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Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Series

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Outlines on the Standard Epistle Series

PENTECOST

ACTS 2:1-13

Introduction

The church claims to live by the Spirit of God: born of water and the Spirit, unable to call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Ghost, believing in Jesus Christ only because we are called by the Gospel through the Holy Ghost, enlightened with His gifts, sanctified and kept in the true faith. That this is our faith is what we celebrate today.

The Coming of the Holy Ghost

- I. *The coming in our text initiates the Spirit's work in the world.*
 - A. The fulfillment of our Lord's promise
 1. Not to leave us orphans in this world
 2. To lead us into all truth
 - B. The sound of the wind without wind
 1. Evidences of the Spirit's coming — not tangible
 2. Effects of His coming, fruits and results — tangible
 - C. The tongues of flame
 1. Flame to give light
 2. Tongues to give power to speak what we have seen and heard of Christ
- II. *The first coming shows us that there are certain constants in the Spirit's coming.*
 - A. The disciples were all with one accord in one place.
 1. As disciples they were professed followers of Christ.
 2. Being in one place showed that they were obedient followers because the Lord had commanded them to remain in Jerusalem until the coming of the Spirit.
 3. They were held together by their Lord's command.
 - B. We are disciples only as we meet the same test.
 1. Is Jesus enough our Lord to keep us under the influence of His Word?
 2. Are we still governed by our own spirit or by our Lord's Spirit?
- III. *The Spirit's coming led the disciples into all truth by taking the things of Christ and showing them to them.*
 - A. The disciples had been eye-witnesses of all that Jesus did.
 - B. The coming of the Spirit blessed the eye-witnesses.
 1. His coming made what Christ did personal for them.
 2. His coming wrought the conviction that was their faith in Christ.
 - C. The Spirit's coming wrought a mighty change in the disciples.
 1. Once frightened at the prospect of suffering, the disciples now rejoiced to be considered worthy to suffer with their Lord.
 2. Once fearful because of little faith, the disciples now were bold because they were utterly certain of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - D. To this we are called just as surely as the Spirit comes to us.

1. We have the Spirit as surely as we have been baptized.
2. We are strengthened by the Spirit through the Word and sacraments.
3. Faith believes that it is so and simply acts in the power of the Spirit of Christ which has been bestowed.

IV. *The coming of the Holy Ghost achieves its purpose.*

- A. All the attendant signs call attention to the mighty acts of God accomplished in Christ.
- B. We are inescapably bound to this purpose.
 1. We are enabled to hear the mighty acts of God in Christ in language which we can understand.
 2. We are empowered to declare the mighty acts of God in Christ in language which others can understand.
- C. Without the Holy Ghost we may know all about Jesus, but we will not know Him as the Mighty Actor, the Great Performer of the deeds of God for us.

Conclusion

We have no gimmicks by which we can be sure of bringing the Holy Ghost to ourselves. All that we have is what God has given us—the Gospel by which we are told the mighty acts of God in Christ—the Lord's Supper, by which the fruits and benefits of God's mighty acts in Christ are made our very own. To submit to the means is to obey Christ. How shall it be with us? By our might and power? Or by the Spirit of Him who is Lord of hosts, the Lord of all them that live by His Spirit in the faith of Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, the Lord of all?

WILLIAM A. BUEGE

TRINITY

ROMANS 11:33-36

Introduction

"Choose you this day whom you will serve! If the Lord be God, then serve Him!" We do not settle this matter with a few words. Our perversity is no less perverse because we have to do with the things of God. Our self-deception and our self-will are not left out of the picture just because the picture has a few halos in it. It is precisely here that our radical wrongness finds its fullest expression. When we talk about God we are most capable of escaping from God. "About" God gives us our escape from the obedience and the commitment and the service called for by standing in the presence of the living God. What is always decisive and conclusive is our response to God.

