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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 verführen und Irrtum einführen.

Luther

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

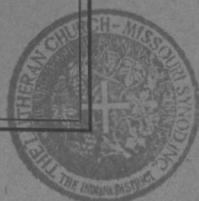
If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — *1 Cor. 14:8*

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ARCHIVES

Outlines on Old Testament Texts (Synodical Conference)

Pentecost Sunday

Ezek. 36:22-27

Pentecost is the festival of God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Holiness, who is Himself the Holy God and who manifests God's holiness through the work of sanctification. Catechism, Qu. 173.

God Manifesting His Holiness Within His Holy Christian Church

1. *By gathering it out of all countries*
2. *By cleansing it from all filthiness*
3. *By giving to it a new heart and a new spirit*

1

In this world of sin God wanted a holy people. Therefore he chose Israel, Ex. 19:3-6; cp. Deut. 7:6-8; 9:4-6. Israel had profaned God's name by defiling the Holy Land, Ez. 36:17-19; and by causing the heathen to blaspheme, v. 20. In order to manifest that He is still the Holy God, v. 21, He gives this remarkable promise: vv. 22-24. The fulfillment began under Zerubbabel, Ezra 1:1 to 2:2; continued under Ezra, eighty years later, Ezra 7:1-7; 8:1-15; on Pentecost, Acts 2, particularly vv. 5, 8-11; and will go on to the end of days, Mark 13:10; Rev. 14:6.

Into this Church we have been gathered. Are we grateful? Do we realize that this is not our doing, but a manifestation of God's holiness? Rom. 2:4.

2

Text, v. 25. On sprinkling clean water cp. Num. 19:11-22. That was symbolical of the blood of Jesus, 1 John 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18, 19; Heb. 9:13, 14, 22; 12:28. This blood is applied to us by the means of grace, through which the Holy Spirit operates: the Gospel, John 4:14; 7:37-39; 1 Pet. 1:23; Baptism, Heb. 10:22; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Pet. 3:20, 21; the Lord's Supper, Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17.

This clean water cleanses us from all filthiness, all defilement, no matter what its nature; from all idols, all that we substitute for the true God, all lack of fear and love and trust in God, which lack is the root of all sin. We are cleansed from all sin, and cleansed thoroughly, Eph. 5:25-27; Jer. 31:34 c; Micah 7:18-20.

Are we grateful? Do we regard sin as something horrible, as an abomination, of which only God's own blood could cleanse us? Acts 20:28. Let us exclaim: Ps. 103:1-4.

3

Text, vv. 26, 27. A complete change is effected by the God of holiness, manifesting His holiness as expressed Lev. 11:44, by enabling sinners to fight against sin and begin to lead a life of holiness. A new spirit dwells in them; their heart, the seat of life, is renewed, is no longer a heart of stone. The desires, thoughts, words, actions, flowing forth from this new heart are no longer dead works, but a living service of holy people rendered in gratitude to the holy God, who has manifested in them also His holiness by sanctifying them.

This God will do. Will you as a renewed person, a holy child of God, make use of your divinely created power? Are you, in the strength of the Holy Spirit within you, walking in God's statutes? Let our daily prayer be: Ps. 51:10-13; 139:23, 24.

TH. LAETSCH

Pentecost Monday

Ps. 80:14-19

As God alone gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies His Church, so He alone can and will keep it in true faith until the end.

God Is the Refuge and Strength of His Church

1. *He alone can protect it against its enemies*
2. *He alone can keep it loyal to its Lord and God*

1

V. 16 a; cp. vv. 12, 13. So the Christian Church is harassed by enemies within and without her walls. Picture the enemies outside of the pale of Christianity. They must and will perish at the rebuke of God's countenance. As the Lord commands the waves, Job 38:11; Is. 5:22, so He will hold in check the enemies of His Church, 2 Kings 11:1-22; 20:32-37; Matt. 2:20; Acts 12:1, 2, 23. History furnishes many other examples.

Great as is the danger from without, still greater danger threatens the very existence of the Church from within. It is not only the boar out of the wood and the wild beast of the field that devour the vineyard of God; there is the cutworm of self-satisfaction that cuts down many a plant; the blight of indifference that kills many a branch still outwardly connected with the vine; the aphid of worldliness that stops the development of many a promising bud. As the vine is helpless against the enemies, so we must turn to the divine Gardener and implore His help, vv. 14, 15. He who alone could plant the vine, who alone has supplied strength in the past, He alone can preserve His Church in the manifold attacks endangering her life. To Him let us turn and ask for His protection.

