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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 *Wolfen wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuerehen 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. 14:3*

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Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

Septuagesima

Acts 9:36-42

Sooner or later an unwelcome visitor will come into your home: It will be death. You may stave off this visit for a time, but it will come, and it will turn your happy home into a house of mourning. We dread to think of this unwelcome visit, but we should be prepared for its coming.

A Christian's Conduct When Death Comes to His Home

1. *He mourns over his loss*
2. *He seeks comfort in God's Word*
3. *He speaks well of the departed*
4. *He looks forward to a blissful resurrection*

1

Our body is "wonderfully made," Ps. 139:14; God created man's body with great care and lavishes His love upon it; the whole earth must provide sustenance for it, Joel 2:23, 24; God guards it, Luke 12:7. But when death, the result of sin, comes, the body decays and must be buried. When we must attend to this sad duty, our hearts are filled with grief, we weep and lament. This is quite proper; there was mourning when Tabitha died, v. 39; Acts 8:2; 2 Sam. 3:31. But Christians must not mourn "as others which have no hope," 1 Thess. 4:13. Our mourning must be tempered with hope and assurance that death is a victory, 1 Cor. 15:54-57, and the entrance into eternal life for those who die in faith in Christ. When we stand beside the coffin of a believer, we know that Jesus has said: Luke 23:43. — There is something else that should be said. With grieving hearts we must lay our departed loved one into the grave. The Bible says little about funerals, but it does suggest sincere simplicity, v. 37; John 19:42. There should be no extravagant display at a Christian funeral, merely to "show off." A rich man should not be buried in a pine box, and a poor man should not be buried with costly splendor. Much money is spent at funerals that could be used for better purposes.

2

Christians seek comfort in God's Word, v. 38. Peter was their pastor and teacher; they knew he would bring them solace from God's Word. They sought this comfort sincerely and eagerly; Peter should come without delay. So Christians seek comfort from God's Word when death visits their home. They do not despair in

sorrow nor accuse God of cruel injustice in taking away their loved ones; they bow in submission to God's will. They recall Bible-verses that they know, Job 1:21; Ps. 23:4; and hymn-verses, No. 540; they call their pastor, v. 38, who will comfort them with beautiful words from the Scriptures. It is a wonderful thing to receive such comfort, and many a mourning Christian has said: "What would have become of me if I had not had God's Word to sustain me in my grief."

3

Christians speak well of their departed loved ones, vv. 36, 39. We can hear them speaking: "Tabitha was a Christian woman, a true believer; she loved her Savior because He had redeemed her; she put her trust in Jesus; and see how she showed her faith by deeds of love, how she made garments for the poor, how she helped those who were in need." So we should say good things of the dead; we should speak of their faith, their love for God's Word, their repentance, and their good works as the fruit of faith. One can do that only for a believer. Often people give high praise to the deeds of a person who was not a Christian; sometimes a pastor is expected to do this in a funeral sermon; but we must keep in mind what the Savior says, John 15:5, 6. Christians are thankful to God when they can say of their departed loved ones that they lived and died in faith in Christ and proved their faith by a pious life, Hymn 538, 4.

4

When Christians mourn over a death in the family, they look forward to a blissful resurrection and reunion in heaven. The people in our text had been taught these doctrines, and they believed them (v. 41, they were saints, believers). And now they see the fulfilment of their faith long before they could expect it, vv. 40, 41. — We know that there will be a resurrection, John 5:28, 29; Job 19:25-27. When Christians carry one of their loved ones to the grave, they cling to the hope that the body will rise again in glory on the Last Day, John 6:40; 2 Cor. 4:14. How empty would our Christian faith be without this hope! 1 Cor. 15:16-18. Christians hope for a blessed reunion in heaven; the disciples of Jesus, in the hour of His transfiguration, when they saw a glimpse of heaven, knew Moses and Elias, Matt. 17:3, 4 (Pieper, *Dogmatics*, p. 620); and Christians express this beautiful hope in the prayer spoken in church after the announcement of the death of a member of the congregation, "We pray Thee, comfort the survivors with Thine everlasting comfort, and cheer them with the sweet hope of a blessed reunion in heaven."

