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Homiletics

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INTRODUCTION

This series of sermon starters provides neat solutions for what Martin Bangert calls unhappy marriages. The lessons suggested by Ordo A of the new Roman series make new Sundays out of many in this Easter sequence. This is a foretaste of things to come when in 1973's Advent the Lutheran churches are offered a new lectionary series that is based to a large extent on the Roman series. Our experiment avoids coming a cropper through the homiletic agility of the author, but is interestingly advanced by his lively suggestions for sermons. The parson who utilizes these suggestions will reap a bumper crop. He will help his hearers be blessed in their hearing if he alerts them to ways in which they can connect their use of the psalmody and the collect as well to the theme for the day which the sermon sets.

His neighbor at Hales Corners, Duane Brunette, supplies the outline suggestions for the Ascension-Pentecost sequence. Here again the Ordo fills in additional material from Acts and the Holy Spirit — that sentence might helpfully end just that way. The passages assist us to remember that the Spirit of our God is working with us now and through us now.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

The theme that develops from the Standard Lessons for this day could be stated this way, "The victory that overcomes the world is our faith in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord." Utilizing the Ordo A Lessons simply expands the accent. Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; and John 20:19-31 taken together provide this accent: "By faith in the risen Christ we can joyfully live with peace, power, and forgiveness, awaiting the gift of heaven kept for us out of God's mercy."

Using the Gospel as the preaching text poses no problem on this Sunday since the Standard Gospel and that from Ordo A are identical. A workable theme from John 20:19-31 could be this: "It is difficult to live by faith in Jesus Christ, but through the Word of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are given such faith that enables us to live joyous and peaceful lives in Christ."

An outline on John 20:19-31

Topic: "Let Me Hold Your Hand . . ."

Introduction

I talk not of a romantic kind of holding hands but rather the kind of holding hands

when the going gets rough. Thomas wanted to know if this whole matter with Christ was worthwhile. What do we have to hang on to?

- I. It is difficult to live by faith
 - A. For Thomas (v. 25)
 - B. For us (Especially at Eastertime!)
- II. Hold on to the hand of Christ by faith
 - A. The Word encourages us (v. 31)
 - B. The Holy Spirit gives us the power ("hand," vv. 22-23)
 - C. Hang on now for Easter joy (v. 28)
 - D. Hang on each day for a continuing Easter (vv. 19-20)
 - E. Confront a world in sin (vv. 19-20)
 - F. It has God's blessing (v. 29)

Conclusion

Christ holds out His hand, warm and alive with nail prints in it and all. Hang on to it. Here we go into the world with peace and power!

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 2:14, 22-28; 1 Peter 1:17-21;
Luke 24:13-35

Most will recall that this Sunday carries with it a strong emphasis on the Good Shep-

herd as traced through the Standard Lessons. The theme would be this: "We rejoice that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for us, bringing us into His fold; but He is also an example for us that as we die to sin and rise to righteousness we will also seek the sheep not yet in the fold of Christ." The theme appears to be unwieldly largely because there is very little real contact between the Standard Lessons and those of Ordo A for this Sunday. Thus some of the minor accents were included to bring the theme somewhere in the proximity of the Ordo Lessons. The accent of Acts 2:14, 22-28; 1 Peter 1:17-21; and Luke 24:13-35 would be: "We have joy and confidence in God, for from eternity He has destined us to be rescued from sin by the precious blood of Christ, and by the resurrection of Christ has given us the gift of life by faith." It should be apparent that any contact between the two sets of lessons will be a somewhat unhappy marriage.

In order to provide a basis for using the text, Luke 24:13-35, one would have to dwell on the hopeless situation of the Emmaus disciples as a parallel to the lostness of the sheep, as well as develop the thought of sharing the power of Christ as a parallel to seeking the sheep not yet in the fold. Thus the theme of the Gospel on this day would be: "In the midst of hopelessness, the risen Christ gives us hope and joy that we can share by His power."

