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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weiden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den *Woelfen wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre veruehren und Irrtum einfuehren.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — *1 Cor. 14:8*

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ARCHIVES

Homiletics

OUTLINES ON ISAIAH 53

By OTTOMAR KRUEGER

I

ISAIAH 53

The preceding verses serve as introduction to this chapter and topic. The chapter really begins at Is. 52:13. The general topic is "God's Servant." Who is this Servant? The Talmud says it is the Messiah. Others maintain it was the Jewish nation or the believers in Israel. Others maintain it was Isaiah.

Proof that the Servant is Christ: John 12:39; Rom. 10:16; Matt. 8:17; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 2:22; Mark 15:28; 1 Pet. 1:11.

THE SERVANT NOT GENERALLY RECEIVED

1. *Isaiah Complains of This*

Text. Chapter begins with the complaint that people will not accept the Gospel of Christ. Not Isaiah's first complaint by any means. Cf. Chs. 1, 3, 6, 9, etc. However, nothing is so disastrous as indifference toward Gospel and Christ.

"Report" in Hebrew means "sound or message," i. e., Isaiah's preaching. "Arm of the Lord" is God's power and might stretched out to do marvelous things. He did such things all through the history of Israel and now will do the grandest, viz., send the Savior. But who believes it?

2. *St. Paul Complains of It*

We are reminded by our text of St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 1:18, 22-24 ff. Isaiah had this experience concerning the coming Christ, and St. Paul found coldness towards, and rejection of, the Savior, who had come and died and risen again. In Rom. 10:16 he quotes the Old Testament Prophet's complaint. Jesus Himself referred to it (John 12:38) when the people would not believe in Him.

3. *We Complain of It*

The human heart has not changed since Isaiah's day, and it never will, Gen. 8:21. The Cross of Christ will always be an offense to many.

Hence we find the majority rejecting Christ today. Progress in the Church is slow.

This does not change God's Servant, nor does it detract from His wonderful person and work, of which we hear more in this sermon series.

God grant that we receive Him and His word.

II

ISAIAH 53:2-3

A reason for the unwillingness of many people to accept Christ is His great lowliness, the lack of all outward show, especially His deep humiliation and suffering.

It is difficult for human reason to grasp that all this should be a part of God's plan of salvation. God's thoughts and ways are mysterious also in this point. Proud man cannot see this.

THE SERVANT'S HUMILIATION DESCRIBED

1. *His Most Unusual Appearance*

Christ is described "as tender plant and root out of dry ground." This refers to His humble origin and lowly circumstances. He was of Jesse's house, born at Bethlehem, reared at Nazareth, poor parents, etc.

Christ had no beauty or comeliness in His humiliation. Text. We think of what Paul writes (Phil. 2:5-8) about Christ. Cf. ch. 52:10.

Christ despised of men. The language here is beautiful. Cf. expressions "Man of Sorrows" and "acquainted with grief." We cannot add anything to that. Other prophecies regarding the same thing: Ps. 22 and 69.

2. *This Agrees with the Bible Account Later*

In the Lord's Passion as described by the Four Evangelists all of this came to pass. He was so miserable as though He had ceased to be a human being.

We think of the mockery at the trials, of the mistreatment, of the miserable appearance before Pilate, of His grief in the Garden and on the Cross, of His torment upon the accursed tree; of His death. Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19.

3. *The Reaction on Us and Others*

Text v. 3 b. People turned away from Him in that day and wanted no part with Him. So also today. Natural man wants no suffering Savior, he wants a hero.

We must look beyond this humiliation as Isaiah does, ch. 52:15. We should take care not to be offended in Christ. Matt. 11:6. We may learn lowliness of Christ.

III

ISAIAH 53:4-5

In many schools the 53d chapter of Isaiah served, with many other splendid Bible passages, as memory material. Especially familiar are these two verses, which are often quoted in Lenten sermons. They give us the solution and key to the whole mystery. If you add the last three verses of the preceding chapter to this chapter, then these verses stand right in the center. They treat of

THE SERVANT'S VICARIOUS PASSION

1. *A Willing Passion*

The Prophet makes a statement of fact, telling us what God's Servant did. "Hath borne" and "carried" do not imply that these griefs and sorrows were thrust upon Him. They rather have the meaning of the Greek *elaben*, which means that He took them upon Himself.

This is correct in the light of the New Testament. Matt. 8:14 quotes Is. 53:4 and declares "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." This is also according to 1 Pet. 2:24 and Matt. 26:39 and 42.

