

6-1-1963

Homiletics: Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

Robert Wilson

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Recommended Citation

Wilson, Robert (1963) "Homiletics: Outlines on a Series of Free Texts," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 34, Article 35.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol34/iss1/35>

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

(All the following outlines are furnished by the Rev. Robert Wilson, St. Louis, Mo.)

ASCENSION

ACTS 1:1-11

The day: This day marks the triumphant entry of our Lord into the presence of our Father, where at His right hand He continues His work as Prophet, Priest, and King. We rejoice this day that our Lord has completed His work of redemption and that He has ascended so that He might abide with us always, prepare a place for us, and return one day to take us to Himself in the heavenly mansions.

Problem and goal: The Christian faith centers in the person of Jesus Christ. We forget this so easily. The sermon is to cheer us by calling our attention to the work which the Savior has *personally* done and is doing for us now.

The text: Using the historical account of the Ascension as recorded in the Book of Acts (Epistle for the day) and a composite dictionary definition of the word "harbinger" as follows, the outline below should be helpful.

Harbinger: "1. Formerly an advance representative of an army who arranged for lodging, entertainment, etc. 2. A person that comes before to announce what will follow."

Our Ascended Harbinger

- I. As our Representative
 - A. In His Passion on earth
 - B. As our Mediator in heaven
- II. As our Arranger
 - A. Preparing a place for us
 - B. Arranging for our blissful "entertainment"

III. As our Forerunner

- A. Announcing the completion of Redemption
- B. Assuring that because of His redemptive work we shall follow Him.

Conclusion: Our happy prospects for this life and our blissful assurance of the next life with Christ and all the army of heaven are emphasized in the Ascension of our Lord, who is the Harbinger of the human race, as we sing in the hymn "Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise," LH 213.

EXAUDI

1 PETER 4:7-11

The day: This Sunday serves as the transition from Ascension to Pentecost and marks the waiting period between our Lord's departure and His promised return in the gift of His Holy Spirit. The tone of our worship is expressed in longing desire for the return of Him who has departed but who has promised not to leave His people comfortless.

Problem and Goal: In the first half of the Christian church year we have followed the events in the life of our Lord and seen in them the redemption of man. With the lazy summer months ahead, church members are inclined to become lazy and weary in well-doing. The sermon is to point out that in our waiting for the final return of our Lord, we are to live as He lived and minister as He ministered. We have experienced our personal Pentecost and are to spend our waiting time ministering to Christ's people.

Busy Waiting

- I. The Lord has come
- II. The Lord has returned
- III. The Lord will come again
- IV. Meanwhile
 - A. We are waiting
 - B. We are busy waiting
 - 1) in prayer
 - 2) in brotherly love
 - 3) in good stewardship
 - 4) in true worship

Conclusion: The Lord has come to save us. He has returned to heaven to preserve us. We are saved and preserved in order to serve one another, to have fervent charity among ourselves, and to build the Kingdom. The end of all things is at hand!

PENTECOST

ACTS 2:1-13

The day: Pentecost, or Whitsunday, is the completion of the Easter cycle. On Easter we rose again with Christ to new life, life in and for and with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. On Pentecost we realize that this new life is "poured out" upon us and into us through the working of Christ's Holy Spirit, whose outpouring we celebrate this day and whose gifts of life, secured for us by our Redeemer, we receive this day and throughout the Christian church year through Word and Sacrament.

Problem and goal: The Christian fails to properly receive and use the gifts of life from the Holy Spirit. Knowing that Christ's work of redemption is finished, we are inclined to forget that Christ would still work in us through Word and Sacrament by His Holy Spirit to instill in us continually that life which He purchased for us and which alone enables us to carry on the work of the Lord

and His church. The sermon is to point out that Christ is not finished with us, that He would still work in us and have us work in His church.

Finished and Yet It Is Not Finished

- I. It is finished — Christ's work of redemption
- II. It is not finished — Christ's work of sanctification, inclusive of witnessing
 - A. For this the Holy Spirit came
 - B. For this the Holy Spirit comes
- III. Through means the Holy Spirit is passing on the finished, finishing the unfinished
 - A. Through the Word (Law and Gospel)
 - B. Through the sacraments
 - 1. Baptism
 - 2. Communion
 - C. That others may learn to adore the Father through the Son

Conclusion: The historical miracle has not been completed in us. As long as the Lord puts off His final return, it is not finished, the "tongues of fire" must descend on us and continue to burn in sanctified living.

