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Attitudes Toward the Use of Force
and Violence in Thomas Muentzer,
Menno Simons, and Martin Luther

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Brief Studies

Homiletics

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EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 5:30-39

(Whether or not verse 32 refers to the Holy Ghost [John 15:16] or to the Father taken up in v. 37, or to John the Baptist, I shall leave to the preacher using this text. Neither view can detract from this grand array of witnesses.)

When in Col. 3:11 Paul writes, "Christ is All and in all," he states in a word that the whole structure of religious dogma is utterly meaningless unless it all centers in, and reaches out from, a right knowledge of Jesus Christ. It clearly implies that our whole spiritual life can only reach its health, strength, and stamina in the measure that our faith embraces Jesus Christ for all that He is and claims to be.

Find, then, a real source of strength in our text, for therein

Jesus Sustains His High Claim by Adducing Four Witnesses

I. *Jesus Himself claims to be the Christ, the world's Savior (v. 30)*

There is no mistaking this, that in v. 30 Jesus is referring to His high claim of being the world's Savior, sent by His Father. Although we must look to other clear statements of Jesus, such as Matt. 18:11; John 8:12; 14:6; 10:10; etc., where He pointedly makes this claim, it is in the performance of that great redeeming work, substituting for us, that He has so completely subjected Himself that He claims to seek "not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me."

Such deep dedication to His saving work should evoke our implicit faith and trust in Him.

However, knowing that one's own witness, uncorroborated by others, would be ruled out of court, Jesus is quite ready to set His own witness aside. Calling on others (v. 31) He points out that

II. *John the Baptist substantiated His claim (vv. 33-35)*

John was the divinely appointed forerunner of the Messiah, and the Jews regarded him as "a shining light," a man of God. Since this John pointed Jesus out on several occasions as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), should not that be convincing enough for anyone to accept Jesus for all that He claimed to be?

But should anyone hesitate to accept the witness of a man, Jesus did not need John's testimony (v. 34). He had a greater witness than the Baptist (v. 36), and points out that

III. *His own works proved His claim (v. 36)*

Let no one underrate the powerful witness of the works and miracles of Jesus. Far too many regard them, with silent incredulity, as things they have not seen and therefore cannot be expected to accept. Others would even strike them out of the Bible as weak stories, which, like burdensome lumber, should be cast overboard to lighten the ship. Let such people take our Lord's last miracle, His own resurrection, and disprove it if they can, before they speak of His other works, and they will begin to feel something of the weight of all His works, proclaiming beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

What strength the Christian finds in being well at home among the stories of Jesus' works and miracles!

But for those desiring more proof Jesus points to

IV. *His Father's testimony, which clearly established His claim (v. 37)*

Is Jesus here thinking of the three recorded instances (Luke 4:22; Matt. 17:5; John 12:28) where God the Father spoke from heaven, claiming this Jesus as His beloved Son and accrediting His work and mission? What stronger testimony could anyone ask for than this, coming directly from heaven's throne? Jesus indeed admits that the Jews were not impressed with the Father's testimony, for in their stubbornness and unbelief their eyes did not see Him, their ears did not hear Him, and their hearts did not perceive Him (vv. 37b, 38). In their dullness the people could only respond with "It thundered" or "And angel spake to Him" (John 12:29). But that does not make the Father's testimony any less real and true, and it should mightily help to anchor your faith and mine.

What hardness of heart that will not bend before such abundant testimony! On Judgment Day it will be clearly revealed that unbelief does not arise from want of evidence but from want of will to believe. Why not honestly weigh the testimony adduced in our text and in full surrender confess: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, my Savior."

Corvallis, Oreg.

A. W. SCHELP

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 5:39-47

The Bible is a remarkable book. Really it is a collection of 66 books written by some 36 men over a period of 16 centuries. It is translated into more languages than any other book. Year after year it outsells the best sellers. However, though the Bible is a very popular book, it is also a much-misunderstood and a much-abused book. Therefore we need to learn the lesson which Jesus sought to teach the Jews of His day.