Hymn 142:3 — "Yea, Father, yea, most willingly, etc."

2. *A Substitutionary Passion*

The language of our text is clear and strong to bring out plainly the *satisfactio vicaria*. The contrast is brought out by the pronouns and suffixes of the Hebrew. The Servant of God and His suffering is set over against our transgressions and iniquities. He suffered not for Himself nor for His sins, but for us and our sins.

God was punishing our sins upon His Son. Climax in "*geplagt, geschlagen und gemartert*." In v. 5 the strongest terms are used to show complete misery, as "perforated," "ground up," "thrown to earth."

Testimony of New Testament. Cf. Rom. 4:25, 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18.

3. *A Sufficient Passion*

The facts are stated clearly and can leave no one in doubt. The last statement reads: "We are healed." The Servant did not merely begin our redemption, He completed it. His Passion was all that was needed. To doubt that means to insult Christ and the Father, who sent such a Savior.

Christ left nothing undone. We need not atone for our actual sins as Papists teach. Heb. 10:12, 14, 18; Rom. 5:1; 1 John 1:7.

What a wonderful message concerning our salvation.

IV

ISAIAH 53:6

1 Pet. 2:25: "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." This agrees perfectly with what Isaiah says here.

This is the key to the terrible suffering described before and after our text. The inquiring person seeks for the reason, and here it is.

THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING CAUSED BY OUR SIN

1. *Description of Our Past Condition*

Text. "All we like sheep have gone astray." That implies willing disobedience on our part. Mankind sinned willingly in

Eden, Gen. 3. Adam's children followed in his evil example, and sin came upon us all, according to Rom. 5.

There is no exception to this rule. Ps. 14:3; Eccl. 7:20; Is. 64:6. We, too, are headstrong and willful, turning "everyone to his own way." Cf. Jer. 2:13. As such sheep we had no shepherd to lead and protect us. We were without God in the world. So God did something about it. John 3:16.

2. *God Placed Our Guilt on Christ*

The righteous God had to do something about our guilt; He punished it upon His own beloved Son. Not just a bit of it and then let that suffice, but the full amount, "the iniquity of us all." Compared with this load of debts, the postwar debt is insignificant (more than 200 billion national debt).

God looked on Christ as a malefactor and transgressor; our sin was upon Him. The Innocent One steps into the place of the guilty. The Good Shepherd (John 10) replaces the erring sheep and lays down His life for them.

God did this in His justice and love: justice towards sin, love towards the sinners.

3. *Our Guilt, Then, Canceled and Eliminated*

Debts are not paid twice. The "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" has been paid by our Substitute and Savior. We go free. Jesus indicated this in the Garden when He took everything upon Himself and guaranteed the liberty of His disciples.

God is for us; therefore all is well. Rom. 8:31-32.

This is the very center of Christian doctrine.

Let us comfort ourselves with it.

V

ISAIAH 53:7-9

When one reads this chapter one gets the impression that Isaiah must have been an eyewitness of Christ's Passion. He speaks as one might who would have been in Gethsemane, in the Judgment Hall, at Golgotha, yet this was written 700 years earlier.

As Luke vividly describes the voyage of St. Paul to Rome, the storm, the shipwreck, so Isaiah describes Christ's Passion.

THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING IN DETAIL

1. *His Trials*

Text, v. 7. These words are descriptive of Christ during the various hearings, or trials, which were given Him before Herod, Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate.

Christ was quiet and resigned. He was led as lamb or sheep to His execution. The idea is repeated for emphasis. We are reminded of the Pascal Lamb of the Old Testament and of what John the Baptist said John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18.

When Christ opened His mouth, it was in prayer for His enemies, Luke 23:34. The Ethiopian eunuch read this passage and marveled (Acts 8:32); we, too.

2. *His Execution*

Text, v. 8. Here we see our Savior, the Servant of God, being led out after His being condemned before Caiaphas and Pilate. Who can fully exhaust this story? We have a *cruce interpretum* in the question "Who can declare His generation?" Cf. Luther: "*seines Lebens Laenge ausreden.*"

Then we see Christ being crucified, cut off from the land of the living. The soldier makes certain with his spear.

The thought of Christ as our Substitute recurs again and again in Isaiah 53. It is referred to from various angles. Here also in v. 8.

3. *His Death and Burial*

Text, v. 9. Christ's death and burial belong to His humiliation; hence this verse must be considered as dealing with this phase of His career. He was buried among the sinners near Calvary, that is, "with the wicked." It was the cemetery for the "place of the skull." Yet He was buried in a rich man's grave, viz., that of Joseph of Arimathea.

