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ARCHIVES

Outlines on Synodical Conference Gospels

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 6:5-15

Jesus takes it for granted that all who believe on Him will pray. Without argument He introduces the subject of prayer in His Sermon on the Mount by simply saying, "And when thou prayest."

However, Jesus does not take for granted that all who believe on Him know by nature how to pray. Therefore He follows up the simple statement "And when thou prayest" with detailed instructions, together with a most wonderful example. These instructions, together with the example, teach us that THE PRAYING HEART THAT PLEASES JESUS is humble, sincere, courageous, and forgiving.

I

IT IS HUMBLE (Vv. 5, 6)

Hypocrites are not humble. They are proud and vainglorious. They do not pray to be heard and helped by God. They pray to be seen and praised by men. "They have their reward."

To please Jesus, our Savior, our hearts must be humble when we pray. If we remember who we are and who God is, our hearts will be humble. We are weak creatures; God is our mighty Creator. We are sinful; God is holy. Furthermore, our hearts will be humble when we remember how desperately we need God's blessing and how graciously God bestows His blessing in answer to our prayers.

II

IT IS A BELIEVING HEART (Vv. 7, 8)

Heathen look upon the number and the weight of their words as more important in prayer than sincerity of heart. We may pray long prayers. Jesus did. The words we use in prayer should be heavy with earnestness. However, much speaking, even much shrieking (prophets of Baal), avails nothing unless our hearts are sincere — sincere in confessing guilt to God, sincere in faith which looks to Jesus for pardon, sincere in trusting God's Word and

promises. Since our hearts are sincerely believing, God, who knows what we need, will supply our need even before we ask Him. That is the daily experience of every child of God. That faith is God's own gift to us because of the redeeming blood of Jesus Himself.

III

IT IS A COURAGEOUS HEART (Vv. 9-13)

The prayer Jesus teaches us to pray puts many of our prayers to shame. Often we are timid in prayer. We have not because we ask not. We pray for gravel when we might be praying for gold. We lack courage in our praying.

The prayer Jesus teaches us to pray is little in the number of words it employs, but big, very big, in the petitions it places before our Father in heaven. Every day when we pray, let us pray not for the biggest and the best which this world, this life, our fellow men have to offer, but let us pray for the biggest and the best God has to offer — the hallowing of His name, the coming of His kingdom, the doing of His will, the forgiveness of our sins, the deliverance from evil. Let us take courage when we pray.

IV

IT IS A FORGIVING HEART (Vv. 14, 15)

It is no accident that Jesus bids us to forgive immediately after having taught us how to pray. Our prayers avail before our Father in heaven because through faith in Jesus our sins are forgiven. Without forgiveness through faith in Jesus, prayers are an abomination to God. And this we must remember: If we forgive not our fellow men, we forfeit God's forgiveness. An unforgiving heart is an unbelieving heart. And an unbelieving heart, together with all it says, is hateful in the sight of God. Our hearts must be forgiving hearts when we pray.

The praying heart that pleases Jesus is humble, sincere, courageous, and forgiving. Friend, what kind of heart have you? When you pray, is your prayer pleasing to Jesus? Do not brush this question aside as unimportant. Rather answer this question by searching your heart. Answer this question by praying to God that He would daily grant you a new heart — a heart that is humble, believing, courageous, and forgiving.

San Antonio, Tex.

ROLAND WIEDERAENDERS

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 6:19-23

Walking along a mountain trail, a traveler was startled by the frantic cries of a bird overhead. Evidently in great distress, the bird flew in circles, each circle becoming smaller as it neared the earth. Below was a coiled snake, its eyes fixed on the bird and its mouth wide open. Lower and lower the bird flew, faster and faster, until it dropped into the yawning mouth. Apparently the snake had caught the eye of the bird and thus accomplished its end. It made considerable difference in what direction the bird was gazing at the time.

This is true also of the character of man and the destiny of the soul. If he sets his affections and sights upon things earthy, he will become bankrupt and undone. If he seeks the things heavenly, by God's grace he will be rich and blessed. In our text Jesus poses a basic question of life:

WHAT HOLDS YOUR GAZE?

