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HOMILETICS

Outlines on a Series of Free Texts

(The following outlines are furnished by the Rev. Paul Koenig, St. Louis, Mo. The suggested general theme is "All of Grace.")

SEPTUAGESIMA

MATT. 11:25-30

The goal of the sermon is to make men realize the glory of God's grace, since they are so prone to attempt to earn their own salvation and since the Gospel emphasis is that in the kingdom of God nothing but grace obtains.

It is not without just cause that Luther praises our text as a paragon among the Gospels worthy to be learned by heart by all Christians. He adds, "The other Gospels show us miracles done to others, but I am never so sure of God's grace as when I have clear, plain words before me; there is nothing so comforting as those lessons which contain sermons of Christ wherein He so lovingly teaches us and invites us to come to Him for salvation."

Grace Our Cause for Thanksgiving

I

A. There are many who do not give thanks. They are the wise and prudent. From them "these things" are hid. What are "these things"? The truths of the Gospel, truths that are secret, unknown to natural man, truths that must first be revealed if men are to know them. The wise and prudent are the would-be-wise, such as the scribes and Pharisees, wise in their own conceit. They are the self-righteous who think that they need no help, who are do-it-yourself people, who want to pay for their own way to heaven.

B. By nature all men, also Christians so far as they still have their sinful flesh, do

not understand the nature of the Gospel, the nature of grace. They are inclined, like the laborers in the Gospel, to emphasize their own efforts, to look askance at God's goodness. Because of the dullness of their hearts many fail to give thanks for God's grace.

II

A. We thank the Father in heaven for His gracious revelation.

1. For the order of revelation. He hides things from the wise and prudent. God's will is that no one, not even the wise and learned, is to invent his own way to salvation, no one is left to depend on his own efforts. No, we are called upon merely to accept what God has revealed about Himself and His gracious will, to take our reason captive, to accept in faith the Word of His grace. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein. (1 Cor. 1:21)

2. We thank Him furthermore for the Person through whom His most glorious revelation comes to men. "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." He, the great eternal Son of God, reveals the Father to men. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." "No man knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." He is well qualified, for He is in the bosom of the Father. And the Father reveals the Son. In short, all true knowledge of God is the work of the Lord of heaven, especially of the Prophet Jesus Christ. The wise sneer and call us babes and simpletons. Why should we care? On our

side is He to whom all things are delivered of the Father, a powerful Friend and Protector.

B. We thank the Father in heaven for the gracious invitation which the Lord Jesus extends.

1. His invitation goes to "babes," to the weak and weary, to those who have vainly tried to atone for their sins, whose conscience upbraids them, who realize their sad plight and see nothing but wrath and judgment. To such, then, the call is extended, to those who see their helplessness and crave assistance. All are invited. No condition is attached. His words apply to all. The grace of God is universal.

2. And the purpose of this invitation? "I will make your work to cease, call a halt to your sorrows and your cares. My purpose is to remove from you the burden and to cause you to breathe more freely, to get rest for your souls." Christ takes off the load of guilt, of fear, of wrath and judgment. In exchange for this load they will receive another, a more pleasant load: the yoke of Christ. It is difficult to the flesh to deny everything, but to the believer it is joyous service. Instead of being yoked to the service of sin, he is now yoked to the service of Jesus. They receive a new burden, but one that does not weigh down, the burden of being a disciple. Of this Luther says: "Christ's burden does not oppress, but makes light and itself bears rather than is borne."

3. This gracious invitation is doubly important and welcome because it is extended by the Lord Jesus Himself. "I will give you rest." He is the proper Person to invite. He has authority to call men to Himself, is the almighty Son of God, Savior of the world who has paid for men's sins, has a right to grant forgiveness and grace (Acts 4:12). This invitation is worth so much because Christ is compassionate. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. I do

not proudly turn from sinners, but gladly condescend to the lowliest. I understand your problems and am ready and able to solve them." Finally, Jesus is the right Person to extend the invitation of grace because He Himself can give power to such an invitation and make unwilling hearts willing. His Word works faith, makes sinners able to exchange the yoke of the Law for the Gospel yoke, the service of Satan for the service of Christ.

