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Ministry and Future: Contradictions and Hope

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TRINITY XIX

JOHN 9:24-41

Introduction

Passages like John 20:29, Rom. 11:33, and Heb. 11:1 are often quoted to prove that faith requires no seeking, searching, or knowing on our part but that we are simply to believe and trust in "we know not what." Without contradicting any of these passages, today's text suggests that there are certain things that you must see before you can believe. For example, before you can trust in Jesus Christ, you must see God in the face of Jesus Christ. Before you can truly appreciate the Scriptures and the bread and wine in the holy sacrament, you must see Christ in them. Before you can believe that whenever you give a brother a cup of cold water it is "as unto Christ," you must see Christ in the face of every man.

But who has such eyes to see? Can you blame the Pharisees for not seeing God in the face of that very common carpenter from Nazareth? When bread and wine are handed to us today and the pastor says: "Take eat, take drink, this is My body, this is My blood," we, too, are inclined to say, "I don't see it."

Be of good courage. Our Lord does not require what He does not first give. He speaks in our text for today: "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see" (v. 39). Our Lord assures us that He will give us the vision to see what is necessary for believing.

Seeing Is Necessary for Believing

I. Natural Man Cannot See What Is Necessary for Believing

A. God revealed Himself to the Pharisees, but He was not seen. Though God is a Spirit, He wants to be seen, known, and trusted. For this reason He revealed Himself in Christ. The purpose of the miracle of the healing of the man born blind was to reveal to the

Pharisees the mercy and love of God. But the Pharisees didn't see God; they saw just a Sabbath breaker, another sinner.

B. God reveals Himself to all men, but He is not seen by many. God makes Himself known in mighty acts. It is He who gives us seed time and harvest time, daily bread, healing through the miracle of modern drugs. Especially He reveals Himself in Word and Sacrament. But natural man says, "I don't see it. I can't see God" (1 Cor. 2:14). Of course natural man can't see. He is blind to God and the things of God.

C. The reason the Pharisees could not see God is that the devil had made them blind. The devil prevented the Pharisees from seeing the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ by appealing to their pride and making them believe that through Moses they could already see and know everything. There was nothing more to be revealed. "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this Man, we do not know where He comes from" (v. 29). The Pharisees possessed a "know it all" attitude ("We know that this Man is a sinner," v. 24) that prevented them from seeing that fuller revelation of God in Jesus Christ. They were like the blind men in the fable, who each felt one part of the elephant and then concluded that he knew exactly what an elephant was like. The Pharisees did have a partial revelation of God through Moses, but because they thought it was the full revelation it was distorted and prevented them from seeing what God was really like when He was revealed in Christ.

D. The reason that all men do not see God is that the devil has blinded all men to God. The devil still prevents men from seeing the revelation of God in Word and Sacrament by appealing to their pride and by convincing them they can already see and know everything there is to see and know

with their five physical senses. Then, because they cannot see Christ in Word and Sacrament with their physical eyes, they refuse to believe that He is truly present. Or, the devil keeps them blind to a fuller and more complete revelation of God by convincing them that what they learned in Sunday school is all there is to know. Then they miss that fuller revelation of God that comes from continued, intensive study of the Scriptures.

II. *Jesus Christ Gives to Man the Vision to See What Is Necessary for Believing*

A. Jesus gave sight to the man born blind. To see the world about him was not his greatest gift. The real miracle was the shedding of light that enabled him to see God in the face of Jesus Christ (v. 35-36). The glory of God shone through the miracle of healing as it did in all miracles that Jesus performed. The healing of the paralytic in today's Gospel was performed, as Jesus said, to show that He had power to forgive sins. Such power as was witnessed by the man born blind could only cause him to say, "If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." (V. 33)

B. Jesus is still in the world to give us the light to see what is necessary for believing (John 9:5). Christ is in the world in Word and Sacrament. They show us Christ the Miracle-worker, but also Christ the Savior, dying on a cross, miraculously rising from the grave, brilliantly showing the full glory of God. As we read and listen to the Word, as we eat and drink His body and blood, light streams into our hearts and minds and makes it possible for us to see God, God in Christ, Christ in Word and Sacrament.

C. Be careful that you do not shut out the light. The Pharisees saw the light, but they shut it out and refused to let it enlighten them. People who have been sitting in a dark room grow accustomed to the dark and satisfied with seeing only blurred shadows. When someone enters and turns on the light,

such people are liable to protest because the light at first blinds them, "Turn out the light, I can see without it." The Pharisees loved darkness rather than light. Because they insisted, "We can see," their guilt remained, and they became blind (vv. 40-41). We are in danger of doing the same. Because the light that shines into our hearts from the face of Jesus Christ is bright, it dazzles us and blinds us at first. The glory of His miracles, that He should condescend to dwell among us in Word and Sacrament, is too much to believe at first. Like the Pharisees, we are inclined to cover our eyes and say, "It is just too much for me to stand, I can't believe it." The blind man, too, marveled at first. He didn't know what to make of it. But he basked in the glory of God's light and eventually saw what was necessary for believing. If you will live in the light of God's Word and Sacrament, God's glory will become brighter and clearer, and yours will be the joy of walking in the full light of God's glory and splendor.

Conclusion

Seeing is necessary for believing. If we will take the hands from our eyes and let the light of Christ shine into our hearts through Word and Sacrament, we will see what is necessary for believing—a God of love, mercy, and compassion, a God who loves all men in Christ Jesus, and a God who would be loved by us through our fellowmen. Just how this happens we will not be able to explain, just as the man born blind could not explain how he was healed. But with that man we can say, "One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I can see." And that seeing is believing.

TRINITY XX

JOHN 15:1-8

Connection to the Propers

The text emphasizes that the heavenly Vinedresser looks for fruit on the branches

He has carefully grafted into Christ, the Vine. The Epistle further admonishes us not to dissipate our resources and energy in drunkenness and foolishness but to make wise use of our time in bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. The Collect also invites us to pray for cleansing from sin so that we will be enabled to "serve" God. This sermon was used in preparation for an every-member visitation program, in which visitors were urged to speak to their fellow members to remind them that God requires fruit and to "edify one another with psalms, and hymns, and spirituals songs" so that they could bring forth more fruit.

