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## Homiletics

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THE SIXTH SUNDAY  
AFTER TRINITY  
JULY 5

*Worship Supplement*

The Noonday Office (pp. 116—117)

*Introduction:* Twelve o'clock comes, and half the day is already gone. How time flies! High noon isn't (for most of us) a very exciting time. Not many experience the daily activity of New York's Times Square at noon. We grab a quick sandwich and sigh as we brace ourselves to get back to work. Maybe we can learn to s-t-r-e-t-c-h that lunch break with the use of this Noonday Office.

*Point:* What a wonderful time it is to pause in prayer and commune with God as the Collect declares: "O gracious Jesus, who at this hour did bear our sins." At this break in the day we can well use Christ's pardoning power and the reminder of our cleansing in Him. This is declared in today's Epistle for us baptized children of God. This can give us the impetus to carry on, to journey on through the day with Him as we meet and deal with His creatures. It's high time we learned to pray for the spiritual strength needed for the common tasks of our lives in Christ.

*Problem:* "Let me not be put to shame in my hope," says the Psalm Antiphon. And haven't we often experienced this letdown as we placed our hope in the wrong things? The values of life got mixed up in the business of the day, and we found ourselves losing hope. What a shame! In our little self-centered world, perhaps the sinful self has not been destroyed as cleanly as St. Paul tells us this morning. And then we blush to hear the words of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. We are ashamed of our anger, our dealings with others. Let the Little Chapter ring out

loud and clear: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

*Power:* Christ bore our burdens. He offered Himself on that cross, and by His death we have life. Paul tells us this is our experience in Holy Baptism. It's all real. It's all personal. It's all vital and throbbing with power. He gave so that we might respond as giving people to one another, bearing burdens, being reconciled together, sharing the compelling concern that we learn about in our Gospel lesson. Isn't this what our noon Collect is crying for? Isn't this what our lives need?

In the heat of the noonday sun and the glaring tension of today's living, our Good Shepherd invites us to seek out the green pastures of His Word and the quiet, still waters of His grace. For His help, His power, His stimulating presence, "Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God."

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THE SEVENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER TRINITY  
JULY 12

*Worship Supplement*

Morning Hymns — 788 and 789

"Father, We Praise Thee, Now the Night  
Is Over"

"When Morning Gilds the Skies"

How does your day begin? "Good morning, God!" Or do the words tend to get inverted? "Good God, morning!" Do you sleep each night resting and restoring your strength for the day to come? Or do you sleep at night trying to recover from the exhaustion of the day just past? What is significant about questions like these is that they reveal how we go about utilizing the



power of God-in-Christ made available to us every day—at its break and in its parts and at its ending. Some people use God only as an ear for complaint. Some see Him only as a repairer of disasters and a comforter in disquiet. But the love of God is available as *power* to live more positively, to enable us to override trouble, and to move through the day as men offering strength to others in addition to having strength for themselves. "Graciously aggressive lives" they might be called—lives that are what they are by grace but that know that God's grace is available to develop them into the kind of lives He would have them become; and they move out in His grace to appropriate the grace yet available.

The stance is one of adoration. "Active and watchful, stand we all before thee;/ Singing we offer prayer and meditation:/ Thus we adore thee." More specifically that stance of adoration is expressed in "May Jesus Christ be praised." "Whate'er my hands begin,/ This blessing shall break in:/ May Jesus Christ be praised." As we in adoration assert aloud in faith all that God is, we activate His Word within us by which we know that God is all that He is, and that Word empowers us with new grace.

A sermon *point*, then, would be to lead worshipers to recognize each morning and the beginning of each task as opportunities for an aggressive appropriation of grace in the stance of adoration. Man's song of songs—"May Jesus Christ be praised"—is both praise to God for His marvelous works of grace and at the same time the accepting of the strength for life that He has given through Jesus Christ.

Our *problem* can be seen in the way our living becomes bland. The daily routine seems to have no purpose. The breaking of a new day is taken for granted. Tasks and trials and testings seem unrelated to the building up of the man of God to the kind of strength his God can use. "Jesus Christ

be praised" becomes a tune we listen to. Back of all this is a reluctance to appropriate the power of the Lord, lest it make us run too hard the race of life, lest it make us too eager to cry, "Send me," lest it point out too obviously the poor to be enriched, the prisoner to be visited, the naked to be clothed. We are not ready to "yield our members to righteousness for sanctification" (Epistle: Romans 6:19-23). The drift of that stance is toward death.

God creates new life each morning. The daily rising of the sun dispelling the gloom and darkness of night symbolizes Christ's rising from the darkness of death, creating new life for His people. "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." God moved into the days of our living with His aggressive grace. He forced the hand of the wicked and turned even their enmity, which crucified the Son of God, into the method for the release of His divine life in the world. Now He stands, as did Christ in the Gospel (Mark 8:1-9), simply asking us: "How many loaves have you?" If we bring our sixes and sevens, He will give thanks to His Father (aggressively moving into the gracious power of God available to prayer), break them into more pieces and more strength-giving possibilities than we could dream of. By now we should be convinced—seeing what He has done with the bread. Can we not agree what we ought to do with the "few small fish" we still have tucked away?

