

Concordia Theological Monthly



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A Series of Sermon Studies for the Church Year

TRINITY

JOHN 14:22-26

Introduction.—The doctrine of the Trinity is not contrary to reason, but above reason. If we were asserting the threeness of exactly the same category of which we were asserting the oneness, it would be a logical contradiction, but we are not saying that God is three Persons in one Person, but that He is three Persons in one God; not that that makes the doctrine of the Trinity clear, but that it removes it from the area of being against reason to that of being above reason.

Theme.—Though the doctrine of the Trinity is above reason, it is not above human consciousness and experience both in the assertion of the threeness of the Persons and the oneness of the Godhead.

I. The child of God has a consciousness and experience of the three Persons of the Godhead as distinct from one another.

1. He is conscious of the being and activity of the Father.

"Father."

a. He knows Him as the Creator.

b. He knows Him as the Preserver, particularly his own Preserver.

"My Father."

c. He knows Him especially as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he became a member of the heavenly family and by whom he can pray with the rest: Our Father, which etc.

2. He is conscious of the being and activity of the Son.

"If a man love Me."

a. He knows Him as the historical Christ, who talked to, and walked among, men, suffered, died, rose, and ascended.

- b. He knows Him as the immanent Christ, the living Christ, who is with him now, "whom, having not seen, he loves," who suffered and died and rose for him — "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

"He will keep My words."

- c. The believer's whole life is consciously lived in obedience to the living Christ.
3. He is conscious of the Person and activity of the Holy Spirit.

"He shall teach you all things."

- a. When a Christian meditates upon the Word and finds in it instruction and comfort, warning and correction, he knows the Spirit is at work.

"Shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

- b. When a Christian finds that in all his meditation his thoughts are always flowing out from, and back to, the living Christ, he knows again the activity of the Spirit.

- II. A Christian has the consciousness and experience of the complete oneness of the three Persons of the Godhead.

"The Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's, which sent Me."

1. A Christian has a consciousness of the oneness of the Father and the Son. The believing soul knows and feels that the more it adheres to Christ, the better it knows the Father, and that in Christ the Father comes to Him. "We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."

"Shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

2. A Christian has the experience of the complete oneness of the Son and the Spirit. John 16:14: "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you."
3. A Christian, then, is conscious that the Spirit receives of the Son, and the Son receives of the Father, and so all three are perfectly one.

Conclusion.—So the doctrine of the Trinity does not trouble the Christian, because he does not understand it; it is rather infinitely precious to him, because he deeply experiences both the threeness and the oneness of God to his enlightenment and comfort. The Christian does not understand the sun, its suspension in the sky and its endless burning, but revels in its brightness and in its warmth.

WALTER O. SPECKHARD

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 12:44-50

The Text and the Day.—Both the Epistle and the Gospel of this day point to the Day of Judgment, the latter emphasizing the manner in which men may escape God's wrath, namely, by hearing Moses and the Prophets. That is also the burden of our text.

Notes on Meaning.—Since v. 36 states that Jesus hid Himself, yet the content of vv. 44-50 is so similar to that of vv. 34-36, it is assumed that the Evangelist here gives a summary of Christ's final words to the Jews before His death. V. 44 may be clarified by supplying *merely* after the word *not*. V. 46: Christ is the Light, not only because He *shows* the way, but *is* the Way, ch. 14:6. It is His last plea to the Jews to accept Him as Savior.—Natural man abides in spiritual darkness until Christ by the Holy Spirit enlightens him, just as darkness is the general condition in nature and is driven away when light appears. God alone can create light, 2 Cor. 4:6.—V. 47b: The objective of Christ's first coming was not the judgment, but the redemption, of mankind.—V. 48b: The Word here signifies the Gospel message, ch. 16:8-9.—V. 49: This was spoken from the viewpoint of the Incarnation. According to His divine nature, Christ knew this.—The "commandment" is not one of the Ten Commandments, but means "instruction." The same as Matt. 28:20: ". . . whatsoever I have commanded you." That commandment is eternal life, v. 50. The Gospel offers and gives everlasting life, Mark 16:16; Luke 11:28; Rom. 1:16.

Preaching Emphasis.—In line with the Gospel of the day, the emphasis should be placed on the importance of using God's Word publicly and privately, since it is God's means for leading men from darkness to light. A fine opportunity to invite faithful par-

ticipation in the church's agencies for instruction in the Word. This was Christ's final and stirring plea to the Jews for faith in Him and His Word.