All of this suffering was not the end of the "Servant's" career. Is. 52:15; Rom. 4:25; John 12:32.

Let us hail and adore our wonderful Savior.

VI

ISAIAH 53:10

In Lev. 16:20-22 we have God's prescriptions regarding the scapegoat. This animal was brought to Aaron, and he placed both hands upon it and confessed Israel's sins over it. He put all the transgressions of Israel upon this goat. Then a man took the goat out into the desertlike country, called wilderness, and let him go. Thus the goat symbolically carried away the sins of the people. The man returned, the goat did not.

THE SERVANT AS OUR SCAPEGOAT

1. *God the Father Used Him as Such*

A scapegoat is one that bears the guilt, shame, or punishment for another. Thus God used Christ. He "bruised Him," "He hath put Him to grief," says our text. He became an offering for our sin, as the goat in the Old Testament. (Isaiah's imagery is drawn also from the goat of the sacrifice, Lev. 16:9).

This was all according to God's plan conceived in eternity before the world began. God provided for our salvation in His Son. Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Cor. 5:19. Hymn 384; 142:2.

2. *God Remains Just Through It All*

This we Christians take for granted, knowing God as we do from His Word. Cf. Ps. 33:4; Ps. 145:9; Ex. 34:6-7. However, we are told here that "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." So God's work goes forward; He makes no mistakes.

Furthermore, the Savior will "see His seed." This seed are the believers, His followers. There was the Old Testament Church of the faithful and then the Christians of the New Testament. Acts 20:28; John 12:24; John 17:20.

3. *God Accepted His Offering for Our Sins*

The significance of the Old Testament scapegoat. The sins were carried away, and Israel was free. God received the offering given by the people through their priest Aaron.

Here is a greater than Aaron and his sons. Here is our High Priest, who offered up Himself. Heb. 7:26-27. God is satisfied.

VII

ISAIAH 53:11-12

The chapter ends as it began, namely, with visions of great things accomplished and gained. *Vide* ch. 52:13.

First the weight of His tribulation is referred to, and its intensity, but then the glorious results are pictured. The concluding verse binds up the chapter into one harmonious whole. From the literary standpoint there is real unity here.

THE SERVANT'S REWARD AND RESULTS OF HIS WORK

1. *Justification of All Sinners*

The Hebrew conjunction indicates that these now are the consequences of all of Christ's vicarious suffering.

He is just and makes just. He is satisfied at the sight of the justified. Isaiah 11. The Servant shall have a large congregation of righteous as His reward.

The last term, "He shall bear," evidently refers to the high-priestly office of Christ and His intercession for us. 1 John 2:2.

2. *The Spoils Divided*

The Father is speaking of His Servant. Great and prominent sinners came to the Lord as His spoils, cf. Nicodemus, Jairus, Constantine, Charlemagne, etc. Phil. 2:9-11.

As the strong conquerors divided the spoils in history and still do, so Christ, the Lord of Lords, does likewise. He holds the field. His kingdom destroys all others, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The reason for all this success is that "He poured out His soul unto death and was numbered with the transgressors." Cf. Luke 22:37; Mark 15:28; Heb. 9:28. His glorious work of redemption wins the hearts of men everywhere.

3. *We Are Saved*

This is important for us. The righteous Servant made us righteous and holy. We are among the blessed spoils, thanks to God's grace and mercy.

We have often repented and strengthened our faith by gazing at this suffering and now victorious Servant of God. We trust in His redemption and righteousness.

May this meditation upon the suffering Savior draw us closer to Him and heaven.

A Series of Sermon Studies for the New Church Year

THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

2 PET. 3:11-15 a

The Text and the Day.—Following the suggestion of Dr. Martin Luther, the Reformers Bugenhagen and Veit Dietrich appointed the story of the Transfiguration for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany as a proper close for the Epiphany season, which deals with the manifestation of the glory of Christ. Since this Sunday is the last Sunday after Epiphany for this year, we follow the Lutheran custom of concentrating on a text that magnifies Christ's glory, particularly at the end of the world.