Introduction

Nobody blames a farmer for expecting a bountiful harvest of grapes from his vines, especially after he has toiled hard and long all spring and summer, grafting, pruning, cultivating, spraying, and irrigating. Why, then, do men blame God, the heavenly Vinedresser, when He looks for fruit on the branches that He has carefully grafted into Christ, the Vine? Today, through your church, your Lord is coming to you to look for those fruits He has every right to expect after all the loving care and attention bestowed on you through the Holy Spirit. He looks for the love that will abound in good works, that will move you to give of your time and treasure and talents to alleviate the suffering of the afflicted, to relieve those who are in want, and to preach the Gospel to the poor. But many are inclined to say: "God is asking for too much! He wants the impossible!" With the unprofitable servant many complain: "Lord, I know you to be a hard man, reaping where you do not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow." Today's text teaches us, however, that *God is fair*. God knows that without Him we can do nothing. And He expects nothing from those who do not have Him. But when God carefully tends a vineyard, He expects to find fruit on the vines. That's only fair.

God is Fair

1. God Does Not Look for Fruit Until He Has First Labored

A. Without God's labor man is incapable of bearing fruit. Our Lord illustrates that He understands man's inability to bring forth fruit to His glory by likening him to a branch and Himself to the Vine. The branch has no life or power in itself. The life and power is in the Vine. Cut off a branch from the Vine, and it quickly withers and dries up. We were intended to be connected constantly to Christ, the Vine. God knows, however, that the devil has severed us from the Vine, making us incapable of living the life of God. What is worse, the devil does not just leave us to wither and die, but grafts us to himself, so that his power flows within us and causes us to bring forth evil fruit instead of the good fruit that God requires. Our Lord understands our condition. He knows that "you don't gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." And He does not expect to find the fruits of faith in the lives of people until they have been grafted into Christ, the true Vine.

B. Do we understand that man is incapable of bearing fruit before God has labored? On a visitation program such as we are conducting we meet people who show no evidence of fruit. Yet we demand fruit. We insist on gifts, pledges, service, etc., and we become impatient with people who seem selfish, cold, and indifferent. Perhaps they have not yet been grafted into the true Vine. God must labor before He can reap. Our concern must be to bring them into the blessed relationship with God through faith in Jesus and thus to bring them His power and life and make them bear fruit.

II. God Labors so that All Men Can Bring Forth Fruit

A. God makes Christ the Vine available to us all. From eternity Christ possessed the very life of God. He came into our world

demonstrating the power of that life. In our place He died for our sins, the death which we deserved. But the life could not be forever snuffed out. Three days later, Christ arose to live forever and to be the Vine that could supply the life of God to as many as would believe in Him.

B. God grafts us into the Vine and empowers us through Word and Sacrament. The great task that engages the heavenly Vinedresser is to take all the branches that have been cut off from the Vine and to make them clean through His Word and graft them into Christ Jesus, the Vine (v. 3). This is what happens in Baptism through the Word. This process continues as we use Word and Sacrament and guarantees our connection with Christ.

C. God causes the fruit to grow by the power of His Word (v. 7). "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you." Ask what you will. Do you want the power to forgive an enemy? The compassion to love all people? The generosity to give your all? Things impossible for us are not impossible for God to work in us and through us through His Word. See how it works. He comes to a cripple and says: "Take up your bed and walk." The cripple might have said, "Jesus, you are asking the impossible. There is no muscle, no life in my leg." But Jesus doesn't ask what He does not first give. And with the word He gives the power and the life to do the impossible. God's Word is power, and it brings power to us—power to bring forth the fruit that God requires.

III. *Let Us Give God the Fruit of His Labors*

A. We shall do so by abiding in Christ. Ten times in these verses Christ says, "Abide in Me." He wants to stress that we can bring forth fruit only as long as we allow Him to work in us through His Word. There is a warning implied that we can fall away.

B. We shall do so by letting God have

His way with us. God is constantly pruning and cutting, through trials, for the purpose of strengthening our union with Him. Let us humbly submit, so that we can be more productive.

C. Failure to give God His fruit brings destruction. God is more than fair. He grafts into the Vine, He cleans, He prunes, He nourishes, He feeds. But if after all effort dead branches refuse to be revitalized, refuse to bear fruit, they are cut off and cast into the fire.

Conclusion

God is fair. He does not demand from anyone what He is unable to produce. But when God labors as He does over each one of His children, carefully grafting them into the Vine of Christ and empowering them through His Word and Sacrament, He does expect to see the reward of His labors. He expects to see a Christian life abounding with the fruits of faith. And that to Him is proof that His labor has not been in vain, that we are indeed His disciples. That is His glory.

TRINITY XXI

MARK 10:13-16

Connection to the Propers

"The whole world is in Thy power, O Lord, King Almighty; there is no man that can gainsay Thee." Those are the words of the Introit. Still, the wisdom of man makes him think that he can gainsay God. In today's sermon text our Lord urges us to be childlike in our faith, laying aside wisdom and trusting only in the Word of Jesus. The nobleman in the Gospel provides us with an illustration of this childlike faith. He did not need to see "signs and wonders" before he would believe. His faith rested on Christ's word alone, and when he went down to his house, he found his son alive and well. Thus he received the reward of faith. The Epistle urges us to use the armor and the weapon,

the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to overcome the wiles of the devil, who tries to rob us of our childlike faith and to lead us to trust in our own wisdom.

Introduction

Certain movies are labeled "For Adults Only." Sometimes this seems to make them more attractive to adults and certainly more attractive to children. Children do believe that the best things in life are for adults and that they are not permitted to participate in them and enjoy them until adulthood. Unfortunately the church has often given the impression to children that membership and participation in the church cannot be enjoyed by them until they are adults or at least confirmed. Today's text certainly corrects this faulty thinking, for our Lord clearly states: "To such belongs the kingdom of God" when referring to those little children, whom the disciples were trying to brush aside. In fact, our Lord goes on to make the point that the kingdom of God is for "children" only. He says: "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." This does not mean that adults cannot enter. But the wisdom and knowledge that comes with years all too often rob us of the simple faith and trust that we must possess if we are to enter the Kingdom. Our Lord urges us all to become like children because

The Kingdom of God Is for Children Only

I. The Wisdom of the World That Comes with the Years Can Be Destructive to a Childlike Faith

A. Children possess such simple, trusting faith because they lack wisdom. The world is full of examples of things accomplished by men too ignorant to know they were impossible. Gillete, of safety-razor fame, said that a technical training would have made him unable to believe that such a thing as a safety razor could be perfected. Children are not wise enough to know that some

things are impossible. They have implicit trust in their parents, for they are unable to understand that there are things their parents cannot do or provide. This leads them to admire and imitate their parents. Here are two traits of children that must be possessed by all if they are to enter the kingdom of God. Men must trust in God as children trust in parents, and they must adore and imitate the Father in heaven as children imitate earthly fathers and mothers.

