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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 Wölfen 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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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

New Year's Day

2 Cor. 13:14

At this time of the year many promises and resolutions are made. They are frequently made to oneself, the promise to drop certain evil habits or sinful practices, or the promise to do certain good and profitable things (enumerate several). Today many promises are made to others. We all know how uncertain they are, how quickly broken, how easily forgotten.

What is true of the promises we make to ourselves and to others is often true of the promises made by others to us. Just think of the many promises made to you during the course of last year—the promise of promotion, of higher salary, of a new home, etc. Politicians and cheap statesmen often make the wildest promises for the purpose of getting votes, of gaining power. Oh, how many such promises are made only to be forgotten.

This is not true of the promises of God. Ps. 33:4; 1 Kings 8:56; Rom. 4:21. Our great God can and will also keep the promises made in our short text.

The Ever Certain New Year's Promise of Our Great God

1. *Concerning the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*
2. *Concerning the boundless love of the heavenly Father*
3. *Concerning the comforting communion of the Holy Ghost*

1

A) Paul promises grace unto the Christians at Corinth. He loved to do this. Cf. Rom. 16:24; 1 Cor. 16:23; Eph. 6:24. Paul wrote by inspiration of God. Thus this promise of grace in our text is a promise made by the great God, the Triune God, who in this text is presented to the Corinthians.

B) We may speak of grace in various ways. We speak of a woman who is well cultured, well behaved, as a woman with grace. This is not the grace of which our text speaks, the grace promised us on the threshold of another year. Grace is the free, unmerited kindness, love, consideration, which a higher placed being extends to one that is lower, e. g., the condescension, the mercy which the judge grants to the guilty. In this case it is the kindness which the Lord of lords, the holy God, extends to us sinful human beings. Ps. 103:8-13.

C) This grace which is promised to us is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. This gives to God's grace its real foundation, a real basis. It is not just a kindly feeling, but grace based upon

the meritorious suffering and death of our Lord Jesus. Col. 1:14. It is just this fact which makes this grace so powerful, so saving, so cleansing, so sanctifying. If it were but the grace of a mere man, it would avail little; but it is the grace of the God-man, the great Mediator between God and man. This grace was manifested in self-sacrifice, 2 Cor. 8:9, and it is sufficient for all human needs, 2 Cor. 12:9.

D) The world needs this grace at all times, especially at the beginning of a new year in dreadful times like ours. Think of the record of sin and shame that the world and our own country has again written in 1941. Think of yourself. You and I see much that is black and sinful in the record of the past. We need the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and we need it this very day.

E) What a glorious promise, then, "The grace—be with you all"! Not one is excepted. There is no forgotten man in the economy of God. This glorious promise of the saving, cleansing, sanctifying grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is there for all, for every day of the coming year. When our sins of the past trouble us, when our future sins rise up before us, then let us rely upon the certain promise of the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2

A) "The love of God." Even human love is wonderful. It is one of the most beautiful and wonderful of human virtues. Just think of the sweet love of youthful lovers, of the enduring, ever-deepening love of husbands and wives truly knit together by cords of love. Think of the love of a friend for a friend, of a brother for a brother, of the wonderful, self-sacrificing love of a mother for a child. Then read Is. 49:15. God's love exceeds even that of a mother.

B) The love of God in Christ Jesus is still the most wonderful love. Of this love we read that it is an everlasting love, Jer. 31:3; that it is the love which gave us His Son, John 3:11; that it has made us God's own children, 1 John 3:1. But the love of God in Christ Jesus is also the source of many temporal blessings. All the gifts mentioned by Luther in the First Article and in the Fourth Petition are given us not because of any merit or worthiness in us but because of God's wonderful love and mercy.

C) We need this love so much today. We live in a loveless world. "Might makes right" is about the only principle observed in our war-mad world. We shall need His love throughout the year 1942.

D) Again, what a comfort to hear God's absolutely certain New Year's promise! The love of your great God in heaven be with you all. No one need fear that he will be overlooked.

3

A) "The communion of the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost is often overlooked even by Christian people. Still the Holy Ghost is as important as the Father and the Son. It is the Holy Ghost that makes the love of God in Christ Jesus available to us in Word and Sacrament. Without the communion of the Holy Ghost, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we could go to church 25 years, yea, 50 years, and receive no spiritual benefit.

B) How comforting today to be assured of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit! He is the real Comforter, John 15:26. He shall give us the real comfort during the year 1942. When things look dark, when our situation seems hopeless, it will be the task of the Holy Spirit to whisper into our ear the ever certain promises of our great God. Is. 41:10; 1:18; Ps. 23:4, 6; 121:7, 8.

