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ARCHIVES

HOMILETICS

INTRODUCTION

These studies continue to illustrate how the use of the Ordo A Gospels rather consistently reinforces the thrust of a Sunday as it has been shaped in the past by the historic propers.

The studies in this issue note an improvement in the selection of a Gospel for Trinity Sunday. Even in a distinctively different Sunday, such as Corpus Christi in the Roman sequence, a connection is helpfully drawn to the propers of *The Lutheran Liturgy*.

The three series of the Ordo will be the background against which the Lutheran 3-year cycle is formed. Lutheran clergymen may well be alerted to the examination of the coming Sundays with a view to considering whether the changes are radical enough. We begin with this issue the sequence of Sundays which continues through the Thirty-fourth Sunday of the Year. That sounds even more endless than the Twenty-seventh Sunday After Trinity!

TRINITY SUNDAY

Ex. 34:4b-6, 8-9; 2 Cor. 13:11-13;
John 3:16-18

The text offered by Ordo A as the Gospel for the Feast of the Holy Trinity comes as a blessed relief. If you have studied the scholars of our tradition, you will remember how they scored the fact that the traditional Gospel for the Feast of the Holy Trinity (John 3:1-15) was completely out of harmony with the observance of the day and obviously mismatched with the propers and lessons appointed for the day. The Feast of the Holy Trinity concerns no activity but a doctrine. John 3:16-18 is patently more harmonious to communicating the eternal truths of the work of our salvation by God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The conversation of Christ and Nicodemus in John's Gospel had begun in the 2d verse of the 3d chapter. It is generally conceded that the dialog concluded in the 15th verse. From verse 16 to 21 John gives expression to the amazing implications of the love of God in Christ Jesus. For reasons better known to the Fathers than understood by their heirs, the ancient Gospel appointed for that which was at one time the Octave of Pentecost was retained centuries later by the Lutheran reformers for the feast we herewith consider. "God's Salvation in Christ Can Be Appropriated by Faith Only"

- I. Man's utter inability to work out his own salvation.
 - A. He would, for time and eternity, be locked in misery under God's wrath.
 - B. Left to his own doing, he would have to perish.
- II. The unsearchable and inscrutable God sent His Son in love.
 - A. The Son came not to condemn the world.
 - B. The Son came to save the world.
- III. Faith, the gift of the Spirit, effects salvation.
 - A. Faith provides escape from condemnation.
 - B. Faith makes the believer acceptable.
- IV. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

Deut. 8:2-3, 14b-16a; 1 Cor. 10:16-17
John 6:51-58

The assignment given those who have been asked to submit these brief sermon studies includes the directive: "Consider the accent of the day as it develops with the use of the standard lesson and . . . contrast the thrust of . . . the new Ordo lessons." According to Ordo A, the day observed by those

of Roman persuasion is Corpus Christi. The thrust of the traditional First Sunday After Trinity Sunday lessons is the matter of applying Christian love. The text offered by Ordo A is considered by the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church as a proof text for transubstantiation. But that isn't the point of harmony between our traditional texts and the text at hand. Divorce your thinking from the Corpus Christi theme and notice that there is indeed a connecting link. This portion of John's Gospel treats the matter of discipleship and touches particularly upon the secret of Christian faith and living. We would propose this for your consideration:

"Christ's Sacrificial Love Our Pattern of Love"

- I. He came down from heaven to bring eternal life.
 - A. The bread He gives is life-giving.
 - B. The blood He gives brings life.
 - C. Receiving these gifts assures eternal life.
- II. He who eats the bread from heaven and drinks the blood has the life that shows itself.
 - A. Life comes from Him.
 - B. Love expresses itself because of His love.

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THE SECOND SUNDAY
AFTER TRINITY

Hosea 6:3-6; Rom. 4:18-25; Matt. 9:9-13

The historic lessons of The Lutheran Liturgy include two great banquets to which we are invited and a suggestion for a guest list for the banquets we ought to give. The Old Testament Lesson (Is. 25:6-9) describes a great feast at which the Lord will "wipe away tears from all faces" and the Gospel another feast given by God (Luke 14:12-24)

whose guests were those who have the most to weep about in our world. The Epistle (1 John 3:13-18) urges us to open our hearts to all our brothers in need and to love them in deed, perhaps in banquets.

