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Vol. XLIII

May

Number 5

HOMILETICS

INTRODUCTION

Anyone interested in developing a series of sermons to promote attendance in July should find homiletic happiness in recasting the sermon suggestions that are included in this issue. They were developed by different men who, though on speaking terms in all other things, did not speak together about these; and yet their progression almost calls for a phrasing that would accent their series relation — like Paul speaking to Felix and Drusilla about faith and about justice and self-control and future judgment (Acts 24:24-25). Of course as Felix heard Paul, he was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity I will summon you." That would be all right too — if you were to read these and simply decide to file them for a future opportunity.

GEORGE W. HOYER

Trinity 6

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Old Series

Ordo A

Exodus 20:1-17

Zechariah 9:9-10

Romans 6:3-11

Romans 8:9, 11-13

Matthew 5:20-26

Matthew 11:25-30

The Collect prays God, "Graft in our hearts the love of Thy name." A new shoot from the new branch must be grafted in — the roots we have by nature will not be able to produce such love. And the Collect indicates the good fruit — "Increase in us true religion." The Gospel points out that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees if we hope to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Ten Commandments are the Old Testament lesson of *The Lutheran Liturgy*. The Ruth 1:1-18 passage of the *Service Book and Hymnal* might be more specific to many ears in accenting love as the fulfilling of the Law, if they can be helped to translate the particular domestic situation of that account to the everyday situations in which they must exercise their faith in love. The Epistle shows how the grafting in of the love of God took place — "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. . . . United with Him in a death like His . . . we believe that we shall also live with Him."

When the new lessons of Ordo A are read

on this Sunday, the Epistle's stress is comparable — "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the Spirit." The grafting is directly attributed to the Spirit rather than through baptism by the Spirit. "The deeds of the body" are to be put to death in order that we might truly live. The Zechariah passage would strike many hearers with its Advent and Palm Sunday overtones if they are not alerted to the connection with the Gospel in the description of Jesus as "gentle and lowly in heart." In any case, when the Gospel of Ordo A is considered as a text for the sequence of propers included in the historic series, a possible theme could be: "The Righteousness of True Religion."

The scribes and the Pharisees were good men. (It never seems to come up, but their wives were probably good women too.) It would not be too comfortable to stack our righteousness up against theirs. Yet Jesus warned that those who hope to make the kingdom of heaven must have a righteousness that exceeds theirs. And in the context of the Gospel He spelled out that righteousness by obedience to the Law must include the implications as well as the obvious statements of the commandments. But what Jesus does by what He says and who He is and what He has done for us is to point up the fact

there is a righteousness of false religion and a righteousness of true religion.

- I. The religion of exceeding righteousness makes men labor and become heavy laden.
 - A. It seems plain to the wise and understanding that the way to favor with God is by doing enough righteous things.
 - B. God points up that life lived on this premise must keep the whole Law or suffer its condemnation.
 - C. No wonder "all who labor are heavy laden." No rest for the weary wicked.
- II. True religion accepts the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the rest it brings.
 - A. Its source is the Father's gracious will, made simple for the simple, and revealed to men by His Son, Jesus.
 - B. His obedience of the whole Law and yet willing enduring of its condemnation is offered to all who will accept.
 - C. With His righteousness He gives rest. As we accept it we find rest.

Trinity 7

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Old Series	Ordo A
Jeremiah 31:23-25	Isaiah 55:10-11
Romans 6:19-23	Romans 8:18-23
Mark 8:1-9	Matthew 13:1-23 or 1-9

The Collect could sum up a possible development of the Sunday's thrust with its prayer that God would "put away from us all hurtful things and give us those things which are profitable for us." It could well add a petition for the wisdom to enable us to tell the difference. This stress would make natural an application of the Gospel's feeding of the four thousand in line with the Collect's ascription to God of "never-failing providence." But if the stress of this

second cycle in the Trinity season be "newness of life and righteousness as marks of those who are in the kingdom," as Luther D. Reed suggests in *The Lutheran Liturgy*, and if the sequence begun with a stress on justification last Sunday be continued with a stress on sanctification this Sunday, then the Epistle might better serve as the major impetus of the Sunday's thrust. There St. Paul urges as much enthusiasm for sanctification (growing out of the righteousness God gives us through Jesus Christ) as in our natural state we would expend in impurity and greater iniquity.

The new Gospel proposed in Ordo A would serve more adequately for such a stress than would the historic one. Obviously the Ordo selections envision a different stress. The feeding and food determine the selections from the Old Testament (in both series) and they suggest the Epistle and the Gospel in the Ordo selections. But with our accidental arrangement of the Ordo Gospel as the sermon text for the historic proper we could move from last Sunday's theme into a further focus on the place of works in the Christian life. The theme might be "Good Works and True Religion"—or if one would wish to take the opportunity to make another theological term more useful to the people of God, he might phrase it, "Sanctification in True Religion."