Notes on Meaning.—The end of the world is inevitable. The present heaven and earth will be destroyed (see context). But Christians need not fall into terror when they recognize the many signs which point to the dissolution of all things (Matt. 24:3 ff.). The Day of the Lord, which will bring consternation on all unbelievers, will be a day of peace and joy in which righteousness will reign for all believers (Is. 11:5 ff.; 25:7 f.; and ch. 35). In fact, believers in Christ look forward to the coming of the Day of the Lord, convinced that the promise of new heavens and a new earth cannot fail (Is. 65:17 ff.; 62:22). The exhortation of the Apostle to constancy in faith is very much in place. Satan will give neither mind nor conscience rest, and the world can easily deceive the Christian and seduce him into sin. Therefore the Apostle urges diligence in clinging to God's Word (regular reading of the Bible; regular attendance at church services and at the Table of the Lord; daily prayer) so that faith can in-

crease in strength and the believer be without spot and blameless (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 3:13). Then the believer will understand that the long-suffering of our Lord is not a sign of impotence or disinterestedness (chap. 3:3-4), but evidence of His love to save as many as possible.

Preaching Pitfalls.—Looking at our present world, a preacher could lose himself in painting a lurid picture of the disintegration of family, ecclesiastical, national, and international life. His utterance could be true to the core; but if he dwells too long on the ungodliness of our modern age, he has not enough time to emphasize the Gospel message in the text, and he leaves the individual hearer untouched.

Preaching Emphases.—Our time is not much different from that of St. Peter. The Apostle found it necessary to urge his fellow believers to stand fast in the faith and resist temptation to sin and apostasy, even if such steadfastness should lead to loss of life. In our country there is no persecution entailing bloodshed. Yet there is insidious ridicule of Scripture and open denial of the faith once delivered to the fathers. Our members are exposed to this poison. It comes to them through the movies, the printed page, and the radio. This is subtle persecution and leads some of our people to the brink of apostasy. Therefore we shall have to emphasize the necessity of circumspection, the nearness of the Day of the Lord, the renewal of faith, the beauty of the new heavens and the new earth, and the Lord's desire to save.

Problem and Goal.—A growing number of our people are not taking God and the Bible too seriously. The preacher must strive to get at the conscience of his members, rouse his people out of their lethargy, lead them to the Cross of Jesus, and urge them to believe that the new heavens and the new earth will be a reality through faith in Christ.

Outline:

HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD?

- I. By recognizing and repenting of our sins.
- II. By believing in Christ as our Savior.
- III. By earnestly striving to lead a life dedicated to God.
- IV. By thanking God for the promise of citizenship in the new heavens and the new earth.

ALEX WM. C. GUEBERT

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

ROM. 3: 27-31

The Text and the Day. — Septuagesima Sunday is numbered among the Sundays which the Lenten Cycle comprises. The blessed, holy Passiontide once again presents to us an opportunity to devote intensive study to the work of redemption by Christ Jesus. So the Propers for this Sunday emphasize man's helplessness, the versicle reading: "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" and God's gracious helpfulness, the versicle concluding: "But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." Our text fits admirably into this cycle, summarizing briefly how our helplessness is solved by God's helpfulness.

Notes on the Meaning. — The burden, the heart and soul, of our text is, of course, v. 28. Since we are justified by faith without the deeds of the Law, man has nothing whereof to boast. V. 28 is a summary of the doctrine of the sinner's justification as set forth in the preceding context, vv. 21-26. Man himself is described in v. 23. Paul's argument is this: If man had fulfilled all the works of the Law to do them, he would have whereof to boast. But since he is justified not by the law of works, but by the law of faith — *law* here being used in its wider meaning of *rule* — all boasting is excluded, aye, would be presumptuous. Nay, rather, God justifies the sinner by grace through faith for Christ's sake. Thus, and thus only, is heaven again opened unto the sinner, regardless of his racial background or origin, whether he be Jew or Gentile. V. 30: "One God," hence there is only one way of salvation. Finally we have the remarkable statement that only he who has been justified by God establishes the Law, lives according to the Law, v. 31. Faith wrought by the Spirit of God takes hold of justification. But faith is not something inactive, lifeless, or dead. Luther: "The nature of faith is that it is something living, busy, active, mighty, so that it is impossible for faith not to be constantly active in doing good. Neither does faith ask whether there be any good works to be done, but does them without being told and is constantly busy." St. L., XIV: 97 f.

Preaching Emphases. — The doctrine of justification by faith is the life-giving element, the dayspring from on high, the

all-powerful and only incentive for a Godward life. Only he who is able to say by faith: Ps. 103:2-5, is perfect and thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works, 2 Tim. 3:17. By justification a complete change is brought about in our thinking and will. The powers of the soul are freed from the fetters of sin. The mind becomes enlightened. The will is directed toward God. God is enthroned in the heart. This change, this new life, is ours in Christ, with whom we are united by justifying faith. We are now able to say: "For me to live is Christ," Phil. 1:21. What a marvelous change!

