

RECEIVED NOV 30 1954

Concordia Theological Monthly



D E C E M B E R • 1 9 5 4



ARCHIVES

HOMILETICS

Studies on the Swedish Gospels

NEW YEAR'S DAY

JOHN 14:13

The Text and Its Central Thought.—The disciples' hearts were troubled when Jesus announced that He would leave them. Though they have the assurance that they, too, shall be brought to the Father's house and know the way, what of the interim? They are to continue believing that Jesus is in union with the Father and is therefore both Messiah and God. His works, too, are to strengthen this conviction.

But they are also to perform works while they wait. These Jesus says will be as great as those He Himself performed, even greater, since they were to be instrumental in converting many more sinners than did Jesus and in bringing the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Also the disciples were to save souls through the grace of God in Christ and not only perform healings through the manifestation of mercy and omnipotence. The reason for this activity is the completed redemption: "His going to the Father." Without this exaltation no promise could be fulfilled. This promise cannot refer to "faith healing," since it is given to all believers, not just to some. The miracles of Jesus and the Apostles were credentials supporting their preaching, and those of the Apostles were performed only at the direction of the Holy Spirit, not of their own volition.

But human flesh and blood needs strengthening for the great tasks of world-wide Gospel preaching. Hence our Lord urges His disciples to pray often and promises to grant their requests. While this assurance is unconditioned, it plainly pertains to the great works they are to do and by which the Father was to be glorified in the Son. Hence the prayers are to be for spiritual strength, for consecration, and divine blessing upon their preaching of the Gospel. They realized that prayers for selfish and fleshly enjoyments would not be countenanced or answered by Jesus.

The Day and Its Theme.—The first day of the new year is opportune for praying for strength to meet the challenging opportunities in the work at home and abroad. With the consciousness that this year may be the world's or the individual Christian's last, there is a greater urgency to make it a year of our Lord. This will fit it into the monthly theme of *Parish Activities*. The second of the Introits for the Day likewise lends itself remarkably well for this theme: "At the name of

Jesus every knee should bow, etc.” The emphasis of the Graduals also is on the proclamation of the redemption.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—To invite the hearer to pray down upon himself God’s blessing for a consecrated Christian life of mission activity—in the new year.

Sins to Be Diagnosed and Remedied.—A. Christians are too prone to pray selfishly for things that concern this body and a temporal life of ease. Spiritual blessings and the kingdom’s welfare should concern him far more.

B. The glory of God as our “reason for being” is all too often forgotten even by the best of God’s children. A happy new year for most people means a troublefree life and food and shelter, including some luxuries. Their sights ought to be lifted so that they become “dedicated men.”

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—The Epistle emphasizes the fact that we are free from the bondage of the Law and have now graduated to the status of sons. As such we are partners of God and co-workers with Him. The Gospel features the name of Jesus. To implement His name, we have been privileged by God to bring salvation to men. This is the purpose for which Christ came, suffered, died, rose, and returned again to the Father. Having experienced redemption, we are to bring redemption’s message to mankind. The motive for our activity is the Gospel.

Illustrations.—Great missionaries were always men of prayer. Carey: “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.” Judson: “The prospects are as bright as the promises of God.” Neesima: “Let us advance on our knees.” Henry Martyn: “Now let me burn out for God.” Peter at Joppa prayed to know God’s will with regard to Dorcas.

The young Walther Leaguers who are serving in New Guinea as lay missionaries prayed for strength as Jesus emphasized.

Outline

Marching on Our Knees to Victory

- I. God’s army is dedicated to His glory.
 - A. We are not conscripts but volunteers, because we know the joy of salvation.
 - B. We seek the Father’s glory as Jesus did, since we are in union with Him.
 - C. The victories we seek are such as will win souls for Christ. (Lives and words dedicated to Him.) These are the greater works of v. 12.

- II. To be victorious God's army must go on its knees.
- A. Pray for power in word and life—deeds and words that will convince men. "Whatsoever," while unconditioned, refers to needs for doing "works."
 - B. Pray for an obedient mind—"in My name"—as a believer, whose will is his Lord's.
- III. Victory is assured.
- A. The promise is definite.
 - B. The promise is not dependent on us.
 - C. Christ, the God-Man, makes it (vv. 10, 11).

