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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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Outlines on the Standard Gospels

Epiphany

Matt. 2:1-12

In matters pertaining to this life, men and women often show great daring.

Dare to Be a Devout Christian

1. *A devout Christian who strives for ever better acquaintance with Christ*
2. *A devout Christian who exercises his faith in the service of Christ*

1

Vv. 1 and 2. It is quite probable that they had heard something about the great King expected by the Jews. Ezekiel and Daniel had exercised their prophetic office in Babylonia during the Exile. No doubt their prophecies had been passed on from generation to generation. And now they saw His star. They were determined to become better acquainted with Him. Traveling was not as pleasant and rapid as it is today. But they are not deterred by the prospect of a long and wearisome journey to Jerusalem. You are acquainted with Christ, have learned to know Him as your personal Savior. Do you now strive for ever closer acquaintance with Him? Is the distance from your home to your church too great? Dare to overcome that spirit, and be a devout Christian who desires to become ever better acquainted with Christ! Remember what He did for you, and come to meet Him where He promises to be, Ex. 20:24.

Vv. 5 and 6. The Wise Men receive further information from the Scriptures. Do you seek more intimate acquaintance with Christ by reading your Bible and conducting family devotions? Dare to put off all sluggishness. Go and search diligently for this Child. John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:11; Luke 10:39; Acts 17:11.

Vv. 7 and 8. The wise men do not give up their quest because of the entire absence of enthusiasm for the King of the Jews, not because they must now extend their journey to Bethlehem and no one is ready to accompany them. They dare to continue alone and in the face of all discouragement. How about you? Perhaps prominent men and women of your acquaintance show only coldness toward Christ, even enmity. Do you stand alone? Do not let your dismay so overcome you that you permit coldness toward Christ to take hold of your heart. Dare to be a devout Christian who. . . .

Vv. 9 and 10. It is true, the Wise Men were encouraged by the reappearance of the star. But arriving in Bethlehem, another ex-

perience awaited them which might have caused a shock. What a little town! No palace for a king! Only an ordinary house! No great throng of worshipers; only Joseph and Mary, poor and uninfluential people. Do they turn away in dismay, even disgust? Not they! Are you perturbed by the fact that your church is only a small uninviting building, that its membership is made up not of the molders of public opinion in your community (1 Cor. 1: 26-28), but only of Josephs and Marys? Remember 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2: 6-8. This Christ is there; therefore dare to be. . . .

With what devotion has not Christ redeemed and sought you! Will you not dare to be what He expects of you?

2

V. 11 a. What? They, the men, fall down before a child that had not yet even begun to learn! And, then, *this* Child born and living in obscurity and poverty? Ridiculous? The Wise Men do not think so. What about you? Do you fall down and worship the Savior, bringing all your needs to Him in prayer, worshiping Him with praise and thanksgiving? Have you no time (Ps. 55:17)? Do you omit your regular prayer and drop your family devotion when others are around because they might laugh at you for praying? Dan. 6:10. But is not such worship the least that the Lord could expect of you for all that He has done for you? Matt. 10:32, 33. He is looking for your worship. Therefore dare to be a devout Christian.

V. 11 b. Why present Him with gifts, and such lavish gifts? Besides, they might need their gold for their homeward journey, hard times might set in, and old age would creep upon them. Whether or not such thoughts disturbed them we do not know, but we do know that they opened their treasures and presented Him gifts, which could be of service to Him in His present and future needs (His flight into Egypt). The Lord expects your gifts. Mark 12:41. To be sure, He could build and expand His Church without us. But He has conferred upon us the distinct honor that we may be workers together with Him in this blessed work. 2 Cor. 9:7. Think of what He gave for you, and how, 1 Peter 1: 18, 19. Is He now to measure the intensity of your love for Him by the size of your gift for Him? The Old Adam has his excuses ready; we must save for times of possible depression, because the prices for all commodities have gone up, etc. Dare to be. . . .

V. 12. When the Lord had spoken to the Wise Men, they did not begin to argue the why and wherefore; they simply obeyed. Do you? When the Lord warns, or when He admonishes, do you cheerfully obey?

R. NETTZEL

First Sunday After Epiphany

Luke 2:41-52

While most of us, as a rule, are aware of the passive obedience of Christ (His suffering in our stead), we are not always sufficiently conscious of His active obedience (His fulfillment of the Law for us). Moreover, only he who has learned to confess, "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness," etc., can truly comprehend the full purpose of our Savior's life on earth.