B. Wisdom has a tendency to destroy this faith of childhood. It doesn't take long for a child to learn that there are things his father and mother cannot do. He learns that a bank is not just a place from which you get money but a place where earned money must first be deposited before it can be withdrawn. He learns that his parents make mistakes and have faults, and just a little wisdom makes him think that his parents know nothing anymore and he knows it all. This is carried over, too often, into our relationship with God. Since human wisdom cannot understand the power and ways of God, we are quick to say that God and the things He does just cannot be.

C. The wisdom of the world cannot accept the wisdom of God. We must understand that the wisdom of God cannot be grasped with the wisdom of men. We must accept the fact that the Gospel is foolishness, indeed sheer madness, to the wisdom of men, so that we do not try to grasp it with human reason (1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Cor. 1:18 ff.). We err when we try to make the Gospel reasonable and understandable. People who hear the Gospel for the first time will find it preposterous, foolish, and contrary to human understanding and will react as Festus did when he said to Paul: "Paul, you are mad; your great learning is turning you mad." (Acts 26:24)

D. Wisdom has robbed many of their faith. Because many people do not know that the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot

be grasped with worldly wisdom, they have rejected it as foolishness. They reject the Gospel because they cannot cram its wisdom into their heads as they think they should be able to. They do not understand that the wisdom and knowledge of God is so vast that it cannot be crammed into our heads.

II. *Lay Aside Wisdom and Become Again Like Little Children*

A. Christian faith can be received only as a gift. Human wisdom cannot grasp the wisdom of God, but when we become like children and simply believe the words and promises of our Lord, faith is bestowed as a gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the Word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." The Gospel, when believed in childlike faith, does impart forgiveness, peace, and life.

B. Childhood is the best time to receive this gift. Blessed are you if this gift was given to you through Baptism while you were still an infant. Adults, heed this admonition of our Lord in this text to bring infants to Jesus in Baptism. It is much easier for the Holy Spirit to bestow His gift in infancy, for the wisdom of years makes the task more difficult.

C. No one is ever too old to become a child. As children grow in years, they discover that their parents are sinful humans too and that they have their limitations. But as children of God grow older, they are never disillusioned by the heavenly Father. With God nothing is impossible. He is able to bestow the gift of faith on anyone, regardless of age. In the Gospel, the Word and the sacraments, we have His powerful message of the Cross and the Resurrection; it is able to confound the wisdom of the wise and penetrate the hardest of hearts. Through constant use of these means of grace, our doubts are laid to rest, and we receive that constant

strengthening of our faith and the assurance of the truth of the wisdom of God.

Conclusion

Today's sermon is not intended to deprecate wisdom, intelligence, and human understanding. We are not to remain babes forever, but we are to mature in wisdom and understanding. But we must ever retain the humility that will enable us to accept the fact that in our relationship with God we must forever remain children. But who is there who would want to be more than a child of the Father in heaven? May God preserve us from being less!

Sarnia, Ontario, Canada

PAUL G. EIFERT

TRINITY XXII

LUKE 9:57-62

Introduction

The end of another church year is again in sight. It seems that the church fathers who set the traditional propers for this Twenty-Second Sunday After Trinity had a keen awareness of the need of the average Christian worshiper about this time of year for encouragement to faithfulness and constancy. The Introit assures us that we have a Lord ready to forgive, to hear, to help. In the Collect we ask that we may continue to be faithful in asking. In the Epistle Paul prays for the good work begun in the Christians at Philippi to be completed; for their continuance and perseverance until the Day of Christ. In the Gradual we are assured that God will heal and mend the battle-scarred. In the traditional Gospel for this day we are reminded of God's faithfulness in forgiving us and our commitment to be continually forgiving. The portion of Scripture we have heard as the text speaks of the need for

Total, Instant, Constant Commitment

Here are three unfinished, very short stories; three casual, roadside encounters,

conversations with Christ. Two men expressed interest in following Him; one was invited by Christ to follow Him. We are not told the outcome in any case, but we hear what Jesus expects.

I. *Christ Expects Total Commitment*

A. To the first man's statement of intent, "I will follow you wherever you go," Jesus says in effect, "Fine, but have you stopped to think what this will involve? Foxes have dens to which they can run for safety; birds their nests where they roost in relative security; but I, the Son of Man, have no place to call My own."

B. If you follow Me, Christ says (i.e., If you *really* follow Me), you will have to adopt a view of life quite different from that of most of the people around you. All the passionate drive for "a place of your own," all the careful planning for a "nest egg," all the attachments to things which might get in the way — are you really ready to turn your back on all these things and take on what many would call the uncertainty, the insecurity, the hazard of following Me?

C. We do well to remember that Christ became totally poor for our sakes ("He emptied Himself") that we might be totally rich in Him. He did not only lack luxuries during His earthly ministry; He lacked those things that even in primitive cultures are considered absolute necessities. He reminds us that we must go all the way in our willingness to abandon all that our old Adam would have us believe we deserve, all the things of "the good life," if we are to live unencumbered lives for Him.

D. In following Christ we as servants should not expect to fare better than the Master. But because of the Master we can serve, no matter what. We count the cost and the consequences as things *in* our lives. But we are above all mindful of the cost to Christ of our peace with God and the blessed

consequences of His redemptive sacrifice as the transforming power which has done things *to* our lives. We pray for grace to follow Him in total commitment.