C) Cheerfully enter, therefore, the new year. God's promises shall never fail us. They are certain today; they will be certain tomorrow; they will be certain always. God is faithful. His saving grace, His boundless love, His comforting fellowship, will be with us, with every one of us, throughout the coming year.

E. L. ROSCHKE

Sunday after New Year

1 Thess. 5:5-10

This season, the passing of the old and the entry upon a new year, speaks an earnest and serious language. We are reminded of our approaching end and of the approaching end of time, the dawn of eternity. Events occurring on earth today speak most forcibly of Christ's return to Judgment. Matt. 24; Luke 21; 2 Pet. 3:3-12; etc. — Context from which text has been taken definitely speaks of the approaching Day of the Lord, vv. 1-4.

The Christian's Reaction to God's Reminder of the Approaching End

1. *He remembers that he is a child of light*
2. *He lives as a child of light*

1

The contrast brings out the truth forcibly in v. 5: "children of light—not of darkness," "children of the day—not of the night." Undoubtedly the apostle speaks of the darkness of ignorance and the light of knowledge (2 Cor. 4:6); the darkness of sin and vice (text, v. 7; John 3:19; John 11:9; Eph. 5:11) and the light of godliness (Acts 26:18).

The Christian, too, is by nature in darkness (Eph. 5:8; 1 Cor.

2:14) but he has been changed into a child of light (1 Pet. 2:9; John 8:12; 12:46; 2 Cor. 3:18). This transformation has taken place in his life because Christ has entered his heart. Christ as the "bright Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16), the "Brightness of His [the Father's] glory" (Heb. 1:2), "the true Light" (John 1:9), "the Light of the World" (John 8:12; 9:5), "the Day Star" (2 Pet. 1:19), is the Light that shineth in darkness (John 1:5; Is. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; Luke 1:79). He now is numbered with "the children of light," "children of the day" (v. 5); "of the day" (v. 8). He knows Christ and His work, Is. 60:16; Jer. 9:24; 31:34; John 17:3; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:10; Eph. 3:19; 2 Tim. 1:10.

As one of God's "children of light," so intimately acquainted with Christ, assured of all blessings which the Savior has procured for him, the Christian knows that Christ will come again, according to His promises, and welcomes his Savior's return. He lifts up his head with joy, etc., Luke 21:28.

2

The Christian will manifest the transformation which has taken place within him in his life and conduct. He will live as a child of light, a child of the day.

Watchfulness and moderation will characterize his life. The two go hand in hand, vv. 6, 7. If a person is not watchful, he will soon be intemperate; if he is intemperate, he will soon sleep. He must be watchful because temptations are so varied and so severe — drunkenness, gluttony, pleasure-madness, lust, immorality, greed, love of money, cares of this life, etc., Luke 21:34; also indifference, apathy, and lukewarmness toward things of God. All these things are works of darkness, v. 7. — However, the Christian has been delivered from darkness, Col. 1:13; he is in the light, John 12:35, 36, and must walk as a child of light, Eph. 5:8. Hence he is awake and constantly on the alert lest the Day of the Lord should take him unawares, 1 Thess. 5:2, 4, 6.

The Christian not merely refrains from doing certain things, but he aggressively does what God desires, v. 8; cf. Eph. 6:10-17. "Breastplate of faith"; faith embracing Christ's victory is a mighty weapon. With it the Christian fights a defeated foe. 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11. — "Breastplate of love"; love toward God is a mighty incentive to battle against the enemies, and love toward the neighbor motivates a life of service. — "The hope of salvation" is called the helmet. It protects the head against mortal wounds, the hope set before him keeping the Christian ever alert, so that he directs his entire life toward the goal.

The Christian's hope is a definite and certain one. He knows that God has appointed him "to obtain salvation," v. 9. This is

certain because Christ has procured it by His death, v. 10. Nothing can be more certain both in life and in the hour of death, v. 10. Hence there is nothing to fear about the Day of the Lord, but it will be a happy and blessed day for the "children of light." Are we such children of light? _____ J. W. BEHNKEN

Festival of Epiphany

Is. 42:1-8

Hymn 501:1. Jesus drew the Wise Men of the East to Himself. He "let them see Him in His glory and His mercy manifold." This is the great work of Jesus still, as we see from the text before us, which is therefore a real Epiphany text and an eye-opener as to the divine character of mission-work.

Behold My Servant!