To God the Glory Forever

1. *This area is so difficult for us because we are initiates.*
 - A. We know sin, but we also know about the forgiveness of sin.
 1. This can be a device on our part for evading God.
 2. This can become a system by which we attempt to manipulate God.
 - B. We know Law, but we also know Gospel.
 1. These are not merely names that we hang on certain doctrines.
 2. They are the moment-by-moment reality in which we find ourselves.
 - a. The moment always before God
 - b. The moment always condemned by God
 - c. The moment under the mercy of God
 - C. We tend to change the glory of God into the glory of a creature.
 1. We can confess all the proper

- statements of faith without being in the faith.
2. This was finally what happened to Israel according to Rom. 9—11.
 3. When knowing and observing become ends in themselves, they deny God.
- D. The Christian has no grounds of his own on which he can boast.
1. God has imprisoned all, Jew and Christian, in disobedience.
 2. God would have mercy upon all; if we were not disobedient, God would not have to show us mercy.
- II. *We are always tempted to deny that God's is the glory forever.*
- A. As professing Christians we seek to do something for God.
1. We deny God's glory when we do what we do as though it deserved reward.
 2. This is what we do when worship, prayer, and giving are still expressions of self and not God's love. Cf. 1 Cor. 13.
 3. This is what we do when we see ourselves and our words and our actions as under anything except the mercy of God.
- B. Our natural conclusion is: "Why try to do anything then?"
1. We show how deep our disobedience is.
 2. We show how little we understand God's glory, as if we can tell Him how He ought to be and what He ought to do.
 3. We show how sure we are that we can be God's advisers.
 4. We show how we seek to give Him in order to be recompensed again.
- III. *The only proper response to God is in all things and at all times to acknowledge Him as the God who only has mercy.*
- A. This is to know God always and only in Jesus Christ.
1. In Christ God has shown His inexhaustible riches — finding within Himself the means by which He can still be my God though I am a disobedient sinner.
 2. In Christ God has shown His inexhaustible wisdom — working out the way by which He could be righteous and just to forgive my sin.
 3. In Christ God has shown His inexhaustible knowledge — not merely knowing me for what I am, but knowing me in His love in Christ.
- B. We cannot know God — the Holy Trinity makes that clear — but we can believe.
1. We believe in God our Father.
 2. We believe through Jesus Christ, the Son, our Savior.
 3. We believe by the power of the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier.
- C. To God the glory forever.
1. I never under any circumstance give God anything because of God are all things.
 2. I never under any circumstance keep God as my God because *through* God are all things.
 3. I never under any circumstance bring myself to God because *to* God are all things.
- Conclusion*
- I can never, under any circumstance do anything except worship God, humbly acknowledging Him in all my ways, reverently

adoring Him as God, to whom is the glory forever. If we will but see it, this is the faith of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the God who has mercy upon us, the only and perfect Savior of sinners imprisoned in disobedience.

WILLIAM A. BUEGE

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THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 JOHN 4:16-21

Today's Gospel (the Rich Man and Lazarus) has many thrusts, such as that we are to "listen to Moses and the prophets." But the frame of the parable holds the canvas of a man who did not love his poor neighbor as he ought. Love is the emphasis of today's Epistle, for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him (text).

Dwelling with God

I. *Dwelling in God*

A. Characteristic of God: "God is love" (text).

B. God has revealed Himself to us. He spoke by prophets (Hebrews 1) and by His deeds. His greatest Word and His greatest deed is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. "His love was disclosed to us in this, that He sent His only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love He showed to us in sending His Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins." (1 John 4:9, 10 NEB)

C. We live in God. In the shadow of the cross is grace and not wrath. Standing in His grace we live. "The life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and sacrificed Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20 NEB)

D. Dwelling in God means not only love and security but it is all we need. The love is perfected. It is fulfilled and filled full. It is complete. Aware of having sins for-

given by His love, I stand in awe of Him (Ps. 130:4); and aware that it is so easy to forget His love, I must "work out my salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12); yet His perfect love gives boldness on Judgment Day. His love removes fear and the guilty pains of judgment. The guilty feeling is gone because of His perfect love.

E. Knowing this and believing His love (text), we dwell in God, in the fullness of His love. If I am still afraid of judgment, if my guilt feelings drive me to fear, then I must look again to my God through Christ and have Him look at me through Christ. "God is love." His love is seen and made manifest in Christ.

