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Homiletics

George W. Hoyer
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Ricaahrd Kaczor
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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HOMILETICS

INTRODUCTION

The north country's Richard Kaczor ends his first sermon study in this series by labeling as plain fantasy any claim on God other than the acceptance of His grace. "We will remain frozen people as long as we live in the land of fantasy." Here a mild pun on Ps. 19:7 might express both the truth of the Gospel and the gratitude we feel for its work in our lives: The thaw of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The Sundays of the year move on toward the ending of the church year, and the Gospels continue to develop Matthew's approach. The Epistles begin the writing to the Thessalonians and the last times come closer. The propers, be they standard or the new Roman Ordo, surround us with grace and point us on toward Christian action. In the last days before the final judgment we need take care lest we surround men with exhortation to Christian action and merely point toward the grace that is their only possibility and power.

If your congregation has not yet learned Hymn 757 in the *Worship Supplement*, this would be the time to alert the organist and the choir to practice it in order to introduce it to them. It is suggested as the hymn of the week for Trinity 20 and the text by Martin H. Franzmann on the Gospel for the day is magnificent. Give the parish enough chance and it will rival "At the Lamb's High Feast" for popularity. "The feast is ready—Come to the feast, The good and the bad, Come and be glad, Greatest and least, Come to the feast!"

GEORGE W. HOYER

Trinity 18—Oct. 1, 1972 TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

The Roman Ordo	The Standard Lessons
Ezek. 18:25-28	Deut. 10:12-21
Phil. 2:1-11 or 1-5	1 Cor. 1:4-9
Matt. 21:28-32	Matt. 22:34-46

What is the accent of the day with its propers and the standard lessons? The first section of the Introit for the day (Wisdom of Sirach 36:16-17a) comes from a prayer that God would show Himself faithful by manifesting His Lordship through rewarding His waiting people and destroying the enemy. The words of the Introit, "Hear the prayers of Thy servants," in their original context are followed by these, "And all people on the earth will know that You are the Lord." The petition of the Collect asks that our hearts be ruled and directed by the Holy Spirit. "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' but by the Holy Spirit." The Collect also acknowledges that "without Thee we are not able to please

Thee." The Epistle speaks of the waiting people of God who have been richly endowed by Him with grace in Christ Jesus and with every gift necessary for their time of waiting. The closing words of the Gradual bid every nation and people praise the Lord. The Gospel introduces us to that Lord—Jesus, the Christ, descended from David, yet existing before David and David's Lord. It is this Lord who sums up God's will for man's life in two commandments, "Love your Lord . . . and love your neighbor," and who then lives out the Law and the Prophets in His own life and in His death so that He might free men for life as He wills it. The message of the Law and the Prophets is not coldly calculated commandments, but the Christ. The Old Testament Lesson, Deut. 10:12-21, is tied to the Gospel.

We could phrase an accent for the Sunday like this: The church waits and prays for the coming of her Lord and while she waits she works the will of Him for whom she waits.

The theme for the Sunday is not radically changed by the lessons from the Roman Ordo A. In the new Epistle we find a message close to that of the Standard Gospel, for in Phil. 2:1-11 we hear of the Lord who humbled Himself and was exalted, who worked out man's salvation, the Lord who gives us the incentive for love. The grace of God mentioned in the Standard Epistle appears in the new Gospel as well and here Jesus warns the Pharisees and chief priests not to reject that grace. The idea of the waiting church is not as prominent with the new lessons.

A suggestion for an outline on Matt. 21: 28-32 (use NEB for order of sons as found here):

Fantasy or Fact?

Many people today imagine that they are "in" with God because of who they are and because of what they have done. This is living in pure fantasy. The fact is different. Jesus in the parable of the Two Sons talks to us about fantasy and fact. We might even name the first son "Fantasy" and the second son "Fact."

I. Fantasy

A. The chief priests and elders lived under the illusion that they were sons of God because they were Jews and because they tried to live good lives. (Pharisees are included [v. 45] and they quibbled about the greatness of the commandments.)