2

Three times the thought is expressed that God alone can keep His Church loyal.

A. The Church promises, We will not go back from Thee, v. 18 a. That is the Church's vow and hope. And the basis? V. 17. We, the sons of man, of sinful Adam, born with a nature that can only stray away from God (cp. Ps. 78:57; 51:7; Job 14:4), can become men, strong men, men of His right hand, when God lets His hand be upon us and sets us at His right hand. There sits His Son, our High Priest. United with Him by our God we are strong, strong for Him, and Him alone, loyal to Him in good and evil days. Phil. 4:12, 13.

B. We will call upon His name, v. 18, place our whole trust in Him alone, follow Him whithersoever He leadeth, let no distress or anguish separate us from Him. How is that possible? Quicken us, we pray. Give us life, thou Fountain of life, through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life! Then, and then alone, we shall live unto Thee and die unto Thee, to be forever Thine.

C. Therefore we can look fearlessly into the future with its uncertainties and perplexities and dangers. We shall be saved! V. 19 b. Why? See v. 19 a. It is God, the God of the shining face, of grace and mercy, the Lord who made His covenant with us, the God of hosts, the omnipotent Ruler; He will fulfill the promise in John 10:27-30; 11:25, 26, so that we may rejoice, Rom. 8:38, 39.

TH. LAETSCH

Trinity Sunday

Num. 6:22-27

This threefold blessing was spoken in the Old Testament times by the Triune God, as its New Testament counterpart, 2 Cor. 13:14, proves. It sums up all the blessings which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have in the past graciously bestowed upon us and which they promise to continue. Let us meditate upon

The Blessing Bestowed upon the Church by the Triune God

We shall consider

1. *Its marvelous content*

2. *Its wonderful effect*

1

V. 24 speaks chiefly, though not exclusively, of the love of God, the Creator, who through our Savior has become our Father, in a higher sense than Mal. 2:10, our reconciled Father, showering down upon us innumerable blessings, material and spiritual, temporal and eternal gifts. We think here particularly of the

blessings enumerated in Luther's exposition of the First Article. In spite of the world-wide war, how kind has God been to the citizens of our country. Compare the conditions prevailing here with those of other countries, and we shall have to confess that God in a truly marvelous manner has blessed and kept, and is still blessing and keeping, us and our country.

What moves God to bless and keep us? Is it because of our greater wisdom, our unlimited resources, our righteousness? What God says to Israel in Deut. 7:7, 8; 9:6, 7 applies to us also. Not our power and righteousness have merited our blessings. They are gifts of God who has according to His promise, v. 25, made His face to shine upon us and was gracious to us. This grace has been procured by Jesus Christ and involves all the benefits in Luther's exposition of the Second Article. Show the magnitude of this gracious gift.

V. 26. Not only has the Father sent His Son to make possible our redemption and His gracious blessings. It is the Father and the Son who together with the Spirit make this salvation our own by lifting up His countenance upon us and giving us peace through bringing us to faith in the Savior and thereby filling our hearts with joy and peace and hope of everlasting life and bliss. See the exposition of the Third Article.

Truly marvelous gifts are vouchsafed to His Church by the Triune God in this wonderful blessing.

2

V. 27. Like Israel we need the blessing and grace and peace of the Triune God. This blessing was first spoken when Israel was in the wilderness, a sinful people, Ex. 19:12, whose wrongdoing had brought them close to destruction, Ex. 32:1-10; who had been harassed by enemies, 17:8 ff.; by hunger and thirst, 15:22-24; 16:1-3; 17:1-3. A long and wearisome journey lay before them. Sin continued to contaminate every action; sorrow and tribulation were their daily companions; death ruthlessly severed the most tender bonds of kinship and affection. Apply this to the conditions of our day.