II. *God dwelling in us*

A. Looking into our hearts, we often wonder whether God dwells in us. Could it be possible that Satan might enter us, as he did enter Judas? We know we have secret faults (Ps. 19:12). We know the good is not always done and evil is in our hearts. (Rom. 7:19)

B. As God revealed Himself so also we reveal ourselves. God manifested Himself with and in love. God's visible love is in Jesus Christ for us. In our lives we reveal what sort of people we are and what spirit lives within us. We are enjoined: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:29-31 NEB)

C. Our love to God reveals the new life His love has created in us (text). Our love to our neighbor is also motivated by His love to us. "I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are My disciples." (John 13:34, 35 NEB)

D. God's dwelling in us manifests itself

in love, visible love, just as God's love was visualized in Christ.

Dwelling with God has two aspects: that we never forget God's love to us, for it removes all fear, and that we never forget God's love to us, for it prompts us to show love to our brother.

GEORGE W. BORNEMANN

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 JOHN 3:13-18

Two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, may serve as symbols of the world and the church. Here are two camps. The sacred record tells us that sin was "couching at the door" of Cain (Gen. 4:7). The writer of Hebrews (11:4) has, "By faith Abel offered a sacrifice greater than Cain's, and through faith his goodness was attested, for his offerings had God's approval; and through faith he continued to speak after death." Abel's offerings were accepted by God, for his sacrifice attested to his faith. The way of Cain (Jude 11) is the way of rebellion, of flouting authority, of defilement, of abuse (Jude 8-10). These two ways are in conflict. The world hates especially those who "are strangers in the world" as was Jesus Christ (John 17:14). "If the world hates you," comments our Lord, "it hated Me first, as you know well. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you out of the world, for that reason the world hates you" (John 15:18, 19 NEB). The lesson of love, God's love to us, our love to God, and our love to the neighbor, needs to be learned.

Love—a Mark of God's Children

I. *Passing from death to life by love*

Love is the significant mark indicating we have passed from death to life (text). By love we become aware that we are not in the

camp of the world, of darkness, of death. "Only the man who loves his brother dwells in light: there is nothing to make him stumble. But one who hates his brother is in darkness; he walks in the dark and has no idea where he is going, because the darkness has made him blind." (1 John 2:10 NEB)

A person may be endowed with great gifts and feel that these are sure signs he is a child of God and in God's kingdom. But even to those who someday would say: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, cast out devils in Your name, and in Your name perform many miracles?" Jesus will declare: "I never knew you: out of My sight, you and your wicked ways!" (Matt. 7:23 NEB). This same thought is expressed by Paul: "I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal." (1 Cor. 13:1 NEB)

If we hate, it is a mark that we are still in death and not in life. Hatred is a form of murder and is marked with death. It came in sharpness in the night in which He was betrayed, for "the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray Him" (John 13:2 NEB). The mark of God's child is not anger nor betrayal, but love. Thus we show we are of God, for God is love.

II. *Perceiving God's love*

The prerequisite for our love to God and to our neighbor is that we understand what love is. It is fully revealed in the love of God in Jesus Christ as we see Him who "laid down His life for us." (Text)

Christ's love was a voluntary love, and in His voluntary act He conquered death (John 10:18: "I am laying it down of My own free will" NEB). By that love He gave life. Thus we understand that we are no more in death. Perceiving His love, we will understand why we have passed from death to life.

God in word and in deed teaches us to

understand love. We need no words of men, "for you are yourselves taught by God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9 NEB). To respond by saying, "I love God," and still to hate his brother condemns such a man as "a liar." (1 John 4:20)

When we perceive God's love, we learn to love as we have been loved by God in Christ. "In a word, as God's dear children, try to be like Him, and live in love as Christ loved you, and gave Himself up on your behalf as an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to God." (Eph. 5: 1, 2 NEB)

We should withhold nothing from the brethren in our love to them, not even our lives. In the midst of sin and while we were yet sinners, God loved us. "Be generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4:32 NEB)

Jesus Himself says, "Love one another, as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you." (John 15: 12-14 NEB)

III. *Practicing our love*

If love is the mark to indicate our passing from death to life, and if we can perceive this mark of love in all its fullness in Jesus Christ, then how important it is for us to practice love. Love calls us to practice, to love not only in word but also in deed. Our faith expresses itself in deeds of love. Love may mean martyrdom and may summon us to sacrifice. We trust Him even if we must give things away, even our life. We have confidence that when He commands us, "Love one another" (John 15:17), that He wants the best for us and for others.