B. We, too, may be tempted to live under the illusion that we are sons of God because of who we are (Lutheran, have our name in the church records, etc.) or because of what we do (the gifts God has given us in grace [Epistle] can sometimes cause us to be proud).

II. Fact

A. The chief priests and elders were actually rejecting sonship because

they were rejecting the Father's call to enter the Kingdom by "the way of righteousness" (forgiveness of sins). They had rejected John the Baptist and were now rejecting Christ — "by whose authority?"

B. The publicans and sinners who had listened to and accepted John's preaching of the "way of righteousness" were the real sons of the Father. They were doing the will of the Father by taking His offer of forgiveness of sin. (They had hailed Jesus as "the Son of David.")

C. We show ourselves to be true sons of the Father by doing His will, therefore, by accepting His "way of righteousness" through Jesus Christ. We are to repent and believe. (It is this Jesus, the Christ, who in true love for God and neighbor went to the cross to work out our salvation. This Servant is our Lord.)

"God is dead" for us as long as we strive to enter the kingdom of God under our own power, and we will remain frozen people as long as we live in the land of fantasy. What seems almost unbelievable is *fact* for faith. He offers us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation again today in this Word and in the Lord's gift of His body and blood.

Trinity 19 — Oct. 8, 1972

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

The Roman Ordo	The Standard Lessons
Is. 5:1-7	Is. 44:21-23
Phil. 4:6-9	Eph. 4:22-28
Matt. 21:33-43	Matt. 9:1-8

According to Reed and Lindemann this Sunday begins the last cycle of the Trinity Season, the theme of which is the consummation of the Kingdom. The Introit for the day opens with a prayer to God for assurance of salvation and includes that assurance in the

words, "He delivereth them out of all their troubles: He is their God forever and ever." The Collect prays that God would keep us from all things that may hurt us in order that, being prepared in body and soul, we may carry out His will. The Epistle brings us that will of God and reminds us that preparation means putting off the old nature and putting on the new. The gradual bids us praise God for the marvelous things He has done, which is exactly what the people did who were there that day when Jesus prepared the paralytic by healing his body and soul. That Lord of the Gospel does the same for us today. The Old Testament Lesson is related to the Gospel.

The Propers for this day bear a theme something like this: The church looks to her Lord to prepare her for her salvation and for the doing of His will.

The new Epistle of Ordo A certainly fits in with the prayer of the church to her Lord for salvation and the preparation to do His will, and if v. 5b were included, it would extend the shadow of the Last Day over this day. This Epistle also includes the assurance of God's blessing. The new Gospel surely turns our eyes to the consummation of the kingdom, but it does not include the positive comfort of the Standard Gospel but underscores God's judgment. The Old Testament Lesson is definitely related to the Gospel and is required background for understanding the parable.

A suggestion for outline on Matt. 21: 33-43 follows:

What Have We Done with the Master's Son?

- I. In this parable Jesus warns the chief priests and Pharisees about their rejection of the kingdom of God. (The kingdom of God is God's gracious working to establish His rule among men by forgiving their sins.) Is. 5:1-7 and Old Testament images in general could be

mentioned to shed light on the parable. Many have rejected Him.

- A. God had sent His servants, the prophets, to warn Israel of her iniquity and to offer them forgiveness; but they were beaten, stoned, and killed.
- B. God had finally sent His Son to them. It was He who was pleading with them and warning them as He told the parable. The Son was God's last approach and the rejection of the Son would mean judgment from the Master.
- C. We can see that God carried out what the chief priests and Pharisees themselves said should happen (v. 41), for the Gospel was sent out to the Gentiles.

What have we done with the Master's Son? "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son." (Israel's fathers have become our fathers.)

II. He confronts us again today.

- A. God has called us to be His new Israel. Through His once rejected Son He now comes to us with the offer of forgiveness. It is this Son who is at work in the Gospel.
- B. How have we responded to this Son?
 1. Have we crucified Him anew by our rejection? Are we bringing the judgment of God down upon us?
 2. Or have we accepted His offer of forgiveness and so put off the old nature and put on the new? This is what God wants for us. This is what He offers us in His Sacrament.