Today we see our Lord in the Temple as a twelve-year-old lad, fulfilling the Law in our stead and thus becoming our Savior. Our theme, therefore —

The Twelve-Year-Old Jesus Obedient for Us

1. *He was obedient to His Father in heaven.*

A. The first part of the Decalog demands that we love God and His Word above all, Matt. 10:37; 22:37; 6:33; 7:21; Col. 3:16. But as we examine ourselves in the light of these requirements, who of us must not confess: Eccl. 7:20 and Is. 64:6? Surely we are disobedient children and deserve God's wrath and punishment. 1 Cor. 10:5-11; Luke 13:3-7; Mal. 4:1.

B. Thank God that Christ Jesus was obedient to His Father in heaven in our stead! (a) "At twelve a Jewish boy became a son of the Law, with the responsibilities of a man, putting on the phylacteries, which reminded him of the obligation to keep the Law." (*Expositor's.*) (b) As a true "son of the Law," Jesus visited His Father's house, vv. 41-44; gave God the first place in His heart, v. 49; let the Word "dwell in Him richly" and "in wisdom," vv. 46, 47; and continued in obedience to the Lord's will, vv. 51, 52. (c) And this the child Jesus did as our substitute, since "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth," Rom. 10:4; cp. also Gal. 4:4, 5; Phil. 2:8; Rom. 5:19; Matt. 3:15.

C. How good of Jesus, already as a child, to keep God's Law for us and to grant us this His righteousness by faith. Let us, therefore, show our deep appreciation by putting God's things first in our lives, by finding delight in His Word, and by living according to His will.

2. *He was obedient to His earthly parents for us.*

A. The Lord demands obedience to our parents, Eph. 6:1-3; 6:23; Col. 3:20; Prov. 23:22; to our teachers and pastors, Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:12, 13; to our civil leaders, Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14. But do we always follow these requirements of God's Law? Who of us has not hurt his parents, despised the instructions of his teachers, and shown indifference to the law of the land? Surely, as disobedient children, we, too, deserve God's wrath. Prov. 30:17; Deut. 27:16; 21:18-21; 2 Kings 2:23, 24.

B. However, behold the Lad Jesus obedient also to His earthly parents and to earthly authority for us! Though His father and mother understood not, v. 50, the "must" of v. 49, they saw Him "habitually subject unto them," v. 51. He "increased in favor with God and man," v. 52. Thus Jesus, obedient to His parents for us, became what the Prophets had called Him, "The Lord *Our Righteousness*," Jer. 23:6.

C. Think of it, God's Son subject to human authority! What deep humiliation! What perfect submission! And all this for us. Shall we not join, in the "Alleluja" of heaven's multitudes and "serve the Lord with gladness"? (Introit.)

Conclusion: When we behold the Lad Jesus as our Lord, "high and lifted up," reigning over sin in our stead, so that His righteousness may be imputed to us by faith, we cannot but pray the collect of the day from our hearts, asking God to grant us "grace and power" to do His will.

TH. F. NICKEL

Second Sunday After Epiphany

John 2:1-11

The science of economics, embracing an investigation of the needs of humanity, their source of supply, and human behavior in their acquisition and use, is usually taught to students from a purely materialistic view. But economics also has a Christian aspect, and I propose to give the congregation a

Short Course in Christian Economics

1. *The needs of humanity*
2. *The source of supply of these needs*
3. *The conduct of Christians when their needs are supplied*

1

A wedding at Cana was attended by many guests, including Jesus, of whom many wonderful things were already known, Luke 1:31, 32; 2:9, 10; Matt. 2:11; Luke 2:46; Mat. 3:17. What an honor to have such a guest! But the joy at the wedding was marred by an embarrassing circumstance, v. 3. Social custom required the serving of wine. The mother of Jesus said: "They have no wine"—they need wine.

That is a situation that prevails at all times and in all places. There is always need of something. Humanity needs food, shelter, clothing, fuel for wintry days, seed for sowing, tools, medicine—a thousand things. But man does not live by bread alone. We need education of our mind and cultivation of our talents. Above

all, our soul has many needs: the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of God's mercy, strength to obey God's will, faith in the love of God, and the sure hope of heaven. Without these we cannot be truly happy here or hereafter. The Savior shows us that the soul's need is greatest, Matt. 9:2; Luke 10:42. "They have no wine" was a sad complaint; "they have no Savior" is a sadder one.

2

A purely materialistic view of economics concerns itself with earthly means of supply; Christian economics leads us to a different view. There was no wine, but presently there was plenty. The supply came from Jesus. And so it is always. Human needs are satisfied by the power of God. The miracle of Cana is repeated every day. We have the supply for the needs of the body because God has given fertility to the ground. The fuel that warms our homes and drives our machinery was put into the earth by God. If we take inventory of all our earthly possessions, we shall see that all our supply comes from God, Ps. 145:15, 16; Gen. 1:29; Matt. 6:26.

