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HOMILETICS

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

HEB. 9:11-15

Introduction

In the Letter to the Hebrews the author presents the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. The New Testament is the continuation of the Old, for in it the revelation begun in the Old is completed (Heb. 1:1); the promises made in the Old Testament are fulfilled; the things typified in the Old are realized in the New.

The contrast which he expounds is not to be seen in terms of good vs. bad but rather in terms of incomplete vs. complete, of type vs. fulfillment, of shadow vs. substance.

Our text is very instructive if we see it as a study in

Shadow and Substance

I. Shadow

A. The Old Testament deals with shadow, for it speaks of sacrifices and ordinances which are types of the substance. This does not mean that the Old Testament institutions and provisions lack reality. For how can there be shadow if there is no reality?

B. The shadow is to call attention in advance to the reality, the coming substance:

1. The sacrifices are a type of *the* Sacrifice.

2. The priests are a type of *the* Priest.

3. The cleansing is a type of *the* cleansing.

C. The Old Testament is preparatory.

1. The sacrifices and ablutions were designed for the preparation of a special people, for the purification of the flesh. (Heb. 9:13)

2. The tent, God's dwelling place in the wilderness, is preparatory for the "more perfect tent, not made with hands." (Heb. 9:11)

We can speak of the Old Testament "shadow" because the reality was in existence. The Christ of God is a preexisting Christ (John 1:1-3). The text does not speak of Christ as coming into existence, but as "appearing" (Heb. 9:11; John 1:14). Before the Christ appeared in the flesh, men had only the shadow; but since His appearing we can speak of

II. Substance

A. Christ is the Substance.

1. He is the new "Tent," not made with hands. In Him God dwells bodily. (Col. 2:9)

2. He is the Priest to end all priests (Heb. 9:12, "once for all").

3. He is the Sacrifice to end all sacrifices (Heb. 9:14, "offered Himself").

So the "tent" in the Old Testament gives way to the substance, the "tent" of the New Testament (Christ); the High Priest of the Old Testament gives way to the New Testament High Priest: Christ; the blood of goats and bulls and calves gives way to "the Blood of the Lamb," in which we wash our robes.

B. Christ is the Mediator. (9:15)

1. In Him shadow and substance become one.

2. In Him God and man are made one.

a. In Him is the At-one-ment.

b. He is the Reconciler, who "makes one." (Gal. 3:19, 20)

Conclusion

In Jesus Christ we have salvation, for He is the Substance forecast in the shadow. In Him is fulfillment. He is the Fulfillment of *the* Law, for He did not merely do what the Law required, He was what the Law required. (Matt. 5:17; John 8:46)

He is the Fulfillment of every office in the Old Testament:

The office of *Prophet*, for He is not merely the Messenger but the Message. (John 1:1)

Priest, for He is not merely the Sacrificer but the Sacrifice. (Heb. 9:12, 14)

King, for in Him is authority not merely delegated but inherent. (Matt. 7:29; 28:18) This is our salvation, and there is salvation in no other. This is God's great gift: no less than His own Son, the Fulfillment of all promises, the Substance of all shadow.

This is the burden of our Lenten meditation, the proclamation of Him whom God hath foreshadowed in the Old and sent in the New Testament. Therefore (Heb. 2:1-3) we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

H. C. DUWE

PALMARUM, THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT

PHIL. 2:5-11

Palm Sunday brings us to the beginning of Holy Week and the climax of the entire Lenten season. The tone of the propers is somber, for we celebrate the beginning of the depths of our Lord's Passion. This day, however, is not without its restrained joy, for we know we are celebrating His completed redemption.