Problem and Goal.—To draw our hearers away from a perfunctory religiousness and to inspire them to faithful use of the means of grace, so that they might have boldness in the day of Jesus Christ.

Outline:

CHRIST'S WORD WILL BE MEN'S JUDGE

- I. It will acquit those who accept it in faith.
 - A. The burden of Christ's preaching was that He had come to lead men from darkness to light, vv. 46-47.
 - B. This was not a new doctrine, but the Father's, that had sent Him, vv. 44-45, 49.
 - C. Being God's gracious offer, Christ's Word is life everlasting, v. 50.
 - D. This is the burden of all true Christian preaching today. He who believes the Gospel has life now, ch. 3:18, 36.
- II. It will condemn those who reject it in unbelief.
 - A. By offering life and light to all who believe, Christ's Word thereby proclaims darkness and death to its despisers, vv. 47-48; ch. 3:14-18.
 - B. Also this is not a new doctrine, v. 49.
 - C. External contact with the Word will not suffice, v. 47a; Heb. 4:2; James 1:22.
 - D. Despisers of the Word have no other way from death to life, v. 48; Heb. 2:1-3.

OTTO E. SOHN

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 17:14-20

The Text and the Day.—The Gospel of the day teaches that “the Holy Ghost . . . calls . . . the whole Christian Church.” Cf. *Homiletisches Magazin* 15, page 382. The Epistle emphasizes Christ’s love and how this love becomes operative in us. Our text combines both thoughts.

Notes on Meaning.—V. 14. In the midst of His sacerdotal prayer, Christ stresses His prophetic work. He had given the Word, not vague stimuli, or merely general impressions. This Word is God’s Word. It is first of all from God and also about God, His Law and Gospel. This Word took the disciples from the fellowship of the world. “Not of the world”: Christ is “Very God of Very God.”—V. 15. Luther: “I have still more to be done by them in the world, namely, that they extend My kingdom.” Calwer, *Handbuch*: “To be fishers of men and to do God’s work, they had to be in the world, where treachery and hatred of the evil one endangered them.” “The evil”: the evil one, Satan; cf. 1 John 2: 13, 14 and 3:12.—V. 16. In receiving the Word, the disciples show they are not of the world.—V. 17. “Sanctify”: consecrate, hallow; cf. 1 Thess. 5:23. As the Old Testament priests were to be sanctified, Ex. 29:1, 44, so the Christians are to be sanctified priests: *êv*, “through,” is to be taken instrumentally. “Thy Word”: “By this means, and in no other way, namely, through His holy Word, God desires to call men to eternal salvation, draw them to Himself, and convert, regenerate, and sanctify them.” *Concordia Triglot*, p. 901. “Truth”: God’s Word. The Bible is infallible, not a mixture of truth and error. It is altogether truth, also when speaking about phenomena of nature.—V. 18. Jesus came into the world to proclaim this truth, chapters 18:37. The disciples of Jesus are sent to teach this same Word of truth in all the world, chapter 20:21; *Ī*Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15.—V. 19. *ὑπέρ*: for their sake, for their benefit, and in their stead. “I sanctify Myself”: like the Hebrew *kidesb*, cf. Ezek. 44:19. I present Myself as an offering. “They also” with their entire person are to belong to the calling of God. Again the only means is “the Truth.”—V. 20. “Their word”: All that Jesus has prayed for for the disciples holds also for the be-

lievers of the future. We shall know the truth only if we continue in His Word as proclaimed by Himself and the inspired writers of Holy Scripture. There never will be anything to take the place of or supplement Holy Scripture. No further revelation or tradition!

Preaching Pitfalls.—Care should be taken not to interpret “Word” in v. 14 as the office of teaching. Inasmuch as our text is only part of the high-priestly prayer, the context must not be disregarded.

Problem and Goal.—Love of the Lord for His Church and the blessings of His Word, specifically the Gospel, stand in the forefront. The sermon is to lead the hearer to greater thankfulness to Jesus for His gift of grace and to a deeper appreciation of His Word.

Outline:

Introduction: Context — Father in heaven. “Our Father, who art in heaven.”

THE LORD’S PRAYER FOR HIS CHURCH

I. First petition — Vv. 14-17.

With particular stress on verse 17. “Hallowed be Thy name.”

II. Second petition — V. 20.

Growth of the Church — mission. “Thy kingdom come.”

III. Third petition — V. 15b.

Trials and victories of the Church — pertinent verses.

“Thy will be done,” etc.

Conclusion — V. 21.