San Francisco, Calif.

ARTHUR NITZ

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

MATT. 3:13-17

The Text and Its Central Thought.—Except for a few minor details, the parallel accounts in the Gospels of Mark (ch. 1:9-11) and Luke (ch. 3:21, 22) make no significant additions to Matthew's account of Jesus' Baptism. Jesus leaves His home town in Galilee, all set to begin His public ministry of mercy and redemption, and proceeds to the Jordan River where John, the son of Zacharias, is baptizing many penitent people for the remission of sins. He requests John to baptize Him. In John's hesitant reply we note the emphatic position of "I" and "You," stressing the contrast between sinful John and his sinless Master, Jesus, and the superiority of the one great Minister of God over another great minister. And yet, what condescension on the part of Jesus to submit to the ministry of John! Jesus does not say He has need (*chreia*) of baptism; nevertheless it is proper (*prepon*), it is in line with His ministry to fulfill all righteousness that He be baptized. So John complies. Why was Jesus baptized? Certainly not: (1) because He needed the washing of regeneration for Himself; (2) because He chose this as the symbolic rite inaugurating Him into His ministry (John's Baptism conferred forgiveness); (3) because He was washing away the real sinners' sins, as their Substitute (the atonement required more than that). Jesus was baptized to identify Himself with the sinner who needs the washing away of his sins through Baptism. There is nothing in the text to stress the mode of Baptism or even to prove any particular mode, like immersion. After His Baptism, Jesus is anointed or installed into office by the Holy Ghost, who descends

in the bodily form of a dove (or hovered as a dove hovers), and His Baptism, and everything else that He has done and purposes to do for the transformation of unrighteous sinners into saints, has the whole-hearted approval of the Father in the words: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus is the central figure in the text and must remain paramount in the sermon. At the same time the sinner has prominent place in the picture. He is on the receiving end. At the close of Jesus' ministry on earth the converted ones (the church) are commissioned by the Lord Christ to go to work for Him. The central thought, in keeping with the Day and in line with the theme of the Swedish lectionary, is expressed in verse 15: "It is proper for us [Jesus and John; Jesus and His twentieth-century John the Baptists] to fulfill all righteousness." Commandment breakers are declared righteous by the grace of God through the substitutionary atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, come in the flesh. Only perfect people can enter into communion with the perfect God. Baptism is the cleansing agent that wipes out unrighteousness and substitutes God's mercy in Christ and so brings the cleansed creature into fellowship with God.

Stoeckhardt (*Biblische Geschichte*): "The Baptism of Christ is at the same time a picture of our Baptism. We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and thus enter into the most intimate fellowship with the Triune God. God the Father has in Baptism designated and received us as His children through Christ. Christ, God's Son, has there presented Himself as Savior and Redeemer, has washed us with His blood from all our sins. And the Holy Ghost has come upon us in Baptism, entered our hearts, and has given us a new birth unto life eternal."

The Day and Its Theme. — 1 Peter 4:12-19 and Matt. 2:13-23 not only present the story of persecution and martyrdom but also emphasize God's providential care of the infant Jesus (Gospel) and of His persecuted Christians (Epistle). The Introit, Collect, and Gradual stress the unchangeable, eternal character of God, who rules with justice and mercy and wants us to abound in good works. The monthly theme of *Parish Activities* is "Missionary Conquests, Past and Present" and may be tied in with this text through Matt. 28:19. The Eastern Church today, as did the Western Church during the days of Ambrose, commemorated the Baptism of Christ on the Feast of the Epiphany.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon. — To lead the hearer in seeing the place that Jesus' Baptism had in God's eternal plan for the salvation of the world and to move the hearer to find his place in that plan.

Sin.—If we insist on using human standards of comparison to measure our character, let us use John the Baptist. Although described by Jesus as the “greatest man born of woman,” John considered himself unworthy of baptizing Jesus and expressed the need of being himself baptized.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—Jesus, the Son of God, wonderful, adorable, beautiful Savior in His humiliation—the open heaven—the voice of God made audible to man—the God of peace descends—Jesus offers men His righteousness—God provides channels of His grace.

