

Concordia Theological Monthly



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ARCHIVES

HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Swedish Gospels (Alternate Series)

TRINITY

MATTHEW 28:18-20

The great celebrations of the church year are over. We have again been refreshed by witnessing in spirit the glorious resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What happens now? We know what happened to the disciples of Jesus after Pentecost. The account of the life of the early church in Acts throbs with vitality of the Spirit. Nothing — neither persecution nor inner controversy — could stop the witness of the church to the resurrected Lord. How about our congregations? What difference does it make in our lives that we have heard again the preaching of the resurrection and the promise of the Spirit? Do our congregations burst with new vitality? Is there an eager sharing of our good news of salvation with neighbors? Quite the contrary. We settle down for the long Trinity season. We brace ourselves for the “summer slump.” Congregational activity slows down until the fall. By contrast, the text commands a vitality and a purpose which makes of life something entirely new.

The New Life

- I. *It is new because it belongs to a new age*
 - A. Old age. Man is captive to powers of sin, death, devil. Man is dead in trespasses and sins, spiritually blind. (Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 1:18 ff.)
 - B. The authority of God over these enemies of man and the breaking in of a “new age” already evident in the life of Christ. Jesus begins His preaching with “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). Taught as one who had authority (Matt. 7:29). Power to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6). Son of God (Matt. 11:27 ff.). Power over demons (Mark 1:22, 27). Power of final judgment. (John 5:27)
 - C. The resurrection and Pentecost are victorious evidences of God’s power and the defeat of the powers of this evil age. Salvation is won. Hence, Jesus’ word, v. 18: “All authority . . . has been given to Me.” A new age. Those who live under the

gracious rule of God in Christ are in the new age and have a new life. (Cf. Dan. 7:14)

II. *The new life becomes a reality for people when they become disciples of Jesus*

- A. Authority and power of Jesus fully accepted in heaven, but not yet on earth. On earth, it is discerned and accepted only by disciples.
- B. Therefore Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations (v. 19). The good news of God's victory in Christ has a universal destiny.
- C. Such mission outreach was not new to the Jews (Isaiah, Psalms, Jewish apocalyptic, Pharisees, Matt. 23:15) nor to the disciples (centurion, Samaritan woman, Gadarenes). Jesus' command here involves the fulfillment of the "age" and is eschatological. It is a sign of Jesus' victory and authority and also of the end of the age. (Matt. 24:14)
- D. Baptism is the method. Make disciples by baptizing (v. 19). It is a baptism into the name of, into confession of, into a close and new relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Only place in N. T. where Trinitarian formula is given. Usually "in the name of Jesus." But it should be noted that Baptism and the Holy Spirit are joined together (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:44; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 3:27, etc.). Nor is it coincidence that in most of these cases there is preaching of the acts of God in His Son. Hence, baptism "in the name of" the Trinity says that the Father is present making alive as He did His Son, that the Son is present forgiving sin, and that the Holy Spirit is present as an abiding gift of the Son and the Father.
- E. The church evidences the new life by becoming a missionary people. A victorious calling. Both church and its programs exist that the Christian faith may be propagandized and that through this means the rule of God in Christ may be extended in the world. Church activity which does not contribute toward this purpose should be re-evaluated. "The Church does not conduct missions as one of her many activities; she has in all her activities a mission; she is a missionary people—if she is not that, she is not the Church" (Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 257). Plainly, much more is required of us than we

have done. We ought not to trifle with our historic mission. It would, indeed, mean new life in our parishes if we became a truly missionary church.

- III. *The new life is evidenced and maintained by continued instruction*
- A. "Teaching them to observe . . ." (v.20). Not only right teaching, but also right living.
 - B. Such new life is motivated by the Spirit. (Cf. Gal.6 for contrast between life of flesh and life of the Spirit)
 - C. The church witnesses by her distinctively Christian conduct to the fact that she is a people set apart to God. This is an area often of profound failure.
- IV. *The new life means struggles but never defeat, because of the strengthening presence of our Lord*
- A. "Lo, I am with you alway. . ." Comforting in our failures and strength-giving in our battles. Pentecost, early church. (Rom.8:31)
 - B. Jesus is present in Word and Sacrament. Also where two or three are gathered together.
 - C. "To the close of the age" (v.20). In view of the particularly trying circumstances of the final days, when Satan will be loosed and even the elect will narrowly miss being led astray (Matt. 24:21 ff.), this word is to be treasured.