That is true Christian conduct when death comes to our homes. If we will learn these four lessons now, we shall be able to use them when the unwelcome visitor knocks at our door and enters. We will be prepared. We shall be able to stand before the coffin of a loved one, with breaking hearts and tearful eyes, but we shall be able to say: Hymn 547:1, 4. FREDERIC NIEDNER

Sexagesima

Heb. 10:19-25

This text prepares us for the Lenten season soon to begin. It exhorts us to consider the Great High Priest provided for us by God and to remain ever loyal to Him.

Let Us Remain Loyal to Our Great High Priest

1. *Let us come to Him boldly at all times*
2. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith*
3. *Let us rouse our brethren to like loyalty*

1

V. 19. We have boldness to enter into the holiest. We can have absolute confidence in the way leading into the presence of God Himself. If ever we need a reconciled God to be our Guide through life, we need Him in these days of unrest and worry. Here is the absolutely reliable way to this reconciled Father. It is the way by the blood of Jesus, v. 19, through the veil of His flesh, v. 20, a way opened by His deep humiliation unto the death of the cross, Phil. 2:5-8, by the shedding of His divine blood, 1 John 1:7. Ought we not to have confidence in this way?

It is a new way, such as only Christ could consecrate. Because He Himself is this way, it is a living way, v. 20, a way which transports us to God without any effort on our part, as, *e. g.*, a moving sidewalk or an escalator. Ought we not gladly make use of this Way? Instead of complaining, worrying, ought we not permit Christ to lead us straight to our heavenly Father?

Our High Priest Himself has placed us on this way by Word and Sacrament. He has sprinkled our hearts and washed our bodies, v. 22, cleansed soul and body from all sins. We are through Him fit to appear before the Holy God. Let us draw near with a true heart. Let us not contaminate ourselves with sin and doubt, but through the use of Word and Sacrament be strengthened in that full assurance of faith which at all times goes straight to our Father and tells Him all our joys and sorrows, stands in daily and intimate communion with Him.

2

V. 23. Only by professing Christ can we retain Him and His blessings; cf. Matt. 10:32, 33. Our High Priest surely is worthy of our loyal confession. We profess a High Priest far excelling even Aaron and the whole tribe of Levitical priests, ch. 5:1-6; 7:5-17, a great Priest over the house of God, His Church on earth and in heaven, Heb. 12:22-24; who loves His Church and sympathizes with every one of its members, ch. 2:14-18; 4:15; 5:1, 2. We have a High Priest who not only has redeemed us from past sins, who not only daily cleanses, teaches, comforts us, who also engenders in our heart a living hope by His promise of that eternal life which He has procured for us through His suffering and death, cf. 3:14 to 4:11; 6:9-20; 9:28. This hope will not make us ashamed, for He is faithful that promised, v. 23b. Ought we ever to be ashamed of confessing so great a High Priest? Alas, how often has our mouth been silent! How often have our actions denied Him who is the author of our temporal and eternal salvation. Let us in the Lenten season gather round about the cross of Christ and there obtain strength and willingness for loyal profession of His name.

3

Vv. 24, 25. As loyal servants of our High Priest we must provoke, stimulate our fellow-Christians unto love and to good works, so that together with us they may serve their High Priest in true righteousness and holiness. Micah 6:8; Rom. 13:10; Phil. 4:8, 9; Col. 3:10 to 4:6.

For this purpose let us be diligent in attending public worship, v. 25. There in the public assembly we are built up on our most holy faith and are thus enabled to teach and exhort our brethren to remain unwaveringly faithful to their Savior. By our own example we influence others not to forsake public worship but with us to come to that place where our great High Priest offers to us in Word and Sacrament the blessings He procured for us by His suffering and death. Wherever we have opportunity, let us admonish, instruct, and comfort our brethren so that in unity of faith and loyalty to the Son of God we may walk with them on the living way prepared for us by our great High Priest.

This we should do so much the more as we see the day approaching, that Great Day on which we must all appear before the judgment throne of Christ, 2 Cor. 5:10, that blessed day when Christ Himself will appear without sin unto salvation to all that believe on Him. Heb. 9:28.