II. *Christ Expects Instant Commitment*

A. When the chief character of the second of this little trilogy of short stories was invited by Jesus to follow Him, he said to Christ in effect: "Yes, Lord, but not at this particular time. I must first see my aged father buried." (It is most probable that if the father were already dead and awaiting burial the son would have been in active mourning and not likely to be engaged at all in this conversation with Christ.) Christ's startling, almost shocking reply is: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

B. Certainly Christ employs hyperbole here, gross overstatement to emphasize a point He knows is so difficult for the average person to grasp that it must be made in the boldest possible terms. Not only must everything else in the life of the Christ-follower take second place ("He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me"), but there should also be no delay, postponing, procrastination in following Him. We can't "buy now and pay later." The cost of discipleship becomes payable from the instant of commitment to Christ.

C. When Saint Paul in Galatians 1 writes of the way in which he was called by Christ and of his response to that call, he says, "I did not, as might have been expected, talk the matter over with any human being" (v. 16 Phillips). And then he writes that he immediately went to work proclaiming the Gospel in Arabia and Damascus. There is such a thing as divinely inspired impulsiveness, and there is such a thing as devil-inspired delay. The late C. S. Lewis in his *The*

Screwtape Letters, a fanciful exchange of correspondence between a senior devil and an apprentice enticer, writes of the apprentice devil receiving special commendation from his tutor for suggesting that instead of trying to keep people from following Christ altogether they subtly encourage them to say "yes" to Christ but then simply delay indefinitely putting their decision into action.

D. Following Christ is more than a matter of resolution in our life. It is a new way of life, a new attitude and power that He puts into our life. He in His grace has called us to follow Him, and His call comes to us repeatedly every day in a great variety of situations. But more significant than these stories is the fact that Jesus was there to tell them. And He was there because He came to make us *able* to follow through on them. We pray for the grace to give ourselves to Him in instant commitment lest there be no commitment at all.

III. *Christ Expects Constant Commitment*

A. The second and third men reported in these verses had a common problem. They both wanted to do something else "first" before following Jesus. J. B. Phillips has the third man saying, "I am going to follow You, Lord, but first let me bid farewell to my people at home." But Jesus says to him, "Anyone who puts his hand to the plow and then looks behind him is useless for the kingdom of God."

B. Of course only in the primitive, underprivileged parts of the world today do men literally still put hand to plow in their day's work, but the principle is obvious. Once He graciously calls us into His service, there is to be constant, continuous commitment. It is futile and frustrating and enervating to try to live in two worlds—to follow Christ by fits and starts and by constant running back to what we were and who we were before He called us. What Christ wants is the

totally disengaged heart, our undivided allegiance. If we try to follow Him halfheartedly, occasionally, sporadically, just at our convenience, we will never be able to render really effective field service for Christ, and we will never experience the supreme joy of the undivided heart.

C. This business of priorities has to be a constant concern of the child of God. In His great discourse on discipleship, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." In all the daily pressures that tempt us to become preoccupied with everything *but* the kingdom of God, we constantly need God's help in maintaining this pattern.

D. Constant commitment, too, is a gift of God granted to us by the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament. As we continue in the Word and our Baptismal relationship to God and as we frequently receive the body and blood of our Lord in Holy Communion, He Himself will be constantly working in us, leading us to know and empowering us to do His gracious and good will.

Conclusion

Pierre Teilhard, the French theologian, in *The Divine Milieu* speaks of what we are here calling "Total, Instant, Constant Commitment" as present in "the God-intoxicated man, the passionately indifferent man who has found Him who burns by setting fire to everything that we love badly or not enough; Him who calms by eclipsing with His blaze everything that we would love too much. . . . The temptations of too large a world, the seductions of too beautiful a world—where are these now? They do not exist. Now the earth can certainly clasp me in her giant arms. She can swell me with her life or draw me back into her dust. She can deck herself with every charm, with every horror, with every mystery. . . . But her enchantments can no longer do me harm."

TRINITY XXIII MATTHEW 10:24-33

Introduction

The historic propers again reassure and encourage the weary pilgrim. Introit: God knows, hears, will deliver. Collect: We pray for deliverance from the mess we have made of things. Epistle: We transients wait eagerly for the great journey home. Gradual: Excerpts from Ps. 44 remind us of who is on our side. Gospel: While still in the world, we have great responsibility to the world order. As you continue and think of the termination of your temporal pilgrimage,

What Do You Expect?

The text is from Christ's orientation talk with the Twelve before sending them forth, a "blood, sweat, and tears" talk. No soft sell, glossing over hardships (similar to recruitment program for the Peace Corps). But at same time it speaks of assistance He will give and assurance of the ultimate outcome, victory. We are told to

I. Expect to Fare as Christ Fared

A. Vv. 24-25a — Fully aware of what Christ as Teacher and Master suffered (experienced, endured), we as pupils and servants can expect no preferential treatment (Rom. 8:17-18). Indeed it is an honor to fare as badly as Christ fared. "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised."

B. We are to try to be winsome in order to attract people to our fellowship, where the Holy Spirit may reach them; but avoid the temptation to be superficially "attractive," "accepted." We have not only the individual priesthood of all believers but the individual "prophethood" as well. Our prophetic role, like Christ's, may well at times incur wrath, resentment, hostility. Do not court, but gladly accept, martyrdom.

C. V. 25b — "If men call the master of the household 'Prince of Evil,' what sort of

names will they give to his servants?" (Phillips). What do you expect? Always to be appreciated, acclaimed, honored? Never to be misunderstood, maligned, scorned? If so, you are expecting to fare better than Christ, your Lord, fared.

D. Name-calling today is most apt to be done subtly. Pressures to be part of the "in" group, "hep," at home "where the action is." Horror of being considered "square," dull, a "drag." Good to remember what Christ said in Luke 6:22-26.

II. Expect to Have Christ's Help

A. Vv. 26-31 — Cultivate a calm detachment in relation to your critics. Phillips says: "Never let them frighten you." The day will come when all inner motives, including yours, will be revealed. Fear nothing except unfaithfulness. Luther: "Tho' devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us, We tremble not, we fear no ill, They shall not overpower us."

B. The fearful man quickly becomes the ineffective man. Fear paralyzes, immobilizes. Only faith in the risen, victorious Christ can help us overcome our natural fears. Compare the timid, fearful disciples before Christ's resurrection appearance with the recklessly courageous apostles afterwards. Phillips: "Never be afraid of those who can kill the body but are powerless to kill the soul! Far better to stand in awe of the One who has the power to destroy body and soul in the fires of destruction!"