We shall never reach the moon by thinking in terms of propeller-driven aircraft. We are living in the rocket age. Likewise in the church. This is a new age. We have a new life to live. The command is clear, the promise sure.

Alton, Illinois

REUBEN C. BAERWALD

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATTHEW 16:24-27

How much is your Christianity worth to you? You just gave a beautiful answer in the hymn we sang — "Jesus, Priceless Treasure." Was this sheer poetry or honest conviction? At times we have to face a choice to understand our honest convictions. Cf. the young man who

would follow Jesus, but who turned away sorrowfully when Jesus said: "Sell all that thou hast" (Luke 18:22). He made a poor appraisal. We are in danger of making the same mistake. Our text gives us a proper appraisal. Hence we consider:

Priceless Values

I. *What it costs to be a disciple*

Understand the phrase "the *cost* of being a disciple." You cannot buy Christian discipleship. We mean the things we have to give up, to suffer, and to do, because we are disciples. Christ mentions three things.

A. *Self-denial* (v. 24).—A denial of human reason and wisdom as it exists apart from God. The natural man receives not the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Cf. the man who said there is no God, because he had never found Him with his telescope. We must say no to our sin-darkened reason and bring our thoughts into obedience to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5)

Self-denial includes a rejection of one's own righteousness. Cf. the Pharisee in the temple (Luke 18:10 ff.). "Nothing in my hand I bring." (Hymn 376:3)

Self-denial means also to say no to every sinful desire and ambition: the desire for power, influence, popularity, riches, gratification of passion. (Eph. 4:22; Gal. 5:24)

B. *Bearing the cross* (v. 24).—Do not embrace Christianity to escape tribulation. The opposite is true (Acts 14:22). The cross is painful—crucifixion (Gal. 2:20). Be sure you understand what is meant by the cross: everything we suffer and endure *for the sake of Christ*. Not the heartaches we incur by our sins.

Illustrations of the cross: The persecutions of the early Christians; the scorn we must bear for believing in God and Christ.

C. *Following Jesus* (v. 24)—This requires obedience to His commands. We do not revise Christianity to suit ourselves, but we revise our ways to make them conform to Christ's will. (Acts 9:6)

Following also means active participation in His work. We are not only "spectators" in the Kingdom. We must be good

soldiers, fighting the Lord's battles, not only reading about them. (Matt. 20:3, 4; 2 Tim. 2:3; John 15:8)

Our flesh may conclude this is too high a price to pay. Therefore we consider

II. *Why we should be happy to pay the price*

- A. *This is the only way really to live* (v. 25). — Many prefer to spare themselves the tribulations of discipleship — they would "save" their own lives. They do not know what it means really to live. They are like the rich man in the parable of poor Lazarus. He was self-deceived as to life. He missed his chance to live. (Luke 16:19-31)

To live we must forget about self and personal advantage; go "all out" for Christ, spend ourselves, our energies, time, and talents for Christ, and without seeking personal advantage we shall find greatest satisfaction and joy in serving Christ and others. (2 Cor. 11:16-23)

- B. *We shall gain nothing but lose everything if we lose our own soul* (v. 26). — It is possible to gain worldly wealth by ignoring Christian principles. Many have done it. Judas. But earthly treasures will eventually fail — completely (Matt. 6:19, 20). "You can't take it with you." If we give up Christian principles to gain earthly wealth, we lose our soul and in eternity lose everything. The value of one soul is worth more than all the world. To save it is our highest joy. (Luke 12:20)
- C. *There is a reward of grace* (v. 27). — We do not become Christians just for the sake of the reward. Then we should never receive it.

It is not a reward which God owes us (Luke 17:10). It comes from grace — God's undeserved kindness.

The reward is not heaven or salvation itself (Eph. 2:8-9). It is something over and above. (Dan. 12:3)

As to its real nature, we wait until eternity dawns, and then we shall understand and rejoice over it.