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY  
AFTER TRINITY  
JULY 19

*Worship Supplement*

The Offertory Sentence for "After  
Pentecost" (p. 32)

VISTA is using the slogan "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." Once one has heard that slogan



he is no longer uninvolved. It has a certain ability to shake one loose from his complacency. It creates an uneasy feeling. It is saying too much to claim that you can't say no to a statement like that — but it is correct that it forces one to become either more of the answer or more of the problem. And the thrust of the Word of God does exactly that to us. The Gospel (Matthew 7:15-23) warns us against false prophets and alerts us to the "fruit test." In a democracy, when we rule ourselves by our votes, the passages that remind us that "the powers that be are of God" insist that we use our power to vote as men under God's direction. Since we have all been made witnesses of what God has done in Christ Jesus for the whole world, all the warnings of the Gospel (Matthew 7:21) against crying, "Lord, Lord" without doing the will of God, fall on us. We who have been gifted with the Spirit so as to be able to cry, "Abba! Father," and who are led by the Spirit as sons of God, must hear also the Epistle's "provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." (Romans 8:12-17)

The *point* of a sermon based on the first of the "After Pentecost" offertories would be to lead the hearers to participate actively in God's mission — specifically to serve as ministers to their own community.

The *problem* is that Christian people commonly think of ministry as the task of called "professionals." They prefer to be spectators watching what happens and complaining if nothing happens, but hesitant or fearful of becoming part of the action.

The *power* is in this — "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." When I answer God's call with "Send me," it is His power that moves me to do so. This same power never fails me. It shows me the way to go, what I must do, and the words I must say. The path and the actions and the words take on flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. But more — the strength to walk and to do

and to speak have been given through the enfleshing of God's Son, Jesus Christ. His gift to us is more than example. He did the Father's will and offered up His life of perfect obedience both to secure for us forgiveness for our failures and to make available new life for our future successes. His resurrection enables our rising to our responsibilities.

Consider Isaiah's call. After an overwhelming demonstration of God's power that moved Isaiah to say, "Mine eyes have seen the King!" God simply stated His need for a volunteer to do His task. Isaiah volunteered, although he had no idea of what he was getting into and was quite reluctant about his qualifications for the job. You can't say no to God. (Or, perhaps, not *just* no, for that word indicates gross opposition — "I'm not interested," "I don't want to have anything to do with You," "I couldn't care less.")

The compelling love of God that called us also sustains us. "Teach me the way I should go." God provides the road map. "Teach me to do Your will." God graciously gives us the necessary qualifications. "My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord." It is not I, but Christ who lives in me.

Material supplied by  
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#### THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY JULY 26

##### *Worship Supplement* Eucharist III (pp. 63—67)

The third of the eucharistic services proposed for trial use in the *Worship Supplement* has its origin in Roman Catholic experimental rites. That so much of the service could be utilized by the Commission on Worship for Lutheran use is an indication of the great common tradition and faith



that we share with that denomination. It also provides evidence of the work of the Spirit in His church, which all of us have been able to see since Vatican II. Both its origin and several of its accents suggest that "unity" could helpfully be considered as the congregation celebrates Communion with this form. The central thought might be phrased in this way: Unity comes from the oneness of God through the universality of His creative and redemptive actions. This unity is acclaimed by the church, those who respond corporately by the Spirit.

*Point:* We as a congregation affirm consciously and joyfully the unity from God as it is expressed in the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist III.

A. Propers: 1 Chronicles 29:10-13, the Old Testament Lesson, is a monotheistic "Benedicamus." "*We* bless the God of Israel . . . for *all* that is in the heavens and on the earth is Thine . . . and Thou art exalted as head above *all* . . . and Thou rulest over *all* . . . and in Thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to *all* . . . and now *we* thank Thee, our God. . . ." David ends a 40-year reign by gathering the chosen-among-the-nations to celebrate the centrality and universal sovereignty of Yahweh.

B. Liturgy: Compare "God the Father of us *all*, Ruler of the *universe*, look from heaven upon Your Church, upon *all* Your people and upon this congregation . . ." (Prayer for Peace and Unity) and note the references to "all," "universe," and "united" throughout the Thanksgiving.

*Problem:* We deny the centrality and sovereignty of God and live as if His created unity were irreparably broken.

A. Propers: 1 Corinthians 10:6-13, the Epistle, underlines the corporateness (the

word *all* is mentioned four times in verses 1-5) of those graciously united in the Exodus. Idolatry, immorality, testing, and grumbling deny the centrality of God and insist on brokenness and death in Adam. People live the lie of independence.

B. Liturgy: The first person plural replaces the singular throughout, but significantly in the Confession. We confess the corporateness of our sin against God and our consequent sin against one another.

*Power:* God does not deny unity to us in Adam. He loves us in Christ, turns us to Him, gathers us around Him, and gives us the Spirit to affirm His unity.

A. Liturgy: "Our *Brother*, Jesus Christ, Your Son" (the Confession) marks our reunion identity as loyal children forgiven in Christ. By His once-for-all brokenness and death, we have been returned to the one body, to the Spirit, and to faith and hope (the Prayer for Peace and Unity). We have been gathered as an expression of the church (Prayer after the Our Father) to celebrate our unity in the resurrection power of Christ (second part of the Thanksgiving).

B. Propers: Luke 16:1-9, the Gospel, indirectly urges us to be zealous for unity. The unjust steward was commended for making friends even with money. Certainly we who are dealing in a much more significant unity ought to be concerned with fostering God's will that His church be one. We ought to be drawing circles of inclusion rather than exclusion, opening doors and arms to welcome people rather than raising suspicions or promoting attitudes that keep people out. This feast of unity and communion both creates and celebrates the one faith in the one Lord.

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