C. V. 27 — What we learn close to Christ we are to proclaim openly and boldly. In fact, only the fact that we have heard from *Christ* what we speak can embolden us to speak. What we are not sure Christ has said to us, that we properly say with some reticence. We should not be oracles that peep and mutter but confident spokesmen, witnesses, proclaimers for Christ.

D. Vv. 29-31 — The Master will protect His servants. Not one sparrow (they sell for a penny a pair) falls to the ground "without

your Father's leave" (NEB). And you are worth so much more than any number of sparrows that even the hairs of your head have been counted. He who feeds the sparrows will not let the saints starve. So, again, never be afraid!

III. *Expect Christ's Vindication*

A. Vv. 32-33 — Phillips: "Every man who publicly acknowledges Me I shall acknowledge in the presence of My Father in heaven, but the man who disowns Me before men I shall disown before My Father in heaven." Not to be construed as a bargaining position we reach in our relationship to God any more than the fifth petition of the Our Father. Any ability to "publicly acknowledge" Christ (1 Cor. 12:3), as well as any ability to forgive others, must come solely from His grace.

B. But once we possess this grace to confess Christ to men, we have the assurance of His vindication of us before the Father. There may well be times when the devil succeeds in tempting us to act as if we were ashamed of Jesus; there will be more times when we are thoroughly ashamed of ourselves and our fears and failures. He knows, will forgive, own us as His in heaven.

C. Our confession of Christ is to be "before men," "publicly." Your faith is *not* just a matter between you and God. What men see of your faith is very important — to them. Your fellow Christians are to be stimulated and encouraged by your example. The unbeliever is to see enough to lead him to inquire about the One who lives and reigns in you.

D. Christ will do all the owning and disowning in heaven, all the acknowledging and denying. Cast yourself completely on Him. Acknowledge that all your petty righteousnesses are as filthy rags and that your only hope of standing in the presence of a Holy God is based on the garment of Christ's righteousness which He has graciously given to you.

Conclusion

What do you expect? The mechanic who really works at his trade can expect to have grease under his fingernails; the salesman who covers his territory, to be away from home more than he would like; the student who wants to make the grade, to have to study late on occasion. The Christian who lives and speaks his faith can expect more hardships than we have mentioned but also indescribable joys on the way as Christ Himself helps from day to day and the ultimate bliss of eternal oneness with the Holy One.

TRINITY XXIV

JOHN 10:23-30

Introduction

As this is the last Sunday of the church year, the Introit and Collect for the Twenty-third Sunday After Trinity would be used. In today's historic Epistle St. Paul prays that the Colossian Christians may endure and finally share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Gradual: Christ lauded as the Deliverer, Fountain, Light. Gospel: Christ delivers on the way and will deliver at the end. Text gives us assurance that we are and will be —

One with God in Christ

These paragraphs in a setting of hostility against Christ. He had just been called a "demon" and "mad." Following this exchange they "took up stones again to stone Him." Nevertheless, Jesus gently tries to win them to a faith that trusts in Him, listens to Him, and brings them through Himself to oneness with God.

I. *A Faith That Trusts Is Essential*

A. V. 24 — The people seem to blame Christ for their uncertainty. "How long will You keep us in suspense?" He had been talking for hours, perhaps days, but they had been listening from a posture of prejudice, "the seat of the scornful." Similarly, today,

people listen to the claims of Christ with closed minds or preconceived notions and then find fault with the message or the messenger because they are still confused, unclear.

B. V. 25 — To their petulant cry, "If you really are Christ, tell us so straight out!" (Phillips), Jesus replies, "I have told you, and you do not believe it." The open mind, the receptive heart are prerequisites to faith. The Parable of the Four Soils; Jesus' Lament over Jerusalem. If you have trouble believing, do not fault Christ but first search your own heart. Have you really been as open-minded as you think you have been?

C. Reexamine the evidence. "My deeds done in My Father's name are My credentials" (NEB). Casual, occasional, cursory hearing of the Word may leave a person relatively untouched, unconvinced. Go over the record. Look at both the words and deeds of Christ in Scripture. Bible reading; Bible study. Review miraculous works which reassured John the Baptist in prison. The only way out of doubt is into the Word.

D. V. 26 — "Because you are not sheep of My flock you do not believe" (NEB). A faith that trusts the object of our faith is essential. A relationship of confidence and willingness to be led is necessary. Shepherd image.

II. *Listening to Christ Is Essential*

A. V. 27a — Christ's sheep hear Christ's voice. Terribly important in times when so many confusing voices claim to be spokesmen for Christ. Appreciative but cautionary references to the new theologians. Need more than ever the indwelling Holy Spirit to be guided into all truth. Pray for grace to recognize the voice of Christ as we listen to new terminology, vocabulary, salutary attempts to communicate the old Word in new words.

B. V. 27b — "And I know them." Jesus' knowledge of us is an effective knowing (Rom. 8:29 f.). It is only because He in

His grace has known us (has acknowledged us) as His that we are His. Great comfort that we are His not by the ordering of our thought processes or the mustering of our wills (both so pitifully subject to human frailties), but by an empowering and preserving divine act.

C. V. 27c — "And they follow Me." The blessedness of having listened to Christ, having the confidence that we are following *Him*. Not "cunningly devised fables," roads that will lead nowhere, or worse. The bliss of being shepherded by the *Good Shepherd*, being led as we hear in Psalm 23. . . . The joy of walking where Enoch and all the saints walked.

D. V. 28 — As we faithfully continue to listen to Christ and to follow Him, we have His assurance that He will give us eternal life, and we shall never perish, and no one shall snatch us out of His hand. Again, it is Jesus, in His grace, who is giving and preserving. Without Him utter confusion and uncertainty. With Him absolute clarity and certainty. Have only one fear — to be far from Christ; one concern, to be and stay close to Him.

III. *God Himself Gives the Oneness*

A. V. 29a — (Cf. RSV and NEB for variant readings here, but the sense is unaffected.) Christ here boldly lays Himself open to charges of uttering either blasphemy or nonsense. He identifies Himself as the One to whom the Father has given those who will not perish. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." What He has been doing the Father has been doing. What is safe with Him is safe with the Father. Hymn 437. All this is either true or blasphemous (the reaction of His immediate hearers); or nonsense (reaction of many today). We glory in it as the Gospel, "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."