Conclusion: Christian discipleship is worth everything — more than it costs us. Let us quickly invest everything we can in it (Matt. 13:45, 46). We will never regret our "purchase."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 14:26-34

These are harsh words, aren't they? Jesus says: You can't be My follower unless you hate your parents, mate, children, and yourself, carry a cross, and forsake all you've got. These are impossible conditions of discipleship. Or are they? Let's see as we hear Christ's command:

First Count the Cost

I. *Before you declare yourself Christ's follower*

- A. It takes more than a declaration of our mouth. To *call* Christ Lord is not enough. (Matt. 7:21)
- B. It takes more than the worship of our lips. Simply to be in church and to praise Christ with our worshipping lips is not enough. (Cf. Matt. 15:8)
- C. It takes more than feverish church activity (cf. Matt. 7:22). Consider what these folks did—prophesied in Christ's name, cast out devils, did many wonderful deeds. Who of us can match that record with all our consecrated church work? And yet Jesus said to these activists: I never knew you. Depart, you evildoers. More is needed even than a splendid record of church work.

II. *Before you can build, you've got to know what you're building*

You're constructing the tower of Christian discipleship (v.28). To follow Christ means:

- A. You've got to be what He was—a ministering servant (Matt. 20:28; John 13:12-17). Please note that Jesus says happiness hinges on our “washing one another's feet” in humble service. If we're not happy enough, we're not “washing” enough (Phil. 2:5-11). Please note here:
 - 1. Humbleness is not the lowering of your thoughts but of yourself for the benefit of others. If our humility doesn't help people, it's a fake and useless humility. Jesus is, of course, a perfect example of this humbleness.
 - 2. The low road is the only way to the high road (Phil. 2:9-11). Jesus is now the greatest name because it was once the most despised name. The reason given why every knee will one day

bow before Him is that He once bowed His head in death for us men and our salvation.

B. You've got to go where Christ went

1. On constant errands of mercy to help people.
2. Onto a cross — the cross of self-sacrifice for the gladness and betterment of others.
3. Into a grave. We still must collect that bitter, painful "check" of death from our employer sin, in whose services we have spent our life.
4. But then out again! This we know. For where Jesus, our Leader and Pioneer went, there we'll go too. It has already happened! (Eph. 2:1-5)

III. *It's terribly high*

A. You've got to hate your family (v. 26).

1. This does not mean a literal despising and hateful words and behavior. The Fourth Commandment still stands, as do our Lord's words in Luke 10:25-28. Certainly our first "neighbor" is the one closest to us — parent, mate, or child. Often we forget that and start our being nice away from home.
2. What Jesus means is this: If ever it's a case of Christ or family, family must go (cf. Matt. 10:35-37). It's loving our family more than Christ that our Lord condemns (Luke 14:20). Yet we must also remember that Christ meets us to be loved *in our family*. To disregard them, to shirk our responsibility of a loving tongue and conduct toward them, is to fail to love Christ.

B. You've got to hate yourself (v. 26).

1. This does not mean suicide or an abuse of your body.
2. What Jesus means is: You've got to kill that part of yourself which is constantly fighting God and godliness — your old Adam, your unholy passions and will (cf. Gal. 5:20, 21, 24; Matt. 5:28-30). No part of our body dare stand in the way of a *total* devotion to Christ.

C. You've got to carry a cross (v. 27).

1. Before you can, you've got to put somebody down — your

selfish self. Can't carry yourself on a pillow and still carry your cross after Christ.

2. This cross is not just any pain you suffer; not just lingering sickness; tragedy, trouble. This is a cross, yet not the cross to which Jesus refers here.
3. This cross is the suffering you endure as Christ's follower. The cross is:
 - a. The sacrifice of family and self (v.26).
 - b. The sacrifice of goods (v.33).
 - c. The sacrifice of the world's friendly and popular acclaim (John 15:18-21; Rom.12:2). It hurts to be different, to shine in the cold, unfriendly darkness.

D. You've got to give up all your goods (v.33).

1. This doesn't mean you've got to sell all your possessions.
2. It does mean:
 - a. You can't serve Christ and goods at the same time (Matt. 5:24).
 - b. You can't be more concerned about your goods than you are about pleasing Christ (Matt.6:25-34).
 - c. Rather you should view your goods only as gifts from God to be used for the betterment of others.