TH. LAETSCH

Quinquagesima Sunday

2 Cor. 11:23-30

In speaking of his services as an apostle of Christ, Paul presents himself as a shining example to all pastors. These words, however, may be applied to all Christians. They set up a high ideal that every member of a Christian congregation should endeavor to attain. From this viewpoint let us study our text.

Paul an Example of Loyal Christian Service

1. *In his sufferings for Christ's sake.*
2. *In his care for his fellow-Christians*
3. *In his boasting of his weakness*

1

V. 23. The false apostles, v. 13 ff., professed to be Christ's ministers, servants, while they sought their own honor and comfort, vv. 19, 20. Paul lays claim to this title in a far nobler sense, the only true sense. He is a servant ever ready to do Christ's command, always willing to endure any hardship for His name's sake Cp. Acts 9:15, 16. What a long list of sufferings vv. 23-27! Picture them briefly, vividly. And all for Christ's sake. Paul might have avoided all these hardships by leaving the service of his Master. But that would have been disloyalty to his Savior, to whom he owed so much, Gal. 2:20; 1 Tim. 1:15; etc. Loyally, faithfully, he served in the sufferings appointed for him.

The Savior demands like willingness to suffer for His name's sake of all His followers. Matt. 10:34-39; Acts 14:22; 1 Pet. 4:12-19; etc. Are we as willing as Paul to suffer mockery, ridicule, persecution, loss of business, of prestige, of social standing for the sake of Him who died for us to make us His own in time and eternity? Is not our motto only too often, Safety first? What *have* we given up for Christ? What do you do for your congregation? your Church? How often do we refuse our cooperation merely because it inconveniences us. Study Paul's life, bow your head in shame and sincere repentance and begin to emulate Paul.

2

V. 28. The care of all churches. He prayed for them continually, 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3, 4; Col. 1:3, 9. His letters throughout bear testimony of his solicitous care for the welfare of all congregations established by himself and others; cp. Rom. 1:8-15; 2 Cor. 2:13, 14; 7:5-16; Gal. 1; Acts 14:21, 22; 15:36; etc.

Christ demands like interest on your part in the welfare of His kingdom. Prayer, Matt. 9:38; Eph. 6:18-20; mission-work, Matt.

28:19, 20; interest in the affairs of the Church, Eph. 6:21, 22. Do you pray? Do you know what is going on in your congregation, your District, your Synod, the Church at large? Do you know where our missionaries are stationed and their trials and dangers and hardships? What do you do for them? Do you read your church-papers? Surely there is much room for improvement!

Paul has the welfare of the individual Christians at heart, v. 29. He feels the weakness of his brother as his own, endeavors to strengthen each individual Christian; cp. Acts 20:20, 31; and he burns with holy indignation whenever any one is offended, cp. Gal. 1:6-9; 5:12; 2 Cor. 11:15.

Like care for the individual is demanded of every Christian, Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8. Are we so solicitous for the spiritual welfare of our brethren? A team seeks to keep all its members in perfect physical condition; else the whole team may suffer defeat. So let us, like Paul, be our brothers' keepers. 1 Cor. 12:12 ff.; 2 Cor. 1:24; Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:24, 25.

3

V. 30. Paul does not boast of his accomplishments, his strength, though he might have done so, vv. 21, 22; Phil. 3:4-6. He boasts rather of what men have done to him in order to show their contempt and hatred. And he knows that even such boasting is regarded foolishness by his opponents, v. 23. Yet he gladly boasts of his weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon him, chap. 12:9, of that Christ who had told him, 12:9. Cf. Is. 57:15.

Let us not boast of our accomplishments, our virtues, our numbers, our prowess, our wisdom. Pride goeth before the fall. Let us boast of Him who unto the world is foolishness, Christ Crucified. Let us glory in the fact that His grace is made perfect, its saving, sanctifying, life-giving power manifested most clearly, by the fact that it builds and preserves the Church of God through weak, sinful, mortal beings. To this grace be glory forever! And in its strength let us become ever more faithful servants of our gracious Savior.

