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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein weiden, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Woelfen wehren, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuehren und Irrtum einfuehren.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie*, Art. 24

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — 1 Cor. 14:8

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sicher mit Unrecht. Die Abfassungszeit zu bestimmen, ist unmöglich."

Oesterley (*op. cit.*, p. 508) has this to say: "The implication, therefore, is that this letter was written at a time when the Jews were in the enjoyment both of religious liberty and peaceful surroundings. Another implication is that this period of quiet had lasted some time; the danger of which the letter bears witness would have taken some time to develop. Then, further, there is no reference to the great calamity of A. D. 70, which affected the Dispersion Jews very deeply from a religious point of view and which would therefore have been referred to, one may presume, had the letter been written some time soon after this catastrophe. The possibility of its having been written some time before this must be allowed; Marshall holds, for example, that it was written during the first century B. C. (in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, II, p. 579); and there is no strong argument against this; the present writer prefers to date it along with the two preceding sections of this book, though he fully realizes the force of Cheyne's words that 'it is hardly possible to fix the date exactly and unsafe even to say that the epistle was written before 2 Maccabees, the supposed reference to it in 2 Mac. 3:1 ff. being disputed.'" (Note: *Encycl. Bibl.*, II, 2395.)

As to the place of composition of this epistle no authority makes any definite statements. Since the epistle purports to have been written to Babylon to warn the Exiles, why not assume that it was written somewhere in Palestine?

Bibliography

- Wace, II, pp. 287—303.
Kautzsch, I, pp. 226—229.
Charles, I, pp. 596—611.
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Austin, Tex.

K. G. MANZ

(To be concluded)

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Gospel Selections

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 6:20-31

The words of our text remind us very strongly of the Sermon on the Mount as it is briefly recorded by Matthew in chapter five. Christ may have spoken similar words on various occasions. Far more important it is for us to give due consideration to the important truths which he utters.

**Christ Proclaims Truths which Are in Direct Contrast
to the Opinions of the World**

1. *He pronounces those blessed whom the world despises*
2. *He reproaches those whom the world praises*
3. *He lays down rules which the world ridicules*

1

V. 20a. Does, then, poverty put men into the kingdom of God? Christ is here not speaking of the absence of material wealth. He is addressing Himself to His disciples, who have found in Him forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. These He is instructing, how they are to be minded. Cp. also Matt. 5:3: "poor in spirit," always humble, fully aware of the fact that they have nothing that is of value in the sight of God; therefore meek and unassuming, Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:5-8.

The world: "What fools these Christians are never to boast of their moral worth, of their accomplishments, etc.!" Christ: V. 20. You are now in possession of all the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus, and you are heirs of all the riches in the kingdom of heaven.

V. 21: "that hunger." See Matt. 5:6, "after righteousness." To be sure, the Christians are continually hungering after the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, which alone makes them acceptable to God. But Christ is here speaking of the righteousness of life, piety in every form.

The world: "What folly! Too honest, too strict, too narrow-minded; stand in their own way of progress and success; deprive themselves of every enjoyment." Christ: V. 21a. Satisfied with the assurance that God will give them grace to walk in the ways of the Lord, Is. 40:29, 31; that God is pleased, Col. 1:10 ff.

V. 21b. "Weep now." Weep over their sins; that they are not making the desired progress in sanctification. Weep also over the sins of others and over their neglect of seeking salvation in Christ Jesus.

The world: "What senselessness! Only making life miserable for themselves; grieving over trifles. And why worry about us? We can well take care of ourselves. Christ: V. 21b: "Blessed . . . laugh," rejoice over the fact that God will in His grace cover their shortcomings with the garment of Christ's righteousness, that God will yet win many unbelievers for Christ and salvation. On the last Great Day and forever thereafter, Ps. 126.

Vv. 22, 23. That is the lot of the conscientious Christian.

The world: "Serves them right. They have brought it all down upon themselves. Think they are better than others; must always be telling us that we are lost sinners and can find salvation alone in Christ. And look at their lives! They are not perfect either — hypocrites.