When Do We Read the Bible Correctly?

I. *When we find Jesus in the Bible*

A. It is the will of Jesus that we search the Scriptures. A casual, haphazard reading is not enough. The Jews were not guilty of a casual reading of their Scriptures, the Old Testament. They searched. They knew all the words (Matt. 2:4-6). They knew large portions by memory. In this the Jews are to be commended. Many in our day make a study of the Bible. They search. They analyze. They compare Scripture with Scripture. Truly, they dig deep. This in itself is not to be rejected.

B. In John 5:39-47 the Lord Jesus rebukes the Jews not because they searched the Scriptures but because they failed to find Jesus their Savior in the Scriptures. Instead they found a history of which they were proud. They found a Law which they felt able to keep. They found a self-righteousness on which they built their hope for salvation. Similarly many in our day find cause for criticism, reason for ridicule in the Bible, but they do not find Jesus. They wax sentimental over Psalm 23; they misunderstand and misapply the Sermon on the Mount, but they fail to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, their Savior.

C. The failure of the Jews to find Jesus was without excuse. Scripture, the Old Testament, testified of Jesus (v. 39). Moses wrote about Jesus (v. 46; Is. 7:14; Micah 5:2; Is. 61:1-3; etc.). Certainly, failure to find Jesus in the Scriptures in our day is without excuse. We have both the Old Testament and the New. In all of our Bible reading and study in public and private let us always seek Jesus. Let us search Scripture to learn the answer to these questions: Who is Jesus? What did He do for us? How do we receive benefit from the work He did for us?

II. *When we find eternal life in the Bible*

A. The Jews unto whom Jesus spoke the words of John 5:39-47 believed that the

Bible offered eternal life to them through the works of the Law. That is why they refused to come to Jesus (v. 40). That is why they refused to receive Him (v. 43). However, Jesus pointed out that the Law would not save them; rather it would condemn them (v. 45). Finally, Jesus invited them to find eternal life in Him, their Savior. (Vv. 39, 46)

B. Eternal life is found in the Bible. That is the purpose for which God gave us the Bible. That is why we are to search the Bible. We find eternal life in Jesus. (V. 39; 2 Tim. 3:15)

It is not enough that we read and hear the Word of God. We must read and hear it correctly. We read and hear it correctly when we find eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior.

R. WIEDERAENDERS

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 21:12-22

We speak of "full-time" service in the work of the church. Thereby we refer to those pastors and teachers, professors and executives, whose occupation is the carrying on of the work of the Lord. We also speak of "part-time" workers when we refer to those who are paid employees of the church only a part of the time. We speak of "volunteer" service when we refer to the members of the royal priesthood who do the work of the Lord without pay in addition to their regular employment. We are happy that we have these "full-time," "part-time," or "volunteer" servants of the Lord.

Yet in a sense this terminology is all wrong. When we became members of the communion of saints, we became "full-time" members of the kingdom of God, and we are to

Serve Him Full Time

I. *We must serve Him full time*

A. Because He is the Lord of the church (vv. 12, 13). In the incident of the cleansing of the temple on Monday of Holy Week Christ reveals Himself as the Lord of the church. By driving out all them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrowing the moneychangers, by applying the word of prophecy "My house" to Himself, the Lord Jesus declared that He is the Lord of the church. If we would serve God, we must serve Him.

B. Because He is the Savior (v. 14). By healing the lame and the blind who came to Him in the temple Jesus showed Himself to be the prophesied Messiah, whose coming would have the characteristic of healing the lame and the blind (Is. 35:5, 6; 61:1-3). — Vv. 15, 16. By rebuking the displeased chief priests and scribes, who objected to the cry of the children "Hosanna to the Son of David," Jesus likewise declared that He is the promised Helper of the Old Testament. Jesus is indeed the Savior whom God has sent. Not to serve Him is the height of folly and puts us in a class with the chief priests and scribes.