1. *Believe His Gospel*

2. *Give glory to God*

1

God's Servant is Jesus Christ. What is the service He renders? He brings judgment, the Gospel, to the Gentiles, v. 1; is a covenant of the people, the Jews; a light of the Gentiles, v. 6; sets judgment, the universal religion of the Gospel, in the earth, v. 4. This work of preaching the Gospel to every creature He does now through the Church. Nevertheless it is His work. Luke 10:16. Hymn 292:7.

By His Gospel ministry Jesus accomplishes great things. Coming to poor, contrite sinners with the comforting assurance: Is. 43:25, He restores the bruised reed, revives the smoking flax, v. 3. He makes a new covenant, v. 6, with those who labor under the curse of the old one; viz., that whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved.—V. 7. The blind begin to see that their own righteousness does not save them nor their sins condemn them, but that salvation is by faith alone. They cannot of themselves escape their prison of sin, death, and the power of the devil, but the Savior by the Gospel kindles faith in them and so sets them free. John 8:30-32, 36.

These truly great achievements are held in scant regard by the children of the world. Jesus works quietly, v. 2, and silently imparts His blessings. *Luth. Hymnal* 647:3. He craved no publicity for His miracles Matt. 12:14 ff.

Yet, though many refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly, Is. 8:6, God does not want them to be refused. He insists on Christ's Word being believed. He invites sinners to faith, v. 1. The Father delights in His Son and His Son's Word, Matt. 3:17. The Spirit of Truth testifies of Him, John 15:26; glorifies Him, John 16:14. Good and sufficient reason this to believe Him.

God makes His plea for faith stronger still, vv. 5-8. Not to believe Jesus is to rob God of the glory and the praise due Him. Cp. Deut. 18:15: "Unto Him ye shall hearken," and v. 19: "I will require it of Him."

Let every one, then, behold God's Servant, believe Him. John 3:36.

2

Behold God's Servant so as to give glory to God. Marvelous are the blessings Christ brought to us in and with the Gospel. We used to be like a bruised reed, a smoking flax, blind, "fast bound in Satan's chains," but now we are healed, fervent in spirit according to the inner man, a light in the Lord, free indeed, having for our Lord the King of Grace, whom we know and love and have enthroned in our hearts. Such salvation has come to us without our doing or merit by the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore glory be to Him! Glory be to the Father! "*My Servant*," "*Mine Elect*," v. 1. "*I have called Thee*," etc., v. 6. Glory be to the Holy Ghost, who rests on Christ, v. 1; Is. 11:2; 61:1-3.

Also let us give glory to God for the assured success of mission-work. God's promise is that Jesus shall succeed in establishing the Gospel on earth. "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth," that is, actually, v. 3. In this He shall not fail nor be discouraged, v. 4. The "isles," the Mediterranean countries, which Paul filled with the sound of the Gospel, shall wait for His Law, believe. But not these only; among all nations, languages, and tongues Christ binds up the broken-hearted, opens blind eyes, liberates the imprisoned. John 10:16; Is. 55:10, 11.

God, the Lord, very emphatically guarantees the success of Christ in evangelizing the world. He, the omnipotent Creator and Giver of life, has said: vv. 5, 6,—and therefore Jesus Christ will ever prove to be just that. Would it not be presumption on our part to doubt it? Would not a defeatist attitude over against the work of the Church deprive the Lord of the glory and praise to which He is entitled?

All this should make us very glad. Christ's work is our work, too. "So send I you," John 20:21. How contradictory to profess faith in God's Elect and yet take no active interest in His work. Mission-work necessarily lies close to the heart of every Christian, and to Christians it is a great consolation and encouragement that the omnipotent and faithful Lord underwrites this work and very energetically guarantees its happy outcome. It is anything but a doubtful venture. 1 Cor. 15:58. PAUL G. BIRKMANN

First Sunday after Epiphany

Eph. 6:1-4

The general theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians is the one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the household of God, the family of God, the body of Christ. The inspired writer describes this family of God as to its origin, its redemption, its assembling out of a hopeless, lost estate, its growing in all four directions, and its reflection in the lives of its members. Thus in chap. 5:22-31 Christian wedlock is shown to reflect the one holy Christian Church. We see, then, that this chief theme dominates throughout and must not be overlooked in the study of any section of this letter. Applying this to the text before us we find the theme:

When does a Home Reflect the Blessed Family of God?