Illustrations.—The story itself. Note how God Himself visualizes His revelation. Dramatize the mighty miracle wrought when an infant is baptized. Stories from the Book of Acts and from our foreign mission fields.

Outline

The Place of Baptism in God’s Plan for the Salvation of the World

I. The Baptism of Jesus.

A. The unique purpose of Jesus’ Baptism.

B. The first public act in a grand redemptive ministry.

C. Part of a plan designed and carried out by the Holy Trinity.

II. The Baptism of “all nations.”

A. The need of John and the Jews to be baptized and the fulfillment of that need.

B. The need of all nations today.

C. The role of the twentieth-century church in carrying out Christ’s commission to baptize all nations.

St. Louis, Mo.

ALVIN C. MACK

EPIPHANY

MATT. 12:15-21

The Text and Its Central Thought.—The first portion of Jesus’ teaching, preaching, and healing ministry is complete. His healing on the Sabbath has threatened the authority of the Pharisees who have met to determine His ultimate destruction. Jesus withdraws from the towns where He has taught publicly, to more remote regions. Here a multitude from all sections of Israel and from the neighboring Gentile regions are attracted to Him. He heals, but seeks no publicity on

that account. Cf. Mark 3:7-12. The Kingdom is to grow quietly among those who sense their need for God's help. Matthew takes the occasion to point to Christ as the Fulfillment of the prophetic Servant of God (cf. Isaiah 42), suffering, yet saving, seeking to draw, and indeed drawing, all nations to Himself. Baptized with the Holy Spirit, the Beloved of God must build His kingdom quietly, in the face of opposition, among any and all people who look to Him for the salvation of God. A central thought of this text is: "The revelation of Jesus in the face of opposition works, under the Spirit's guidance, to the saving of the nations."

The Day and Its Theme.—Is. 60:1-6 presents the vision of the nations converted to Christ, as the church shows forth His light. In Matt. 2:1-12 the Epiphany of Jesus is seen as uniting East and West in the service of God. The Collect, the Introit, and the Gradual emphasize the movement of peoples in response to the revelation of Christ. The Swedish Lectionary suggests the theme: "The Dawn of a New Day." The sermon might point to 1955 as a time for increased mission realism as well as for increased mission activity. A central thought might be: "Let us study the mission challenge of the new day, then rise to meet it." *Parish Activities* suggests "Missionary Conquests—Past and Present" as a theme for the month.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—To help the Christian see his direct involvement with Christ in the world mission program of 1955.

Problem to Be Diagnosed and Remedied.—The church needs constantly to reappraise its foreign policy; particularly now, in view of the momentous forces reshaping the world scene. After a century of comparatively free mission movement, we have come upon an era of increasing hostility to the spread of the Gospel. The effects of aggressive Communism, dying colonialism, and rising nationalism hamper the mission program in many fields. Limited mission undertakings must be seen against the vast throng of people for whom Christ died, yet who are dying without Christ. The church should rise to the challenge of the new day with every effective mission tool and policy. Such reappraisal of mission policy is needed for the individual Christian just as for the church. His obligation is not fulfilled in the mere filling of the mission side of his envelope. He is totally involved with Christ in the saving of the nations. His place in the world scene is determined with a purpose by the Holy Spirit. His daily occupation, daily prayer, activity in church societies, his reading of the newspaper, his summer vacation—his every activity may be seen as an oppor-

tunity for contributing to the work of showing forth Christ as the Savior of men's souls.

Opportunity for Explicit Gospel.—The same Holy Spirit, bestowed on the Son by the Father, is put upon us, to redeem our every activity and redirect it, by His grace, into channels of effectiveness within His plan of salvation.

Illustrations.—How opposition challenges the church to a clearer showing forth of Christ and His kingdom may be amply illustrated from the history of the martyrs and great missionaries. The Gospel, with its references to the East, points to the world's longest-neglected mission field and scene of current political and military crisis. Navigation, transportation, and communication, corrupted by man but sanctified by Christ in His mission program, may be seen as typified by star and caravan. Effective supporting or contrasting use may be made of material from speeches dealing with international policies and delivered at the beginning of 1955.