The lessons of Ordo A move in on our reaction to the divine caterer's suggestion. Do we love steadfastly, do we know God — or are we trying to get by with token sacrifices and burnt offerings while we sit stolidly at our tax booth gathering in all we can? We should be realistic about ourselves, but we ought not "weaken in faith when we consider our own bodies which are as good as dead." The promise of God can put new life into us. He can change us from those who excuse to those who choose the bread of the kingdom banquet.

When the Gospel of Ordo A is used as a text for the propers of the Second Sunday the images are mixed, but the theme could accent our Lord as The Cure for Excusers.

I. Sitting or following?

- A. He thought he was doing all right.

That's where a good publican should be found — sitting at the tax office. We all agree. That's really the real estate business. Consider your station. Take up your yoke — whether it is your obligation to your marriage or to your five pair of oxen. It is our duty to do our duty by those who are dependent on us. These are our nearest brethren and we ought to love them.

- B. But the Lord demanded a right-about-face.

"Follow me." He could have pointed out the usual publican problems. He does to us: "If any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" But the greatest problem is just sitting there and not following

Jesus Christ. We must repeatedly turn from looking after our selves and our loved ones to look at Jesus. Is ours actually the right position? Are we sitting or following?

II. Well or sick?

- A. All will be well if we change our position.

That was the attitude of the Pharisees. Jesus should not eat with tax collectors and sinners. Tax collectors should resign and sinners stop sinning. And we should make new resolutions and new efforts. We should change. We should do better. Actually the first need is to recognize our condition. Matthew realized he was sick, poor and maimed, and blind and lame. Do we need to be reminded that we are living in the highways and the hedges?

- B. Actually what we need is the Great Physician.

What we are can be cured only by drastic divine action. And God sent the Doctor. The Physician made a house call. His life and words made the diagnosis clear. But He Himself was the cure. He was both mercy, and He was sacrifice. He laid down His life for His brethren. We make a new beginning as we "come to the feast," as we "taste the banquet." It will be our great joy as we invite the brothers in need to our banquet and find among the guests our Brother in deed.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ex. 19:2-6a; Rom. 5:6-11;

Matt. 9:36—10:8

Jesus saw the crowds to whom He ministered as "sheep without a shepherd." He sent out the Twelve to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He had urged the disciples

to pray that the Lord would send out laborers, and then proceeded to answer their prayers by Himself sending them out. That thrust in the Ordo A Gospel is clearly a follow-through on all that Jesus did for us "while we were yet sinners." He sent Himself and died for His people. It is good to hear of His concern for all of us, for the Old Testament Lesson recalls how Israel was uniquely God's "possession among all peoples."

The historic lesson praises the God who is like no other in "passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance" (Micah 7:18-20). The Gospel records the heavenly joy over one repentant sinner and cheers us in the fact that we too have been sought. The Epistle (1 Peter 5:6-11) includes us among those whom "the God of all grace has called to His eternal glory in Christ."

The Ordo A Gospel describes a situation before the new covenant made by the God of all the earth opened the Kingdom doors to all peoples. Those disciples were warned to avoid the Gentiles and to enter no town of the Samaritans. The Kingdom was *at* hand, but not *in* hand. Now that the Kingdom is in hand, we are urged to beat the bushes. A brief summary might be, "Found — now look!"

I. Found.

- A. The mighty hand of God has done it. Jesus Christ, God's right-hand man, has sought and found us. Without money and without price, Jesus has recovered each one of us, every one of us lost coins.

As a man among men He chose us to be brothers and disciples.

- B. But stay humble under that mighty hand.

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to perpetuate the old non-Gentile, non-Samaritan exclusions, which

made them something special.

The name of Judas here still listed among the Twelve should warn us that the roll is not complete until it is called up yonder.

- C. You will be very close to His head if Jesus Christ has raised you to His shoulder.