III

The revelation and the invitation of grace are the cause for our thanksgiving. We give thanks to our gracious God in our worship services. When we receive the words of absolution, our heart rejoices in the grace of God. "Father, I thank Thee," we can say with our Lord whenever the glorious Gospel of our blessed God is proclaimed to us from our pulpits. Grateful appreciation for God's grace prompts the offertory in which we ask for a clean heart and a right spirit and the restoration of the joy of our salvation. In the Eucharist we show the Lord's death till He come and praise Him for grace unending. Only the grace we have received induces us to respond to the *Benedicamus* by saying, "Thanks be to God," and to chant our Amen when in the benediction the pastor imparts to us the grace of the Lord, who lifts up His countenance upon us and gives us peace. We are grateful for God's grace not merely in public worship, our whole life is to be an uninterrupted thanksgiving with hearts and hands and voices in praise of the grace of our gracious God and Savior.

SEXAGESIMA

JOHN 12:27-33

Our text aims to strengthen our faith by showing us the terrific cost of our redemption, something we often do not realize. We simply look upon God as being favorable. Hence we treat the Gospel with indifference

and take Christ for granted. "Viewed as a whole, this Sunday is the expression of the Christian's true condition. In spite of his sinful weakness he feels the growth of grace." (Fred H. Lindemann, *The Sermon and The Probers* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958] II, 29)

Unbelievers frequently level the criticism at Christians that we worship a God who died on the cross. Such a death, say they, cannot but bring shame upon God's name, upon Jesus Christ and all who confess Him. Far from disgracing our Lord, Christ's death has the opposite effect. He says that

God's Name Is Glorified

I

A. By Christ's awful suffering and death as manifested in His soul struggle.

1. The text shows us what Christ endured. "Now is My soul troubled." He ponders the question whether to ask God to spare Him this "hour." Note what He calls this hour! For us the hour — our hour of redemption — is something great, an event that brings us joy. For Jesus it means suffering, curse, abandonment. Note the parallel to Gethsemane. "If it is possible, remove this cup from Me." Human words are inadequate to describe the terrible sorrow that nearly crushed our Savior and all but blurred for Him the counsel of God for the redemption of men.

2. But note the next words, again parallel to the garden scene: "'But for this cause came I unto this hour.' That is the purpose of My incarnation, to suffer untold agony, to die by being lifted up on the cross. No, I will not step back, I will not flinch from doing My duty. I will carry on and carry through to the bitter end on the accursed tree."

B. The end result? The glory of God. This is a real paradox. The Father's Son

humbled Himself and became obedient even unto the death of the cross, and through this shameful death the Father is glorified. Why? Because it is the breakthrough of the Father's love for poor sinners, the fulfillment of prophecy, the carrying out of the decree of redemption.

II

The Father's name is glorified as by Christ's suffering and death Satan is judged.

A. The prince of this world is cast out. Satan held the world in his clutches, ruled men by leading them to sin, even had the audacity to offer the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof to the Son of God (Matt. 4). But in Christ he met his match (1 John 3:8). Satan's head is crushed on Calvary. By His death He destroyed him that had the power of death. Together with its prince the world is judged.

B. Satan's defeat meant the freeing of men. For He delivered them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, slaves of fear of death, slaves and victims of Satan. What a glorious liberation! All by grace, all to the glory of God, all for the eternal salvation of men.

III

A. There is no mistake about the manner in which men are to be saved.

Only by Christ's being lifted up. He spoke these words signifying what death He should die. There He hangs suspended between heaven and earth, rejected by both, put to death by the most disgraceful method of execution.