Outline

Let Us Study the Mission Challenge of the New Day and Rise to Meet It

- I. The enemies of Christ oppose His kingdom.
 - A. Our Lord faced seemingly disastrous opposition at the hands of the Pharisees.
 - B. Christian peoples throughout the history of the church have faced opposition.
 - C. The church today faces increasing opposition to its mission work.
- II. The Holy Spirit builds His church through opposition.
 - A. The withdrawal of Jesus revealed Him as the true Messiah and Savior of all the nations.
 - B. Through opposition the Spirit rallies the church to its most effective proclamation of Christ and His kingdom.
- III. We must work for the cause of missions in the new day.
 - A. We have been made new people, workers with Christ.
 - B. We need to study the changing world scene with its changing mission challenges.
 - C. We need to bend our individual effort toward bringing the nations to Christ in this year of grace.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MATT. 12:46-50

The Text and Its Central Thought.—Our Lord Jesus always made the most of the little interruptions that also marred the even flow of His life here on earth. When His sermon was interrupted by "His mother and His brethren, standing without, desiring to speak with Him," Jesus simply picked up this little incident and hung another sermon on it. He had come into this world to teach men the basic concepts of His Father's kingdom, and so dedicated was He to that purpose and end that every little incident in life was made to serve the same end. Do not think Jesus rude, then, when you read about this incident. He was not belittling His relatives. In fact, His sermonet was really not provoked by the presence of His mother and His brethren, but by the man in the audience who said to Him: "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee." The remark implied that these blood relatives had a prior claim on Him. The man obviously expected that, in deference to His mother and brethren, Jesus would dismiss His audience and give His attention to His kinfolk. There was great need here for another lesson pertaining to the Kingdom, and this great Teacher from heaven could not bypass the opportunity. The world must be taught that God is no Respector of persons (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25). In God's kingdom there is no recognition of priority because of birth, blood, culture, or nationality. And to alert the man in our text to this truth, Jesus said to him: "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?" The one thing that God is vitally interested in is respect for God (v. 49). It is not blood ties but heart ties that count in the Kingdom. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." Whosoever subjects his will to that of our Father in heaven, whosoever sees the Father's plan of salvation in His Son, Christ Jesus, he is numbered among the near ones and dear ones of the Lord.

The Day and Its Theme.—The theme "Jesus as Disciple and Teacher" fits well into the Epiphany season. In thought and content our text runs parallel to the Gospel for the Day. Even as a twelve-year-old boy, devoted to His great mission on earth, He expects His parents to understand that while "subject unto them," He would let nothing interfere with His discipleship, the *must* of being about His

Father's business. And so He becomes the Teacher of His parents, of the doctors in the Temple, of disciples like you and me. Also the Epistle (Rom. 12:1-5) falls into this line of thought. Picturing our relationship to God as being "one body in Christ," it would see us dedicated with the same devotion to the cause of the Kingdom, letting nothing in "this world" interfere with the teaching of the one thing needful. Nor need it bother you if Introit and Gradual for the Day do not specifically emphasize this thought. They are aimed at the Epiphany of Christ from another point of view.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—It should inspire in hearers a discipleship so devoted to the cause of the Kingdom that interrupting and distracting incidents in life become new opportunities for the teaching of Kingdom truths.

Sin and Its Fruits to be Diagnosed and Remedied.—It is man's warped and carnal nature that makes him so slow to realize that human prestige and prominence is utterly meaningless in the Kingdom. It was carnal thinking when the man in our text supposed that Jesus should show preference to His mother and His brethren. It is carnal thinking when pastor and congregation are inclined to show a preference for men of scholastic, professional, or political prominence. We must bring our Kingdom thinking to the point where we recognize as part of God's family the children, whom the disciples tried to push aside; the publicans, at whom the Jews wrinkled up their noses; the undesirables, whom you and I are so likely to bypass.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—Such an opportunity stares the preacher in the face in v. 50 of our text. For who are the near ones and dear ones of the Lord? "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My mother and sister and brother." What an opportunity to show that in the Kingdom everything rests on man's complete submission to God's will, a will that would see every sinner trust implicitly in the redeeming work of His Son! (John 6:40.)