While Introit and Gradual are meditations on the suffering of our Lord, wherein are heard echoes of His words from the cross, the Collect prays for grace to follow the example of His patience and humility. The Gospel records the events of the first Palm Sunday and Christ's triumphant but humble entry into Jerusalem. The Epistle presents a classic passage of the New Testament,

stressing the preexistent deity of Jesus, who in spite of that deity nevertheless humbled Himself, became man, and suffered death upon the cross. This passage, which is thought to be a creedal, Christological hymn sung at the celebration of the Eucharist already by St. Paul's day, also emphasizes the exaltation and Lordship of Christ and our obligation to possess the "same mind" as did our Lord. Paul likely has in mind his familiar contrast between the first and the second Adam, the one born low snatching at deity, the other begotten as Deity from eternity humbling Himself to repair the damage wrought by the first. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 22, 45-50; Rom. 5:12-21)

The custom in some quarters is to administer confirmation on Palm Sunday. A link from the outline's central thought to confirmation may be made, since the phrase "Jesus Christ is Lord" was likely one of the earliest baptismal creeds of the church and confirmation is generally regarded as a reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant.

Introduction

Who is your Lord? Perhaps that sounds like a strange question to be asking 20th-century Americans. For here, in this country, in this day and age, we have no system of royalty, and slavery has supposedly long since been abolished. In our democratic society we believe that each man is his own master, free and subservient to none.

But if we look beneath the surface of present-day political theories to the realities of existence, we see that every man does indeed have a master, a lord whom he serves and to whom he is bound. We are only fooling ourselves if we think men are really free, really their own masters.

Some have another person as their master whose bidding they do at all costs. Others have an organization or business corporation as master, regardless of its aims and objectives. Still others give their allegiance to

things and possessions, money and status symbols. And all men, because of their corrupted nature, let their own evil lusts and sinful desires exercise lordship over their minds and wills.

The Epistle for Palm Sunday, however, points to the one and only Master whom God calls men to serve and in whose service true freedom is found. This text calls us to acknowledge and believe that

Jesus Christ Is Lord

I. *He is our humble Lord*

A. Although Christ was Lord and God from before the foundations of the world, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him, yet He did not regard His divine position something He had to cling to. But He emptied and divested Himself of the divine form (but in so doing always retained His essential deity) and took instead the form of a man—and more! He came as a slave and servant among men.

B. Today He enters Jerusalem en route to the waiting cross, to disgrace, agony, and death—for us that He might be our humble Lord! For He is the Lord who has long ago been appointed to reign from a cross. He is the Lord who must fight and win His battle with the evil foe by Himself tasting bitter death.

C. This ride which we see Him make today began at His incarnation, has continued throughout all His life, and now reaches its climax in His holy Passion and death. By means of His life and death, our humble Lord reverses the course and repairs the damning damage of Adam and all Adam's children (you and me!). Adam, made in the image of God, thought that equality with God was something to snatch at. He puffed himself up, desired to be in the fashion of God, and thus became disobedient and subject to eternal death. But now the second Adam has come in utter

humility and obedience even to the point of suffering death (the death wrought by Adam and his children). He suffers in our place and calls us to believe and follow Him and be once more the children of God.

II. *He is our exalted Lord*

A. Although our Lord humbled Himself even to the point of death on a cross, His death on that cross was at the same time exaltation. For it was there that Satan met his match and was conquered. Furthermore the cross held forth the promise of resurrection on the third day. (Cf. John 12:32,33; 17:1)

B. In addition, when His mission was accomplished, God exalted our Lord by raising Him from death to the eternal throne (which was always His), and by giving Him a name which is above every name.

C. Now, at the very mention of His name, every knee should bow in reverent devotion. He is the Lord and King above all lords and kings. All creatures everywhere owe Him homage.

D. Every tongue must now confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This takes place already in His church, but not yet in all the world. But the day is coming when all will recognize Him as Lord, some to their sorrow but the faithful to their joy. Then all will know Him as Lord and Master even over death!

III. *He must be Lord in our hearts and lives*

A. We too must bow and confess "Jesus Christ is Lord" in our thinking and in our doing.

B. This means we are to be His joyful subjects and disciples who follow the example of His humility. . . . First of all, in that we divest and empty ourselves of any spiritual pride in our own works or merits before God and thus receive only the merits of our once humble but now exalted Lord as availing anything in our relationship with

the Father. And then also that we divest and empty ourselves of any pride, prejudice, and vanity in our dealings with our fellow humans, especially the brethren in the faith.

