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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*

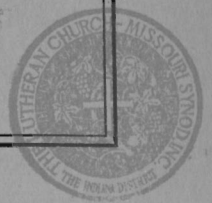
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ARCHIVES

## Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

### Sunday After New Year

#### Lam. 3:22-33

The preacher may make a few remarks on the poetic form and beauty, in particular on the sequence of content, of the five elegies. Feeling the faith of the author, the pastor will cast his hearers' mind into the form of the book, and as the prophet practices on the ruins of Jerusalem, so the pastor preaches — having learned the practice before — in view of the past year and present day on

#### The Art of God-Pleasing Lamenting

##### 1

*It can be practiced by a Christian only.*

A. The prophet's lamentations express (1) a prayer to God, vv. 23, 41, 55 f.; 2:20; 5:1; (2) an acknowledgment of God's justice in casting off, causing grief, afflicting, vv. 31-33, 39, 42, and of God's compassion, abundant mercies, faithfulness, vv. 31-33, 22, 23; (3) submission to the correcting rod, vv. 27-30; (4) hope, vv. 24, 26, 29; patience, vv. 25-28; perseverance, vv. 27-30; (5) praise and glorification of God in mourning and by mourning. The text, therefore, proves to be the climax of Lamentations, sparkling with cheer and happiness in spiritual light — a paradox like 2 Cor. 6:9b, 10a — supernatural.

B. To praise God while pining is an art, seemingly simple and easy, requiring only that we address to the right Person the right words in the right spirit and right measure with the right purpose in mind. Who qualifies? (1) We complain when we ought to praise, or we lament beyond measure, hysterically, or below measure, stoically. Mostly our lamentations do not conform to the facts involved. Would Job have begun his complaint with a curse (Job 3:3) or Jacob wailed comfortless (Gen. 27:35) if they had known the full facts, each of his case? (2) The heavenly Father wants us to learn the art of lamenting; but many children do not want to practice, and all His children find the art to be extremely difficult. None learns it to perfection because of the element of the flesh and of ignorance. The Bible calls our imperfection in this art our infirmity, Rom. 8:26.

C. Yet the text presents the perfect product. It is given by inspiration of God. The Lord's willing disciples, who learn of Him, Matt. 11:29, have the promise and comfort of Rom. 8:26, 27. After all, then, our lamenting reaches the heart of God in perfection by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the mercies of

Christ. On earth He instructs our hearts by His Word, that we humbly acknowledge the justice of God's Law, but accept the comforts of the Gospel and live according to Rom. 12:12; and in heaven, before God, and in our behalf, He forms and fashions our complaints into acceptable prayers and praises and removes the mistakes of our infirmity.

D. Hence the noble art of lamenting is far beyond the ability of the unbelievers. It is a spiritual, supernatural art. In his helpless confusion the unbeliever's grumbling grows to growling and blasphemy against the Almighty. It is noise, not music; sinful, not godly; despair, not trust in the Lord. The Christian only has the aptitude, practices the art, and is conscious of this particular talent (saith my soul, v. 24).

## 2

*The Christian practices it to the glory of God.*

Occasion for lamenting: (1) Jeremiah refers to the ruins of Jerusalem; we see the ruins of the old year. (2) He refers to the condition of the Church; we have reason to be concerned for its present state. (3) As Jeremiah, so we look upon our past as we have deserved it, and into our personal, national, spiritual future as we have deserved it. Our lamentations, in truth referring to us, cannot be voiced to our credit and glory.

Our penitential psalm of praise: (1) The prophet calls himself and all the blameworthy to repentance. We practice the art of lamenting by true repentance, Luke 22:62. (2) He praises the heart and acts of God, the faithfulness and compassion revealed in His acts of mercy. We practice the art of lamenting by measuring our sobbing for consideration and praise of God's heart and mercies. (3) He meekly recognizes the value of affliction, vv. 27-30. Heb. 12:5, 6, 11; Rom. 5:3-5. We practice the art of lamenting by drying our tears for a time to glorify God's wisdom and purpose in afflicting us. (4) The seer peers through tears into the bright future, vv. 23, 25, 26, 31-33. Luke 21:18, 19, 28; Matt. 24:13, 22. We practice the art of lamenting by arresting our grief by trust in the promise of deliverance, and thus we glorify God.