To this people, harassed by sin and guilt, by fightings and fears within and without, the Lord twice every day proclaimed His blessing and laid His name upon them, v. 27. The priests speaking this blessing did not only *wish* upon the people God's blessing, but God indeed and in truth blessed them, gave them His protection, His grace, His peace. That is what we also need, and that is what God offers to each one upon whom this blessing is pronounced by the royal priesthood of the New Testament, 1 Pet. 2:9, be that pastor or layman. More than that. As He has adopted

us and called us by His name in Holy Baptism, Gal. 3:26, 27, so, as often as this blessing is spoken, He again opens His heart and hand and sheds upon us abundant grace and peace and blessing for body and soul. No matter what may happen, no matter how fierce the trials, how wearisome the journey, how dark the path, of our life may become, let us never forget this blessing. Let us as blessed children of grace and peace show our gratitude in holiness of life, in submission to His will, in trust in His never-failing goodness and mercy.

TH. LAETSCH

First Sunday after Trinity

Prov. 11:23-31

The chief thought of our text, as to the principles involved, is given in the opening verse. That is the rule of life for the righteous, to desire only that which is good. Since they are living in fellowship of faith with their heavenly Father through Christ, they are ready to regulate their whole life by the wishes of the Lord, lest by their own fault they come under the condemnation of the wicked and their expectation be wrath. Our text presents in particular one phase in the conduct of men in the sight of God, namely,

The Use of Earthly Gifts and Blessings

1. *The improper use of such blessings*
2. *The right and proper use of such blessings*

1

a. Money and material blessings. The sin of avarice is pictured in v. 24 b: withholding gifts and monetary assistance, although the situation evidently calls for such help. The judgment of the Lord upon such a person is frequently that of reducing the miser to poverty. — Speculation in the effort to increase riches quickly, at the expense of others, is condemned in v. 26 a: withholding corn, or grain, in order to drive the price up beyond fair returns on the investment. In this case the people who are thereby directly harmed, will curse the speculator, and God evidently concurs in such condemnation. — Making riches the basis of one's confidence in life is spoken of in v. 28 a: people who trust in their riches, who commit fine idolatry with respect to their money and securities. Such foolish people shall fall and come to naught. Job 31:24; 1 Tim. 6:17.

b. Talents and other qualifications. Some people employ their abilities for only one purpose, namely, to work mischief, v. 27 b. They are determined to gain honor for themselves and do not

hesitate to trample on the rights of others. They prove themselves unworthy of the gifts of God.—The situation is aggravated if a person troubles his own house, does not even possess enough natural affection for his own flesh and blood to give them the proper care. 1 Tim. 5:8. Such people, as it were, sow the wind and will reap the whirlwind, and frequently fools of this type will become the servants of those who use their good common sense and act in keeping with the will of God. V. 29.

2

a. Blessings in the form of money and earthly goods. The advantage of the right kind of liberality, v. 24 a: distributing money and other kinds of assistance with a free hand. Under God's blessing such a person presents the paradox of increasing in this world's goods, instead of decreasing. The soul of blessing (literally), that is, the liberal person, who unselfishly shares with others, shall be made fat, be recompensed richly, by the Lord.—A special form of this liberality is that of refusing to speculate with the products of the soil, v. 26 b, ready to sell to others as they require grain to sustain life. Job 29:13.—Making every effort to put God-given blessings to good use. Such people are called righteous, v. 28 b, and the promise upon them is that they shall flourish as a branch, Ps. 1:3.

b. Of the use of all other talents and spiritual gifts of God. If a person uses all diligence, makes every effort, toward establishing that which is good and beneficial, he will be rewarded by the good will, the favor, of those who are benefited by his kindness, v. 27 a.—The Lord Himself concurs in this favorable attitude, since, under His blessing, the righteous in all their relationships in life will be like a tree that brings forth good fruit in abundance, v. 30 a. It is in this way that the righteous becomes a winner of souls, gaining them for the Lord by virtue of his righteous conduct, as suggested in 1 Pet. 3:1. Cp. Dan. 12:3; 1 Cor. 9:19; James 5:20.

The summary of the whole paragraph is given in the concluding verse, v. 31. The righteous receives the Lord's merciful reward, while the wicked and sinners must suffer the just judgment and condemnation of the Lord.

P. E. KRETZMANN

Second Sunday after Trinity

Judg. 2:1-12

The Romans under Coriolanus had routed the enemy in battle. As they began their pursuit, they begged their general, who was half dead with wounds and fatigue, to retire to the camp. "It is

not for the victor to tire of the battle," was the reply of Coriolanus as he joined in the onward rush of his men.