An outline on Luke 24:13-35

Topic: "The Drooping Disciples of Emmaus"

Introduction

The drooping disciples shuffled along looking sad. Easter was a disaster and hopeless. Many today consider it so — a good bit of shuffling is still going on. Life appears hopeless. Is there hope and joy anywhere?

I. Without Resurrection power life is hopeless

- A. For the two disciples (vv. 21, 22 and 24)
 - B. For us (Unconvinced about Easter and life. What else is new? Easter is merely "nice" and every Sunday is a shuffle.)
- II. The Lord "risen indeed" gives hope
- A. The source is the Word (As for the disciples, vv. 25-27)
 - B. The hope is destined for us from eternity (vv. 25-27)
 - C. The suffering and risen One stays with us (v. 29)
 - D. He gives us a life of hope and joy. (vv. 32 and 34)
 - E. We share this hope and joy (vv. 33 and 35)

Conclusion

Our eyes are opened by Word and Sacrament. We have burning hearts also, and we are destined to be His! The disciples couldn't keep it quiet . . . run, don't shuffle, to the nearest exit.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20b-25;
 John 10:1-10

This Sunday begins to anticipate the ascension of Christ, and a theme based on the Standard Lessons would carry this accent: "We rejoice that our risen Lord gives us His own power to live as His people until He returns and our joy is made full." Since the lections of Ordo A elect to use the Good Shepherd account on this Sunday, this necessarily colors the accent of the day so that it would look like this: "Christ our Lord, the true Shepherd, calls all people to repentance, and by His death and resurrection offers to all the gift of abundant life through faith." With this as the accent of Acts 2:14, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; and John 10:1-10, it was not too difficult to fit the John passage as a

working text into the setting of the Standard Lessons. This was done by picking up the ideas of the "Abundant Life" and Christ as the Door into this life, thus arriving at this preaching theme: "Through His death and resurrection Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, gives us abundant life and the power to live it joyfully."

An outline on John 10:1-10

Topic: "The Open Door"

Introduction

The humorous picture of a pompous visitor leaving the home and properly walking right into a closet. He used the wrong door. Which is the door to life? We face revolving doors, no admittance doors, authorized personnel only kinds of doors. Christ is the Door to abundant life. Where's the handle?

- I. The world's usual statement of Easter life (Bland, surface kind of life. Christ has more in mind.)
- II. The elusiveness of abundant life (Life slips through our fingers . . . to say nothing of *abundant* life! To many life is a piece of bread, where God offers a whole smorgasbord. We swindle ourselves in trying to exit through closets, climbing through transoms, or hacking holes into walls. We settle for life in one dimension.)
- III. Christ is the Door for the sheep (Through Him. . . . He dies and rises for us. Quite a door to go through since He happens to be in heaven right now.)
- IV. By faith in Christ we have abundant life
 1. By faith we are saved (Happily branded sheep)
 2. We go in and out to pasture (Living life as His)
 3. We hear Him
 4. We know Him
 5. We follow Him

Conclusion

He's quite a Door. What He opens to us is life in eternal and thus abundant terms. It's not alone a vision of life — it's real! No restrictions on this Door . . . open it up!

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12

As the Ascension appears to be anticipated in the Fourth Sunday of Easter, so on this day the Standard Lessons appear to point toward the Feast of Pentecost. The accent of the Standard Lessons would be stated in this way: "We rejoice that our risen Lord sends us the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, giving us every necessary gift for life." The Lessons of Ordo A do not proclaim the sending of the Spirit as prominently, but rather keep it somewhat in the background. The accent of the Ordo Lessons, Acts 6:1-7; 1 Peter 2:4-9; and John 14:1-12, would be: "Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, has brought us out of darkness into light and has given to us the gifts of the Spirit and thus the ability to do His will, building His church."