C. Because He is the Judge (vv. 18-20). Jesus showed Himself to be the Judge who demands full-time service when He condemned the fig tree for its fruitlessness. This condemnation of the fig tree that gave every sign of fruitfulness with its leaves is a constant warning to us that we must serve Him unless we wish to suffer a similar condemnation.

In our day many would have us believe that it is of little consequence whether we serve the Lord or not, that the Lord will in easy indifference overlook our failures to serve Him. This condemnation of the fig tree gives a lie to any thought that we can ignore the demand to serve Him who is our Lord, our Savior, and our Judge.

II. *We can serve Him full time*

A. By avoiding the secularism and the sham of the chief priests and the others who made a mockery of the worship of the Lord and His temple. To use our worship and our church membership as a hypocritical covering for our greed and evil ways is to fail to serve the Lord. "The church is no refuge for sinners who go on in their sins and think they are safe when they go to church; and certainly not for the sinners who support the church by desecrating the church and justify their desecration by crying, 'It is for the church!'" (Lenski, *Matthew's Gospel*, p. 816)

B. By accepting the healing He brings and gives (v. 14). The lame and the blind accepted Christ's healing. We likewise are to accept the healing from the sickness of sin and evil which the Savior brings to us. To reject Christ's forgiveness and His blessings is to fail to serve Christ.

C. By joining in the praise of the children (v. 15). Our lives are to be a song of praise to Him who has redeemed us to God and made us His children, owning and confessing Him before all as our Savior and Lord.

D. By bringing forth the fruits of faith. A fruitful fig tree. The daily acts of obedience to the Lord's will, the repeated evidences of acting in keeping with the commands of the Lord, are the fruits of faith that are to grace our lives. These show that the blessings of Christ have given us spiritual life.

E. By never doubting the Lord in our prayers (vv. 21, 22). The Lord has given us remarkable promises of the power of believing, doubt-free prayer. To take the problems and tasks of life to the Lord in believing prayer is to serve the Lord full time.

All of us must be, can be, full-time servants of the Lord. In enjoyment of the forgiveness and the love which the Christ has gained, with hearts and lives cleansed, the child of God chooses only the full-time service.

LEWIS C. NIEMOELLER

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 9:1-7

Do you ever wonder why God afflicts you, even though you are His child? Is He angry with you? Punishing you for some sin? Ever wonder why God afflicts others? Is He punishing them for certain sins?

When Do You as a Christian Have
the Right View of Afflictions?

I. *When you know that afflictions are not necessarily the result of certain sins (vv. 1-3a)*

A. Is affliction the result of certain sin or sins? This was question disciples asked Jesus concerning man born blind. Disciples puzzled. If blindness was result of his own sin, God punished him before he committed transgressions, for he was born blind. If it was result of parents' sin, he was being punished for another's transgression. (Ezek. 18:20)

B. Afflictions in general are the result of sin. If there were no sin there would be no suffering. Trouble and sorrow came into world with sin. (Gen. 3:16-19)

C. Certain afflictions can be traced to specific sins. David repented of his adultery with Bathsheba. God forgave his sin, but the son of the adulterous union died (2 Sam. 12: 14-18; see also 2 Sam. 24:10-15). Certain afflictions today can be traced to specific sins. Lose health by drunkenness and have sin forgiven by repentance and faith, but that doesn't restore immediate health. Squander money by gambling, repent of evil ways and find forgiveness, but that doesn't bring back lost money. An immoral person may repent and find forgiveness, but that doesn't remove social disease resulting from immorality. Illustration: Drive a nail into beautiful table top. Nail can be pulled out and hole covered with putty, but mark of nail remains. Sin may be forgiven, but often the marks remain.

In some instances our affliction can be traced to certain sins. Let that serve as warning.