The Israel of our text after glorious conquests grew weary of waging the Lord's battle and came to grief. "These things are written for our admonition." Let us renew our ardor with the thought:

"It Is Not for the Victor to Tire of Battle"

Such weariness

1. *Is utterly disgraceful* 2. *Unless driven off, will prove disastrous*

1

"From Gilgal to Bochim," v. 1 — significant phrase. Gilgal was the Plymouth Rock of the Pilgrim Fathers for Israel (Josh. 4:19) and for years the headquarters of Israel as it marched from victory unto victory under the invincible Captain of the Lord's hosts who had appeared to Joshua near Gilgal at the beginning of "the wars of Canaan" (Josh. 5:13 ff.). And now Bochim (the Weepers), where Israel wept at their disgrace brought home to them by that Captain, the Angel of the Lord, the Pre-Incarnate Christ (1 Cor. 10:4, 9), whom they had forgotten. (On the Angel of the Lord see Pieper, *Dogmatik*, I, p. 477 ff.) The Angel's rebuke requires the background of chapter I. Bring out briefly.

Would the Israelites become Canaanites? Not if the Angel of the Lord can prevent it. Matt. 9:13; Luke 15:2. His message at Bochim (2:1-3) reminds them of His deliverance and constant faithfulness (v. 1), His commands (v. 2 a) and threats (v. 3); confronts them with their sin and probes their conscience with an unanswerable "Why?" (v. 2 b). Silence and tears! Their disgrace indeed called for tears.

The question of Paul in Gal. 5:7 is applicable to many a church that has grown sluggish in its appointed warfare, disgracefully forgetful of the Church's mission and its conquering Lord. The Church must be *militant* until Canaan is fully possessed. Zeph. 3:16. Busy hands are needed in the Church's task of breaking down the Canaanite altars — not by physical force but by the Word of God. Luke 9:56; Matt. 28:18-20. Let not our ardor be cooled by real or fancied "iron chariots" or the evil example of indolent soldiers. Look rather to our Captain who *has fought* and *is fighting* in the *thick of the fray*, Mark 16:19, 20. Under Him victory is sure. But when His presence, His commands, His promises, are left out of account and the Church looks only to the fancied "insuperable" difficulties, the Church loses its victorious power and sinks. Matt. 14:30. Nay, "it is not for the victor to tire of battle."

2

It is to be feared that the tears at Bochim were prompted by the threatened punishment rather than by true repentance. We see further decline. Weeping without a return to obedience is not true repentance, and sacrifice without a forsaking of sin is offensive to God. 1 Sam. 15:22. It is a sad contrast that the second generation presents over against the generation that fought the wars of Canaan under Joshua and the elders. These "served the Lord," vv. 6-9, while the new generation "knew not the Lord," etc., v. 10. They may have had head knowledge, but the light of faith was extinguished in the heart; cp. Deut. 32:15. Unbelief, fear, weariness of fighting, worldliness, tolerance of evil; then tolerance leads to actual defection, vv. 11, 12, and defection to disaster. The threats of Bochim are fulfilled. The Book of Judges tells the story.

The moment we sense weariness in our God-appointed struggle, we must renew our vision of the "great works of the Lord" and in sincere repentance take up the fight with new vigor. If weariness is not driven off, it will lead to manifold disobedience, to entanglements with the world and its idols, and they will be to us as "thorns in the sides" and ruinous "snares." God had wanted Israel to be *physically* separate from the Canaanites. In judicial punishment for their unbelief Israel could no longer drive them out. God wants us Christians to keep ourselves *spiritually* separate from the world, 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Jas. 4:4; Rom. 12:2; otherwise the world will conquer us. Think of the typical cases of some of the congregations to which John wrote the Seven Letters, Rev. 2 and 3. Through ease and weariness of fighting the Lord's battles according to the Lord's directions many congregations and individual Christians have become "savorless salt," good for nothing but to be cast out.

When the Angel of the Lord comes to us and confronts us with our disobedience in the face of His unspeakable grace, let us humbly accept His rebuke and in true repentance fight as it pleases Him who has enrolled us as His soldiers, 2 Tim. 3:4. He will teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight, Ps. 144:1, and bring us at last to that blessed place where the victors shall need to learn war no more.

V. BARTLING