This sacred art is not too difficult, if we turn for further help and direction to the penitential psalms and to the psalms of praise, to the five elegies of Jeremiah, in particular to our text. This is God-pleasing lamenting, which He blesses. John 4:46, 47; Matt. 15:21-28; Ps. 56:8-10.

G. H. SMUKAL

## Epiphany

Is. 60:1-11

Epiphany is the Christmas of the Gentiles. The standard festive Gospel lesson tells of the coming of the first Gentiles to worship the Christ child. To us, who are descendants of Gentiles,

Epiphany should be a festival of far greater importance than many regard it. We have reason to praise the wondrous grace of God manifested to the Gentiles. It impresses upon us also our paramount work as children of God:

**The Glorious Work of Mission**

1. *God has prepared us for the work*
2. *God richly blesses our work*

**1**

The great seer envisioned the New Testament Church. He foresaw the manifestation of the light, which would dispel the gloom and darkness through which the Old Testament Church was passing. Old Testament believers longed for the passing of the night. Their eyes were riveted in hope upon the approaching Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness.

The sin of man had enveloped the earth in darkness, ignorance, sorrow, v. 2. Impossible for man to dispel "gross darkness." Sin had separated man from God, the only source of light; hence "darkness."

God is the Light—"glory of the Lord," v. 1. In Him is no darkness. Wherever God manifests Himself, there is brightness and glory, and all darkness must vanish.

God sent His Son to be the Light. Is. 9:2; John 1:5-9; 8:12; 12:35, etc. John especially emphasizes this. On the Mount of Transfiguration he "beheld His glory." Christ removed the cause of darkness, sin.

The Holy Spirit brought us to the Light, called us out of darkness, 1 Pet. 2:9, hath shined in our hearts, 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18. Knowledge of faith in Christ is light, dispels darkness, and brings joy and gladness, because sin is removed.

Those who have been brought to the Light have become lights. John 5:14-16; Acts 13:47; 1 Pet. 2:9. The Light is come to them, and light will come from them. They will reflect the Light. "Arise, shine!" V. 1. Christians do this by their witness bearing, Acts 1:8, either by oral confessions or by their life and conduct.

**2**

There certainly is much need for mission work. Despite nineteen centuries of Gospel preaching, distribution of Bibles in over a thousand languages in whole or in part, tracts, etc., there is still much ignorance, sorrow, darkness.

The light, however, reflected by Christians, placed on a candlestick will attract people's attention, and many will approach the Light. Isaiah foresaw this, and he states that the Church shall see, vv. 4, 5, a great number coming to the Light: Gentiles, kings,

v. 3; "all they," v. 4; "the abundance of the sea," "the forces of the Gentiles," v. 5; "the multitude of camels," v. 6; "all the flocks of Kedar," v. 7; etc. What wonderful promises of successful mission work! How wonderfully fulfilled beginning with the coming of the Wise Men to Bethlehem and continued throughout the centuries!

The Prophet foresaw that all classes of men shall come. They shall come from near and far. They shall come with rich gifts and offerings, "their silver and their gold," vv. 6, 9. They shall come to show forth the praises of the Lord, v. 6. They shall help in the building of the Church, v. 10. Wonderful success!

The success of missions results, on the one hand, in great excitement and joy among God's people, v. 5. God's people eagerly lift up their eyes to see, vv. 4, 8; John 4:35, and rejoice over the salvation of blood-bought souls. On the other hand, God's people look for further opportunities to win souls for Christ. They will keep the gates open, v. 11, and seek to bring men unto the Light.

God grant unto all of us the preparation, ability, and willingness for missionary activity and the joy of success!

J. W. BEHNKEN

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### First Sunday After Epiphany

Ps. 78:1-7

The psalm from which our text is taken gives very important instruction. The opening words are an earnest direction to all Christian parents.