D. But afflictions are not necessarily the result of certain specific sins. Jesus' answer (v. 3a). The blind man and his parents were not sinless (Rom. 3:10). Jesus meant that neither this man nor his parents had committed any transgression that brought on affliction of blindness. It is wrong to judge a person who is afflicted and conclude that his affliction is result of some special sin. Let us be careful in judging afflicted! A family is wiped out in car accident; that does not necessarily mean there was reckless driving. A businessman suffers business reverses; that does not necessarily prove dishonesty. A laborer loses his job; that doesn't necessarily mean he was lazy. A farmer loses his crop in hailstorm; that doesn't mean that God is getting even with him for some sin. A child becomes ill; this doesn't necessarily mean it was disobedient. A Christian suffers illness for a long time; that doesn't necessarily mean he abused his body or that God is punishing him for some specific sin.

E. This is a good truth to remember when we ourselves are afflicted. We must not let Satan convince us at once that God is angry with us and is punishing us for a certain sin. Christ bore our punishment (Is. 53:5). There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Do not let Satan rob you of this comfort. Of course, if we have been guilty of some special sin, we should repent (Prov. 28:13). In fact, we daily sin much and therefore should repent daily. But we should not let Satan rob us of our Christian comfort. Christ has borne our punishment for us, and therefore we know our afflictions are not necessarily the result of certain sins.

II. *When you realize that the work of God is revealed in them (vv. 3b-7)*

A. The work of God was manifested in marvelous miracle Jesus performed (vv. 6-7).

Rubbing mud on a blind man's eyes doesn't ordinarily restore sight. It could have the opposite effect on a seeing person. The pool to which Jesus sent the blind man had no healing power in its water. This was done that the work of God might be manifested. The blind man should realize that Jesus performed a miracle, a work of God. He saw the power of God in the miracle, for even the scribes and Pharisees could not shake him from that conviction.

B. The work of God was manifested in the proof that Jesus gave of His Messiahship. Isaiah 35:4-6 and 60:1-12 were fulfilled. Jesus came not only to give light but also to be the Light (John 8:12). He gave sight to this man's eyes and light to his soul. Love and compassion moved Him (v. 4). Seeing this work of God, this man was to know that Jesus was both God and promised Messiah. Believing this he had life (John 20:31). Thus the work of God was manifested in his affliction. Had it not been for his blindness, this man might never have seen Jesus or believed in Him. He might never have been able to testify to his friends of the power and love of Jesus. John 9 might never have been written for our comfort in affliction.

C. God often reveals His love and power to the afflicted whom He heals. Joseph, godly young man, sold into slavery by his brothers. In Egypt he remained true to God in spite of severe temptations. Yet God permitted him to be afflicted, to be thrown into prison unjustly. Joseph patiently bore this affliction. God exalted him to become ruler in Egypt and to save many people. Joseph told his brothers, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." Perhaps the affliction God sends to you is a school in which God is training you for some great work. Perhaps God wants to teach you (Jer. 17:5-7). Maybe God is teaching humility (James 4:6). Perhaps God wants to teach you patience, a noble Christian virtue, one

that most of us lack. God's aim is that we see His love and power both in the affliction and in its removal. Heb. 12:6.

D. God reveals His love and power even to those whose affliction He does not remove. The Apostle Paul. 2 Cor. 12:7-10. A mother with a handicapped child said, "I thank God that He has given me the faith to bear this cross." This mother had learned to sing, "Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee, 'e'en though it be a cross that raiseth me."

Yes, even the crosses that God lays on us ought to draw us closer to Him. Knowing that Jesus is our heaven-sent Redeemer, we can be sure He has borne the punishment of our sins. This assures us that afflictions are not necessarily the result of certain sins. Rather they are sent by the Lord that we might see the work of God manifested in them. Hymn 518, v. 1.