In answer to this question Jesus advises

1. Don't Gaze upon the Treasures of the World
2. Let Your Gaze Be upon the Treasures of Heaven

I

Don't Gaze upon the Treasures of the World (V. 19)

A. Jesus is not saying that we are to avoid or despise the things of this world. All temporal things have their temporal use and value. We are to pray for "daily bread" and to receive it with thanksgiving. To seek food and raiment is in itself altogether right (1 Tim. 4:4, 5; Ps. 145:16).

B. But we are not to make "treasures" out of the things of the world. Whatever man stakes his life on or gives his life to is his "treasure" (riches, position, business, fame, power). It may be gold or garbage, high society or a bums' gang. Before God both are alike — usurpers of the throne which belongs to Christ.

C. The degrading influence of keeping our eyes riveted upon "earthly treasures." If a man occupies himself with money-making as the *chief* object of his endeavors, he will become groveling and

mercenary in his motives, and his heart will become cold and hard as the gold to which he clings (v. 21; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

Pursuing pleasures derived from the gratification of sensual appetites, he becomes increasingly brutish by his choice of a worldly, animal life. The heart loses all loftiness of purpose when it habitually delves into the dirt of earth. Such aspirations make him unfit to gather any treasures in heaven.

D. The instability of such "earthly treasures" (v. 19). Gold, dominions, education, position, and pleasure will not last. These cannot meet the needs of man. Moths, rust, time, and death take their toll (1 John 2:15-17; 1 Tim. 6:9-11). When "things" are crushed beneath the march of time, the soul is left without a Physician, a Savior, a Paraclete.

Because men are spiritually blind, they are insensible to this difference. Like children at the seashore, they eagerly gather the shards and pebbles of life. One of the sorriest stories in all history is the "Rich Young Man." (Matt. 19:16 ff.) He stood where all of us inevitably must stand, faced with the choice of keeping our eyes fixed on earthly or heavenly things.

Ever since Esau's bad trade with Jacob, men have been selling their soul for a mess of pottage. They are anxious about making a living to the neglect of making a life. They repeat the old jargons "Business is business" and "A man must live!" forgetting that a man must die and that dead men, rich and poor alike, are all paupers so far as this world's goods are concerned (Job 1:21 a; Matt. 16:26).

These words of admonition are spoken not necessarily to worldlings, but to Jesus' disciples. He challenges them to "lift their sights." . . . "Seek ye first the kingdom of God. . . ."

II

Let Your Gaze Be upon the Treasures of Heaven (V. 20)

A. To discern these blessed treasures we need spiritual eyes, which see what the natural eyes cannot see (vv. 20-23). Natural man does not have this sight (Eph. 4:17-18). This spiritual sight is imparted by God's Word. (Ps. 73:24-26; 119:17, 18; Eph. 1:17-19.)

B. Jesus intimates that even Christians have "eye trouble" (vv.

22, 23). Normal eyes are single, correctly focused, registering true impressions. "Evil" eyes lack this singleness of vision. One or both eyes turning inward — cross-eyed; one or both eyes turning outward — wall-eyed. This is true also of the "eye" of the soul. If the spiritual gaze is single and set only on Christ, light floods the soul with all its peace and joy. If it is double, gazing on world and on Christ at the same time, all is darkness, and "how great is that darkness!" (V. 23.) Illustration of such "eye trouble" (Rev. 3: 15-18).

C. Here is a challenge for Christians to lift up their eyes to heavenly treasures (v. 21).

Treasures in heaven are "those that pertain to the kingdom of heaven and come to us from heaven. The Kingdom itself, with all its blessings, righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, sonship, and a heritage in eternal glory, which is laid up for us in heaven" (Ylvisaker). Christ appeals for a single eye, which gazes upon the life in this world against the backdrop of eternity. Jesus is the Light that lighteth every man (John 1:19; 1 John 1:6, 7). If we keep our eyes on Jesus, God will supply our physical needs (Matt. 6:31, 32). His redeeming work guarantees us the treasure (Rom. 8:32). If we keep our eyes on Jesus, God will supply us with further spiritual illumination (Col. 2:3; John 16:13; Heb. 11:3; Job 19:25). Keeping our eyes on Jesus, we shall have complete victory and treasures in heaven (Heb. 12:2).

In what direction are we gazing? Do we put first things first in our life, in our homes, business, pleasures, in our church life? Is our vision single or double? Can we say with the Psalmist: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord"? (Ps. 25:15.)