TH. LAETSCH

Invocavit

1 Pet. 1:17-25

Lent—a time for devout meditation, for reflecting on the vanity of our “vain conversation received by tradition” etc., cf. *Apology* 4:12, and trusting in the “fountain filled with blood.” Lent—a time for renewed consecration by the power of truth (Gospel) through the Spirit.

To produce such meditation coupled with consecration, the Holy Spirit uses means. These means presented in our text as

The Incorruptible Seed

1. What this seed is

2. What this seed produces

1

The seed which is to be planted in our hearts is the Gospel, the very heart of which is the message of Lent. "The Gospel is the divine teaching of the gracious forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ Jesus unto eternal life." The Gospel teaches that we are redeemed (vv. 18, 19), that a ransom was paid for us; not silver and gold; coins are not current in the spiritual realm. Sin is so great an evil that it cannot be eradicated by corruptible means. Not even well-intended religious works "received by tradition" are acceptable ransom. These themselves must be atoned for; never can they be the means of salvation. Cf. Paul, Luther. The ransom paid for the sin of the world was the precious blood of Christ. Is. 53:5; Matt. 20:28; Titus 2:14; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 7:26, 27. Illustrations from the Passion History. The passive obedience of Christ. Rom. 5:8, 9.

The Gospel is also the teaching of the active obedience of Christ, the "Lamb without blemish and without spot." "Jesus Christ had no blemish within Himself, nor did He contract imperfections from without." Bengel. His life was perfect. He fulfilled *all* the Law, Matt. 5:17, for us, Gal. 4:4, 5.

This Gospel is no afterthought on the part of God to cover up some possible defect in Creation, v. 20. Christ was foreordained. He did not become incarnate to show us what the human race would have been like without sin. (Being a perfect model is only incidental to His coming.) From eternity the everlasting God had determined to save sinners through the *redemptive* work of Christ.

This Gospel stands on solid ground. It is approved and underwritten by God through Christ's resurrection and glorification, v. 21. God by exalting Him at His own right hand in heaven, proved that the Gospel is *His* message to men. Phil. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 1:20, 21.

Considering the facts our text presents about the incorruptible seed, we are not surprised at the descriptive words applied. Imperishable: While man and all the glory of man—even his most profound philosophies—are perishable as the flower of the grass, v. 24, the Gospel is the incorruptible gift of God. Apology 23:70. Since it is of God, the source of life, it is itself living. It abides forever, v. 23; Heb. 9:12.

This blessed Gospel of Christ's service and sacrifice according to God's plan is unfolded by the entire Lenten story. Nothing else can ever take its place, Gal. 1:8. The Gospel also produces most blessed fruits.

2

When other seed is sown, it undergoes radical changes. Not so this incorruptible seed. It does, however, change that with which it comes into contact. When this seed is planted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are born again, v. 23; Jas. 1:18. In former times "enthusiasts" claimed they produced regeneration by the "inner light"; now Modernists attempt the same through the social gospel. God, however, has established only one means of regeneration, and this is effective. It produces faith in us. V. 21.

In this faith we call God Father. V. 17. It makes us children of God, reestablishes the proper relation between Creator and creature.

We receive power to sojourn here in fear, v. 17, to walk circumspectly, "purifying your souls." Cf. Acts 15:9. The incorruptible seed produces fruit of good works, pleasing to God, true reverence and veneration of God. Gen. 39:9.

Unfeigned love of the brethren. Being born again of incorruptible seed, we have become members of a new family; not only God's children but also brothers and sisters of our fellow-Christians. Outside the Gospel there is no true brotherhood among men. Titus 3:3; Mark 10:29, 30. This seed the means of ending wars among nations; dissension in churches; strife in families. It creates the proper relation between husband and wife; parents and children; etc. Charitable institutions, etc., are a result of the Gospel.

You need this incorruptible seed, since God judges "without respect of persons," v. 17. Let not Lent with its glorious message pass you by unmoved. Seed sown on barren ground transforms it into a place of beauty; thus incorruptible seed changes your lives of vanity to faith that proves itself through love to God and man.

VICTOR MENNICKE