When the early church was separated from the world, its members had the mark of love and were "united in heart and soul. Not a man of them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in com-

mon" (Acts 4:32, 33 NEB). In the Old Testament God required the practice of love. In Deuteronomy 15:7 (RSV) we read: "If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be." Faith in action means love in practice. "Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,' but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing." (James 2:15-17)

By God's grace in Christ our neglect of love, our hatred and anger, are taken away in His sacrificial death on Calvary. Through His love we have been forgiven, and life is ours. Love is therefore the mark of our new life, and by it we supply our brother in all his needs.

GEORGE W. BORNEMANN

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 PETER 5:6-11

As a part of our church's burial service we read the verse from Job 14: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." It echoes the previous statement of Eliphaz: "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7 RSV) and that of Job: "Has not man a hard service upon earth, and are not his days like the days of a hireling?" (Job 7:11 RSV)

Trouble brings loss of tranquility and serenity; gives an uneasy feeling; disturbs and disquiets in matters of health of body and peace of mind. The Lord Jesus would speak and say: "Set your troubled hearts at

rest. Trust in God always; trust also in Me" (John 14:1 NEB). In today's Gospel (Lost Sheep and Lost Coin) we are reminded that God does not wait for "something to happen" when there is trouble; rather He acts. The shepherd goes and searches for the sheep "until he finds it" and the woman sweeps and searches for the coin "until she finds it." The sheep and the coin are found by someone who cares. So we are instructed

What to Do in Troubles

I. *See the almighty hand of God*

As we see His mighty hand (text), we know we will be lifted up from our troubles ("exalted"). Therefore we can cast "all our cares on Him, for He cares for us" (Ps. 55:22 and text). Also see Matt. 6:25-34.

God's mighty hand brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. They were to remind their offspring of this gracious deliverance of God whereby He showed that He was their God (Ex. 13:9; Deut. 6:8). Their hands were weak, but God's arm was almighty. They were to "cast" all their cares on God. (Text)

The mighty hand of God knows no weakness. He is our strong Deliverer. He "who started the good work in you will bring it to completion by the Day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6 NEB). "He who calls you is to be trusted; He will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). God is strong; He will deliver us from all troubles that assail the body and the mind and the soul and the spirit.

The cares that weigh heavy on our heart are to be cast on God as a man casts a stone. The Lord is our refuge and our strength in trouble. (Ps. 46)

II. *See the adversary, the devil*

The text would make us aware that in time of trouble the tempter is ready to strike and to do his work. Peter knew from his own life what it meant to be "sifted as wheat by Satan" in the hour of trial. He knew what

it meant to be admonished to be sober, vigilant, awake. "Keep awake" (Mark 13:37) he was told. "Be alert, be wakeful" (Mark 13:33). "Stay awake, all of you; and pray that you may be spared the test: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:38)

The "adversary" is the term for an accuser in a trial before the judge. The devil would not only be accuser but would also attempt to be the destroyer. Strong as a lion, deceptive in trial, eager to devour. Peter knew that God strengthens, but he would not let his readers forget that the devil seeks to drive to despair. The father of lies accuses and slanders.

III. *See the child of God adoring Him*

Trouble is no respecter of persons. Not only the scattered people "who lodge for a while in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1) are experiencing troubles but Silvanus, through whom this appeal was written (1 Peter 5:12), could tell of others having problems (cf. 1 Thess.). "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (text). And of this sort of trouble there has been no let-up to the present day.