#### **Christian Parents, Make Known to Your Children the Wonderful Works of God**

1. *God earnestly wills it*
2. *Your children's welfare demands it*
3. *Your Church's future requires it*

#### I

V.1. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the psalmist is a prophet of God. Christ Himself designates him as such, Matt. 13:35, quoting v. 2. And we know that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, 1 Pet. 1:11. In the name of the Lord the psalmist addresses especially parents. They are to incline their ears to the words of his mouth. He reminds them of what their fathers told them, v. 3, in compliance with the Lord's command, vv. 4, 5; Deut. 6:7; 4:9; Ex. 12:26, 27. The purpose of such instruction is shown in v. 7.

This command of the Lord is in force today, Eph. 6:4. You are Christians, who love their Savior, John 14:15; 1 John 5:1-3.

You would have considered it an affront to your Savior and a disgrace to your Christian profession if you had not soon after birth brought your children to Baptism in accordance with the will of Him who has done so much for you. And so you will consider it base ingratitude to refuse or neglect obedience when He calls upon you to make known to your children the works of the Lord. You will not consider this an arduous task but a delightful privilege and will gladly place yourselves into His service.

## 2

Vv. 3, 4. The implication is that irreparable harm will come to our children if we withhold from them the wonderful works of God, especially God's redemption of mankind.

This fact should fill us with very great concern. To be sure, our children should be enabled to become intelligent and loyal citizens, etc. But we must not make the very serious mistake of placing last things first and first things last, Matt. 6:44; 16:26. What if our children have an abundance of earthly possessions, but are not rich in God? What if they are decked with silks and satins but do not have the cloak of Christ's righteousness? Is. 61:10; Matt. 22:11-13. No comfort in life, no hope in death.

Parents, acquaint your children with the great events recorded in the Bible, especially with Christ's life and death, resurrection, ascension, return to Judgment; show them what all this means to them for their temporal and eternal welfare.

Your children have become children of God in Baptism, Gal. 3:26. But they must be brought to a conscious faith in Christ, their Savior. Their knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; Gen. 8:21; Rom. 7:18) and grace (Rom. 3:23, 24; Eph. 1:7) must be increased and deepened. They should be enabled to find comfort in every sorrow; always to give an answer to every man, etc. (1 Pet. 3:15), to defend their faith in the face of gainsayers, to stand firm over against seducing spirits (1 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 16:17; 1 John 4:1), to resist every temptation to sin and to walk in all things pleasing unto God (Rom. 12:1, 2).

Begin early! Mother, tell that little child upon your lap of the love of Jesus, teach it to pray to the loving Savior! Father, do not leave all this to your wife, do not consider it beneath your dignity to do the same! Family devotion. If you have not yet begun, begin now. It can be conducted in this way—. Then use every helpful agency provided by the Church: Sunday school, Saturday school, summer school, especially day school, Bible class. Do not only send your children to church, take them and worship with them. What if the Lord should ask on the Last Day: Where are thy children?

## 3

Vv. 4, 6. The Lord is very much concerned about the future generation, and He here makes them your concern. If you take this lightly, you should take stock of your own Christianity.

What will become of the Christian Church if you and your fellow Christians neglect to do whatever you can to perpetuate it? True, the Lord has promised: Matt. 16:18; 1 Kings 19:18, but He has not given this promise to any one organization. Vv. 4, 6, 7. Remember Luther's warning to the German people of his time. You know what has happened in Germany. Will our Church endure if we do not give to our children a thorough Christian education and training, so that they will be able to transmit what they have heard to coming generations that they might set their hope in God, etc.? V. 7. Indifferentism, unionism, worldliness, are even now making themselves all too strongly felt.

Christian fathers and mothers, let us bestir ourselves and make known, etc. God will bless our efforts for the glory of His name, for the welfare of our children, and for the perpetuation of our dear Church, in which Christ is still enthroned in all His glory as the Savior of mankind.