C. He is Lord in our hearts and lives when we commemorate His death and resurrection, not only during Lent and Holy Week but each time we gather to speak and sing the Gospel to one another and to proclaim it in the celebration of the sacrament of His body and blood and live our lives in unity with Him.

D. Thus, as followers of Christ by virtue of Baptism and the faith active in love created in us by the Holy Spirit, we shall be exalted with our Lord Jesus Christ by the Father. We are called Christians after His name. We are followers of the Lord, His for time and for eternity!

E. Since He is our Lord, and we are His, as we await His final coming, we follow also His missionary imperative. And we work, so that every tongue may truly confess Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Conclusion

Who is your Lord? There is only one Lord for you. He is the One who came once in humility and who is now highly exalted by the Father.

He comes to you again today—once more in lowly form—to give you forgiveness in the word of absolution, to give you His Body and His Blood in the Holy Communion, to speak to you in the witness of your fellow Christians.

He comes. . . . And how do you greet Him? Let it be with the words of the ancients: "Hosanna. . . . Blessed be He. . . . Hosanna in the highest!" Let that be your greeting today, every day, and at the end of time when He comes again in glory. For He, Jesus Christ, is your Lord!

THOMAS EDGE

MAUNDY THURSDAY

1 COR. 11:23-32

The eve of the commemoration of our Lord's crucifixion places before us the events in the Upper Room. This is "Command Thursday," and the liturgy sets before us two commands of the Savior, given but a few hours before He was offered up on Calvary.

The first command is expressed in the Gospel, where the disciples receive the injunction to "wash one another's feet" as the symbol for the more explicit command to "love one another" (John 13:34) even as Christ has loved them.

The second command is recorded in the Epistle, where St. Paul repeats the Savior's command to "do this!" (i. e., celebrate Holy Communion). Writing to the Corinthians, who had been sorely abusing the sacrament, Paul gives us what is undoubtedly the most complete statement of the Scriptures on the subject, and a most appropriate lesson for the anniversary of the sacrament's institution.

The Introit and Gradual (the first one of the two listed in *The Lutheran Hymnal*) meditate upon the death of our Lord, then imminent, but also anticipate the glory which is His—and ours!—as a result of His death. The Collect is addressed to the Son ("O Lord God"), praising Him for having left us this memorial of His Passion in the sacrament, and asking guidance for our proper use of it.

Introduction

You are a preacher! "Who, me?" you say. Yes, you! You are preachers, each and every one!

Of course you are not preachers in the very same sense that the called and ordained pastors of the church are preachers. It is not possible for all of us to be engaged in the "public ministry" of the church. But you are preachers nonetheless.

When we hear that word "preacher" I sup-

pose we usually think of one who gets up in a pulpit at the services of the church and proclaims the Word of God. To be sure, that is an important part of being a preacher. But that is not a preacher's only duty. In addition to baptizing, absolving, teaching, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, winning new Christians, etc., etc., it is also the important duty and privilege of a preacher to be at God's altar celebrating the Holy Eucharist, or Communion, on Sundays and other special days. (Apology of Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV, paragraph 1)

And you are preachers too! Even though you may not be one of the church's called and ordained pastors, you nevertheless—in one way or another—share in all the duties of your pastor. And in a special way you share and participate in the celebration of Holy Communion when you come together with your fellow Christians at God's altar for this purpose. Furthermore, says the inspired apostle in the Epistle for this Maundy Thursday, you are a preacher when you eat the consecrated bread and drink the consecrated wine of the holy sacrament. St. Paul puts it this way: "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death!"

In the eating and drinking you are in a very special sense a preacher, proclaiming, as you do, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since then you are preachers, each and every one, on this anniversary of this sacrament's institution by our Lord, let us consider the message you are to preach. Tonight, therefore, I urge you by the power of the Holy Spirit:

Proclaim the Lord's Death

I. *Proclaim His Death as the Seal of a New Covenant*

A. The old covenant was sealed with blood (Ex. 24). So was the Passover in Egypt (Ex. 12). Christ is the Yea and Amen

to all the sacrifices and covenants of the Old Testament.