Des Moines, Iowa

STRATFORD EYNON

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 7:24-29

In Palestine the heavier buildings were erected on rock, even as in our country. Others were built on less substantial material. In our text Jesus applies this parable to the hearing of His Word. He divides the hearers into two classes: those that hear and believe

and do; those that hear but are "Gospel hardened." He separates them even as He will separate them on the Day of Judgment. Both classes are found in every church.

TWO KINDS OF HEARERS

I

The Failures

For the purpose of graphic portrayal Jesus uses the picture of a builder who erected his house on sand. The house may have been well planned, attractive without, elaborately furnished within; but it was built on sand. As long as the weather was fair, it stood. But when the test came (v. 27) — storms, wind, terrific rain — it collapsed like a house of cards. Application to hypocritical hearers of God's Word:

A. Those who come to church because the minister is an eloquent preacher. (Ezek. 33:31, 32.) They like to hear fancy oratory, clever sayings, sharp explanations of problems. Far be it from them to come in the manner of the Greeks: "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21).

B. Those who hear God's Word but do not repent of their sin nor accept God's grace in Christ. Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 15:8).

C. Those who hear but think a sermon is good when it misses them and hits the man behind them. In our text Jesus declares: "*Everyone* that heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them not."

D. Those with a typical "confirmation complex." To them, instruction, confirmation, church membership, the routine of going to church, is enough. Sunday after Sunday they face the appeal of the Gospel without response. Boast of their Lutheran heritage but never grow in grace, like the Jews who boasted of being Abraham's children (John 8:33). Feel no need of cleansing and redemption. . . . Time to examine ourselves (Ps. 139:23, 24). There is a hearing unto death.

When the test comes — sorrow, trials, cross-bearing, sacrificial service — these people are failures. They break under the strain. Their beautiful exterior is exposed as sham. Heart is a spiritual vacuum.

II

Fruitful Hearers

The other side of our text offers a pleasant, strengthening picture. Jesus portrays a man who built his house on a rock (vv. 24, 25). It may or may not have been as beautiful, without and within, as the former, but it had this great essential — a *solid* foundation. When rains came and storms descended, it stood every test.

A. These are the people who hear and are brought to the knowledge of their sin (Acts 2:37, 38).

B. People who receive Christ. He is our Hope (1 Tim. 1:1). He is the Way to the Father (John 14:6). He is the Christian's Rock and Fortress. When we sing "Rock of Ages," we mean Jesus. Also called such in Scripture (Eph. 2:20; Col. 2:7). Above all, He is my Savior from sin (1 John 1:7). "On Christ, the Solid Rock, I Stand" (hymn 370). Luther knew what this meant amid storms of Reformation. Leaned heavily on Christ and His Word (Psalm 46).

C. People whose faith guarantees them the victory in all things. In doubt, sorrow, despair, heartache, guilt, the Holy Spirit sustains them through His Word. And to them Jesus says (John 10:27, 28). Secure amid the storms of this life, they are sealed unto life eternal.

D. People whose hearing is coupled with doing. (James 2; text, v. 24; Titus 2:11 ff.)

What kind of hearer are you? Listen so that you may be rich in the life that flows from the Word (Luke 8:15).

Topeka, Kans.

ALBERT C. BURROUGHS

FESTIVAL OF THE REFORMATION

MATT. 23:8-12

Celebrating Reformation is apt to set off a spasm of pride. "Look at our great Church! Look at our pure doctrine! Look at those evil people!" In this text Jesus Christ warns "the multitude and His disciples" (Matt. 23:1) against people and practices toward which He was leading a reformation. He speaks sharply and plainly. Yet His admonition is not an occasion for pride. Even so

the Lutheran Reformation spoke sharply and plainly about the distortion of the Gospel and counterfeit of the Church which threatened its time. But its summons was not to pride. Rather this is

THE WATCHWORD OF THE REFORMATION: TRUST IN GOD!

I

The Evils Which This Summons Must Correct

A. The idolatry of human authority in religion

1. The Pharisees had set up a system of human teachers who placed themselves over the Law and revelation of God. Some were called "masters"—teachers of teachers, authorities over the rest.

2. The Roman Church arrogated to itself the right to judge in matters of doctrine. In our time it renews the claim that it is superior to the revelation of God in Scripture, alone interprets the Scripture, through tradition and new dogma supplements Scripture. The menace in this assumption is that the human being likes a show of authority. He "likes to be told" also in matters of religion.