Christ: V. 23a. Why? "In like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." Cp. Acts 5:41; 16:25. You are in good company, especially because you are enduring "for the Son of Man's sake." John 15:18-21; 1 Pet. 4:12, 13. "Your reward is great in heaven," not of merit but of grace.

2

V. 24a. Wealth does not of itself bring man to destruction. Abraham, Job. But: 1 Tim. 6:9, 10; Luke 18:23. However, Christ is here speaking of such as consider themselves beyond reproach, are quite satisfied with themselves and hold that God, too, has every reason to be satisfied with them. Luke 18:11, 12; Matt. 19:20; believe that, if all men would be as good as they are, all would be well. Their conscience seldom troubles them. If it does, they silence its voice.

The world usually praises such as being a credit to any community. Even in funeral sermons their merits and achievements are lauded to the skies.

Christ says: V. 24b. They have provided their own consolation in thinking that God in His love will overlook their insignificant frailties. This self-made consolation will not always, even in this life, render the desired service; but on the last Great Day it will fail them utterly. Their garment of self-righteousness will be torn from them, and they will stand before God in all the nakedness of their sin.

V. 25. "Woe unto you that are full!" Who are they? People who seek their sole satisfaction in the things of this life. They have their bank account, their stocks and bonds and other safe and productive investments. What need they more? — Those who have but little are content with that little. They enjoy the satisfaction of having a pair of strong arms, enjoying good health, having an alert and sagacious mind. If matters take a turn for the worse, they can still take care of themselves.

The world usually considers them wise and happy people, thinking, even saying: These people know how to enjoy life and how to get the most out of it.

Christ says: "Woe! . . . Ye shall hunger." Already in this life their hunger for more is never appeased. The more they have, the more they want. And what if reverses set in? What happened during the depression? Desiring to be good losers, some gritted their teeth and took it; others were determined to start all over again. In others the hunger for what was lost was so great that they considered suicide the only recourse. When in death and on Judgment Day all their idols topple and fall, then what? Hunger and thirst forever.

V. 25b. "Laugh now." Spicy jokes, ribald song, merry cup,

obscene movie, foul roadhouse: this the world considers a real life. Why not get your fling while it lasts? Why not eat, drink, and be merry?

The Lord says: "Woe! . . . Ye shall mourn and weep." Often enough in this life, over much-needed money foolishly spent, impaired health, wrecked reputation, etc. But what after this life? Weeping and gnashing of teeth forever.

V. 26. Now the Lord turns to His disciples with the warning not to yield to the temptation of approving of the world's iniquitous life either by silence or by participation in the hope of gaining the acclaim of the world. False prophets.

3

Vv. 27-31. Christ instructs His Christians how they are to exercise their love toward their fellow-man, Rom. 13:10; even their enemy, vv. 28, 29; Rom. 12:20. — A Christian's love should induce him rather to suffer wrong than to do wrong. To smite back, v. 29a, would hardly be in accord with love. — Conditions may arise which will cause a Christian's love to go to the extent of vv. 29b, 30. That does not mean that he should never insist on his rights. These words are addressed to the Christian as Christian. As a citizen he may even be under obligation to protect himself and his property out of consideration for others who also have a claim upon his love. As a Christian he should let his love have no limit. In general the Christian's love should be guided by v. 31.

Let us always remember that we are Christians and that we are not to be guided by the opinions, views, and philosophies of the world but by the instruction of our Lord.

R. NEITZEL

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 13:44-50

The instruction which Jesus offers in this text is of utmost importance *just now*, for right now we meet with much harmful misunderstanding of the word "church." True, the word may be used in a number of different meanings. I need not enter upon each of these just now. It is essential, however, that we understand the word as we use it daily in the confession of our Creed when we say: "I believe in the holy Christian *Church*."

To enlighten us on this subject, Jesus spoke the three parables of our text.