Since the Standard Lessons do emphasize Christ and the Holy Spirit guiding us into truth, the Gospel of the Ordo A series almost begs to be developed along lines referring to Jesus as "Way, Truth, and Life" and the One who with the Spirit enables our life. The theme of John 14:1-12 would thus be: "Our risen Lord invites us to believe in Him and go with Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, through this world and into eternity."

An outline on John 14:1-12

Topic: "What a Way to Go!"

Introduction

Eloquents have a certain zing and excitement to them. How would you like to run off with God? He enjoys referring to us as the bride and to Christ as the Groom. What a way to go!

I. Are you troubled? (Disciples were because Christ was to leave. We are just because we are alive. Or troubled in the drudgery and disaster of "trying" to be Christian.)

II. Believe in and go with Christ

A. Christ is worth trusting

1. He is the Way (Through His death and rising)
2. He is the Truth (In the midst of fake truths)
3. He is the Life (We try to plug into life at lower levels, connecting with ourselves or others as conveyors of life, but He is the only One spanning eternity.)

B. Go with Him to heaven

C. Go with Him who is the Trinity (What a groom! "What you see is what you get," Christ says.)

D. Go with Him through this life in power

Conclusion

In boldness, elope with Christ! What a way to go! Think of it — life with God Himself!

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3:15-18;
 John 14:15-21

An examination of the Standard Lessons for this day makes evident that on this Sunday we find a juncture of themes of Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost with prayer hovering over them all. A theme would be assembled in this fashion: "We rejoice that in Christ all things are ours, that we can ask all things of the Father, and are enabled to do the will of God, in religion pure and undefiled." What apparently causes this theme to have such "wobbly knees" is the presence of prayer within the accents of the day. In contrast, the theme developed out

of the Ordo A Lessons is not encumbered with prayer references and thus the accent of Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Peter 3:15-18; and John 14:15-21 would be this: "We are not left desolate, but the living Lord Christ gives us life and the Holy Spirit to enable us to live the life of joy in Christ to the world."

In order to establish some sort of harmony between the Gospel text (John 14:15-21) and the theme of the Standard Lessons, it was almost necessary to eliminate the accent on prayer and focus rather on the Christian life. The theme of the Gospel then came out like this: "In the desolation of our lives, the risen Christ asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to live in us, giving us life and so equipping us to all good works."

An outline on John 14:15-21

Topic: "Moving Day"

Introduction

On moving day the old house or the new are so empty, bare, cold, with echoing sounds so foreign to a real home. Let the Son in!

I. We feel desolate

- A. The desolation of life (Alone in a crowded world)
- B. The desolation of a fading Easter (What's there to be shouting about now? Easter is "back there.")

II. Christ prays the Father to send the Holy Holy Spirit to us (v. 16)

III. The risen Christ lives in us (v. 17)

IV. Christ says, "Because I live, you live" (He comes in and makes us alive. Easter goes on always inside of us. Talk about moving in . . . !)

V. We live with a purpose (We keep the commands by His power)

Conclusion

Pray for the furnishings of the Lord. Let Him move in. He doesn't use any "period"

pieces of furniture, just the equipment of the Spirit. Let the Son, Life, in!

MARTIN W. BANGERT
New Berlin, Wis.

ASCENSION

Acts 1:1-11; Eph. 1:17-23; Matt. 28:16-20

GO FORTH

Ascension is a triumph for Christ, a festival of victory. Christ left His Father's throne, was born to die and through His death reconciled us to God. His work was completed and now in a sense He goes home. He promises to be with us always, but Ascension pictures His return to heaven victorious as though to give account of His completed work. Sin does not go to heaven with Christ but remains here on earth. Let us break this bond of sin. Let us ascend to heaven with our hearts and wills and desires; then we shall follow our Lord.