R. NEITZEL

## Second Sunday After Epiphany

### Ps. 104:24-35

*The Aims:* 1. To awaken a realization of the sins whereby we despise God's goodness in the kingdom of nature.

2. To comfort with the divine assurance that by grace through faith in Christ, these sins are forgiven.

3. To use this comforting assurance as the incentive for putting away these sins, and for replacing them with songs of prayer and praise.

The Introit strikes the keynote of the day. By the words of the psalm "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands" we are called upon to "praise the Lord . . . for His wonderful works among the children of men" (Gradual). How fitting our text, in which the psalmist calls upon us:

**Praise the Lord for His Goodness to Us in the Kingdom of Nature!**

## 1

*Let us behold the works of God in creation and preservation.*

A. In creation.

a. V. 24. On earth—the hills and valleys, the streams and lakes, the lilies of the field, the stars and planets in their courses,

the countless infinitesimal creatures, the birds and animals, and, above all, mankind. We think also of the rich deposits of coal, oil, and ore, so precious today. Rubber, so vital to transportation. Electricity. The radio. And what untapped resources yet to be discovered! Truly, as the psalmist says, "the earth is full of Thy riches," v. 24c. There is also the "great and wide sea," v. 25, each drop of its vast waters a world of life in itself. On it "go the ships," v. 26a — then sailing craft, now steamers and Diesel-driven dreadnaughts. In it "leviathan," *i. e.*, "the monster of the sea" (Gesenius). How manifold God's works on land and in the sea!

b. "In wisdom hast Thou made them all," v. 24b. Consider the intricate design, the structural perfection, of each work in God's creation, *e. g.*, the snowflake, the leaf, the tree, above all, the human body. David Grant, the noted anatomist, while dissecting a human body, called it an "inexplicable miracle," and his remarks on that occasion cured Dr. Orrin Keating of atheism. (*Reader's Digest*, November, 1942, p. 57.) Surely, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," Ps. 139:14.

#### B. In preservation.

a. He supplies the needs of all He has made, vv. 27, 28; Matt. 6:26-34; 10:29-31. He provides even for the pleasure of His creatures, v. 26: "to play therein." According to the Sunday's Gospel, Jesus made wine for a wedding.

b. All life depends on Him, and He takes it again, v. 29; Job 1:21.

c. He grants new life by the miracle of reproduction, so manifest in spring, v. 30.

d. And all these things he does *for us*. "He richly and daily provides *me* with all that *I* need to support this body and life." How good of Him! What shall I do about it?

## 2

*Let us thank and praise God for these things with our hearts and lives.*

a. We ought to praise Him, since these works are created and preserved for God's enduring glory and joy, v. 31 (note the original: "Let the Lord rejoice . . ."), and God threatens to punish those who misuse His creation and thus dishonor Him and pervert the purpose of His works, v. 32; earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, droughts, famines, *war*. (Aim 1.)

b. The Lord expects us to sing His praises as long as we live, v. 33; to bring joy to Him by our meditations, v. 34 (literally: "Let my meditations be pleasing to Him"), and to rejoice in His works, v. 34b. With Luther we therefore confess: "For all which it is my duty," etc. But do we do this? Always? Are we not often



guilty of neglected prayers and vain repetitions, of sin and ingratitude? (Aim 1.)

c. God wants us to praise Him by the removal of sin from the earth, v. 35. But are we putting away *our* sins? What about indifference to God and worship, disobedience to parents and authority, hatred, lust, adultery, covetousness in word and deed? (Aim 1.)

Conclusion: We have seen God's wonderful works of creation and preservation, but we have recognized also our many sins in failing to give proper praise to the Lord for His goodness to us. What shall we do about these sins? Let us flee to Jehovah, the God of the covenant, of grace and mercy in Christ. In today's Collect we pray: "*Mercifully . . . grant us Thy peace.*" (Aim 2.) How gracious of God to grant us the knowledge of this grace today, in this sermon! Oh, may this mercy of our Lord persuade us to put away our sins and to replace them with songs of prayer and praise, blessing the Lord with our hearts and in our lives for His marvelous goodness to us in the realm of nature! (Aim 3.)