Jesus' Instruction Concerning His Church

1

He tells us who the members of this Church are.

a) In our text Jesus does not use the word "church," but He speaks of the "kingdom of heaven." That is just another name for

Church. The true Christian Church is a kingdom. It has one Master, Ruler, King, who is in truth the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Matt. 23:8, 10; John 13:13. When Pontius Pilate asked Him, "Art Thou a King, then?" Jesus confessed, "Thou sayest that I am a King," John 18:37. Jesus is the only Person who actually in every sense deserves the name of Leader, Captain, King, Lord. Many other kings and lords were and are mere figureheads. While they parade as lords or monarchs, there is an entirely different power behind the throne. But Jesus is a King who is actually the King. He has a name that is above every name. He takes advice from no one. With Him there is no power behind the throne. He Himself is Lord of lords and King of kings in the full meaning of the term.

b) This King has gained subjects for Himself, not by force of arms, not by warfare, conquest, and cruel subjugation of others; no, He has won these subjects by bestowing upon them the most costly treasure which any man may gain or possess. Here in our text it is called a treasure hid in a field for which a man sells all that he has in order to buy it. Again He calls it a pearl of great price, for which the man gives all that he has. What is this treasure? It is peace with God, purchased not with gold or silver but with the holy, precious blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. This treasure of forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and heaven is found in the Word of God. They who find it there and accept it by faith, rejoice over its possession and allow nothing to wrest this pearl of great price from them; *they are members in the kingdom of heaven*. They are the people who compose the holy Christian Church. Gal. 3:26.

Are you one of these?

2

Having pointed out who are actually members of His Church, Jesus adds a *warning against counterfeits*. He does this by telling the parable of the net which gathered of every kind, good and bad fish. By this parable Jesus wishes to teach us that the members of this kingdom, as long as they are in this world, are externally mingling with many persons who have not this treasure of which He has just spoken. Outwardly these people also claim to have accepted the pearl of great price. They are like one who has stolen a diploma. He pretends to be a graduate, to have a degree, perhaps a doctor of medicine, but in reality he is not one. And so there are people who claim to be Christians, — they may externally belong to a congregation, they may be baptized, they may attend Holy Communion, — but in reality there is in their heart no true faith, they do not possess the pearl of great price. Thus, in the first congregation at Jerusalem there were thieves and liars, Ananias and Sapphira. In the congregation at Corinth there were people who were actually worse than unbelievers. Even in the intimate circle of Christ's twelve

apostles there was one who was a thief and a hypocrite. Yea, in the apostolic times there were men who pretended to be Christian ministers and who taught for filthy lucre's sake. So it has been at all times, so it is today.

Is that not cause for each of us to examine himself? — And again, let us not be offended when some one whom we believed to be a true Christian is exposed as a hypocrite, sham, a make-believe. Let us also beware of underestimating the priceless value of the blessings which Jesus bestows in His Church because we notice that there are hypocrites, counterfeits, in the Church. These bad fish in the net of the Church are no more a part of it than the mud upon the fender is a part of the automobile. The true Christians are nevertheless highly honored, rich, and blessed.

3

In order to comfort the true members who suffer and are misjudged because of these hypocrites, Jesus in our text *foretells the glorification of the Church*, vv. 49, 50.

a) Here on this earth the Church does not display its true glory. It is, in appearance at least, defiled by the hypocrites who mingle with its true members. These sham Christians may even hold high offices in the Church, as many of the Popes were at the very head of Christendom, whereas sincere, earnest Christians may be despised, suffer persecution, may even be condemned as heretics and, like John Huss and other martyrs, be laughed to scorn and burned at the stake. This condition has offended many persons. Many have condemned the entire Church because of these conditions. But there is no excuse for such condemnation. The Lord has foretold that there will be false prophets who will be highly honored by their adherents; there will even be false Christians; even Satan himself will transform himself into an angel of light. It is foolish to expect to see a Church of perfect saints. There will be tares in the wheat-field, there will be pretenders in the visible Church.

Therefore it is important that we be upon our guard. "Believe not every spirit" and pray more earnestly to God to be delivered from these false brethren.

b) That prayer will certainly be heard; for here in our text Jesus calls attention to the fact that the wicked will be cast out. Just as the bad fish which were also in the net will be cast into the sea, so on the Day of Judgment the wicked will be separated from the just, Matt. 25:46; 7:21. In that day the Church will be glorified. Christ Himself will publicly testify to the faith, the godliness, the love, and the good works of His faithful Christians, Matt. 25:33-40; 19:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; Rev. 7:9-17.