FEAST OF TRINITY

ROMANS 11:33-36

The day: The Feast of the Holy Trinity simultaneously marks the end of the first half (the festival portion) of the Christian church year, in which we have recalled events in the life of our Lord, and the beginning of the second half (nonfestival portion), in which the propers for the days illustrate the practical life of Christianity as it develops from the truths presented in the first half of the Christian church year.

Problem and Goal: As Christians we believe the mystery of His Trinitarian essence,

but too often we are not willing or strong enough to accept the mystery of His wisdom in making decisions that affect our lives. The sermon is to point out that when God's wisdom takes action in our lives, it is always to God's glory and man's good.

God's Glory—Man's Good

I. God's mind

- A. His knowledge and wisdom unfathomable
- B. To His glory
- C. For man's good

II. God's action

- A. His decisions unsearchable
- B. To His glory
- C. For man's good

III. Man's response

- A. Man does not presume to understand fully God's mind or God's action any more than His Trinitarian essence
 - 1. Man accepts God's acts as good for him
 - 2. Man glorifies God for and in these things

B. In thinking of God, praying to or talking about Him, man does not presume to criticize God's mind or action.

- 1. Man accepts these things for his good
- 2. Man glorifies God for and with these things

C. In his thinking of God, praying to or talking about Him, man does not put God under obligation and dictate to Him what man thinks God owes him.

- 1. Man accepts these things for his good
- 2. Man glorifies God for and with these things

Conclusion: In creation, preservation, and redemption we marvel at the love of God in Christ in our daily life. It is our knowledge, and not God's goodness, which is at fault when questions arise, for His action is always marvelously, though often mysteriously, to His glory and man's good. We can only adore the goodness of our Trinitarian God.

(The outlines below have been prepared by the Rev. Clarence Peters, St. Louis, Mo. The general title of the series of sermons is "The Church and the Kingdom.")

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 4:32-37

The theme of the propers for this day is love to God and love to man. The life of faith is active in the keeping and doing of the Great Commandment and the other which is like unto it. God's gift to us is the gift of forgiveness. The response to this love is not one of fear or compulsion but of love alone. God is Love, and he who claims to love God will show it in loving his brethren. The call to the kingdom is the call of God to trust His promises, to love Him, to keep His commandments, to serve Him, and to love the brethren.

A Church in the Kingdom Is a Church in Action

I. The members of the church are united (v. 32)

People in those days were just as different, the one from the other, their opinions differed just as violently, as is the case today. Through the preaching of the Gospel the Holy Spirit had molded them into a united group. "I believe in the holy Christian church, the communion of saints."

If it were possible for us to go to True Light Church in New York, to Good Shepherd Church in St. Louis, to our churches in Brazil, the Philippines, Japan, India, For-

mosa, Hong Kong, Africa, Europe, we would find all the people confessing, "Christ is my Lord, who has redeemed me." Divisions and factions in congregations deny the spirit of the Christian faith.

Denominations represent the spirit of division, especially when they place themselves above the Word. The early church was "of one heart and of one soul."

In His high priestly prayer Jesus prays for the oneness of His church (John 17:11). Is there within our heart a longing for the oneness of all Christendom, not just for the sake of union but because it is natural for the church to be one?

II. The members have love for one another and for those who are not members of the church

The members of the early church were deeply conscious of the grace and mercy God had shown to them in Christ, and they wanted to share this with everyone (v. 33).

The church was in its infancy. Much opposition. Threat of imprisonment and death. Yet the members told the story of the living Lord. They knew all people needed this.

The living, active church of Jesus is a witnessing church. Let's examine our record. Have we hid our light under a bushel? Have we kept the Gospel for ourselves? The "Christian" who does not feel the urge and desire to tell his unbelieving fellowmen about Jesus should be very much concerned about his own spiritual life. Are the members of our family Christians? our neighbors? the people with whom we work? the children in our neighborhood? Those early Christians thought the spiritual and eternal welfare of their fellowmen their business, so much so that they risked their lives to bring the Gospel to them.

Today varied efforts are made to win the hearts and affections of people for certain causes: Communism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter Day Saints. Some are so determined

to spread their cause, wrong though it may be, that they are ready to be thrown into jail, to pay huge fines, to suffer for it. Are we Christians infiltrating every channel and avenue of life among our fellowmen to win people for Christ? You cannot start a fire with an icicle, and if Christians are going to be like icicles about their convictions, then we must not be surprised if enemies of Christianity take over.