In these closing days of the church year we wish to prepare for the second coming of our Lord. We find, however, that He is the only One who can prepare us. We pray as

we did in the Introit, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," and we hear the assurance, "He delivers [us] out of all our troubles: He is [our] God forever and ever."

Trinity 20 — Oct. 15, 1972
 TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY
 OF THE YEAR

The Roman Ordo	The Standard Lessons
Is. 25:6-10a	Is. 65:1-2
Phil. 4:12-14, 19-20	Eph. 5:15-21
Matt. 22:1-14 or 1-10	Matt. 22:1-14

The opening verse of the Introit (Dan. 9:6) and its original context definitely fit the Gospel. God is righteous even in punishing those who act wickedly. It is only because of His mercy that we can pray for pardon. God's greatness which we praise is shown chiefly in His having mercy. In the Collect we pray for pardon and peace that we might be cleansed from sin and enabled to serve God. The Epistle warns us as we live through evil days to watch how we walk, not to be unwise, not to be foolish. The height of foolishness is to reject God's gift of forgiveness and His way of life. The Epistle exhorts us to give thanks always and for everything and the first part of the Gradual gives the opportunity to do just that. In the last part of the Gradual, in words of one of the penitential psalms, we pray for forgiveness. Such a prayer is good preparation for the Gospel which warns against rejecting that gracious gift of God. The Gospel is clearly a warning that God's judgment rests on those who refuse His *gracious* invitation and a warning against not accepting that grace which alone can adequately prepare us for the heavenly feast. The Old Testament Lesson is related to the Gospel, again furnishing material for interpreting the parable of the Marriage Feast.

The thrust of the Propers for this day might be stated like this: The church is to give thanks to God for His *gracious* offer of

the forgiveness of sins and all care is to be taken that this gift is not rejected.

How does the use of the lessons of the Roman Ordo A affect this thrust? The new Epistle points out God's ability to meet our every need. We can face every situation we encounter with Him as our Supplier. This Epistle lacks the warning carried by the Standard Epistle to supplement the Gospel which is the same in both series.

A suggested outline on Matt. 22:1-10 follows:

We Can Be Replaced!

We receive invitations in our lives to all sorts of events. We handle these invitations in various ways. Some we accept. Some we postpone. Some we turn down because we have something else to do which we consider more important. At times we can become rather careless about how we handle invitations, but today we learn of an invitation which we must handle with care for it is an invitation from God. God warns us not to reject it for doing so excludes us from salvation and fellowship with Him.

(In this parable we have two very strange things happening: the first is that all the invited guests refused the invitation, and the second is that the king destroyed them for doing so. Several scholars have pointed out that these strange elements in the parables often bear the emphasis.)

- I. Jesus told this parable to warn those who opposed Him that they were rejecting the kingdom of God and by doing so were inviting God's judgment upon themselves. He was making it clear that they could be replaced.
- A. God had called Israel to be His people and He had done it on the basis of grace. But God's *gracious* call was turned by some into a cause for pride. Some felt that being an Israelite was enough to qualify them for the kingdom of God. Some

thought the kingdom of God would be a glorious earthly kingdom. Some thought they could usher the kingdom in by force, or by keeping the Law. (Old Testament Lesson helps here.)