B. But He is also the sacrificial Lamb of God, whose blood now seals the new and better covenant, made by God with a new people gathered from all lands and nations and races.

C. It is the body and blood of that sacrificial Lamb of God that is present in the Holy Communion. ("This is My body! This cup is the new covenant in My blood!") It is present to seal God's new agreement with us, His new people, the church. He is our God, and we are His people through the merits of Jesus Christ, into whose body we have been baptized and in whose merits, life, death, resurrection, we trust and believe.

II. *Proclaim His Death in Remembrance of Him*

A. The Biblical meaning of remembrance is more than a simple remembering, more than just having a vague idea of something that happened long ago. Instead it is an ἀνάμνησις, a making present of past events! (Cf. Num. 10:10; also Israel's ἀνάμνησις, or remembrance, of the Exodus, as a making present and potent in the lives of the people the past events of God's deliverance.)

B. The once-for-all death of Christ is therefore remembered and made present for us tonight. ("Do this in remembrance of Me!") This sacrament is the memorial of His perfect Passion and death for our sins. "But if the Eucharist is a memorial of the Passion of our Lord, it is also the abiding witness of His resurrection: only a church which possessed a living experience of the risen Christ in her midst could have celebrated week by week the memory of how on that dreadful night on which He was betrayed the Lord Jesus took bread and made eucharist. It was no sad, funerary commemoration which the apostles kept: 'breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, prais-

ing God' (Acts 2:46 ff.)" (Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, p. 367)

C. The death of our Lord — and also His resurrection — therefore have their effect on our lives in the present. Through this Sacrament of Holy Communion, God's unique acts in Christ are not just past history; they are brought to bear upon us in the present. And we participate in His acts for our deliverance from sin and death here and now by eating and drinking "in remembrance of Him!"

III. *Proclaim His Death Discerning the Body*

A. Discern the body of Christ, the church. This meal is for the church, not for special groups or cliques, but for all His faithful followers, baptized in His name. This meal shows us that with God there is no distinction of persons. No one is better than another, regardless of skin color, social standing, or economic position. The sacrament therefore also reminds us we dare not distinguish persons. For it is the visible manifestation of our communion, our union not only with God but also with one another. The footwashing of the Gospel and our blessed Savior's mandate (John 13:1-15) graphically demonstrate how we are to be disposed toward one another.

B. Discern the Lord's body and blood under the forms of bread and wine. This is no ordinary meal. Nor is it ordinary bread and wine. But in these humble forms, this is the true body and blood of our Savior: the body once born of Mary, once employed as a carpenter, which once suffered and was given into death after betrayal, which once rose again and appeared to the disciples, and which now is risen on high to the throne of the Father, but which is nonetheless present, distributed and eaten by the faithful for the forgiveness of sins and for the strengthening of spiritual life.

IV. *Proclaim His Death Fearlessly and Often*

A. Participate in this holy sacrament with reverence and self-examination, yes! But not with the fear of damnation. Not with the fear of having failed to make our own selves "worthy enough." We need only fear participating in this sacrament "in an unworthy manner" when we receive it in a faithless, careless way, or when we come to it trusting in anything or anyone other than the perfect atonement our Lord has already made for us.

B. Our worthiness to receive the body and blood of Christ consists only in the fact that He is our Savior and that by means of His life, death, and resurrection He has made us His own. These are the very blessings He gives us in the sacrament when we receive it with faith, even though that faith be weak and faltering. Through this sacrament our Lord strengthens weak faith.

C. We therefore ought highly to prize this blessed sacrament and receive it at every opportunity, mindful of the forgiveness and strength we receive therein, as well as the message we proclaim thereby.

V. *Proclaim His Death in Anticipation of His Visible Return*

A. Our Lord will eat of this bread and drink of this fruit of the vine anew with us in His Father's kingdom. (Cf. Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18)

B. This sacrament is thus a foretaste of heaven. The kingdom of God is frequently pictured in terms of a great banquet. The "Banquet of the Kingdom" begins here and now but has its final fulfillment at the Parousia.