Conclusion: You can pay this high cost only as you ponder that Christ didn't count the cost for you. Again cf. Phil.2:5-11. Christ spared nothing, not even His life, for our eternal benefit. Only that sacrifice for our salvation can inspire us to pay this high cost of following Him.

Richmond Heights, Mo.

HERBERT E. HOHENSTEIN

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 15:11-32

How many stories you have read or viewed about proud and stubborn fathers! It is a favorite theme with writers and dramatists. A son will do something against his father's wishes. He will marry a girl of whom his father does not approve, or he will take up a line of work different from what his father intended, or he will bring disgrace upon the family name. As a result, the father is outraged. He disowns the

boy and refuses to speak to him, perhaps for years. No amount of pleading will change his mind. Stern, proud, unforgiving—this is just the way a lot of fathers are.

But not the heavenly Father. In our text Jesus shows us that God has an entirely different attitude toward His children. He is kind and generous. *He gladly receives His wayward children back if they return penitently.* He is

Our Forgiving Father

I. *We disappoint our heavenly Father and discredit ourselves as His children*

A. In some cases we are like the younger son. We upset His plans for us, waste blessings and resources that He has put at our disposal, bring disgrace upon His name by our loose and immoral lives. (Vv. 12-14)

Often we bring much unhappiness and misery upon ourselves in the process. Sickness, poverty, emotional disturbance often follow. God uses them to bring us to our senses. (Vv. 14-17)

B. In other cases we are more like the older son. We are rather conscientious and obedient. We stay at home and behave ourselves, remain active church members, etc. But we develop an unloving attitude toward those who have strayed more obviously than we. The older brother, too, was guilty of wrong in this very attitude. (Vv. 25-28)

C. In both cases we disappoint our heavenly Father and discredit ourselves as His children. It hurts and disgusts Him when we act this way. By so doing we forfeit any claim to His love. The younger son was not exaggerating (v. 19). Of course, the older son should have made the same admission. All of us should make it.

II. *Our forgiving Father wants and takes us back*

A. God wants us back. With His kind and forgiving attitude He encourages us to return. Through the Gospel and the outreach of the church He repeatedly invites us to return. Christ knew well how much God wants His wayward children to return. He is God. He came into the world in order to make our return possible. He, the divine and innocent Son, was disowned on the cross that we, the guilty ones, might be pardoned. (Matt. 27:46)

B. God takes us back immediately and wholeheartedly. He completely erases the memory of our wrongdoing — no grudge, no probation, no condition — but a warm and loving welcome. He showers a wealth of His blessings on us and expresses His joy at our return. (Vv. 20:22-24)

III. *We should return penitently to our forgiving Father and should encourage others to do the same*

A. Whenever and however we are wayward, we should admit it (vv. 18, 19). We dare not take the Father's attitude for granted. He is kind and forgiving but not soft. Unless we are truly penitent, there can be no warm and friendly reception. Especially when we are in the position of the older brother, such penitence is difficult, but we must acknowledge our sin — to God and to ourselves.

B. We should encourage and welcome other wayward children who return, no matter how seriously and obviously they may have strayed. We should share the joy of the Father over their return. (Vv. 28, 32)

Conclusion: Last Sunday was Father's Day. A lot of attention was devoted to human fatherhood at that time. It's good that we have a chance today to turn our thoughts to the One from whom all fatherhood gets its meaning. Let's approach Him today in worship, and always, in the right way. Let's penitently confess we are unworthy of all His love and goodness. Let's gratefully accept His forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Let's give loving encouragement to others who want to do the same. In just a few moments we shall be praying the Lord's Prayer. As we do this, part of it should have a deepened significance — "Our Father . . . forgive us our trespasses." Amen.

St. Louis, Mo.

MILTON L. RUDNICK

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 8:1-11

(This pericope is generally regarded as not coming from the pen of St. John. Lenski refuses to treat it at all on that ground. But it is regarded with almost equal unanimity as a true record of an historical incident in our Savior's life. The story represents one of the clearest distinctions between Law and Gospel to be found in the Bible.)