Problem and Goal. — We must arouse each member to a burning desire to serve the living God. How can this be accomplished? Through the preaching of the doctrine of justification. Each member must be reminded again and again of the truth that we are saved, we are justified, to serve. It is God's will that we, who embrace by faith the forgiveness of sins, serve God in gratitude by a godly life, 1 Thess. 4:3; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:19-20. We must remind our Christians again and again that it simply is not true that the doctrine of justification by faith lulls the Christians to sleep and renders them inactive in the great cause of God's kingdom. Examples: Life of Christian spouses toward and for each other, Ephesians 5; use of our possessions in the service of God. Justifying faith alone makes it possible for a Christian to dedicate some of his earthly possessions to the service of God in the expansion and upbuilding of His kingdom. We have this doctrine in all its pristine purity. Why isn't there greater activity among our Christians? Because of the weakness of their flesh. Therefore perfection in such sanctified service by the redeemed, restored, forgiven children of God is never attained in this life. But that fact should not keep us from urging our Christians again and again to strive for the goal, Phil. 3:12. And the preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith is necessary as the life-giving, strengthening element to incite our Christians to greater sanctification.

Outline:

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN ITS
INFLUENCE UPON OUR LIVES

I. What does justification by faith mean?

A. Description of this act of God. Context, vv. 23-24.

- B. Necessity of it. Context, vv. 23, 27.
 - C. All-inclusiveness of it (only way), vv. 29-30.
 - D. Appropriated by faith, v. 28.
- II. How does this doctrine influence our lives?
- A. Complete change of the heart and the will.
 - B. Enables Christians to establish the Law, v. 31.
 - C. Imperfect in this life. Still too often inclined to boast, v. 27. By imperfections covered by the Redeemer's sacrifice and blood.
 - D. This doctrine constant incentive to strive for perfection.

Conclusion: Gal. 2:20.

WALTER H. BOUMAN

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

1 Cor. 1:18-24

The Text and the Day. — We are at the threshold of the Lenten season. The proper voice the pleas of God's people — “redeem,” “deliver,” “save Thy people” — which find their answer in the message of Lent. The texts of various series show the right attitude toward Christ. Others, including the Gospel for the day, call attention to the preaching of the life-giving Word. This thought is also emphasized in our text.

Notes on Meaning. — The text becomes more meaningful to us after we have read at least the first four chapters of Paul's letter. Note how often he refers to our important office in these chapters and how definitely he gives all glory to God for whatever is accomplished through our ministry. The A. V. may well speak of the “Word” of the Cross as “preaching” in view of the entire context. Our preaching is foolishness to men as long as they are perishing. To them we are a savor of death unto death (2 Cor. 2:16). Our preaching shows its power by converting men and continues as the power of God in those who are being saved (present participle), among whom Paul includes *us*, pastors and people. Let us learn of Paul to use personal pronouns, always drawing our hearers into our sermons, knowing that God's power works in their hearts and lives through our preaching. During Lent we shall

find them to be especially receptive to our preaching. Let us make full use of our opportunities.

Paul, himself inspired, proves his points by quoting the Old Testament. Do we always furnish Scripture proof for our statements? In v. 20 he applies the Word to his day. Do we? The wise Greek, the Jewish scribe with his technical treatment of the Law, the sophist (Jew and Greek) debating in the schools, had had their day and had produced the skepticism which caused Pontius Pilate to exclaim, "What is truth!" But in the wisdom of God (thanks be to Him for it, Matt. 11:25) man need not and cannot use his own wisdom to know God, i. e., as his God and Lord. Instead, God uses a means which is applicable to all because it demands nothing of man. By the foolishness of preaching He saves those whom He brings to faith through our preaching.

The message of the Cross is not what men think they need. The Jews wanted a sign. On the basis of Daniel 7:13 they were expecting a "Son of the clouds" to appear as their deliverer. They were, therefore, offended at Christ, the lowly servant of man. The Greeks sought the highest wisdom and could see no wisdom whatever in the teaching that death would bring life, that weakness would become power, that shame and contempt would lead to glory. But Christ, the Crucified, actually achieved all of this by His death.