C. Our participation in this sacrament is thus also a sign we believe He is coming again — soon! ("... you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.")

D. Because of what God shows us and does for us in this sacrament, we need not fear His coming, but we can actually pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Conclusion

You are a preacher! And what a wonderful message you have the privilege to proclaim! You can proclaim the death of the Lord Jesus Christ—and also His resurrection! You can proclaim it as the seal of a new covenant. You can proclaim it in remembrance of Him. You can proclaim it discerning His body. You can proclaim it fearlessly and often. And you can proclaim it in anticipation of His visible return.

This is the message you proclaim “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup!” Come forward now, on this anniversary celebration, to proclaim your sermon in the sacrament. And go forward on this anniversary celebration from this altar to proclaim the Lord’s death and resurrection in your lives to your neighbors and to all the world!

THOMAS EDGE

GOOD FRIDAY

Is. 52:13—53:12

This most solemn day of the church year holds before our eyes the heart and center of God’s forgiving love toward sinful men. Today we ponder in a special way the mysteries of that divine love in the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. As the liturgy unfolds the picture of God’s suffering Servant, we stand condemned of the sin which caused His suffering and death. But we also stand forgiven by that very suffering and death which our sin has brought about.

The Introit and Gradual are meditations upon the unfathomable depths of the suffering Servant’s agony on the cross. In the Collect (the first one given for this day in *The Lutheran Hymnal*), we pray for God’s grace on His family, the church, for which our Lord suffered and died. The Gospel is the Passion of our Lord according to Saint John. And the Epistle is a “Servant Song” of Isaiah, stressing that it is through the

substitutionary suffering and death of the *Ebed Yaweb* that righteousness and salvation have been brought to men.

Introduction

This is the Friday we call good! But in view of the terrible events which we commemorate today, how by any stretch of the imagination can we call this day good? The answer to that question lies in the reason why the events of this day once took place. Those events, the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, about which we heard in the reading of the Gospel, took place for you and me. It was on this day more than 1,900 years ago that God finally brought to completion His ancient promises to deliver us from our bondage to sin and death.

The Epistle, the text for this meditation, is one such ancient promise of God concerning the Servant through whom He was to finally complete those promises of deliverance. The striking and clear parallel between the events of the death of Jesus of Nazareth and the ancient promise of God, given through Isaiah in the text, should leave no doubt in our minds and hearts that this Jesus was indeed the Servant by whom God was fulfilling His promises. It clearly shows us that:

Jesus Christ Is the Servant of God

I. The Servant of God Is Rejected by Men

A. Isaiah envisioned the Lord’s anointed Servant as being “despised and rejected by men.” He foretold that men would fail to recognize in the Servant-Messiah the royal person of the Son of God.

B. So it was when that Messiah and Son, Jesus Christ, appeared on the scene of human history. “He came to His own, and His own received Him not.” They looked for a grand and glorious personage to fulfill their material desires, not for a humble Servant. He was thus rejected and handed over to Gentiles to be crucified. Even His closest associates ran from Him, denied and rejected Him in His hour of need.

C. The Servant of God is still despised and rejected by men today. Countless thousands mock and deride Him or despise Him by their indifference. Following our own natural inclinations, we too care little for the pathetic Figure of the text, whose appearance is "so marred beyond human semblance," with "no form or comeliness that we should look at Him." We too would hide our faces from Him and evade the claim He makes upon us. We look not for the humble Servant of God, but for one who will control and manipulate God for our own ends, who will arrange events and things according to our desires.

II. *The Servant of God Suffers and Dies for Men*

A. Having been despised and rejected by men, Isaiah foretold that the Servant of God would suffer and be put to death.

B. When our Lord Jesus Christ had been rejected and delivered to the Gentiles, He suffered untold agony and finally death. The circumstances of the death of Jesus are identical with those foretold by Isaiah concerning the Servant of God (stricken, smitten, afflicted, silent before His persecutors, put to death with transgressors, buried in the tomb of a rich man, etc.)