V. 33. Great grace was upon them all because they were living, believing sons and daughters of God, believers in Christ. Our church will have meaning and vitality as long as we have a faith in the resurrected Jesus that prompts us to bear witness to Him.

III. These Christians were also concerned about the physical well-being of their fellowmen

They shared their earthly possessions. They were not compelled to do this, but they did this out of love. God has not told us that we must even things up, but He has commanded us to love one another. Text: "Neither was there any among them that lacked." The masses in those days lived in rags and poverty. They did not know today's economic plenty. There were many poor people, but the Christians did not permit the poor to suffer want. They did not only talk about love, they loved. This was the kind of message people could not ignore, against which they could not keep their ears stopped. When Christianity was something very real in the hearts and lives of Christians, then it became a flaming fire that could not be stopped.

When people are neither for Christianity nor against it, then it has little power. When people just don't bother about Christianity, then it has lost its impact. That deadly thing can happen to any cause. People took note of our church when it sent food and clothing and other necessities to the war-stricken countries of our former enemies.

At our place of work, our social activities, sports, outings, picnics, weekend holidays, is it evident that we are Christians all the way? Does our conduct show the power of the living Christ in us?

Christ is building His church through us, a church in which hearts are united, in which love proclaims the love of Jesus to those living without Christ, and in which we give physical help to those in need.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ACTS 4:1-12

The propers for the day teach that everything the church gives us, the fullness of salvation, the Gospel of Christ, the kingdom of God, is made known to us in the means of grace.

Many people think of joining the visible church as they might join a club or a society. They quit as soon as something does not please them or when membership no longer seems agreeable to their own interest.

Redeemed children of God recognize the importance of membership in the visible Christian church and of their responsibility to bring others into the holy Christian church.

A Church in the Kingdom Carries Out the Prophetic Office of Christ

I. The prophetic voice of the church speaks God's love in Christ

Peter and John had done a miracle in the name of Jesus of Nazareth when they healed the lame man (Acts 3:1-16). By this work they revealed Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior. In the temple and at the trial they revealed Him as such by their words. (Vv. 1, 8-12)

This had been Jesus' purpose during His public ministry. The text indicates how Jesus carries out His prophetic office since His ascension. He calls, appoints, indoctrinates

His disciples, His people, to be His witnesses. The same Spirit that rested on Jesus is poured out on us. (Acts 2; Cat., Qu. 132)

Jesus says, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke 10:16). Each Christian is to witness for Jesus by telling people of Him. What a high privilege this is!

II. The prophetic voice of the church will not be silenced

The truth of Jesus was confirmed by His death, resurrection, ascension. This truth has never been silenced. Even as Peter and John preached this truth, so the disciples of Jesus have done since then, and they have never been silenced.

The prophetic office of Christ will never fail. We sometimes fail in carrying out Christ's prophetic office because of carelessness, fear, earthly interests. If we Christians do not properly preach and apply the Law and the Gospel, we make it impossible for the Spirit to bring a person to salvation.

The divine wisdom of Jesus entrusted to all Christians the administration of His prophetic office (vv. 10-12) as *the* means of reaching unbelievers. Unconverted man will oppose and resist the testimony of the truth of the Gospel. The enemy's hatred will pursue us if we remain in the front lines like the apostles (vv. 1-3, 5-7). That people will hear the Gospel and come to faith is due to the work of the Holy Spirit, who works through the Gospel and the sacraments. (Vv. 4, 5)

Christ's words are spirit and life in the Christian home at father's knee and on mother's lap, in our Christian elementary and high schools, in the pastor's office and work, in the pulpit and in the pew, in the work with the young people, in our Christian colleges and seminaries, magazines, broadcasts, telecasts, in the mission fields. (Here mention may be made of the program of the various

departments of the Synod, the Walther League, the Lutheran Laymen's League, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Here may also be cited blessings God lays on faithful evangelism work in the neighborhood, the gathering of adults for instruction, of children for Baptism.)

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58)

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 5:1-6

Today's propers describe the love of God in relation to sin, the love which we call grace. The word "grace" is the Greek "charis," which is love addressed to one who does not deserve it.

The text, from the Beatitudes, stresses the blessedness of the children of God. Jesus Christ makes us blessed in time and eternity. Men have ever sought the blessedness of people, but they have "found" this in various sources and ways.

Jesus teaches in our text that

A Church in the Kingdom Rejoices in Man's Highest Good

I. There is such a thing as man's highest good

It is true we are children of misfortune because of our sin. But Christianity is not primarily a religion of giving up everything. Christianity is God's plan whereby man is to regain everything that is worthwhile.