B. V. 29b — When you entrust yourself to Christ, you are in the hands of no one

other and no one less than God Himself (John 14:1 ff.; Rom. 8:38-39). God gave Christ. Christ gives grace. Grace gives the confidence that it is God working His saving work in us.

C. V. 30 — "I and the Father are one." The Proper Preface for the Trinity season: "Who with Thine only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost art one God, one Lord. And in the confession of the only true God we worship the Trinity in Person and the Unity in Substance, of Majesty coequal." One of the clearest, first-person-singular testimonies to the deity of Christ. What John verbalizes in the prologue to his gospel. God's oneness in Himself is indivisible.

D. And once we are one with God in Christ, unless we ourselves deny or destroy this oneness, this will be our eternal destiny. Believers, one with Christ, will be one with God forever. This should give meaning, stature, direction to our lives now and will give an everlasting significance that we gladly and gratefully leave to our ever-gracious Lord.

Conclusion

Oneness with God through Christ creates a faith that trusts, the empty heart simply asking humbly to be filled. It grows by listening to Christ, following Him in the full sense, heart, mind, life. It is all the gift of God's great grace in Christ.

Minneapolis, Minn.

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AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE EISENACH GOSPEL SELECTION FOR TRINITY XXI

MARK 10:13-16

I

The pericope about Jesus and the children is dangerously familiar. As in the case of the Sermon on the Mount, people often

"like" this portion of Scripture without realizing the depth of meaning intended by our Lord in teaching His disciples.¹

These same disciples once again make their presence felt in an all-too-common bungling manner, so like our own performance as μαθηταί. The central figure, however, is and remains the Christ.

Mark 10:13-16 follows the section 8:27 to 9:13, which many consider to be the watershed of St. Mark's Gospel, from which the flow of events moves steadily toward the cross (10:45). Beginning with Peter's confession at Caesarea-Philippi, the evangelist incorporates into his account the Lord's first prediction of His passion and resurrection, requirements for discipleship, and the blinding revelation of power on the mount of transfiguration, about which the inner circle of disciples was to keep silent until after the resurrection and that special manifestation of the power and Spirit of God at Pentecost. (Cf. 9:1; Acts 1:8-11.)

The historical setting for these verses appears to be a house across the Jordan in Perea, where our Lord continued His teaching about marriage and divorce and where a steady stream of unidentified visitors began to arrive with their children. (10:1 ff.)

II

Verse 13: Καὶ προσέφερον αὐτῷ παῖδια.² The simple connective καὶ (parataxis) occurs repeatedly as the introductory word to a new contextual unit, one of many evidences of St. Mark's charmingly unpolished, sincere, unaffected style. The tense of the in-

¹ Archibald M. Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1944), p. 92, where Hunter terms our Lord's words in Matthew 5-7 "the most terrible indictment of human nature in all literature."

² The text followed is taken from the twenty-fifth edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

definite plural verb προσέφερον³ is imperfect and denotes continuous action. The unidentified people who kept bringing or leading children to Jesus were probably believing Jewish fathers and mothers. The παῖδια were children of various ages, "from the infant in arms to the elder children still under the mother's care" (Swete). Mark uses the word of a 12-year-old girl (5:39, 42); Luke in a parallel account employs the term βρέφη, or "infants" (Luke 18:15).⁴ ἵνα αὐτῶν ἄψηται — Bengel calls the final (purpose) clause ("in order that He might touch them") "a modest request." Verbs meaning "to touch" or "to take hold of" in the New Testament regularly take objects in the genitive case. The verb ἅπτομαι is used in the Greek Old Testament of an angel who touches Elijah to sustain him at Horeb while under the juniper tree (1 Kings 19:5, 7 LXX).⁵ To be touched by Jesus, however, is freighted with theological significance. Jesus is frequently described as touching the sick (including the leper) or being touched by them (e.g., Mark 1:40 f.; 3:10; 5:27 f.; 6:56; 7:33; 8:22), the point being that close association with Jesus results in untold blessings. The actual act of blessing the children is described in v. 16.

³ This compound verb is also commonly used of presenting or offering sacrifices to God as an act of worship.

⁴ To those who might have thought that the main point of this text is that "children, too, can believe," let no one think that children believe the Gospel because the Gospel itself is so simple (it is not!) but because the Spirit of God is so powerful (cf. 1 Cor. 1 and 2). The concept of the perspicuity of Scripture is a most valid and comforting doctrine solely because of the benevolent operation of the self-same Spirit.

⁵ Is. 6:7 and Jer. 1:9 in the LXX are also particularly instructive at this point. For possible rabbinical background see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, commenting on the parallel passage, Matt. 19:13-15, in *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I, pp. 807 f.

Οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησαν αὐτοῖς.⁶ The common adversative conjunction δὲ may suggest a general contrast or interference with the normally expected subsequent course of events. The meaning of the aorist verb in this context may perhaps be derived from ὁ ἐπιτίμιος ("faultfinder"), the nickname of the Greek historian Timaeus. (Liddell and Scott)

Whatever their motive, the disciples' rebuke was both unwarranted and without result.⁷ This verb commonly takes a dative object. The masculine (or neuter) pronoun αὐτοῖς is ambiguous, suggesting perhaps that Mark did not think of those bringing children to Jesus as being only mothers.

Verse 14: ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἠγανάκτησεν. From His vantage point in the house, Jesus, when He saw what had already taken place, became thoroughly indignant "on account of the obstruction thrown in the way of His love by His disciples" (Bengel).

The verb ἠγανάκτησεν, probably an ingressive aorist used only here to indicate our Lord's growing displeasure with His disciples, occurs later in this same chapter to describe the same disciples' reaction of displeasure over against James and John (10:41) and still later in 14:4, where some were visibly annoyed because a woman had anointed her Lord with expensive ointment.

In classical Greek literature the verb ἀγανακτέω is used by Plutarch of fermenting wine. Elsewhere it frequently denoted feeling a violent irritation, the noun form refer-

⁶ The familiar variant τοῖς προσέφερουσιν is perhaps due to the desire to get rid of the ambiguity of αὐτοῖς, which grammatically could refer to the children themselves. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), p. 323.