C. In His suffering and death, this Servant of God, Jesus Christ, bears our griefs, carries our sorrows, is bruised for our iniquities, is beaten for us. He is made an offering for our sin. He causes us and untold numbers thereby to be accounted righteous. He pours out His soul to death for us and intercedes with the Father for us transgressors—all while He Himself is the innocent Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. His suffering and death, therefore, confront us with the horribly serious nature of our sin. But at the same time they obtain deliverance for us from our sin (even for our sins of indifference and rejection) and from death, the consequence of sin.

III. *The Servant of God Shall Be Exalted and Lifted Up on High*

A. After the Servant of God had finished His work of offering Himself as the expiatory sacrifice for the sins of those who could not make expiation for themselves, Isaiah prophesied: "He shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high" (Is. 52:13). He will startle and astonish many nations (Is. 52:14, 15). He will be given His due. (Is. 53:12)

B. This prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the Servant of God, Jesus Christ, on "the third day" and at His ascension. Today we look forward with restrained joy to Easter, knowing that the Servant, despised and rejected by men, who suffered and was put to death for men, has completed God's promises of deliverance for us and that He is now exalted on high and is coming again! (Cf. Palm Sunday Epistle, Phil. 2:5-11)

Conclusion

That is why we call this Friday good. On this day more than 1,900 years ago, the Servant of God, Jesus Christ, on a cross on a hill called Golgotha, outside the city of Jerusalem, accomplished all things for our true and everlasting good. In Him, God brought to completion His ancient promises to deliver us from our bondage to sin and death. Now we look forward to next Sunday, Easter Sunday, and the joy of His resurrection. And we look forward also to the final Easter resurrection of all who follow Him and are thus themselves servants of God!

THOMAS EDGE

EASTER DAY, THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

1 COR. 5:6-8

The Easter Epistle shows us the necessity of sacrificial living as followers of Christ and emphasizes for us the fact that this kind

of living is achieved through the power of His death and resurrection. Although the resurrection is not mentioned explicitly, it is implicit in the fact of Christ's sacrifice. Had He not been raised, there would be no exhortation to "celebrate the festival."

It is doubtful whether the apostle's reference to "the festival" should be taken to mean a yearly celebration of Easter, since an annual observance probably did not develop until after New Testament times. It is quite certain, however, that the early Christians did regard the first day of each week as a celebration of Easter and a regular day of worship.

Two Introits are offered by the Lutheran liturgy, both of which break forth with hallelujahs and sing of our Lord's wonderful resurrection. The Collect (the first of the three offered) prays for the ability to accomplish the good desires God puts into our minds, the basis of the request being the fact that He has, through Christ, overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. The Gradual echoes the thoughts of the Epistle and exhorts us to give thanks and rejoice because of this day, which the Lord hath made. The Gospel shows us the empty tomb and proclaims the Easter message of the angels that the Lord has risen.

Introduction

Christ is risen: He is risen indeed! This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it!

This is indeed a day for rejoicing and gladness! For this is a high festival or feast day of the Christian year. It is unlike any other festival of mankind. It is a festival which is not meant to leave a person with a headache or hangover when the celebration is done. It is a festival which does not lead its participants out of the world of reality and which, once celebrated, lets them down with a thud and sends them back, fatigued and spent, to their same old, humdrum,

meaningless existence. Rather this festival, properly kept, can only bring its celebrants lasting joy, peace, and blessing. It is the festival or Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is, therefore, a festival we can participate in without fear of overindulgence.

The Epistle for this day speaks to us about this festival, and on this basis you and I today ought to urge one another

Let Us Celebrate the Festival

I. Why Should We Celebrate?

A. Life offers little reason for celebrating, in view of present-day tensions, world problems, and personal perplexities. To be sure, we have many comforts and conveniences in life. There are many things and people who give us joy. But all these lose their meaning when we are reminded that the yawning jaws of the grave—patiently now perhaps, but certainly nonetheless—await us and those we love.