Jesus sums it all up in one word: *blessedness*.

Blessedness is not just enjoyment, as we enjoy the singing of the birds, the beauty of a flower, not the mere good fortune of obtaining what we have longed and labored for.

Blessedness is more than happiness, as the word is usually used. It apparently comes from a word meaning "great." In this sense the ancient Greeks applied it to their gods, who were called blessed because they had power, dignity, and were masterful. Eventually the Greeks considered blessedness a synonym for the condition of death. Even the cheerful Greeks came to despair of any real earthly blessedness.

Christ and the apostles used the word to express the condition of the purified inner life. It recognizes sin as the cause of all misery, and holiness through forgiveness as the removal of misery. It implies restoration of the perfect human life and perfect harmony with God.

Man's highest good then comes when he gets hold of what restores his broken life and brings him into harmony with the Author of his being and the laws He has given.

II. Where is this highest good to be found?

Man has dreamed of golden ages, fancied Utopias, invented millennia. Men have thought that by their own wisdom they had found ways to lasting and satisfying prosperity, peace, and happiness. Some years ago we were told that war was a thing of the past. Then came World War I, which was to make the world safe for democracy. The very treaty of peace carried the seeds for the great war that followed. We had a depression in 1929, 1930, and the years following. Then came World War II. This was followed by the Korean conflict. Now the cold war, the communist threat, the Berlin wall, the breakdown of morals.

Oh, that men would learn the lesson that none of man's wisdom, science, inventions, prosperity, is the way to man's real blessedness!

Man finds his highest good only in the kingdom of God (v.3). It is where God is, where the Gospel is preached, where people believe in Jesus, where the will of God is done.

We are children of God by virtue of the work of the Spirit, who brought us to faith in the merits of Christ and thus into the right relationship with God. We are truly blessed. God does not hold our sins against us. We are going on to complete blessedness, our eternal highest good.

III. How do we obtain entrance into the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus said (v. 3): There must be a sense of spiritual need, an awareness of falling short of what God expects and demands. There must be repentance that realizes in keen sorrow the effects of sin in all human beings (v. 4). There must be faith in the remission of sins through the crucified and risen Redeemer. There must be willingness to enter God's kingdom in God's way (v. 5). "Meek" means to submit to God's way and will and plan. There must be a faith that makes God's gifts one's own and then longs to live in such a way that God is pleased and fellowmen are attracted to the Gospel.

God now rules in that person. His sins are forgiven. That person is righteous. He has achieved the highest good.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROM. 5:6-10

The propers for today present God's love manifested as mercy to all who suffer.

The greatest mercy God's love has shown to guilty sinners is to declare the guilty guiltless. To bring this message to men is the "go, tell" of Jesus. (Matt. 28:18-20)

A Church in the Kingdom Proclaims that the Guilty Sinner Is Guiltless!

I. The sinner is guiltless in the sight of God because Jesus Christ paid our debt (vv. 6, 8)

God in love made man to be perfect, in His own image. God in love made a perfect

world. He made the world for man. The perfection of man and the world was ruined by the willful disobedience of Adam and Eve. They believed Satan rather than God, and they brought death, sorrow, tears, drudgery, pain upon man. All creation was marred and became subject to death.

God in love reached out for man. He did not want man to perish. And man was helpless, "dead in trespasses and sins," "without strength" (v. 6). You and I cannot save ourselves.

God's love had to find a way. And God did find the way in Christ. God proved His love to man by sending His Son into our human flesh (v. 8). The sinner is guiltless because Christ died for the ungodly (v. 6). Men have been willing to die for their ideal. Examples: *A Tale of Two Cities*, patriots (v. 7). But seldom is a man willing to die to free one who is of no account. He does not want to identify himself with a criminal.

Christ, however, died for the ungodly. Christ's love prompted Him to do this. The sinner is unclean, wicked, defiant, resisting the love of God. Yet Christ died for the sinner that he might be saved. (V. 8)

II. The guilty sinner is guiltless in the sight of God because he is justified by faith in Christ (v. 9)

"To justify" means to pronounce free from guilt. But the sinner is guilty. He is guilty by nature; he is born that way.

The sinner is also guilty because of his conduct. Thoughts are impure, bitter. There is rebellion in the heart against God. The tongue is slanderous, malicious, vile, foul. Not one of us would want everything we have thought and said and done made public. Because we are sinners we are under God's wrath.