Conclusion: Matt. 16:26. Hymn 550. MARTIN S. SOMMER

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

Luke 12:13-21

The standard Gospel for this Sunday contains a solemn warning against worshipping God and Mammon at the same time and against sinful and foolish worrying. In a similar manner our text warns against the danger of overstressing the need of temporal possessions and neglecting the service of the true God.

The Folly of Laying Up Treasures for Ourselves and Being Not Rich toward God

1. *In being not rich toward God, one is miserably poor*
2. *Laying up treasures only for oneself, one will lose all one has*

1

V. 15b. One's life, life in the truest and fullest sense, consists not in the abundance accruing to him from the things at hand for him, from his earthly possessions. No; life in the highest and noblest sense is possible only to one who is rich in God. Possessing God as He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture, what infinite riches are ours, though we be as poor as Lazarus, Luke 16:20, 21, or that widow giving her last mites, Luke 21:2! Having God, we have the redemption He has prepared for us by the blood of His own Son. We have forgiveness of all our sins and justification from all our iniquities, we have a good conscience, hope of eternal life, and comfort in all trials. Cp. Ps. 36:5-9. Life with God is rich, noble, happy, glorious, no matter what the outer circumstances may be. Life without God is poverty and unhappiness, even though we may call the millions of a Rockefeller our own.

That is the lesson taught in the parable of our text, vv. 16-21. This man was rich in earthly possessions, yet poor in the real values of life. All his thoughts revolved round about his own miserable self. He did not see God, the Creator of the ground that brought forth, the Giver of the plentiful harvest, v. 16. What folly to forget the Creator for the creature! Neither did this man think of his fellow-men, thousands of whom could have been fed with the fruits for which he had no room, v. 17. He thought only of hoarding them for his own enjoyment. "I" and "my" and his own soul was all that he spoke and thought of, vv. 17-19. How selfish and foolish to use only for ourselves the gifts that God has given us in order that we might help our neighbor.

It seems that the rich man pandered only to his physical needs. Even if he had paid attention to the cultivation of his mind, yet being not rich in God, that inexhaustible treasure-house of joy and happiness was to him the great Unknown and Undesirable, even

though he may have prayed and attended public worship. He was truly feeding on ashes. How foolish a man!

This rich man lived only for this life and was perfectly satisfied that he had laid up "much goods for many years," v. 19. Eternity and his fate in the world to come did not trouble him, though experience should have told him that he could not live on forever. His possessions had taken hold of him so completely that he neglected the worship of his God, the helpful service of his fellow-men, and the temporal and eternal welfare of his immortal soul. Truly, a fool.

Let us not forget that this parable is spoken in warning not only to that brother, "him," vv. 13, 14, but to "them," v. 15, to all the multitude of people and to Christ's disciples first of all, v. 1. We are also disciples of Jesus, and we also need this lesson. True enjoyment of life, true happiness and contentment, cannot have its source in the things of this world or earthly possessions, be they few or be they many. True joy of life comes only to him who is rich in God. Having the Triune God as your Father, Redeemer, and Comforter, your life will through faith be changed into a rich life, serving not only your own puny self but the great God of heaven and earth and your fellow-men round about you. We have many opportunities as parents, children, neighbors, citizens, as missionaries, etc. Surely, being rich in God, our whole life is enriched, becoming a joy to ourselves and a blessing to untold thousands. Let us not commit the folly of placing our earthly possessions above the riches toward God.

2

V. 13. Jesus' sermon, vv. 1-7, was lost to that man. Though standing among the listeners, his heart was filled with thoughts of business and money. Application: Luke 8:14.

He lost his love to, and the affection of, his brother. How many families, friends, neighbors, have become estranged and bitter enemies because of a few dollars of inherited money, a line fence, etc.! A self-seeking man loses the esteem of all respectable people.

He lost his Savior. He did not understand why Jesus came into the world, v. 14; for he sought money, not salvation. How much of the comfort and contentment that could be ours in this life do we lose because of selfishness and love of money! Besides, we are constantly in danger of losing our Savior.