⁷ This certainly was not the only occasion where one or more of the disciples tried to reprove someone, thereby indicating their spiritual blindness (cf. Mark 4:41; 5:31; 6:52; 8:32; 9:32 f., 38 f.; 10:13 f., 24, 35 f.; 14:10 f., 37 f., 50, 53 f.).

ring even to the physical discomfort frequently associated with teething in little children (so Plato in his *Phaedrus*). The same verb is much less common in the LXX, one reference being Wisdom 5:22, "the water of the sea will rage against (the ungodly)." ⁸

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἄφετε τὰ παῖδια ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με, μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά — Our Lord's obvious displeasure with His disciples prompts Him, perhaps deliberately in the presence of His guests, to tell them all in no uncertain terms: "Let the children come to Me!" Mark's use of asyndeton before the negative prohibition μὴ κωλύετε (rapid-fire parataxis without the use of the familiar conjunctive καί) has the effect of suggesting Jesus' eagerness to speak to the situation immediately at hand. This coupled with the aorist imperative ἄφετε may suggest an urgent breathlessness. "All right now! For once and for all time I want this plainly understood: Allow people to come to Me! Stop placing road-blocks in their path! Never be hindering them in any way!" (The English word "hinder" is probably better than "forbid" since hindering may be unconscious and yet equally destructive).⁹

⁸ St. Mark describes these theanthropic characteristics of our Lord elsewhere in his Gospel (cf. 3:5 and 9:19, where two entirely different verbs are used). Careful concordance study, while extremely helpful, does not in itself always tell us all that we ought to know about a given word or passage. Concordances (Young, Strong, Moulton-Geden or Schmoller, Hatch and Redpath, Mandelkern or Lisowsky) will indeed provide the exegete with useful verbal parallels without, however, necessarily yielding also a rich harvest of relevant thought or substance parallels. There will never be a perfectly suitable substitute for reading large portions of the inspired text.

⁹ Oscar Cullmann has collected evidence to suggest that the phrase "forbid them not" is a deliberate allusion to the baptismal rite of the early church, where the question "What hinders?" (τί κωλύει;) was asked liturgically before the candidates were baptized (cf. esp. Acts 8:36; 10:47; 11:17). See Oscar Cullmann, *Bap-*

The prepositional phrase πρὸς με is not to be overlooked. This is but one of several instances in this brief pericope where we are led to believe that Jesus is the central figure in our text. He is the heart of the Kingdom (cf. 1:14-15). Later (12:34) our Lord in effect tells a certain scribe to look at Him when He says, "You are not far from the kingdom of God!"

τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, "For of such is the kingdom of God" is an extremely significant explanatory clause. Our Lord's interest in children is directly related to the concept of the kingdom of God. (Concerning the kingdom of God itself, there can be no doubt that this is *God's* kingdom, a subjective genitive).¹⁰ The genitive τῶν τοιούτων, too, is to be understood in terms of children and the Kingdom and what our Lord still has to say about it in v. 15. The pronominal adjective or correlative demonstrative τοιούτος is used with a great deal of freedom and occasionally takes the article as it does here with reference to children.¹¹ Not only does the Kingdom "belong to" such as these; the kingdom of God is actually likened unto such as these (cf. 9:37).

tism in the New Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 358 ff. Mark 10:13-16 says nothing specifically about the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Hence, a discussion of the pros and cons of infant baptism solely on the basis of the age range of a παιδίον, for example, is quite beyond the scope of a purely exegetical study of the pericope.

¹⁰ K. L. Schmidt, "Basileia," in *Bible Key Words* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), II, 22 ff., in which both the essence and powerful rule of God are to be seen (cf. Mark 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14 f., 23 ff.; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43).

¹¹ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), pp. 89 f.; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), pp. 709 ff.

Verse 15: ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὃς ἂν μὴ δέξηται τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν.¹² "Amen I say to you" is a formula employed by our Lord at the beginning of particularly significant statements whereby He solemnly affirms the inherent reliability and absolute certainty of what is to follow. The indefinite relative "whoever" is probably directed primarily as a warning not to the children but to the disciples who had just rebuked those who were coming to Jesus (so Bengel). The meaning then may be "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as he would (or should) receive a child, will surely not enter into it" or "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as if it (the Kingdom!) were like a child will surely not enter into it."¹³

This seeming departure from "traditional" views held concerning the meaning of this well-known pericope can be substantiated on sound grammatical and syntactical grounds. The comparative particle ὡς, for example, is usually positioned in such a way so as to connect closely the two members being likened to each other (cf. Mark 1:10; Matt. 10:16; 19:19; Luke 6:22; 10:3; 1 Thess. 5:4; Philemon 17). Thus it would be most natural to

take the comparative phrase ὡς παιδίον in verse 15 as accusative in apposition to the *adjoining* τὴν βασιλείαν, and not as nominative with ὃς, the distant pronominal subject of the verb (it being admittedly impossible to determine with absolute certainty the precise case of παιδίον). Wise was the man who said, "Do not ignore particles; they are often the freight cars of theology!"

The double negative οὐ μὴ with the aorist subjunctive is the most emphatic form of negation regarding the future in the Greek language, and it is used also to give us absolute assurance regarding the gracious promises of God (cf., e.g., John 6:37; 10:27 ff.; Heb. 13:5, where the piling up of negatives is particularly striking).

Verse 16: καὶ ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ κατεύλογει τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά. "And he took them in His arms and was fervently blessing them, placing His hands upon them." The simple καὶ followed by the participle ἐναγκαλισάμενος prompted Bengel to comment: *Plus fecit, quam rogatus erat* ("He did more than He was asked"). The compound verb κατευλογέω is probably intensive and occurs only here in the New Testament. Jesus Himself untiringly blessed these children, thereby making them recipients of all the graces needed for membership in the Kingdom (Matt. 5:3-12). The disciples evidently lacked that same unsophisticated sense of identification with children which Jesus had when He gathered them into His arms, His entire attitude and manner being evidence of the gracious rule of God in action.