- B. When Jesus came to call men into the Kingdom through forgiving their sins many rejected Him, for He and the work He was doing didn't fit in with their ideas. By rejecting Christ they were rejecting God's invitation to forgiveness and fellowship.
- C. Jesus warned them of the result of their actions and showed them they could be replaced.
- II. This parable holds the warning for us that we can be replaced.
- A. Old Israel has been replaced by the new Israel, not because of qualities in the members of the new Israel, but because God in His grace did not give up His work of establishing a kingdom. We belong to the new Israel by God's grace and on the basis of His forgiveness through Jesus.
- B. But today as God's gracious invitation is extended there are many who reject it. They have their own ideas. God's idea and God's invitation don't fit in, and they reject God's Savior and God's forgiveness.
- C. This parable is still a warning of the result of such action. It is a warning to us. We can be replaced and destroyed. God has a right to do it (Introit). Such a warning should cause us to take heed to the Epistle and to watch how we walk.
- III. This parable reminds us again that by grace we have a place.
- A. To judge and to destroy is not God's primary will. God would have men

to be saved. What He did for Israel He has done for all the world by His Son, Jesus Christ. That we confess Jesus as Lord is evidence that by grace we are at a place at the feast.

- B. Lest history be repeated, we mind our manners at His repeated invitations, and we find new joy each time we eat and drink.

Trinity 21 — Oct. 22, 1972
 TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY
 OF THE YEAR

The Roman Ordo	The Standard Lessons
Is. 45:1, 4-6	Hos. 13:14
1 Thess. 1:1-5b	Eph. 6:10-17
Matt. 22:15-21	John 4:46-54

The Introit is addressed to the Lord of all and contains the reminder, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way: who walk in the Law of the Lord." The Collect petitions this Lord to keep His church in continual godliness that through His protection it may serve Him in good works. The Epistle exhorts the church to do battle with her Lord's enemies and to use the armor and weapons He has provided so that she might stand. The Gradual calls to mind the fact that our security comes from the Lord and that those who trust in Him shall not be shaken. In the Gospel we see this Lord in action as by His Word He dispels both physical death through healing and eternal death by granting faith. The Old Testament Lesson is tied to the Gospel.

A theme for this Sunday might be stated thus: The church knows blessing and security as her Lord protects her from her enemies and guides her in His ways.

The Ordo Gospel certainly can fit in with the Introit and Collect by directing us to godliness by its "Render unto God the things that are God's." It holds before our eyes the Lord Jesus who perfectly did so even as He gave His answer to the Herodians. The Old

Testament Lesson points to the fact that God controls the rulers of this world and uses them for His purposes. The new Epistle begins a new epistle that will accent the end times during the final Sundays of the church year. It can be connected to this Sunday's accent through its description of Christians whose faith revealed itself in action.

The following is a suggested outline for a sermon on Matt. 22:15-21:

Jesus — A Revolutionary?

In our day many claim they are following Jesus Christ as they lead or attempt to lead all sorts and sizes of "revolutions." So we ask today, "Was Jesus a revolutionary?" Jesus' words, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," lead us to answer with a "Yes" and a "No."

I. Against Caesar? No.

- A. Many people in Jesus' day wanted Him to be just that—a new Caesar. Many people wanted to make Him a king. They were hoping that Jesus would throw off the Roman rule and establish a glorious kingdom of Israel.
- B. Jesus refused. He stated, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." He even allowed Himself to be crucified by Roman soldiers. Certainly He did not approve of this or of many other actions of the Roman Caesar or of contemporary Caesars.

But His was a different revolution. His kingdom was not of this world.

II. Against the enemies of God? Yes.

- A. He healed. He cast out demons. He raised persons from the dead. He withstood the temptations of Satan. He forgave sins.
- B. He perfectly rendered unto God the things that are God's. He obeyed His Father's voice in every detail even to the extent of giving His life on the cross. That self-giving was God's way of enabling us to render due allegiance to Him.
- C. He calls His church to follow Him in this revolution (see Epistle) and gives her the power and weapons for the fight. The separation between Caesar right and Caesar wrong is not always simple to draw — Paul's words before the Epistle (Eph. 6:7) remind us that we serve the Lord, not men.

Jesus did not come to be a politician, He came as the Messiah, He did not come to force men to do anything. He came to provide a way of salvation and to call men to forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in Him. We who have those gifts are now to take up politics and every task that can befriended the men for whom Christ died.

RICHARD KACZOR
Inglis, Manitoba