Because we are guilty, it is fair and just for God to condemn us. Yet God sets the sinner free. How can He do that? Text (v. 9): "through His blood." Christ substituted for the sinner.

But not every sinner becomes free. God justifies us by faith. We accept these terms of God. That does not leave us any glory. But this is fair, because Christ paid the penalty. (V. 8)

That is the only possible way by which the guilty sinner can be free. We cannot set ourselves free. We cannot run away from our problems. Science and philosophy cannot make the sinner guiltless. Only Christ could do that (v. 9). By accepting what Christ did for him, the guilty is made guiltless.

III. The guilty sinner is guiltless because, being justified, he is fully reconciled to God (v. 10)

The acquitted person now goes free. He cannot be held. Does he not become a menace to society? No. The sinner who is acquitted by faith no longer lives in rebellion against God. He loves his Lord, who loved him first. He goes free, a changed person.

The justified person cannot find pleasure in sin nor live unto sin; he resists sin, overcomes temptation, lives to the glory of God. We need not fear God because His love found this way of removing all our guilt from our conscience.

This joy in his Savior the Christian shares with his fellowmen so that they, burdened with guilt, may be made guiltless through faith in the blood of Christ.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Is. 54:7-13

Whether in the Old Testament times or in our New Testament days, being called into the Kingdom is always a call into God's peace (Num. 6:24-26; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 4:7). The Lord assures His church at all times of His love and faithfulness and peace. This is especially reassuring in times of trial and sorrow and disappointment.

A Church in the Kingdom Is a Home of Peace

I. God's everlasting love covers up His wrath (vv. 7, 8)

Because of their sins, especially national sins of idolatry, intermarriage with those not of the true faith, and immorality, God had forsaken Israel. In anger He hid His face from His people.

This is true also today. God's anger is burning because of personal sins, which have become national sins, such as cursing, sexual liberties and excesses, breaking of marriages at will, unfaithfulness of many husbands and wives, carelessness about entering into marriage, sexy movies, magazines, novels, drinking and drunkenness, hatred so often shown to others, dishonesty, lying, graft, greed, selfishness of pressure groups, stealing, forgery, thinking that money and possessions are the highest goal, despising the Word of God, lack of interest on the part of many in the work and program of the church. And who will name all the sins? God's anger is kindled against His church, His Christians, because they also commit so many of these sins.

But His anger soon passes away. His real relationship with His children is one of mercy and of grace. His mercy reaches out to them (v. 7), His kindness remains with them (v. 10). It is a small anger when compared with His great mercy.

Notice the name: "The Lord, thy Redeemer" (v. 8). Our text follows Isaiah 53, where the suffering and the death of Christ are described. God laid all the sins and all the guilt and all the punishment of all people on His Son. And God raised Him from the dead in proof that He was satisfied with the work of His Son (1 Cor. 15:17; Rom. 4:25; Cat. Qu. 153). God's anger becomes a chastening for His children. The purpose and effect of God's chastening is a closer union with the merciful God.

To Noah God said, "Never again a flood

like that one." In our text He points to the mountains and the hills (v. 10). Have you seen them totter? Do they not stand solid and unmovable in the power of Him who has put them there? So God's love to His children is immovable and will never depart.

When this assurance, this conviction, this certainty, is in the church, with God's children, then they have in this relationship a peace that is beyond all human understanding.

II. His faithfulness undergirds His love

V. 13: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." God will bring His elect to the saving knowledge of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The election to salvation and the means of grace are inseparably tied together. This teaching God the Holy Spirit carries out through God's children, the holy Christian church: sermons, Bible classes, VBS, day school, Sunday school, confirmation classes, reading the Bible, church papers, KFJO, Lutheran Hour, Family Worship Hour, etc. Christians carry out this work of God when they invite others to the Savior,

when they tell others of Jesus, when they bring their sacrificial offerings.

God brings His elect into the relationship of forgiveness and salvation with Himself. As a faithful God He safely keeps His own through the means of grace. He strengthens them so they can resist temptations to fall away (Satan, world, our own flesh).

III. God assures our present and eternal peace

V. 10: "Neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." V. 13: "Great shall be the peace of thy children." That is the peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7), the peace God gives to the human heart when the Holy Spirit begins faith and gives the certainty of heaven.

Satan entices people away from God, our sinful nature would lead us away, yet no one can take the peace of God in Jesus Christ away from us when through the power of the Holy Spirit we are kept safely in the palm of God's hand.

Thanks be to God for His love, His faithfulness, His peace.