Illustrations.—A warped Kingdom concept still prevalent in the church today might be illustrated by the modern disciples who wish all children into the nursery on Sundays, or by the ushers who on crowded Sundays take hymnals from children and give them to their elders, as if their singing were more appreciated by God.

On the other hand, church history is full of illustrations of zeal for the Kingdom that overruled all ties of kindred, blood, and culture.

Outline

Jesus as Disciple and Teacher

I. As Disciple

- A. Jesus was always mindful of "I must work the works of Him that sent Me," a devotion to His Father that overruled all respect of persons.
- B. Jesus set up a pattern for His disciples to always be mindful of "I must do the works of Him that redeemed me," a devotion that overrules all interruptions and distractions.

II. As Teacher

- A. Jesus was alive to every opportunity for enlightening men concerning the truths of the Kingdom.
- B. Jesus set a pattern for His teaching church to be alert and alive to its abundant opportunities to teach.

Tacoma, Wash.

A. W. SCHELP

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

LUKE 19:1-10

The Text and Its Central Thought.— Jesus had told His disciples, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem (Luke 18:31-33). We now find Him on His final journey. At Jericho He healed blind Bartimaeus, who followed Him, glorifying God. Still another was to be the recipient of His grace as He passed through Jericho. Zacchaeus was the head of the custom house in a city which was the center of extensive trade in balsam. He was the last convert before the cross. If Jews were despised for serving as tax collectors for the hated Romans, the contempt for one like Zacchaeus knew no bounds. Much of his wealth may have been ill-gotten gain. His desire to see Jesus was not prompted by idle curiosity. Hated by men, Zacchaeus knew of this Friend of publicans and sinners. In spiritual distress, convinced of his sins and in need of peace of conscience, he was eager to see the Lord, ignoring public ridicule as he climbed the sycamore tree. Calling him by his name, Jesus said to him: "Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." These words were a gracious absolution. Jesus was often invited into homes. In this instance He invited Himself. The Savior, though on His way to Calvary, is seeking out the sinner. While Zacchaeus is overjoyed, the self-righteous murmur because Christ is the Guest of a sinner. Little did they understand His person and

His glorious mission. "He *must* go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things" (Matt. 16:21). "He *must needs* go through Samaria" (John 4:4). "I *must* abide at thy house" (v. 5). What a hunger for souls! What a seeking of the lost! He lodges at the home of a chief of publicans. Finding true repentance and sincere faith in Zacchaeus, Jesus testifies that he is a true spiritual son of Abraham. "When the Lord enters a house, unrighteousness moves out" (Besser). A life is transformed. Instead of grasping wealth, Zacchaeus now dispenses it. He makes restitution beyond the requirements of the Law. He returns fourfold where dishonesty can be proved. Ours is a marvelous text concerning which it is correctly said: "Every verse is full of sweet and holy thought. A child can understand it. An angel will desire to look into it." It culminates in one of the grandest statements of Jesus concerning His saving mission. — A central thought for this text is: "The home into which the seeking and saving Jesus enters is blessed indeed."

The Day and Its Theme. — "The Epiphany of Christ *in* the Christian is made the basis of the Epistle's instructions (Rom. 12:6-16), so simply summarized in the petition of the Collect, 'Grant us Thy peace all the days of our life.'" The Gospel (John 2:1-11) tells us of the miracle of Cana. "The Epiphany in the First Word is immediately followed by the Epiphany in the First Sign." This beginning of miracles took place in the home. By gracing the wedding with His presence Jesus sanctifies marriage and the Christian home. He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed on Him as the promised Messiah and Savior. They beheld His glory. Even so men can behold it in the life of believers (Epistle). All of this justifies the exhortation of the Introit: "Sing forth the honor of His name, make His praise glorious." The Swedish Lectionary indicates as the theme: "The Presence of Jesus Hallows the Home." "Missionary Conquests — Past and Present" is the monthly theme of *Parish Activities*. Bringing Christ into hearts and homes by means of the Gospel leads to ever greater conquests for Jesus.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon. — To impress upon the hearers that Jesus, seeking and saving the lost, can bring pardon and peace and a transformation of life to those only who receive Him into their hearts and homes. For this reason Christians must bring the Gospel to an ever-increasing number of men.