B. Christ provides every reason for celebrating! (1) He is our paschal Lamb, who has been sacrificed for us. He is the perfect Lamb of God, who has taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29). His blood, shed in sacrificial death, marks our doorposts (cf. Old Testament Passover, Ex. 12:1 ff.) and ransoms us for God (Rev. 5:9). (2) He is now our victorious Lamb, who has risen again and conquered death and the grave and who has proved Himself to be King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14). (3) He thus gives us certain promise of our own victory over death and of victory for all who follow Him (1 Cor. 15:54 ff.). That is why we celebrate the festival or feast of our Lord's resurrection. But if we are going to celebrate this festival, we had better also ask:

II. How Should We Celebrate?

A. We should not celebrate with "the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil!" This precludes wild partying and intemperate

merrymaking. All that is evil and petty and wrong must be renounced in our celebration of this festival. Even the remains of a little yeast ferments the whole batch of dough. That is the way it is in your lives as Christians. You must not only renounce all the so-called "big sins" but also the apparently little, insignificant remnants of malice and evil. For these, too, work as an evil influence in you and become an evil influence or leaven in the life of others. Cleansed by Christ and delivered from the bondage of sin and death, cast out all "the old leaven," just as the Israelites did in preparation for their Passover celebration! Their seeking out of all leaven was symbolic of a moral cleansing prior to their celebration, and it served as a reminder of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. (Deut. 16:3)

B. We should celebrate the festival "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." You yourselves are unleavened. You are like a new batch of fresh dough. That is what Christ made you when He kneaded you together with your fellow Christians into the unity of His church. That is what He has made you when you were incorporated into His death and resurrection through Holy Baptism (Rom. 6:3 ff.). Now you must, more and more, let Him lead you to become what He has already made you by His death and resurrection: His own holy and perfect people, unleavened by any evil influence from within or without. That is what you must more and more become through your continual, daily death to sin and resurrection to newness of life with Christ. (Rom. 6:1, 2; 5-14)

C. We should celebrate the festival by feasting and feeding on the unleavened bread of life, Jesus Christ Himself, in whom there was no sin or any spot of guile. He comes to us now in the Gospel proclamation and in the unleavened bread of Holy Communion. The Israelites fed on the flesh of their paschal lamb. So we too now eat the flesh

and drink the blood of our Paschal Lamb, the Son of God and Son of man, Jesus Christ (John 6:35 ff.). We feed on Him for forgiveness of past failures and for the strength of new life to become what He has already made us! That is how we celebrate this festival or feast of our Lord's resurrection; and now one question still remains:

III. *How Long Should Our Celebration Last?*

A. Our human festivals or parties usually last an evening or a day, but our celebration of this Easter festival should last longer than the duration of this day. The Easter season itself lasts till Ascension Day—40 days! Yet our festival celebration lasts still longer, for every Sunday is an Easter celebration.

B. But in addition, our celebration lasts not only throughout the church year, every Sunday and holy day. Every day in the lives of God's people is an Easter celebration. For they have died and risen again with Christ by Baptism, and they daily "celebrate the festival" by recalling this and by casting out "the old leaven." So for Christians Easter lasts all their lives as they live their lives in union with Him who died and rose again.

C. And the celebration lasts still longer! For it extends beyond this life into the life which is to come, which is ours by the grace of Him who has washed us and made us white in the blood of the paschal Lamb (Rev. 7:14). That Lamb is coming again and will bring us to the perfect celebration of the festival of His resurrection!

Pennsville, N. J.

THOMAS EDGE

QUASIMODOGENITI, THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 JOHN 5:4-10

"Quasimodogeniti"—all that the name of this day has taken on as its "proper" burden is formidable.

The baptismal accent in the antiphon of

the Introit (1 Peter 2:2) reminds us of the glorious truth that we have been born again of water and the Spirit. It reminds us that we have been buried with Christ on Holy Saturday past and risen with Him on Easter. Daily we should come forth and arise — new men! How much we wish we would!

We pray about it, we ask, seek, knock. The Collect gathers up our individual petitions "that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord's resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation." How we hope to! How we wish to!