When meditating on v. 23, first place the accent on the name "Christ." Get the full implication of the title. Then note the word "crucified." See how it magnifies sin and wrath as well as forgiveness and grace. Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God *for us* only as the Crucified. "Christ crucified." Here are the mysteries of God of which the Lord has made us stewards; here are the treasures with which we are to enrich men's lives; here is the sole reason for our ministry; here is the guarantee that our preaching will not be in vain. Christ crucified! He is seemingly helpless, yet in that weakness He destroys him who had the power of death. What a proof of His deity and of His redemptive power! He is seemingly a contradiction in Himself, yet He affords a plan of salvation which is applicable to all men, regardless of race, color, nationality (v. 24), with no criticism resting either on the result or on the manner of reaching it Rom. 9—11,

esp. 11:33). What a proof of His wisdom! Christ crucified — as such He will be praised throughout eternity (Rev. 5:12).

Preaching Pitfalls. — We may be tempted to devote a good portion of the sermon to the presentation of the theories of the leaders of thought (vv. 20-22), forgetting what Paul says in 1:17; 2:1-2; and in our text. Again, we may be tempted to seek to make the message of the Cross reasonable to men, hoping to convince the learned, forgetting 1:17.

Problem and Goal. — We, as the called ministers of Christ, are to consider the preaching of the simple Gospel truths our highest office, since only through this message the power and wisdom of God becomes operative in the hearts and lives of our members. Our preaching should fill them with such a longing for the message of the Cross that they will feel impelled to attend the coming Lenten services for the strengthening of their faith, hope, and love. In the theme suggested below the wisdom of God is mentioned. In each part of the sermon this wisdom of God should be clearly shown.

Outline:

GOD'S WISDOM IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION

- I. He requires nothing of man, since man can offer nothing.
- II. He provides everything in Christ, who is our all-sufficient Savior.
- III. He makes it our duty and privilege to preach the Word of salvation to all mankind.

Springfield, Ill.

MARK J. STEEGE

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

JAMES 3:13-18

The Text and the Day. — The day is the Sunday before the beginning of Lent. Since the text is Law, not Gospel, it can be used as a preparation for the Lenten season in the sense that it is a call to repentance, an Ash Wednesday theme.

Notes on Meaning. — The Epistle of James deals mainly with the Law; as such it condemns the sinner, but it also is a rule for the Christian. The immediate preceding context

dwells on sins of the tongue. This text has as its theme "Wisdom." This "wisdom from above" is a grace possessed by one who is a Christian.

"Conversation," ἀναστροφή, does not refer to mere speaking, but has the wider connotation "manner of life." V. 13 refers to the fact that this wisdom from above is characterized by the quality of meekness. The wisdom from below shows itself in the opposite: strife, bitterness, etc. This wisdom may even glory in the fact that it puts up a fight and an argument and feels proud at having bested and humbled an opponent. — V. 14. "Truth" in this verse may be taken as the equivalent of "Gospel." The meaning then is: Do not try to justify your personal strife and enmity as though required by the fact that you have the truth, since such conduct belies the Gospel. — V. 15. "Earthly" refers to the fact that such wisdom from below is of the cheap kind which may appear impressive, but is really shallow and of a low level. "Sensual," ψυχική, does not mean "spiritual," but "on no higher level than that which animates the physical body." — V. 17. "Easy to be intreated," or "yielding," just the opposite of a persistent claiming to be right. — V. 18. The meaning is that the harvest which righteousness ("righteousness" taken here as a quality of a Christian) is to produce must be sown in a peaceful way by those who love peace; such a harvest is never produced by strife and envy.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The text is a text of Law and must be preached as such. The "wisdom from above" in the Christian is a fruit of faith, not faith itself; not to be confused with "wisdom unto salvation." The preacher will add a discussion of the source of the "wisdom from above," namely, the Spirit of God.

Preaching Emphases and Goal. — The emphasis of the text is on peaceful conduct among Christians as opposed to envy and strife. The former flows from the wisdom from above, the latter from the wisdom from below. That peacefulness, gentleness, and an attitude of yielding in a controversy is wisdom is often unbelievable to our selfish and proud hearts.

The text can be brought into relation with the season as a call to repentance at the beginning of Lent.

Outline: WHO IS A WISE MAN?

- I. There is a wisdom from below.
 - A. It delights in envy and strife.
 - B. It even lies against the truth.
 - C. It is earthly, sensual, devilish.
 - D. It results in confusion and every evil.

- II. There is a wisdom from above.
 - A. It shows itself in meekness.
 - B. It is pure, gentle, easy to be intreated, etc.
 - C. It works for peace.

H. O. A. KEINATH