Sin and Its Fruits to Be Diagnosed and Remedied. — The love of money, the lust for gain, the dishonesty of many in the pursuit of earthly goods, with the attendant neglect of the soul, is a besetting sin of the age. The self-righteous disdain for those who have fallen shows

an utter misunderstanding of the Gospel. True repentance leads to humility, compassion with others, appreciation of the Savior, and willingness to amend. Faith worketh by love, also by love of immortal souls in distress.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—The Epistle for the Day speaks of those who are members of the body of Christ, who have grace and faith and prove it by kindness, humility, and brotherly affection. The Gospel reveals the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father. Our text shows most beautifully the Savior on His saving mission, seeking and saving the lost. "I must abide." "Today salvation is come" (v.10).

Illustrations.—Dramatize the story of the text and portray the home of Zacchaeus before and after the visit of Jesus. Actual experiences of pastors can be used to show how homes where Satan reigned became temples of God with the entering of the Gospel, how lives enslaved by sin became dedicated to the service of Christ. Quote *Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 625.

Outline

The Presence of Jesus Hallows the Home.

- I. The need of His presence.
 - A. It is not recognized by men, but it is great indeed.
 - B. It is recognized by Jesus. "I must abide" "The Son of Man."
- II. The grace of His presence.
 - A. It is resented by the self-righteous.
 - B. It is the very aim of His coming.
 - C. It is welcomed by penitent sinners.
 - D. It transforms lives.
- III. How this truth (theme) should move the Christian
 - A) to recognize the need of Christ's presence in heart and home.
 - B) to spread the Gospel of Christ and thus continue winning missionary conquests (evangelism, world-wide missions).

St. Louis, Mo.

PAUL KOENIG

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MATT. 8:14-17

The Text and Its Central Thought.—In preparing to lead his flock to the green pastures of this text recording the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, the preacher should bear in mind the following items: (1) The historical setting. It happened early in our Lord's ministry during the great Galilean tour. At first glance it would seem that the text describes the third of a series of healing miracles on the same Sabbath following the Sermon on the Mount, but Matthew is topical rather than chronological. He has no chronological connective as have Mark and Luke, and it is better to follow the other synoptics, who placed this section before the calling of the Twelve and the great sermon. (2) The danger of "spiritualizing" or allegorizing this text to the extent that the actual miracles of healing are forgotten in one's eagerness to deliver a Gospel message and the text is made to teach less than it is intended to teach. The quotation from Isaiah does indeed indicate that Jesus' power over sin and the devil should receive a major emphasis, but it must be remembered that the miracles are also historical events. (3) The parallel accounts in Mark 1:29-34 and Luke 4:38-41, which give additional details and insights, particularly as to the method Jesus used, the witnesses of the miracles, etc. (4) The nature of the sickness and diseases, including an explanation of demoniac possession. The description of the sickness of Peter's mother-in-law should be limited to *bebleemeneen*, *pyressousam*, and *pyretos*, with only suggestions as to what the sickness really was. Demoniac possession is the key which opens the door to the Gospel preaching on this text; it should not be glossed over but described in all its reality that the light of Jesus' power and love may shine ever brighter during the Epiphany season. (5) The method of Jesus' healing—the touching of the hand, raising the person, speaking a word (*logoo*), rebuking the demon or fever—all of which show that the power lies in the Savior Himself. Critics find discrepancies in the synoptic accounts, but the reverent interpreter will see that none of the accounts excludes the others. (6) Certain facts about Peter and their implications—that he had a wife (1 Cor. 9:5), why he had a house in Capernaum when he was from Bethsaida (Was it his house?), who his mother-in-law was, whether she was a disciple, etc. (7) The results of the healing, complete restoration, fervent faith, and the immediate willingness to serve the Master. If the mother of Peter's wife had not been an ardent follower of Jesus, she certainly was now. Note the imperfect *dieekonei*, which means that she began to serve at table (Luke 10:40). Someone