B. There is no mistake about the effect of Christ's death. "I will draw all men unto Me." By nature men were separated, estranged from God. Left to themselves, they must perish miserably, even after the death and resurrection of Jesus. But in the Gospel and in the sacraments Jesus is lifted up, the

Crucified One is offered to men, the glorious message of grace is proclaimed. Not with 100 percent results. The parable of the fourfold soil. But many drawn, many brought to faith, seed bears fruit a hundredfold. True, Gospel is a stumbling block and a rock of offense to many. But as we listen and the Spirit opens our hearts, it becomes to us the power of God to salvation, draws us to Christ, leads and sustains us in faith, enables us to show our faith by means of a godly life, bringing fruit with patience. What an incentive to mission work! What a rebuke to our frequent indifference! What a mighty answer to the taunts of scoffing unbelievers are the millions and hundreds of millions of men, women, and children who are drawn to the cross! All this of grace, and all to the glory of our glorious God.

QUINQUAGESIMA

ROM. 2:4

"The teaching of the day is love, love in all its glory and wonder, the love of God to man, the love of man to God and in Him to fellowmen" (Lindemann, p. 36). Our constant problem is sin, which in every instance is lack of love, lack of appreciation of God's love. Hence the sermon's goal: repentance.

On the threshold of Lent we prepare to accompany Jesus on His journey to the cross. If this journey is to be for us of eternal benefit, we must cry with the blind beggar: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." Such a plea presupposes penitent hearts, which acknowledge their sins and the need of mercy in Christ Jesus. For this reason some churches observe this day as a day of humiliation and prayer, thus making preparation for a proper observance of Lent. "Grant that I Thy Passion view with repentant grieving." God leads us to repentance by His Word, by trials, or by showering blessings upon us (Gen. 32:10). Our text teaches us:

God's Goodness a Call to Repentance

I

There is always need for repentance.

A. Despite their profession Christians are guilty of many sins of omission and commission. They lack love to God and neighbor. Love is patient, long-suffering, kind, is not puffed up, does not envy others, does not insist on its own way, is not resentful, does not seek its own.

B. In the light of such statements from the song of love in the Epistle, must we not hang our heads in shame as we think of our pride of heart, our selfishness, our envyings, our racial prejudice, not to speak of coldness toward God and His Word, laxity in prayer, and lack of dedication of time, talents, and treasures?

II

A. In view of such offenses one could expect the heavens to open, the wrath of God to be poured out upon an ungrateful and disobedient people. No one could ever hope to escape the wrath to come, no one could ever hope for life. Death and destruction would await us all.

B. The very opposite, however, is the case. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, showing mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem"—a journey of love and a sacrifice of love, climaxed by the open tomb. Forgiveness earned, forgiveness offered in Gospel.

C. Though we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment, He does not withdraw His grace from us; still is long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.

III

A. Mercy, however, is not something to be presumed upon. Shall we now grow secure and think that if God has waited so long, borne with us until now, all is well?

He will not hold us to strict accountability? Sin is not such a serious matter, lacking love for God and man no cause for provoking God's wrath and displeasure? We may go right on in our evil ways?

B. The goodness of God should rather lead us to repentance. His holiness, His mercy, His patience and goodness stand in marked contrast to our meanness, our lovelessness. As we recall His temporal and spiritual blessings, as we accompany the Savior on His way of sorrows, as we contemplate the full meaning of "God commendeth His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," we realize the full weight of our ingratitude. If we ask: What is His purpose in continuing day after day and year after year, despite my sins and transgressions, to invite and admonish me, even to bless me in earthly matters? the answer is: He wants to have me realize what an ingrate I have been,

wants me to see that He gives "all this out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me." He wants me, as I ponder His boundless love and His never-ending mercy, to be overwhelmed by the sense of my own unworthiness, to have my sense of sin deepened, and to have me cry with the publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and with David, "According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." It is only when we have come to the realization of our own unrighteousness and have learned to humble ourselves before God and freely confess our sins and iniquities that the story of Lent will have any appeal for us. Only then can we profit from the contemplation of Christ's great sacrifice when we have learned to view His Passion with repentant grieving. Then Lent will restore to us the joy of God's salvation and will bring us comfort and strength for our journey through life.