THEO. F. NICKEL

### Third Sunday After Epiphany

Dan. 6:10-23

The time in which Daniel lived bore many points of resemblance to our own. That great prophet and statesman lived in days of deepest national misery and degradation of his own people Israel. He lived to see the rise and fall of world powers and visioned more.

In all this time Daniel towers a heroic figure of faith, a source of comfort and help to his own people and of unquestioned loyalty to his earthly masters. His unswerving loyalty to his God brought him safely through all the trying vicissitudes of his time.

#### Daniel's Unswerving Loyalty to His God

1. *How this loyalty was reflected in his illustrious career*
2. *How God graciously vindicated this loyalty*

#### 1

A. Review briefly from preceding chapters what is necessary to lead up to the situation described in text.

B. a) V. 10. Daniel's loyalty to God. "Windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem." Cf. 1 Kings 8:30, 48. In the Temple God had revealed Himself in all His majesty and love. Not all the glamour of a heathen court nor the honors and responsibilities to which he had attained had ever erased from the heart

of Daniel the glorious things he had seen and heard in his boyhood days in the Temple. There all the worship pointed to the wondrous love of God which had made Israel a great nation and the custodian of His gracious promises of the Messiah, the salvation of a lost world. Through this Savior heaven should be opened to all. Indelibly the Holy Spirit's grace had impressed this wondrous love of God upon the youthful heart. To this God, Daniel was resolved to remain ever loyal.

b) This loyalty reflected throughout his life in the land of captivity:

1. In his refusal to defile himself, chap. 1:8. (Cf. Weimarsche Bibel, note on chap. 1:8.)

2. In his refusal to obey the royal decree forbidding prayer to God, v. 10. Cp. Acts 5:29.

3. In his relationship to God's people, Israel, whom he called and led to repentance, chap. 9, and whom he comforted with his prophecies of the Messiah. No doubt, by his great influence at court he contributed much toward making Israel's lot in captivity tolerable and toward their final release under Cyrus. To the great cause of his people, the true Church on earth, he remained devoted though all the cares and burdens of state rested upon him.

4. In his loyalty to his earthly masters, like Joseph of old, v. 14 f. Mindful of Jer. 29:7.

c) Application: Amid the din and confusion of a war-torn world let us ever remain loyal to our God. Whether Christians, like Daniel, be far from home, in their country's service at home or abroad; whether they be in cares, toils, and anxieties of the home front, let them ever keep "windows open toward Jerusalem." May they never forget the true God and His love, their baptismal covenant, their confirmation vows, the blessings of a Christian home, and their home church. May they reflect their loyalty to God, as did Daniel, in all their life. The various points listed under b) lend themselves readily to practical application.

## 2

Chap. 9:23. Through faith Daniel was in possession of the great God's grace and favor, an inestimable treasure, which vouched for blessings in time and in eternity. Rom. 8:32.

A. As Joseph of old, so Daniel was signally blessed of God in the land of captivity; chaps. 1-6 furnish abundant material.

B. Particularly was Daniel's loyalty to his God vindicated in time of danger and persecution. As wonderfully as his like-minded friends had experienced God's protection in the fiery furnace,

chap. 3, so Daniel's faith was vindicated by the glorious deliverance from the lions, vv. 19-23.

C. Daniel lived to see the return of his people to the homeland under Cyrus. God's promise fulfilled. While Daniel himself for obvious reasons (old age, greater usefulness, etc.) did not return, yet the even of his life was cheered by the word of his faithful God recorded in the closing words of his book, chap. 12:13. Rest for his body in the quiet bosom of the earth. Glorious and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life in heaven.