Peter reminds us that similar afflictions are experienced by others, whatever our afflictions might be; but with the awareness of God's mighty victory over our adversary the devil comes ultimately adoration of God for what He does.

"Simon, Simon, take heed: Satan has been given leave to sift all of you like wheat; but for you I have prayed that your faith may not fail; and when you have come to yourself, you must lend strength to your brothers" (Luke 22:31 NEB). "Resist him in the faith," writes Peter. And more: "After that ye have suffered a while," God will "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever." (Text)

"Such testing of your faith breeds fortitude, and if you give fortitude full play you will go on to complete a balanced character that will fall short in nothing." (James 1:4 NEB)

Christ "humbled Himself." He faced the trials and became Man, standing where man stood and stands. He met Satan in the forty days of the wilderness and throughout His ministry. He came to destroy the works of the devil. He gives us the full grace of forgiveness for the times when our faith fell short and we did not resist.

Without Him we fail miserably. With Him we have all things. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

GEORGE W. BORNEMANN

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROM. 8:18-23

Jesus uses the birth of a child as a picture to describe the change from sorrow to joy, from pain to happiness, that a Christian may also expect. John 16:21: "A woman in labor is in pain because her time has come; but when the child is born she forgets the anguish in her joy that a man has been born into the world." Today's Epistle deals with our life in the here and now and tells us that we are living in the last days and moments of a new birth. The labor pains are increasing in intensity. All creation looks forward for the moment of

The Glorious Birth of a New World

I. *The waiting period*

What we wait for is the appearance, the epiphany, the manifestation of the sons of God.

1. We wait for Christ to reveal Himself (1 Cor. 1:7).
2. We wait for God to "balance the account" (2 Thess. 1:7).

3. We wait for "the gift of grace" in Christ (1 Peter 1:13).
4. We wait for triumphant joy (1 Peter 4:13).
5. We look for the liberation of all God's children (Matt. 21:28).

"Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2,3 NEB). During this waiting period we prefer "to suffer hardship with the people of God rather than enjoy the transient pleasures of sin," for our eyes are "fixed upon the coming day of recompense." (Heb. 11:25,26 NEB)

II. *The groaning period.*

It is not an easy period of waiting, but of groaning. Its joy is in the anticipation of fulfillment. Its thrill is in the responsibilities and pleasures that await the parent who knows that the "gift of the Lord" is revealed in the "fruit of the womb" (Ps. 127). Likewise creation and the Christian pass through the period of labor and groan, of travail and tiredness. Changing seasons may bring temporary relief to life's trials. Changing scenery may bring temporary rest to life's toils. But this present time remains a period of tribulation and affliction.

Here are only a few passages which would stress this: "To enter the kingdom of God we must pass through many hardships" (Acts 14:22 NEB). "You have been granted the privilege not only of believing in Christ but also suffering for Him." (Phil. 1:29 NEB). We are "exposed to hardship" (2 Tim. 2:9) in our discipleship.

The world waited with longing hope for the Savior to come. He came as promised. But even in His coming and in His entering the valley of the shadow of death that we might have life, He, too, groaned and tra-

vailed. He suffered. He died that we might live.

In our discipleship here are words you may trust:

"If we died with Him, we shall live with Him;

If we endure, we shall reign with Him.

If we deny Him, He will deny us.

If we are faithless, He keeps faith,

For He cannot deny Himself."

(2 Tim. 2:11-13 NEB)

"Even though you now smart for a little while, if need be, under trials of many kinds, this is cause for great joy . . . These trials come so that your faith may prove itself worthy of all praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:6, 7 NEB). "Our troubles are slight and short-

lived; and their outcome an eternal glory which outweighs them far." (2 Cor. 4:17 NEB)

To recognize the purpose of these experiences is important. God chastens us that we be more chaste. He purges us that we be more pure. He disciplines us that we be and remain disciples.

III. *The period of rejoicing*

Suffering now turns to the splendor that is in store. Hope turns to revelation. Shame changes to glory. Death becomes life. We "look for new heavens and a new earth." (2 Peter 3:13). It is worth waiting for and it is worth all the groans.

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