Alternate Outline:

THE WORD AND THE WORLD

I. Christ gave the Word to His disciples.

A. Vv. 14b and 16.

B. Vv. 17 and 19.

II. The world needs the Word.

A. V. 18.

B. V. 15.

C. V. 20.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 15:1-9

The Text and the Day.—The Gospel and Epistle lessons together with the Introit and Collect for this Sunday emphasize hope and trust in God. In our text Jesus shows us how foolish and hard-hearted men become when they shift from trust in God to trust in man, when they turn from faith in the Word of God to meticulous observance of bare human ordinances.

Notes on Meaning.—In Chapter 15 Matthew resumes the account which he had dropped at the end of Chapter 12, of the growing tension and conflict between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. Traditions of men in the area of religion and the revelation of God are placed side by side in such bold relief that any unbiased person ought to be able to see that traditions of men, when they run counter to the revelation of God, must be rejected. Like inquisitors, scribes and Pharisees swoop down upon Jesus with biting criticism about failure to wash hands before a meal. In spite of the fact that the Levitical code (cf. Lev. 12—15) restricts washing to certain parts of the body representing the defilement of sin and so makes that washing a ceremonial or religious act, the elders of the Jews went beyond the scope of these God-appointed regulations, and scribes and Pharisees scored anyone a sinner who failed to observe their additions to the Law of God (cf. Mark 7:1-4). In meeting the sticklers on the traditions of the elders, Jesus admits that according to the viewpoint of his critics His disciples are guilty of a transgression. But by using the word "also" (v. 3) He turns the tables against them and makes them wince. If any charge of guilt at all could be leveled against the disciples, it was an infraction only of an ordinance set up by human beings and devoid of any religious significance. The distortion of the Fourth Commandment of which scribes and Pharisees were guilty was a willful setting aside of God's Divine Law. There certainly is nothing reprehensible about dedicating gifts to God. But the way in which scribes and Pharisees bandied the word "Corban" back and forth had a most demoralizing effect on many a Jew. Whether the fateful word was spoken in a mood of religious devotion or in a fit of anger, or with intent to take revenge, the person who uttered the word was bound

to withhold the dedicated amount from any profane use, and that included the support of his parents. In later Judaism he was even exempted from paying the gift into the Lord's treasury and could play fast and loose with his vow before God. The force of this fact comes home to us when we examine the word "and" at the beginning of verse 6. The manuscripts Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi, and Bezae do not contain the word "and." The old Latin version, Cureton's Syriac, the Coptic, and the Ethiopic versions do not carry "and" either. Verses 5 and 6 then read as follows: "But you say, Whoever tells his father or mother, 'Anything of mine that might have been of use to you is given to God,' does not have to provide for his father" (Goodspeed). No wonder Jesus called men with such a vicious mind "hypocrites!" With good propriety He cited the words of Is. 29:13 and applied them to his pettifogging critics. The principle He applies is this: You cannot say "Lord, Lord" in one breath and in the very next nullify one fundamental law of God after the other.

Preaching Pitfalls and Emphases. — A sermon on this text cannot be a tirade against scribes and Pharisees, nor ought it be an exposition of the Fourth Commandment. More is involved in this text than the proper understanding of the Fourth Commandment. The attitude of scribes and Pharisees toward the Word of God was wrong. The leaders of the people had slipped into an observance of external things which they had raised into a position of extreme importance and veneration. In their estimation their own man-made regulations deserved more honor than the Word of God. In the case of a conflict between the two they did not hesitate to set the Word of God aside and uphold their traditions. Their error was insistence on tradition at the expense of divine revelation. Since this error is so deeply rooted in many people within the Church, just as prevalent today as in the past, it must be exposed. The sermon should deal with the spirit of pharisaism.

Problem and Goal. — Pharisees are still with us in smaller or larger number in every congregation. It is quite easy for any member of the Church to listen to the enemy within him and to the discordant voices about him and let himself be sidetracked from God's Word. It is easy for him on occasion to attach more importance to social, congregational, synodical stipulations than to

the voice of Jesus speaking in the Bible. The goal of the sermon must be to point out the prevalence and danger of pharisaism in the home, in church, in relationship with fellow Christians and fellow citizens in the community, and show that faith in Jesus and full reliance on the Word of God are the only way to guard against the spirit of pharisaism.

Outline:

HOW MAY I GUARD AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF PHARISAISM?

- I. By turning to Christ in Faith
- II. By keeping the commandments of God.
- III. By seeking the honor of God.

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