The Epistle, this sermon's text, is comment on our problem. God's commands are not burdensome, "because every child of God is victor over the godless world" (1 John 5:3 NEB). "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4 AV). The victory is already achieved, is already ours. Lord, we believe, but we are also aware of the persistence of our unbelief, the areas of our life and conversation that fail to reflect the resurrection.

But "sing aloud unto God, our Strength." "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us." The angel did descend. The stone was rolled away. He was not there. He is risen. He has overcome the world!

Do we still say, "except . . . except . . ."? Then in the Gospel come into the company of the faithful again. There the Christ is present. There the Spirit's witness reaches us again, convincing us. "My Lord and my God!" There we find the help of His grace to bring forth the fruits of His resurrection.

Our Heredity Conquers Our Environment

"I thought I wasn't cut out for this kind of life. . . . I was right. . . . *I want to die.*"

"Nonsense. What you need is —"

"A rest? a vacation? a checkup by a specialist? dinner by candlelight? reconciliation with my aged parents? a cruise of the Caribbean with the over-30 club? an advantageous

marriage? a new sports car? a fresh young thing with long blonde hair or an understanding and experienced divorcee with both feet on the ground? protein tablets and a sunlamp? a new set of tumblers? What? *What?* The salt has lost its savor, so you tell me!" (Herbert Gold, *Salt*, [New York: The Dial Press, 1963], p. 295)

What? "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." Can that suggestion seriously be made in the midst of the world's own suggestions? Can faith overcome the world that has such a record of overcoming us — even in the week since we celebrated "the solemnities of our Lord's resurrection"? Phillips translates St. John's affirmative: "God's 'heredity' within us will always conquer the world outside us." It is faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God that establishes our new blood line. (5:1)

I. *Ours Is a Worldly Environment*

A. We are involved. The last of the "Christian Questions" asks the Christian to "look around to see whether he is still in the world and keep in mind that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15 and 16; 1 John 2 and 5."

B. We feel the anti-God pressures of the *κόσμος* that should have been order and has become all disorder. We are among "the bent ones" (C. S. Lewis' term for people in *The Silent Planet*). We do not, cannot, "stand upright" before God (1 John 2: 15-17). Even a little "bent" is bad.

C. When our faith doesn't seem to make any difference, the basic heresy is that we have discounted that God was in Christ. That's how serious He is about the change He expects in us. By changing what He is into something less we try to excuse our being less than we ought.

D. Our every act of lovelessness reveals we are part of our environment. The se-

quence of thought from 1 John 4:20 is: If you claim to love God, you must love the brother. Everyone who accepts Christ is in the family. Check your love to the Father by your love of the family. Check your love of family by seeing if you love the Father and His commands. Love is obedience. And lovelessness reveals our disobedience, our worldliness.

II. *Ours Is a Divine Heredity*

A. Through Jesus Christ we become sons of God, who love the Father. Transferred from death to life (3:14). Made children of God (John 1:13) by faith. Coming to faith is this being born as God's child, and this is something that has happened: "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." (V. 4)

B. Our love of our Father makes us love the children. We love because He first loved us (4:7-11). His commands are not burdensome, because they are now what we desire to do. We conquer the world day after day because day after day our faith that has overcome the world overcomes again in the power of Christ.

III. *Ours Is a Certain Victory*

A. We must reckon with its struggle. We do love the Father and don't follow as we ought. We do love the family and don't follow through. We can't win, it seems. Yet St. John says, "Victory is sure."

B. We must continually return to the certainty of His victory. He came. It is historical fact. Jordan's baptismal water and Golgotha's atoning blood are not only argument against the heretics but summation of all the redemptive work that climaxed in the resurrection. That you believe it at all is proof of the Spirit's witness. "Out of the mouths of two or three human witnesses" we hold things to be established. Here is God's threefold witness, all agreeing in this one certainty—the victory is ours.

C. We must constantly find the renewing of its power. "Desire the sincere milk of the Word." The Spirit's witness is always strong and true in Scripture. The Spirit did come in our own Baptism and does come in our Lord's body and blood.

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