vain to release Him. He stood there pale before the crowd as it screamed, "Let Him be crucified." He felt powerless before the sea of upturned faces. He washed his hands and delivered Jesus to be scourged. Before His crucifixion, the soldiers were free to have some fun with their victim.

B. Three symbols. Soldiers had heard about His claim to be king. Joking takes its turn. They give mock coronation. Needed, a royal robe; one slips out and comes back with an old officer's robe and throws it over His raw shoulders. A crown; from a garden a cutting of thorns from a bush. Another wit suggests need of scepter; cut bulrush and put it in His hand. Needed, subjects; they knelt before Him and saluted, "Hail, King of the Jews." Hoarse laughter. Brutality left to wear itself out.

C. Crown of thorns: our sin. As we look at thorns we remember God's plan. Once had given a garden without thorns. But when men turned in rebellion, judgment was spoken: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth . . ." Thorn is a symbol of our sin. He takes it and wears it as a crown. Soldiers playing that He is king. So often our discipleship displays same quality. When life is pleasant and our needs are not great, we "play" as if He were king, giving scraps of our time, devotion, and life to Him. Sadly, often it is only when the sin of the world gashes us that we turn in fear, as children, to Him.

D. Scarlet robe: our king. Seems incongruous to have Jesus dressed in military robe at point of His death. Though meant as a coarse burlesque, it was appropriate that He

be dressed as king. A few hours earlier, puzzled by Him, Pilate asked if He were a king. Response: "I am a king. I was born to be a king. But my kingdom is not of this world. I came into the world to bear witness to truth." Jesus looks pitiful, a victim, so helpless. But a king. Part of God's great plan. Going to His death willingly. Evil has its hour, but God remains Lord and King. Remember times in His ministry when enemies would arrest Him. But no one could lay hands on Him. Now, willingly, He submits to die.

E. The reed: His power. For a scepter they placed a reed in His hand. Hitting Him over the head with it, they broke it. Scepter is symbol of power. Strange symbol here of God's power. For Cross is supreme proof not only of presence of evil, but proof of overriding power of God. Very act which was to defeat the Son of God becomes the vehicle for His conquest. Victim becomes the Victor. Instead of the greatest victory over God, it becomes the most earth-shaking victory of God. Even more: It becomes the moment in which God reaches out to rescue all people. Even in His suffering, the eyes of faith see His power being used to rescue us.

II. Answer to our suffering and fear

A. Look at our anxieties and guilt. It has been suggested that anxiety is due to: (1) A sense of meaninglessness. Many modern people see no purpose or sense in existence. Life for them is a blank "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." (2) A sense of guilt. Some psychiatrists think that nearly all mental illness has guilt feelings at the bottom. Accusing memories, unforgiven sin, breeding despair. (3) The fear of death. It is perhaps the most fruitful source of anxiety. Much in our culture suggests a refusal to face the brute fact of physical death. Our own sufferings and fears find their pattern here.

B. Suffering Christ meets our anxiety. Christ meets our anxieties with more than

admonitions or gentle reassurances. (1) To meaninglessness He brings the reality of God. This shows there is Another involved in the mysterious business of life. God lives, and He is holy, righteous love. (2) To guilt He presents Himself as Suffering Servant. God in Christ brings forgiveness to bear upon our guilt. The storms are there in life. We must face them and turn our sins over to Christ. He stills the storms. Release comes as a result of being accepted and restored to the family of God. (3) Over against the fear of death our Lord assures us that our Father is Lord over the whole universe. Beyond the one room of our present life are other rooms, but He is with us. This is life eternal, that we may know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. This life continues for one who commits his way to the Lord of life and death.

Conclusion: See three symbols of Christ's suffering as reminders of our sin, and Christ as our king of power. We look to His suffering as our personal answer to anxieties, fear, and the suffering of life.

PAPYRUS BODMER XV (P75) AND
TEXT OF CODEX VATICANUS

Under this heading Prof. C. L. Porter of Christian Theological Seminary in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (December 1962) very interestingly and convincingly compares P75, a newly discovered manuscript, with the well-known Codex Vaticanus, commonly designated Codex B. His study supports the opinion of Victor Martin and Rodolphe Kasser that P75 agrees strikingly with B, while only rarely with D, a Western text. F. J. A. Hort regarded B an ancient text.

In 1881 and later his evaluation of B was contested by New Testament scholars. Now the reading of P75, which is evidently a very early text, goes far to support Hort against those scholars who think that B is to be dated from the middle of the fourth century A. D. As the author believes, P75 is to be assigned to the period between A. D. 175 and 225. This means that P75 is contemporary with Clement of Alexandria (d. 212?) and earlier than Origen (d. 254?). The striking agreement of P75 with B suggests that the latter was in existence by A. D. 200. There are, of course, also variations in the two texts, but these are minor, consisting merely in spelling, itacism, confusion of vowels and consonants with like sounds, and the like. P75 contains portions of the gospels of Luke and John; the writer limits his investigations to the latter. In John's Gospel 33 variations are in the use of the article, 27 in the order of the words, 30 in the use of conjunctions, 25 in the tense and mood of verbs, and the like. The 205 relatively insignificant variations differ greatly from the 702 between P75 and Sinaiticus (Ⲛ), which is a fourth-century text. The striking similarity between P75 and B therefore suggests that B is not a late text, perhaps "a deliberate revision or a fourth-century recension," but a very early text. The writer suggests that the relationship between P75 and B demands also a re-study of the texts used by the earliest church fathers. While the average pastor is interested primarily in the theology of the divine Word, he cannot avoid the question concerning the original text of Sacred Scripture. Whatever new light is shed on the problem therefore becomes a part of his study.

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