B. The idolatry of human righteousness

1. The evil of the Pharisaic system climaxed in the teaching that works must be done to gain the favor of God and of men. They prided themselves on their own goodness in the sight of God and did their own works "to be seen of men" (v. 5).

2. Through its sacrament of penance and its teaching concerning works of supererogation the Roman Church made the performance of good deeds, particularly by the religious and the saints, a source of the grace of God to others. While denying that they worshiped saints idolatrously, they actually introduced a dependence upon good works, of self or others, into the thinking of men. This position remains dangerous to the present time, whether promoted by the Roman Catholic Church or by any other agency; for men love to believe that they are the source of their own goodness.

C. The idolatry of churchly dignity

1. The panoply of decorum was driven to great lengths by the Pharisees so that people recognized their prestige and gave them honor in many ways (vv. 5-7).

2. Since the days of Constantine the Roman Church has ex-

pressed its power over the hearts of men by a parallel demonstration of wealth and prestige. That it is biggest, oldest, and most powerful remains its greatest claim to its own truthfulness in our own time. Many a Protestant, disturbed over the relative simplicity or modest size of his own denomination, wistfully admires this strength. The thought of "one world-wide major force" in position to dispute the Communist threat is attractive propaganda.

II

The Message of This Summons: Trust in God!

A. Trust in God

1. Our Lord summoned His hearers to turn away from men as authority in teaching or as chief in religious prestige and to put God and Christ first (read vv. 8-10).

2. Philip S. Watson entitled his summary of Luther's teaching *Let God Be God*. The Reformation was a call to men to forsake human authority posing as the Church or as arbiters of religious teaching, as they would forsake idols, and let God be God.

B. The source of this trust

1. Christ blandly says: "One is your Master, Christ." Thus He calls attention to His message by which men learn the way to the Father (John 14:1-11). Through His redeeming work, about to be completed on the cross, Jesus brings forgiveness of sins and the life of God back to men. Thus the great control of their lives and the protector in every need becomes, not a man, but God, which is in heaven. "Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven."

2. Therewith our Lord lays down the pattern of the life of Christians toward one another. They are brethren, and none are over the others (vv. 8-10). Their relation to one another is that of servant (v. 11). The Christian Church is the company of those who edify one another and preserve one another in the faith. That they do as they keep the teachings of Jesus, His redemptive work, and their relation to God as their Father uppermost in one another's minds and hearts.

3. Heirs of the Reformation do well to preserve this accent against every trend toward worldliness within or without the

Church. The children of the Reformation do well to view one another as brethren and by love to serve one another. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is a stout hymn for Reformation. Equally important is Luther's hymn of 1524 (*Lutheran Hymnal*, 231:4):

Thou sacred Love, grace on us bestow,
 Set our hearts with heav'nly fire aglow
 That with hearts united we love each other,
 Of one mind, in peace with ev'ry brother.
 Lord, have mercy!

St. Louis, Mo.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 5:1-9 a

For contentious men our text might offer occasion for contention on two counts:

The unnamed feast (v. 1). Men who wish to establish the precise length of our Lord's public ministry inquire whether this was a Passover or some other feast. If this could be established as a Passover, it would make it possible to add another year to the known duration of Christ's public ministry. But Holy Scripture would have us study the nature and purpose of our Lord's ministry rather than its length and leaves the exact nature of the feast in v. 1 in doubt.

2. The other occasion for contention is the statement in v. 4. In the RSV this verse is omitted. A comparison of many ancient Bible manuscripts shows that in many of the supposedly best texts this verse is not found. It may represent a comment by a Biblical scholar to explain the Jewish belief concerning the healing qualities of the pool of Bethesda written into the margin and taken into the text by a later copyist.

It would be a grave mistake if we were to argue about secondary questions which we cannot decide anyway and fail to see here Him of whom all Scripture testifies and whom also this text glorifies. The text emphasizes against a background of human misery, helplessness, and callousness the mercy and might of the Lord Jesus.

BEHOLD THE MERCY AND POWER OF THE LORD JESUS!

I. Behold His Mercy

II. Behold His Power

I

A. He goes where He may behold humanity in misery and pain (v. 1-3). He visits the pool of Bethesda, a pool credited with possessing healing qualities. There lay "a multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered." All had come in the hope of healing. A pitiful sight!