Jesus Christ must have known frequent frustration at the small harvest His preaching of the Word produced. The parable of the four soils seems a polite expression of that frustration, more polite than the kind of complaining all too often heard from pulpits manned by discouraged parsons. But Jesus evidently was aiming for improved results even as He expressed His frustration, for He ends with totals that He sees as reasonable crop expectations and urges, "He who has ears, let him hear." He expects us to set reasonable goals as well, and so to appropriate the power of the Word that we produce

good works. There must indeed be "sanctification in true religion."

I. It's not easy.

A. Remember that works can be the root of false religion.

B. Be realistic about all that works against sanctification:

The path and the hungry birds

The rocks and the scorching heat

The thorns and the clutching death

II. But 30% or 60% or even 100% is possible.

A. Jesus Christ and the 100%.

He was the Word, took on our human nature that He might have ears to hear. And He heard and did everything the word wanted. This greater Joseph stored up all He produced for His brothers who live in lean years and hunger.

B. Each one of us and the 30% or the 60%.

The seed is good. He waters and ploughs and harrows our ground. We have ears. We hear. And the Sun shines in.

GEORGE W. HOYER

Trinity 8

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OF
THE YEAR

Old Series

Ordo A

Jeremiah 15:19-21 Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Romans 8:12-17 Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 7:15-23 Matthew 13:24-30

The old series combines the Collect, the Epistle, and the Gospel into an effective preaching unit on our lives in the Spirit. The Epistle calls us to walk in the Spirit as those who call God "Abba" (Collect), and the Gospel encourages us to walk genuinely in the Spirit.

The Ordo A series picks up two verses

from the same eighth chapter of Romans, but the emphasis shifts to the Spirit interceding with us as we pray, while the Gospel is Matthew's parable about the enemy who sowed weeds while the farmer slept. The Old Testament reading is taken from the apocryphal book of the Wisdom and would not be used in most Lutheran churches. The theme of the Gospel is to let them alone until the harvest. The Collect and the Epistle can be related to this only with some difficulty, but perhaps a theme like "One and/or Holy?" might work.

Introduction

Which is more important: the unity (*una*) of the church, which means that really there can be only one church which must be broad enough to include all people in its membership (otherwise *una* is a strange boast); or the holiness (*sancta*) of the church, which means the church must keep its standards of inclusion high to weed out non-Christians, (otherwise *sancta* is a strange boast).

Goals

Better to live in our community of committed (Collect) Christians, rejoicing (Introit) in the holiness and the oneness which we have in Christ and in growing degree in observable fact (Ordo Gospel).

Malady

What gets in the way? Some are hung up on *una!* Everybody in! No standards, no doctrinal agreement, no discipline, no sense of sin. Others are hung up on *sancta!* Everybody out! Except you and me, and I have doubts about you. Dig out the weeds now within the church, and don't let any others in (Lutheran fellowship). Mote and beam.

Means

Our Lord says "No" to both hangups, because both sell Him short and neither has any real need for Him. He who spoke the parable in the Ordo A series is also He who

by giving His body into death created the church as His real body and at the same time gave His body and His blood to the church to wash it and to solidify it. In Him the church is *una et sancta*, and we work from this given reality to achieve observable reality. When the community is too *una*, He sanctifies it; when it is too *sancta*, He unites it. From the base of what our Lord Jesus is and does we can operate confidently, neither too little nor too much concerned about the weeds growing in the wheat.

Trinity 9

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF
THE YEAR

Old Series

Ordo A

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

1 Corinthians 10:6-13

Romans 8:28-30

Luke 9:1-9

Matthew 13:44-52

The old series makes a nice, striking unit for mid-July, as Introit, Epistle and Gospel unite to focus our thinking on the passage of time, the near approach of the end of the ages, the necessity of being at least as wise as the children of this world, so that we may be saved (Introit) when the Master comes.

Some of this end-time focus is retained in the Ordo A selections (and this is surely a helpful emphasis at almost the midpoint of the Trinity season. It provides God's people with a great opportunity to check the condition and the shape of their hope). In the OT reading Solomon asks for wisdom (to

discern the times, or is this pure allegory?); the Epistle assures us that everything will come out all right, and we know this because we have already seen the end time in the resurrection of our Lord (Pannenberg). We have found the treasure, the pearl of great price, and we know that the net is being drawn in and the sorting is already under way. And so we pray, "Save me, O God, and judge me by Thy strength."

How about this theme: "We Know How the Story Comes Out!"

Goal

To call for and encourage confident and courageous living by trusting in God's promises, all of which have found their Yea and Amen in the resurrection of His Son.

Malady

Our deep-down human refusal to believe that God cares for us sinners, that He has done all, and that He is completely trustworthy. Sham and superficial kinds of trust in God. Legalistic bargaining with God; misunderstood "covenant" relationships, with God being bound to our requests.

Means

The treasure, the pearl. The net now being drawn in; the knowledge that we are predestined to be conformed to the resurrection image of His Son; those whom He justified He also glorified (past tense).

HERBERT T. MAYER