If we rejoice with Him, it must be because He has found us and not because we are somehow special in having been lost.

Hear Him pray for you that the devil cannot snatch you away, and yourselves resist him, steadfast in the faith. Your value actually only exists because He has picked you up and holds you in His hand.

II. Look.

Account for the one who is lost, don't keep counting the ninety-nine who are found. Any who are harrassed and helpless and all for whom God has compassion are included in our directive.

Do talk, but don't let healing undone. Preach the Kingdom, which means sharing the King. But remember your authority over unclean spirits, your power to heal disease and infirmity.

You have it. Give it. You are found. Look.

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THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Jer. 20:10-13; Rom. 5:12-15;
Matt. 10:26-33

The Standard lessons focus on "The Health of God's People — Now and Forever."

Is. 58:6-12 contrasts two kinds of religious observance and puts the promise of light and health upon the right commitment.

Rom. 8:18-23 describes all creation living in hope for the final redemption of the people of God.

Luke 6:36-42 gives a crisp instruction of Jesus for the attitude of life so necessary for God's community: Don't judge, meet your own fault first.

The lessons of Ordo A, "The Twelfth Sunday of the Year," correlate in the theme, "Faith in God Clings to His Promise of Grace."

Jer. 20:10-13 shows the prophet clinging to God in the midst of persecution.

Rom. 5:12-15 summarizes the triumph over the sin and death of Adam and mankind through the grace of God in the Second Adam.

Matt. 10:26-33 brings Jesus' own counsel to trust in God, and to couple it with the saving acknowledgment of the Christ. Outline:

The Faith That Trusts and Confesses

We have all just recited our Creed, "I believe in God . . ." But faith is more than reciting creeds or agreeing with dogma.

I. Faith trusts in God.

A. Unfaith is not just doubt about dogma, uncertainty of the existence of God; it is fear, fear of everlasting death, fear of subsistence now.

B. Faith clings to God as supporting Father; He knows our every need — and He cares. We know He cares, for He gave up His only Son for us all.

II. Faith confesses Jesus as the Christ of God.

A. Unfaith is not merely not knowing how to say a creed, but it is the failure to make our own God's gift of life through His Son.

B. Therefore real faith says: Jesus, I know You; You were sent by God to redeem me and join me to the Father's family, and You did it at the cost of Your own cross. You really did! I'm going to tell, where I can!

THE FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER TRINITY

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a; Rom. 6:3-4, 8-11;
Matt. 10:37-42

The Standard Lessons stress: "God's Serious Intention in Putting His People into the World."

Jer. 16:14-21 is a harrowing forecast of God's rooting out the people who strayed from Him into idolatry despite His rescue from captivity.

1 Peter 3:8-15 is the great analysis of the life of mutually concerned Christians as the impulse for the saving questions of their neighbors.

Luke 5:1-11 describes a catcher of fish caught by His Lord to become a catcher of men.

The lessons of Ordo A center in "God's Love to His People that They Might Love One Another."

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a, the gracious story of Elisha and the Shunnamitess, portrays God's help despite odds, His blessing on "a great woman."

Rom. 6:3-4, 8-11, bridges the familiar catechetical proof text into the direction of Christian behavior.

Matt. 10:37-42 links two paragraphs to highlight facets of our love to Christ: greater

than love for people, but prompting to love for people. Outline:

What It Takes to Love Christ

"Jesus, Priceless Treasure!" "O Savior, precious Savior!" We can make the loving sounds. But let Jesus tell us what it takes truly to love Him.

I. Loving Him more than the competition.

A. The competition of lovable people. Some agonizing decisions: Are they getting in the way of Jesus? Do I deceive myself that I should not love them?

B. The competition of comfort. The idol of 1972 America. Remember the discomfort He undertook to set you free from the thralldom of flesh and world.

II. Loving Him enough to love His people.

A. Jesus has won us so that we take care of His brothers and sisters, nurture the members of His body.

B. He supports His promise of blessing with His own sacrifice of Himself, in the midst of His brethren, to redeem us all at the cost of His own life.

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