Ascension for us means beholding Christ victorious. Because of what He has done, our lives will hold a new meaning. When the Lord ascended, there was no sadness, no tears shed because of His leaving. The glory had not departed. They knew it after Pentecost. We need help today. The church is yearning for her Lord. We can sense the feeling of separation in the liturgy for today. The church longs for Christ and eagerly awaits the heavenly King in the gradual. She prays for the Holy Spirit in the Gospel. She looks toward the future, strengthened by the spirit of the saints gone before in the Epistle and Gospel. God supplies the help. We can go forth in His power.

I. In His power

- A. He assured the disciples of His power. They only had to remember His power over sin, death, and the devil.
- B. He assures us that He still has power over heaven and earth in His Word

and Sacrament, the power to break sin, overcome death.

II. In this place

- A. He gives us a place and position in His plan. He counts us in.
- B. He does not preserve the truth by canning it, drying it, freezing it. He turns it loose.
- C. He has sent the believers to teach and baptize.
- D. We are to disciple all nations.

III. In His presence

- A. Closely behind His command was His promise. They were sent out on the greatest task in the world, but with them there was the greatest presence in the world.
- B. God's presence is known and shown as we live out His love in our lives. The Son of God became the Son of man to make us sons of God.
- C. As you have seen Him go up into heaven, so shall He come again.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 1:12-14; 1 Peter 4:13-16;
John 17:1-11a

JESUS' GLORY

The Lord has ascended. He promised a new Comforter and Guide. The Holy Spirit has not yet descended. The cry of the church this day is not that of one who is comfortless, orphaned, or alone. It is the time of waiting. The church is full of longing for the Lord. It is not a longing for a glory that has departed, but for the Spirit of that glory to shape the present Christians after the model of the Christ.

- I. The glory of Jesus' work was to show forth the Father's name
 - A. Jesus came to show forth the whole nature and character of the Father.

(Ps. 9:10; Ps. 20:7; Ps. 22:22; Is. 52:6; John 14:9)

B. Jesus came and spoke for God in everything that He did.

II. The glory of the cross is the divine love

A. By the way He died His real glory has been shown to the world.

B. The cross was the completion of Christ's work of offering God's love to all men.

C. He had glorified the Father by obeying Him, even the death of the cross.

D. The cross is the way to life, the way back to the Father.

III. The glory of Christ still shines through His disciples

A. The disciples were given to Jesus by God.

B. Through the disciples His glory continues to reach men in love.

C. He offers joy even in the midst of hostility.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13;

John 20:19-23

GOD BRIDGES TROUBLED WATERS

Storms in life come, and when they do, the waters of life get muddy and unsettled. When this happens, we need understanding, but most of all we need His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12). Storms create fear, frustration, and immobility. That was true for the disciples, and is true about us. We need help; we need guidance. Jesus bridges over trouble with His Spirit.

I. The Lord came and bridged over their fear

A. The disciples were behind closed doors for fear. (20:19)

B. Jesus bridged this troubled water by bringing peace. Fruit of the Spirit is peace after fear has been banished with faith. Peace through His presence.

II. The Lord bridged over their sadness with gladness

A. They had lost their leader and they were down. They had lost their goal and their purpose. They were lost.

B. After seeing the marks of Passion in His body, they were filled with joy. Compare the gladness and sadness through all their living with Jesus.

III. The Lord bridged their immobility

A. They were fearfully doing nothing, just sitting.

B. The Lord breathed on them (like the breath of life in Genesis), and they were moved—no longer still but sent ones. He was alive to give life.

IV. The Lord bridged their confusion and gave them direction

A. They were no longer contemplating a bad situation; now they had a message. They were now on the go with God's forgiveness.

B. Christ through the Spirit gave them the key to the hearts of people—forgiveness. The breath that was breathed on them could pass from them to others and bring life.

Christ had come to bridge the world to God. He came to tear down the fences of hostility between man and man. He achieved this by the bridge of the cross. His Spirit offers life, and by that bridge over troubles, enables us to live it.

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