has pointed out that Peter's mother-in-law was the first woman to be an evangelical deaconess. (8) The quotation of the prophecy from Isaiah 53, which is basic for the correct understanding of the miracles and turns the flow of thought into the placid living waters of God's love and forgiveness of sins. — The central fact, then, is Christ's power over disease, sin, death, and the devil for the salvation of sin-sick, lost human souls. He is the Great Physician of our bodies and souls.

The Theme of the Day.— We notice immediately that the Gospel for this day is taken from the same chapter as our text and reveals the power and love of Jesus in the healing of the centurion's servant, also the humility and power of true faith. The Epistle emphasizes the second great thought of the text, the type of service the Christian healed by Christ renders. It is interesting to note that the Introit and the Gradual have a mission theme. The preacher will readily see this correlation between divine healing, service, and missions and skillfully weave it into a sermon that with the rest of the service sounds forth one beautiful note throughout the day. And what a grand opportunity to sound again the theme of *Parish Activities* for this month.

Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.— To remind Christian hearers of the power and love of Jesus in their lives and to call them to further service.

A Golden Opportunity for Gospel Preaching.— In quoting from Isaiah 53, St. Matthew not only offers divine proof that Jesus is the Messiah, but also makes Jesus the Great Physician of both body and soul because He offered full atonement for the entire human being. The Old Testament Evangelist speaks of diseases and sorrows of the soul, but Matthew by divine direction lumps all the results of sin and the devil's work together and makes Jesus Master of all. If Jesus is Lord over the greater, certainly He is Master of the lesser (Luke 5:23). Nothing can withstand His almighty power, nothing is too great for His all-inclusive love. Here, then, is heavenly food for the hearers, a symphony of divine saving truth: sin, grace, power, love, justification, faith. This is not "spiritualizing" this text, but showing the proper relation between sin, disease, body, soul, death, and the devil on the one hand, and, on the other, our Lord's power and love which conquers all for us. Cp. Heb. 4:5; Rom. 5:20; Matt. 10:35.

Sermon Illustrations.— The thoughts of this text are so close to human everyday problems and suffering that the preacher will have little difficulty in relating this text to life. Good use should be made of the dramatic scene in Peter's house and of the frenzied antics of the devil. Today one should point out the reality of the devil and his

powers; he is still in business. In our carping criticism of the evils in church, school, youth programs, we may forget that the devil is behind it all. Thus the Gospel of Christ is the only hope of the world in its battle against godless Communism. The preacher will also be able to find many examples of people who arose from the sickbed or from sin to serve the Lord in gladness, through whom Christ's healing touch was revealed to others. The sermon will be enhanced by relating certain mission conquests in our ever-growing synodical missions, such as in New Guinea, Hong Kong, and Nigeria, where the ministry of healing (medical missions) accompanies the preaching of the Cross.

Outline

Christ the Never-failing Power in our Lives

- I. He is our Power of healing and forgiveness.
 - A. The diseases of the body.
 - B. The sickness and sorrows of the soul.
 - C. Christ's power over sickness, sin, devil, death.
- II. He is our Power for Christian service and missions.
 - A. The Christian, who has felt Christ's healing touch, serves Him with heart, hand, and voice.
 - B. No greater service can be rendered than to give others this healing power through the Gospel.

Springfield, Ill.

LORMAN M. PETERSEN

LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MATT. 24:35-44

The Text and Its Central Thought. — In Matthew 24 Jesus speaks in a prophetic tone for a very practical purpose. He is speaking of things to come, not with a view to satisfying the curiosity of His disciples, but rather with the distinct desire to influence their outlook on life and their subsequent conduct. He graphically describes the dreadful events to be expected before His second coming, and now in our text gives specific encouragement to all disciples to be ready no matter when the end will come.