1. *When the children honor their parents in the Lord*
2. *When the parents lead them to Christ*

1

V. 1. That children obey their parents is the normal order in God's creation. It is but right, because they must, under God, depend upon their parents for their existence and sustenance. Parents watch over them, protect them, toil for them to provide what they need for the support of body and life. That is the natural order. Disobedient children reveal how terribly sin has vitiated this natural order.

V. 2. This admonition is based on a special commandment of God. To honor parents includes whole-hearted recognition of their station and willing submission to the authority invested in them by God. This divine order is of chief, first importance; it is fundamental to the welfare of human society. If this divine order is being disregarded in our homes, communities, state, terrible conditions will be the result.

V. 3. Therefore the gracious God has added a special promise. He will bless the children who honor their parents. But He also threatens those who disregard His command, Prov. 30:17.

But we must not overlook the words "in the Lord." Children must obey and honor their parents "in the Lord," so that in their conduct be reflected their relation to the Lord. Their willing submission must be the fruit of their faith. As they acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and Savior, so they should willingly do His commandment to love and honor their parents.

Such conduct, then, reflects the relation of the one holy Christian Church to its head, Jesus. The Church looks upon

Jesus as its Creator and Sustainer, above all as its Redeemer. It adores Him as the One from whom all blessings flow, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. It therefore loves Him, hears His voice, and follows Him. John 10:14, 27, 28.

But this will not and cannot be reflected in the conduct of children toward their parents, unless parents bring their children to Christ.

2

V. 4. Of course mothers are included. The father is addressed as the head of the family. Parents must avoid overmuch severity and harsh, cruel discipline. Such loveless severity is apt to kill the affection in the heart of their children, to destroy their confidence, and to make them mutinous. If parents are harsh taskmasters and severe disciplinarians, their children will hate them and all authorities, even God. Instead they are told to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Lord's way of bringing up, His nurture and admonition, does not provoke to wrath but wins. The Lord's way is to bring us to the knowledge of our sins and then to lead us to the cross and to show us the infinite love of God in our Savior. In this manner He wins sinners to come to Him and trust Him, love Him, turn away from sin. For such nurture and admonition breaks the fetters of sin, frees the faculties of our soul from sin's dominion. John 8:36.

If parents thus lead their children to Christ, they reflect what the Head of God's family does. Christ treats His children with loving-kindness. Behind His chastisements is mercy. He is glad when His children come to Him with their troubles. He is ever with them, guards and protects them from all dangers. He intercedes for them when they sin, teaches them, calls them back, when they go astray. He comforts them, encourages them to go onward, and leads them to heaven. Such is the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And Christian parents must follow His example if they wish to make their children happy.

Such a home, where children and parents look up to Jesus and follow Him, reflects the one holy Christian Church.

H. J. BOUMAN

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Rom. 1:16-25

God manifests Himself in various ways — in nature, in history, in the life of the individual. The only saving manifestation of God is that in His holy Word. Hence

God's Word the World's Most Urgent Need

1. *In His Word, God reveals His wrath against man's sin*
2. *In His Word, God offers the only deliverance from His wrath*

1

V. 18. God's wrath is clearly revealed in His Word (Ex. 20:9; Deut. 32:22-25; Nahum 1:2); in man's conscience, man feeling the need of conciliation; in history — war, famine, pestilence, the present world-wide unrest are evidences of God's wrath; cf. Jer. 44:11-14.

Vv. 18 b, 23, 25. God's wrath is a just wrath. Deut. 32:20, 21. It is provoked by the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. God reveals in the works of creation His power and Godhead. Instead of serving God, man changes His glory into an idol image, foolishly and sinfully. Is. 44:9-20. Modern idols: money, science, art, the nude in art, political power, etc. The very existence of a God, or a personal God, or the Triune God is denied.

Ungratefully, v. 21, man places God's gifts into the service of sin, drunkenness, satisfaction of sinful lusts and desires. What waste of foodstuffs and other materials! What wilful transgressions does the darkened heart of man hatch out! Murders, thefts, fornications, divorces, etc. And even the unnatural sins mentioned in v. 25, how prevalent among the civilized nations of today! Are we Christians altogether without guilt?

The world and we Christians must be told that these sins call forth the wrath of God, the Holy One, the Judge of the World, Ps. 90:5-11, in order that the sinner may look for a deliverance from the just wrath of God, Ps. 90:14. God Himself has provided such a deliverance and reveals it in His Word.