Our Lord could have avoided this place. Jerusalem is a large city with many attractions. He chooses to go to this scene of misery, not from morbid interest in sights of wretchedness, but from a spirit of compassion (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Mark 1:41; 6:34).

B. He singles out a particularly unfortunate man to show him mercy (vv. 5-7). "A certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." He had not necessarily been at the pool all this while, but he had had his affliction that long. For half a lifetime or more he had suffered.

All he had met at the pool of Bethesda, this celebrated place of healing, was human callousness (v. 7; cp. v. 4).

In Jesus he met genuine pity (v. 6). "Wilt thou be made whole?" The question was to arouse hope and the will to be healed.

Pity was not enough. Genuine sympathy can be a comfort in suffering. This man needed pity coupled with power to help. In Jesus he found both.

II

A. The Lord commands the sick man, who evidently had a crippling, disabling disease: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

B. "And immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked."

The command was the command of Him by whom God "made the world" (Heb. 1:2). Therefore the effect. For similar cases of instant healing see Matt. 8:3, 8:13; 9:6, 7, 9, 30, and many others.

He who healed this hopeless cripple is our Lord and Savior. He is merciful today, as He was when he walked the streets of Jerusalem

and the roads of Galilee. His power to help and to heal is today as it was then (Heb. 13:8).

To him let us go in our sicknesses, sorrows, and afflictions for mercy. Let us ask Him, if it be His will, to grant us help and healing.

From Him, who is both our Savior and our Teacher, in whose footsteps we should follow as disciples, let us learn also to be merciful to those who are troubled and afflicted, and ever willing and eager to help to the extent of our ability.

Springfield, Ill.

FRED KRAMER

THE HANNOVER CYCLE OF EPISTLES

will be treated in the series of outlines for the new Church Year beginning November 29. They are herewith published for the information of our readers:

1 Ad.	Rom. 2:12-24	Cant.	2 Tim. 2:14-23
2 Ad.	Rom. 3:1-18	Rog.	1 Thess. 5:14-25
3 Ad.	Rom. 10:11-18	Ascen.	1 Pet. 3:15-22
4 Ad.	Rom. 11:16-32	Exaudi	James 1:2-11
Chris.	1 Tim. 3:14-16	Pent.	Acts 8:14-25
SaChr.	2 Cor. 1:3-20	Trinity	2 Cor. 13:1-14
NY Day	1 Tim. 6:13-19	1 Tr.	James 5:1-7
SaNY	1 John 3:1, 2	2 Tr.	James 2:1-13
Epiph.	Col. 1:19-21	3 Tr.	James 2:14-23
1aE.	Heb. 3:1-14	4 Tr.	2 Pet. 1:2-15
2aE.	Gal. 1:6-16	5 Tr.	Acts 9:32-43
3aE.	1 Tim. 6:1-5	6 Tr.	Gal. 3:1-12
4aE.	1 Cor. 4:9-20	7 Tr.	Acts 10:1-33
5aE.	1 John 5:14-21	8 Tr.	Acts 12:1-17
Sept.	1 Thess. 1:1-10	9 Tr.	2 Thess. 3:1-13
Sexa.	2 Cor. 1:23—2:17	10 Tr.	Acts 14:8-20
Quinq.	1 John 4:7-15	11 Tr.	Acts 15:4-22
Invoc.	1 John 3:7-12	12 Tr.	Acts 16:9-15
Rem.	2 Cor. 7:1-12	13 Tr.	Acts 18:1-18
Oculi	2 Cor. 6:11-18	14 Tr.	Acts 21:3-19
Laetare	Heb. 7:11-28	15 Tr.	Acts 21:40—22:22
Judica	Col. 2:6-15	16 Tr.	Acts 23:1-17
Palm S.	1 Tim. 1:12-17	17 Tr.	Acts 24:1-25
M. Th.	1 Cor. 10:14-21	18 Tr.	Acts 26:13-32
G. Fr.	1 John 2:1-6	19 Tr.	Rom. 14:14-23
Easter	Rev. 5:1-14	20 Tr. (Ref.)	1 Cor. 3:11-23
Quasim.	2 Cor. 5:1-10	21 Tr.	1 Cor. 12:12-27
Mis. D.	Rom. 14:6-13	22 Tr.	1 Cor. 9:13-23
Jub.	2 Tim. 1:3-14	23 Tr.	1 Tim. 4:1-11