D. Application: Thus God ever vindicates the faith and loyalty of His own. 1 Tim. 4:8. Hymn 437:1 (new hymnal).

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

### Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

#### 1 Kings 19:9-18

In this season of Epiphany, of the manifestation of God's glory in Christ, our text presents one of the most majestic manifestations of God recorded in the Bible. This manifestation was granted to Elijah on Mount Horeb, perhaps in the same cleft where five hundred years before Moses had stood and seen the glory of the Lord pass before him, Ex. 33:18 to 34:8. Let us study our text.

#### God Manifesting Forth His Glory

1. *With destructive power of His just judgment*
2. *With the life-giving grandeur of His saving mercy*

#### 1

Elijah, the fearless prophet of the true God and undaunted opponent of idolatry, 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; 2 Kings 1, had fled to escape the wrath of Jezebel and save his life for further service of the Lord. Cp. Matt. 10:23. On his flight, despair seized him. He grew weary of life, chap. 19:4. At the question of the Lord, v. 9, he pours out his grievances. In answer the Lord in a marvelous manifestation of His power passes by him, and as His messenger sends stormwind, earthquake, fire. Failing to understand this manifestation, Elijah repeats his question, v. 14. The Lord interprets the vision, vv. 15-17. Hazeal shall sweep like a stormwind over God's enemies; Jehu shall be as an earthquake, bringing ruin and disaster to the house of Ahab; Elisha shall with the fiery law of God (cap. Deut. 33:2; Jer. 23:29), condemn and deliver up to everlasting fire all enemies of God who had escaped the sword of Hazeal and Jehu. And Elijah shall be the agent through whom the instruments of God's vengeance shall be called and anointed.

The twentieth century is a century of apostasy from God. Powerful enemies within and without the Church seek, like Ahab and Jezebel, to destroy the Church and silence the voice of the Gospel. The number of apostates is legion. Money, position, pleasure, their own flesh, are the idols before whom many so-called Christians bow. That is the reason why the Lord is manifesting His supreme power by visiting the earth with His judgments. Global warfare against God is punished by global warfare among the nations. Empires are tottering; whole nations are being wiped out. Millions are being killed in bloody battles, by famine and pestilence. Poverty and immorality are spreading more rapidly every day. The Lord is fulfilling Ex. 20:5; Jer. 14:1-4, 18; 15:1-3, 7-9; Nah. 1:2. Lord, open our eyes that we may turn our hearts to wisdom, cease from sin, and plead for mercy.

2

God manifests the power of His mercy

A. To the individual. While Elijah's flight was not sinful, his despondency was lack of trust in God, a sin against the First Commandment. Yet mercifully God comforts His disconsolate prophet. He has not forgotten Elijah. He appears to him and gives him an opportunity to unburden himself. Similarly God speaks to us in His Word, that still, small voice coming to life in our heart or being called to our memory by the pastor or other fellow Christians.

God assures Elijah that his bloodthirsty enemies, vv. 10, 14, shall not be able to harm him. Elijah himself shall aid in their destruction. We also have the promise of God's help in every time of trouble, Is. 43:1, 2; 1 Pet. 5:10; Heb. 13:6.

Elijah is given an assistant, v. 16b, with whom he may share the joys and sorrows of his ministry. What a blessing to possess and enjoy the fellowship of other Christians! Gen. 2:18a; Phil. 1:8, 25; 2:25 f.; 2 Tim. 4:9-11, 21.

Imbued with fresh courage and new joy, Elijah returns to his work, providing for the schools of prophets (cp. 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7) and preaching God's Word without fear or favor, 1 Kings 21:17-24; 2 Kings 1:2-16. Let us follow his example.

B. To the Church at large. He preserves it in the darkest day, v. 18, and continues to send His messengers and prophets, v. 16b. The Church shall never perish, because God's omnipotent mercy sustains and builds it, Matt. 16:18. Persecution often serves the spreading of the Gospel, Acts 8:4; 11:19-26. While exterminated perhaps at one place, it will flourish elsewhere. Our work is not vain, 1 Cor. 15:55.

Conclusion: Rom. 11:22; Acts 20:32.