We are constantly called upon to make judgments. Which roast looks better? Which hat? Which TV program? We also delight in making judgments about our neighbors. Sometimes this may be harmless. The municipal judge, of course, has a solemn command from God to pass judgment. But, as a rule, you and I have no right to make judgments concerning our neighbor. Instead we have the responsibility and the privilege of walking in tender charity with him. Let us see this as we consider our text under the theme:

Man's Judgment and the Judgment of God

I. *Man's judgment*

A. Upon himself.

1. As a rule, man cannot pass judgment upon others until he has rendered a reasonably favorable judgment upon himself in the same area.
2. The Pharisees could not condemn the adulteress until they had subconsciously judged themselves to be pure in the area of the Sixth Commandment.
3. Man is forever busy judging himself to be reasonably holy and deserving in the sight of God. Luther: "In the monastery I could glibly ask God to forgive me, because I was quite confident that I had not really sinned. Today I have been obedient to my prior. I have fasted and prayed. Therefore, God, be merciful to me for these sins, which really aren't sins." (See his exposition of this text.)
4. And so today.

B. Upon others.

1. In the next — instantaneous, harsh, and done for the unspeakably evil motive of entrapping the pure and holy Son of God. No effort made to help the poor woman. "Away with her! Her blood be on us and our children!"
2. Today. Examples of hasty, harsh, and hypocritical judgments abound in every congregation. Like the Pharisees we condemn the adulteress and then lust over books and movies which are equally sinful. So often we cut another person down so that we may appear taller to ourselves in comparison.

II. *God's judgment*

A. To condemnation.

1. Upon the Pharisees. "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone." After Christ's question the Pharisees, hurled to the ground by this thunderbolt of the Law, see themselves so clearly that they forget all about the adulteress and sneak away.
2. The adulteress. She has suffered under a form of judgment. She has been caught in the act. Crime, witnesses, judge, and jury — all are ready. She can only bow her head and await the first stone.
3. Upon us. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The first goal of Christ's kingdom is to reduce all men to a full awareness of their own sinfulness. The adulteress symbolizes the proper reaction of all mortals in the presence of the holy God. Alone with Him who had so easily unmasked the Pharisees' wickedness, she feels that now she has to do with something much more awful than the accusations of men (or even of her own conscience), that now, through a new insight, she finds herself face to face with the essential and inescapable consequence of sin, the actual breach between herself and holiness. (See Dods, Expositor's Bible)
4. Upon Jesus. "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21)

B. Of forgiveness (v. 11). No strings attached to Christ's offer of forgiveness. (Can anyone doubt that it was received by the adulteress?) The second goal of Christ's kingdom is to convince all men that God has fully forgiven their sins. God can and will forgive great sins only to (self-confessed) great sinners. Subtly the devil seeks to persuade us to offer "conditional" forgiveness to those who tithe, to those who attend Bible class, to those who commune at least five times a year, to those who participate actively in the PTR. To the adulteress, Jesus said: "Hath no man condemned thee? . . . Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:24)

III. *Our new life under God's judgment*

- A. In relation to God. First Table of the Law. Devoted gratitude. "If the love shown us in forgiveness is no barrier to sin, it is because we have not been in earnest as yet about our sin, and forgiveness is but a name." (Dods)
- B. In relation to our neighbor. Second Table. Bighearted charity. This is one of the indispensable characteristics of a redeemed and forgiven child of God. No judgments against others. Incidentally, notice how Christ refused to give a judgment on the question of stoning because it was not within His province to do so. The adulteress might have said: "You let your stones lie, and I will not pick up any to throw at you." The Pharisees should have said: "Please pray God to forgive us. We will do the same for you." When one thinks properly concerning his own sinfulness, everyone else seems a perfect saint in contrast. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20). "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Luke 6:36-42, the Gospel for the day. The parable of the unjust steward, etc.

Conclusion: The story of the adulteress is a story straight from the heart of God, to purify our thinking, to crush every proud heart, to comfort every crushed heart, to keep us mindful of our privilege and duty of manifesting toward our neighbors the charity and forgiveness which we have received from God.

Milwaukee, Wis.

HERBERT T. MAYER