He emphasizes the certainty and the suddenness of the end. Those who are not disciples of Jesus will show no awareness of, or concern for, the coming of the end. Using the days before the Flood as an example, Jesus predicts that people of the world will be completely engrossed in eating and drinking (necessary for preserving man's life) and in marrying and giving in marriage (necessary for propagating

mankind). It was not a sin that they engaged in these pursuits, but it was a sin to care for nothing else, to close their eyes to the signs of the times and their ears to God's prediction to them through Noah, "the preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). "So shall the coming of the Son of Man be." There will be a spirit of apathy and indifference to spiritual matters because of the moral laxity and gross materialism of many people on the earth.

For that reason Jesus earnestly points out that the Day of Judgment will come suddenly and unexpectedly to all people everywhere. Two shall be working in the field. That is midday. Two shall be grinding at their mill. That is morning. Two shall be in bed (Luke 17:34). That's night. How can it be morning, midday, and night at the same time? Because the earth is round. Therefore Jesus is coming to all the world at one time and the same hour. We shall not hear that Jesus has come to Australia and will later arrive in America. No, Jesus shall come to all, the Australians, the Europeans, the Americans, the Asiatics, the Africans, simultaneously. Since this hour has not struck, there is still time for repentance, and we who love the Lord should serve Him with ever greater faithfulness so that more men and women will still hear the glorious Gospel of grace before the end.

The central thought of the text can be expressed thus: "In the midst of careless indifference and materialistic pursuit all around you, remember, Jesus can come at any moment and will expect to find you waiting and working for Him."

The Day and Its Theme.—Rather than consider one certain Sunday after Epiphany, emphasize the theme of the entire Epiphany season. The purpose of the Gospels during this time is to set forth the divine glory of Jesus. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). Since we show forth the glory of Jesus by engaging in mission work, it is necessary that we cry out with the emphasis and urgency of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the *sin of the world*" (John 1:29). We must seek to awaken the people asleep in the sin of materialism "while it is day." When the night has come, it will be too late. Every contact we have with an unbeliever must make us grateful that we have been awakened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit and must drive us to rouse such a one from sleep, so that he will have his lamp of faith burning when Jesus comes again.

The Goal and Purpose of the Sermon.—"To encourage the Christians to maintain their watchfulness amidst all the lethargy around them and to be zealous in awakening others still in darkness all over the world."

Sin and Its Fruits to be Diagnosed and Remedied.—Too many people refuse to believe that God's Word, with its promises and threats, will outlast heaven and earth. . . . Any form of date setting in reference to the end of the world stems from unbelief and defiance of the plain words of Jesus. . . . The materialism around us can easily overwhelm us. . . . Blood relationship or work partnership with a Christian will not guarantee our being taken by the Lord. . . . To invent some plausible basis for our unconcern about Judgment Day will only increase the sin.

Opportunities for Explicit Gospel.—It is significant that He who tells us of the imminence of Judgment and urges us to be alert is He who has made it possible for us to escape the Judgment. He died that we might live. He makes it possible to lift up our heads in grateful joy at that time and see our redemption drawing nigh (Luke 21:25-28). This text also affords opportunity to use that beautiful section of Scripture Rev. 7:9-17.

Illustration.—The story of Genesis 5 and 6 should be utilized extensively. Many examples of present-day materialism can be cited. Perhaps a recent local theft or robbery will furnish pertinent illustrative material. There may also be some well-known cases involving close relatives (one a Christian and the other not) that could be mentioned. Jesus did mission work even up to the moment of His death on the cross. What splendid example He is to us!

Outline

Be Ready Always for Jesus

I. You have the guarantee of His Word.

A. Let it serve to warn and direct you.

B. May it always comfort and sustain and inspire you.

II. The world does not know Jesus and His Word and does not care.

A. As in the days of Noah, so since then the world has been materialistic.

B. This materialistic way of life will mean doom, death, and damnation.

III. In Jesus and His Word there is power for all to be ready.

A. This can separate even closest earthly ties (Matt. 10:32-39).

B. This guarantees life eternal to anyone and everyone who believes (1 Peter 1:23-25; John 5:39; John 17:3).

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