TH. LAETSCH

## Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

Gen. 11:1-9

The closing words of the preceding chapter prepare the way for the event described in this text: how the families of the sons of Noah went out to settle in various parts of the earth. That was God's will, chap. 9:1-7. But some of the "children of men," text, v. 5 (distinguished from the "sons of God," chap. 6:2) did not want to scatter; and this led to the building of the Tower of Babel, the event which led to the division of the one race into many nations with different languages. It is a simple piece of history; but there is a very serious lesson in this for us. It may be stated in the words of the old proverb

### Man Proposes, but God Disposes

#### 1

V. 1: "one language," similar modes of thought and action, similar habits and customs, unity of religion, worship of one God. But the "children of men" were not satisfied with this bond of union; they aimed at a permanent external union; this town with its magnificent tower is to be the center.

Note the motives behind this building. A total disregard of God and God's will; God is not mentioned in all their deliberations. No gratitude for His gifts, no desire to use His gifts in His service. They had excluded Him from all their calculations. A deliberate, determined defiance of God's will. God said, Fill the earth. They said, We will remain here. That is the essence of impiety; holiness is another name for obedience to God. (Perhaps even more; the Chaldeans, we know, were at an early date given to worship of the stars; perhaps the object of this tower was practice of idolatry; legend tells that the remains of this tower were used as an observatory.) But at any rate, the unity of religion and worship which God had given them did not suffice them; they wanted to exchange it for an external, self-made, and therefore ungodly, union.—The prime motive is pride: "Let us make us a name"; lust of glory; the tower is to be a center which is to do honor to them. Luther: "They have no concern that God's name be hallowed, but all their care and planning turns to this, that their own name may become great and celebrated on the earth. This city and tower of men is fundamentally nothing else than an outward, artificial substitute for the inner union before God and in God."

It is the first concentrated effort of man against God, his Maker; a God-defying, man-deifying proposal. It is oft repeated. Disregarding Him from whom all blessings flow, men abuse these blessings; first turn away from God, separating from the congre-

gation of Christians, turning to the society of the ungodly; laying their own material foundations for their work instead of God's; then revolting against God, not only in words but also in actions: molesting, persecuting the Church and its work; setting up their idols in place of God, usually, in the last analysis, themselves and their own desire; in their pride and solely for their own glory undertaking gigantic enterprises, in which they disregard all principles of right and wrong, transgress every command of God, and ruthlessly override the rights and interests of all others.

Babel has become a name for pride, show, vainglory; the emblem of insolence against God, its central idea the effort of the restless, scheming human mind to transgress its divinely appointed limitations; but at the same time a symbol of confusion, desolation, of God's judgment, and in consequence the futility and emptiness of human effort if it is divorced from acknowledgment and service of God. Man proposes; but God disposes.

## 2

V. 5. God not only knows what men are doing but also closely inspects all their work. Let no man think God is ignorant of his wickedness if He delays punishment; in His mercy He does that. But He is intimately acquainted with the thoughts, words, works, and ways of every individual.

V. 6. God is pained not by large, courageous undertakings of men but by the spirit behind them. Whatever derives its inspiration in the least measure from antagonism to God is sin, which the "sons of God" shun and which God must punish.

Vv. 7, 8. And God does punish, often in altogether unexpected ways. Confusing their language, however accomplished, surely unexpected, but effective; the whole undertaking was suddenly abandoned. The most prosperous enterprises often terminate in miserable failure; and the divine verdict on human endeavors often strongly conflicts with man's judgment. So have perished all wicked combinations in the past—mighty empires, public and secret societies, not to forget the antitype of this first Babel, the kingdom of Antichrist. There is a day coming when all that still remains of such ungodly undertakings will be destroyed.

Even in judging God does not forget His mercy. He does not destroy these people, nor does He take His "sons" from the earth, but He leaves them to testify of His divine plan by which all national barriers may be broken down and all men brought back to the family of God. And when the fullness of time was come, God again descended to earth to unite all the discordant speech of the world and in Christ to make all languages one.

Note: Man still proposes, but God still disposes—and leaves us here on earth to bear testimony to that fact. THEO. HOYER