WILLIAM GRAUMANN

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Texts for 1960—1961 Series of Sermon Studies

Brief sermon studies will appear, beginning with the November issue for the next church year, on the Old Testament lessons according to the Eisenach series. The complete listing appears in Paul Nesper, *Biblical Texts* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1952). Instead of drawing on a variety of contributors, the staff has asked the Rev. Herbert E. Hohenstein, M. A., S. T. M., to prepare the entire set. He has taught this sequence as a course in the School for Graduate Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and has preached many of them in Luther Memorial Church, Richmond Heights, Mo.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Text</i>
Nov. 27, 1960	1 Adv.	Jer. 31:31-34
Dec. 4, 1960	2 Adv.	Mal. 4:1-6
Dec. 11, 1960	3 Adv.	Is. 40:1-8
Dec. 18, 1960	4 Adv.	Deut. 18:15-19
Dec. 25, 1960	Chris.	Is. 9:6, 7
Jan. 1, 1961	N. Y.	Psalms 90
Jan. 6, 1961	Epiph.	Is. 2:2-5
Jan. 8, 1961	1 a. Epiph.	Psalms 122
Jan. 15, 1961	2 a. Epiph.	Is. 61:1-6
Jan. 22, 1961	Transfig.	Ex. 3:1-6
Jan. 29, 1961	Sept.	Jer. 9:23, 24
Feb. 5, 1961	Sexa.	Amos 8:11, 12
Feb. 12, 1961	Quinq.	Jer. 8:4-9

Feb. 19, 1961	Invoc.	Gen. 22:1-14
Feb. 26, 1961	Rem.	Ex. 33:17-23
March 5, 1961	Ocu.	Jer. 26:1-15
March 12, 1961	Lae.	Is. 52:7-10
March 19, 1961	Jud.	Num. 21:4-9
March 26, 1961	Palm S.	Zech. 9:8-12
March 30, 1961	M. Thur.	Psalms 111
March 31, 1961	G. Fri.	Ps. 22:1-11
April 2, 1961	Easter	Ps. 118:14-24
April 9, 1961	Quas.	Gen. 33:22-31
April 16, 1961	Mis. D.	Psalms 23
April 23, 1961	Jub.	Is. 40:26-31
April 30, 1961	Cant.	Psalms 98
May 7, 1961	Rog.	Is. 55:6-11
May 11, 1961	Asc.	Psalms 110
May 14, 1961	Ex.	Psalms 42
May 21, 1961	Pent.	Ezek. 36:22-28
May 28, 1961	Tr.	Is. 6:1-8 or Num. 6:22-27
June 4, 1961	1 a. Tr.	Deut. 6:4-13
June 11, 1961	2 a. Tr.	Prov. 9:1-10
June 18, 1961	3 a. Tr.	Is. 12:1-6
June 25, 1961	4 a. Tr.	Is. 65:17-19, 24, 25
July 2, 1961	5 a. Tr.	Lam. 3:22-32
July 9, 1961	6 a. Tr.	Psalms 1

HOMILETICS

July 16, 1961	7 a. Tr.	Is. 62:6-12	Oct. 1, 1961	18 a. Tr.	2 Chron. 1:7-12
July 23, 1961	8 a. Tr.	Jer. 23:16-29	Oct. 8, 1961	19 a. Tr.	Ps. 32:1-7
July 30, 1961	9 a. Tr.	Prov. 16:1-9	Oct. 15, 1961	20 a. Tr.	Prov. 2:1-8
Aug. 6, 1961	10 a. Tr.	Jer. 7:1-11	Oct. 22, 1961	21 a. Tr.	2 Sam. 7:17-19
Aug. 13, 1961	11 a. Tr.	Dan. 9:15-19	Oct. 29, 1961	22 a. Tr.	Prov. 24:14-20
Aug. 20, 1961	12 a. Tr.	Is. 29:18-21	Nov. 5, 1961	23 a. Tr.	Ps. 85:6-13
Aug. 27, 1961	13 a. Tr.	Zech. 7:4-10	Nov. 12, 1961	24 a. Tr.	Psalm 39
Sept. 3, 1961	14 a. Tr.	Ps. 50:14-23	Nov. 19, 1961	25 a. Tr.	Job 14:1-5
Sept. 10, 1961	15 a. Tr.	1 Kings 17:8-16	Nov. 23, 1961	Thanks- giving	Ps. 34:2-9
Sept. 17, 1961	16 a. Tr.	Job 5:17-26	Nov. 26, 1961	26 a. Tr.	Psalm 126
Sept. 24, 1961	17 a. Tr.	Ps. 75:4-7			