2

Vv. 16, 17. The Gospel, which is also God's Word, reveals the righteousness of God, which alone is counted righteousness before His judgment-throne, which God Himself has procured for all mankind by delivering up His own Son, Rom. 3:23-25, which He offers to all men in His Gospel to be accepted by man in faith; hence a righteousness "to faith," imputed to man, declared his own, at the moment he accepts it in faith; hence a righteousness "from faith," flowing out of faith in the Christ of the Gospel. This Gospel is a power of God unto salvation, working and engendering the very faith it calls for, Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23, and strengthening and preserving it unto the end, until the final goal has been reached.

Let us hear and believe and love and follow this Gospel and preach its glorious tidings to all the world. THEO. LAETSCH

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Rom. 5:1-5

"Therefore," v. 1, refers back to Paul's classic presentation of the doctrine of the sinner's justification by the grace of God, for Christ's sake, through faith, chaps. 3 and 4. This doctrine constitutes the very heart of the Gospel. Justification evidences its practical importance by the effect it has on human lives, not only by way of sanctifying them (of this the apostle speaks later), but also by way of making them happy now and forever.

The Blessed Fruits of Justification

They are

1. *Peace with God*
2. *Hope of eternal glory*

1

A) "Peace," v. 1. How many prayers for it arise in this war-stricken world! What a priceless boon even earthly peace!

B) Infinitely more precious is peace with God, the fruit of justification.

a) V. 1 implies that there had been warfare. Through sin man had incurred the righteous wrath of God. Sin is rebellion against God. — And what an unequal warfare this is! It spells the doom of man. Heb. 10:31; Ps. 2; 90:7-9. — All earthly ills are but preludes to the final wrath of God, eternal misery of hell. Only peace with God can change, can avert this.

b) But, thanks to God: v. 1. Justified by grace means that God for Jesus' sake forgives sins, pardons the sinner, and declares him righteous. Through Christ's all-sufficient merits God's justice is satisfied, His wrath appeased. So justified, we have peace with God. Is. 40:2.

c) V. 2a. By Christ we have "access" to God's justifying grace. The justifying grace of God is an accomplished fact through Christ. It extends over all the lost world, stands, as it were, wide open for all. 2 Cor. 5, 19. — Through faith we actually enter into this grace and hence into the blessed relationship of peace with God.

d) What a glorious fruit of justification! It gives that peace of mind and conscience without which there can be no true happiness. At peace with God, every happiness is assured. Rom. 8:31, 32. If scenes of tumultuous joy have been provoked by the restoration of earthly peace after terrible wars, how much more ought there to be rejoicing over the blessed fact of peace with God! Hymn 323:1.

2

"And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "And" connects this clause with v. 1, so that rejoicing in hope of the glory of God is placed with peace with God as the second direct fruit of being justified by faith.

A) Without and before justification the sinner in his wretchedness is without hope. Eph. 2:12; 4:13. A terrible condition!

B) Justified by faith, we rejoice in hope.

a) The *object* of our hope is the glory of God, *i. e.*, the inconceivable glory which God possesses, in which He dwells, the glory of our exalted Savior, momentary glimpses of which were given at the Transfiguration, to Stephen, etc. Not only to behold, but to share this glory, John 17:22, 24; Rom. 8:17, that is our hope. An overwhelming prospect indeed, which may well thrill the Christian heart blessed with it!

b) The *assurance* of this hope. "Rejoicing" is not an idle boasting, but the joyous consciousness and divine assurance of this hope. This assurance (1) rests on justification. "Being justified, . . . we glory," etc. That is an unmovable foundation. Rom. 8:17. — (2) Hope is strengthened by tribulation, so that we glory not only in time of tribulation, but tribulation itself, because of its effect upon our hope, becomes the very object of glorying. "Tribulation worketh patience," *i. e.*, constancy and persistency of hope, which takes every new obstacle presented by tribulation in stride, as it were, overcoming all. Rom. 8:35-37. — Such constancy, in turn, works "experience"; *i. e.*, the final result of many tribulations will be a hope approved, a hope that has stood every test, a hope that, defying storms, strikes its roots ever more deeply. — Every trial tends to bring out more clearly, more joyfully, the Christian hope. Rom. 8:18. Hence we rightly glory in tribulation. Cf. Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief*, pp. 217, 218. Through the gift of the Spirit the Christian's heart is filled to overflowing with God's love, v. 5. This love of God vouchsafes to him the realization of his glorious hope. A hope so founded "maketh not ashamed," will never deceive, but become a blessed reality.

Must we not in view of this glorious hope join in St. Peter's doxology 1 Pet. 1:3 ff? And must not these glorious fruits of justification be reflected in grateful, happy service of our merciful God and Savior? Hymn 84:1.

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