The laying on of hands whereby our Lord touched the children in no mere perfunctory manner is reminiscent of rabbinical customs of firmly placing the hands on the head as well as the direct physical contact experienced in Christian baptism, ordination, and, where still practiced, in individual absolution. In His blessing of the children, our Lord bestows some of His own character and spirit on them.

¹² Some, influenced perhaps by passages in Matthew's Gospel, think v. 15 was inserted at this point in the narrative between vv. 14 and 16. There is no manuscript evidence whatever for this assertion regarding the text of St. Mark's Gospel, however.

¹³ Cf. our Lord's reference to "inheriting the Kingdom" by receiving with love "the least of these" His brethren in Matt. 25 (cf. also James 1 and 2 and 1 John 4). "Thus shall we receive the Kingdom which God would offer to all" (Bengel). We receive the Kingdom solely because of the grace of God, who generously reveals to us in Christ the mysteries of a forgiving God (cf. Mark 4:11; Is. 55:7-9). For possible rabbinical background material for "receiving the kingdom of God," see T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), pp. 131 ff.

He who once tenderly took children up in His arms was Himself cruelly lifted up on the arms of a cross. And He who lovingly took these little ones into His arms is He who was powerfully lifted up into heaven 40 days after His glorious resurrection from the dead. He was blessing then, and He still blesses us today.

III

Prevalent interpretations of this pericope include:

1. That we must become humble like a child to enter the Kingdom. While a certain humility and innocence do appear in some children (e.g., in Matt. 18), these qualities are certainly not an unfailing mark in all. Such moralizing tends to abuse a given text by faulty harmonization and is to be rejected.

2. Many others see in the phrase "as a child" the fact that a child is dependent, in need, and eager to receive aid and assistance from a generous God, who gives the Kingdom as a gift of grace (Mark 4:11; Luke 12:32).¹⁴ This is indeed a Biblical doctrine, but it is not necessarily textual in this case. Although this is perhaps the most prevalent view among exegetes regarding this pericope, such an interpretation tends to dismiss the fact that our Lord is here giving a loving warning to His disciples with the result that the comparative phrase *ὡς παιδίον* is understood as being in apposition to the subject of the clause, "whoever," instead of with the closer object of the verb, "the Kingdom."

3. A third view was stated in a recent article in the November 1965 issue of *Expository Times*.¹⁵ There F. A. Schilling says

¹⁴ Cf., e.g., John Bright's excellent study, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 210.

¹⁵ F. A. Schilling, "What Means the Saying About Receiving the Kingdom of God as a Little Child?, Mk. x. 15; Lk. xviii. 17," *Expository Times*, LXXVII (November 1965), 56-58. A bizarre interpretation of a similar passage is that

that *ὡς παιδίον* means to receive the Kingdom as if it (the Kingdom) were like a child, in need of love and affection. He cautions against confusing this pericope with Matt. 18:3 or attempting to harmonize the two, particularly in the light of Mark 9:36 f., which is a different occasion for which our Lord again chose a child to illustrate a given point about the Kingdom. This latter view, although new and startling to some and affecting the meaning of the entire pericope, nevertheless has much to commend itself and merits further careful study.

In describing the Kingdom as a child, no absolute equation is intended just as our Lord did not mean to imply that the kingdom of God is in every respect to be identified with a farmer who sows his good seed on all conditions of soil, or to a tiny grain of mustard seed, or to a fisherman's net, or to a seemingly "eccentric" householder. (Cf. Mark 4; Matt. 13 and 20.)

Schilling cautions against confusing Mark 10:15 with Matt. 18:3, which he terms "a clear case of the message and meaning of one passage being erased by interpreting it in the light of other (seemingly parallel) texts." If Schilling is correct, the traditional interpretation is a clear abuse of the original meaning of Scripture (in which case even Huck's *Synopsis* misleads at this point by printing Matt. 18:3 between Matt. 19:14 and 15 and alongside Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17). The Lord's words in Matt. 18:3 are addressed to the problem of greatness, and it is probably true that the two sayings are not parallel.¹⁶

of the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. Cf. Howard C. Kee, "'Becoming a Child' in the Gospel of Thomas," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXII (September 1963), 307-14.

¹⁶ One learns slowly to read St. Mark's Gospel in terms of St. Mark; Luke in terms of Luke-Acts, etc., before turning to the wider context of the New Testament and entire Bible. Scripture is its own best interpreter (*Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*), but always in terms

Thus there are in Mark's Gospel at least two separate occasions when children were used by Jesus to teach the disciples in the first place *how they* should be in relationship to the Kingdom (9:33-37) and secondly about the nature of the Kingdom itself (10:15). A child is used to illustrate both. Concerning 10:15, our Lord received little children with affection; in the same spontaneous way, without calculation, with instinctive love and trust, the disciples should be receiving the Kingdom. It appears therefore that the meaning of 10:15 may well be that those who claim to have received Christ but do not receive one another will miss out on all that God has to offer! If this is Jesus' intended meaning, then let us also go and learn what that means!

IV

The pastor, who is given the awesome privilege of rightly dividing the Word of

of sound hermeneutical principles and the material principle of Biblical theology, justification by faith in the crucified and risen Christ. These alone enable the pastor or teacher to listen with an open mind to what God is really saying in His Holy Word instead of bringing to bear upon the sacred text one's own preconceived ideas, a few of which may be subject to question.

truth to his fellow redeemed on the basis of Mark 10:13-16, should find that the foregoing exegesis (receiving the Kingdom as though it were a child or as one ought to receive a child) frees the theologian and preacher from the painful, indeed, impossible task of discovering those subjective characteristics of a child which must also be reawakened in an adult in order that he might receive the Kingdom. Our Lord speaks about that most clearly in His discourse with Nicodemus in John 3. Many a eulogy of the child appears thus to have been strained since, and this bears repetition, not all children are innocent and humble anyway. The kingdom of God is *ὡς παιδίον*.¹⁷

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¹⁷ Homiletical suggestion: One may wish to advance use of this text to Rally Day. Special care ought to be exercised, however, to preach the text without in any way detracting from its intensely christological character. Those using the Eisenach Gospels every Sunday will note that the Twenty-first Sunday After Trinity this year occurs on October 30. To those not already familiar with it, we heartily recommend for careful study an excellent volume by Willem Jan Kooiman entitled *Luther and the Bible*, translated by John Schmidt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961).