The rich man, v. 20, died. Riches cannot keep death away. Where are the nabobs of one hundred years ago? Where will we be one hundred years hence?

In death the rich man lost his riches. Shrouds have no pockets. "Whose shall those things be?" V. 20. Certainly not ours, 1 Tim. 6:7.

He lost his soul, which God required of him, v. 20, and which

because of his selfishness was lost eternally. What had he left? A body that might have become like unto Christ's glorified body, Phil. 3:21, but was now doomed to everlasting torment; a soul that might have entered Paradise, but now was in hell.

"Thou fool!" says God. Lord, keep us from remaining or becoming such fools. Let us heed Thy warning and counsel, Rev. 3: 17, 18. Implant in us the firm resolution: Phil. 3:7-11. To this end teach us to pray: Eph. 1:11 f.

TH. LAETSCH

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

John 15:1-11

Two gigantic forces are opposing each other in the world to-day, each trying to defeat and subjugate the other. Much depends on the outcome of the struggle. One nation after another has had to come to a decision on which side to stand. — Two great forces oppose each other in the field of religion: the belief that Christ, the Crucified, is the center of all religion, and the belief that man may come to God without a crucified Savior. Much depends on the outcome of the struggle. And every person must take his stand on the one side or the other. I wish to counsel you:

Abide with Jesus

1. *Because you will bring much fruit*
2. *Because you will have comfort in distress*
3. *Because your prayers will be answered*
4. *Because you will see the joy of heaven*

1

Jesus employs a vine and its branches as a picture of the relationship between Himself and His disciples, vv. 1-5. The branches that grow on the vine and remain attached to it bear fruit; the branches that fall away from the vine bear no fruit. Those who abide with Christ in faith bring fruit; those who separate themselves from Jesus bring none. What is meant by "bring fruit"? Gal. 5:22: all the Christian virtues, a good life, good deeds. These virtues are found with those who abide with Christ in faith, and only with those. The Law and conscience and the fear of punishment and the hope of reward may impel some people to lead an outwardly good life; but only love to the Savior who died on the cross for our sins will cause a person to lead a life to please God, 2 Cor. 5:15; Luke 1:74, 75. And since every Christian desires in his heart to lead such a life, Rom. 7:22, we should abide in faith with Christ.

2

There is much sorrow in this life. I see faces here that have been bathed in tears. There is many a Christian here who has a heavy cross to bear. And our heart cries out for an explanation, Why must I be so afflicted? I have served God, I have heeded His Word. Why does He trouble me so? If we do not find an explanation, we shall despair. But here it is: v. 2b. The husbandman cuts the plant and causes it to bleed, not to harm or destroy it but to improve it. God sends us affliction and makes our heart bleed in order to make us better Christians, that we may have stronger faith and bring more fruit. So we must not be offended when God sends us affliction. It is all for our good, Job 23:10; Heb. 12:11. There are some Christians today who lead an exemplary life and serve God and the Church; their affliction made them "bring more fruit." Those who abide in Christ have this wonderful explanation of life's burdens and sorrows. Therein they find true comfort.

3

If we abide with Christ, our prayers will be heard. Christians pray often and fervently. They ask God for many things for their body and soul. In these times Christians are praying as they perhaps never did before. Fathers and mothers are praying for their sons in camp; citizens are praying for our Government and for peace; we are pleading with God for His grace and protection. But what reason have we to believe that these words of prayer reach the ear of God? If we abide in Christ, we know: v. 7. The prayers of Christians are pleasing to God. Christ has promised the fulfilment of prayers to His believers, John 16:23. A man may write many checks, but they are only good if he has a bank deposit; Christ's promise is the deposit that makes our prayers good. If we abide in Christ, our prayers will be heard.

4

We hope to go to heaven when we die. We believe what the Bible says about heaven, and we desire to be there in eternity, Phil. 1:23. But what assurance do we have that we really shall go to heaven? Some will be lost forever, v. 6. We shudder at their fate, Matt. 22:13; 25:46. But those who abide with Christ will see the joy of eternal life, v. 11; John 12:26; 17:24.

Say it with me: I shall abide in faith with Christ. Hymn 97:1, 5.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