Also the needs of our soul are satisfied by God. There could be no other way. No man, by his own natural powers, can produce repentance and faith, obedience to God and eternal salvation, Rom. 10:17; John 15:5; 14:6; Hymn 376:2. But God has supplied all these needs for our soul through the Savior, Hymn 366:2. Some commodities may be procured at various places and others only from one source; the needs of our soul are supplied only by Jesus, our Savior, Acts 4:12.

God distributes His gifts with a lavish hand. There is no place in the world where God does not want to provide food and raiment; there are no people on earth to whom God is unwilling to give salvation, 1 Tim. 2:4. Every complaint that "they have no..." is answered, and the supply reaches to the brim.

3

Finally, books on economics tell us of the reaction of people toward the commodities that they receive. They make use of things in many ways, they improve their living conditions, and they create wealth. Our textbook in Christian economics tells us that the reaction to the miracle at Cana was: "They believed on Him." When Christians receive gifts from God, for the body or soul, they believe in God, their Creator and Preserver, in Jesus their Redeemer, in the Holy Ghost, who gives them faith. They thank God for all His gifts and use them for His glory and for good deeds. Materialistic economics tries to make this world a better place to live in; Christian economics teaches the way to a better place to live, in heaven.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

Third Sunday After Epiphany

Matt. 8:1-13

St. Matthew places the events of our text immediately after the record of the Sermon on the Mount. This had made a profound impression upon the people. Christ's preaching and miracles were the topic of general conversation and were discussed. Hence many came to Christ. Some manifested great faith in Him.

The Faith Which Impressed Jesus

1. *It recognized a real need.*
2. *It sought Christ's help*
3. *It obtained Christ's answer*

1

V. 2. Leprosy was practically an incurable disease. Physicians were helpless. Only God could effect healing. No one realized this better than the leper.

V. 6. Palsy was another dreadful disease. The centurion undoubtedly was in a financial position to engage the best medical attention, but none could cure. His servant was in a pathetic condition, "grievously tormented." Only God could help. The centurion was fully convinced of this.

Both leprosy and palsy are a type of sin. Spiritual leprosy renders us filthy and polluted, separates us from God, even as physical leprosy separated from fellow men and rendered the victim unclean. Spiritual palsy renders us helpless, causes indescribable torment, finally the torment of hell. Our own outlook is hopeless. It is necessary for us to recognize this. We will neither seek Christ's aid nor obtain His help unless we recognize it.

2

a) Somehow the leper heard about Christ. He came and placed his sad case before Christ. He knew Him as Lord, Luke 5:12.

b) The centurion was evidently deeply impressed with Christ's activity. He knew the true God. He had done noble things for God's people, Luke 7:3. He was convinced that Christ is He to whom he must go.

c) Both came in deep humility. The leper was an outcast and would not come otherwise. The centurion was a prominent man, nevertheless deeply humble when he approached Christ. "Beseeching Him" — no command, but pleading, begging. What an impression that must have made upon the disciples when the seemingly greater besought the seemingly lesser. God has His elect also among prominent people. We should remember that in our efforts to win souls for Christ. Go out after all classes of people.

This humble man was interested in a lowly servant. When on duty, there is a distinction between officers and enlisted men and

servants; however, God is not a respecter of persons. Employers should show an active interest in employees' welfare. Much capital-labor trouble could be avoided if we had more men with the centurion's attitude.

The humility of the centurion was evidenced especially by his reply to Christ's offer "I will come and heal him": "I am not worthy," etc., v. 7.

Surely we have reason to approach the Lord in self-abasement and deep humility. We are not worthy because of sin and transgression.

Both the leper and the centurion manifested full trust and confidence in Christ that He would heal. "Thou canst," v. 2; "Speak the word only," v. 8. The centurion knew that physical contact was not necessary. He believed in the power of the Word. He offered an example, v. 9. He means to say, If my word can accomplish this, surely yours so much the more.

We also know that the human word is powerful. The word of a few men plunged the world into the horrors of war. The word of a few men surrendered North Africa, Sicily, etc. How readily, then, should we say to God, "Speak the word only." His Word is the power of God.

3

Christ touched the leper, v. 3. For His holy hand nothing was unclean. He said. "I will." That was the gracious will of Christ put into words. "Be thou clean." That was the almighty will of Christ, which effected the cure.

Christ cured the centurion's servant, v. 13. "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee" are wonderful words of promise.

Christ "marveled" at the centurion's faith. Not this important person, but the great faith impressed Christ. The Savior commended this faith and praised it highly, v. 10. There was nothing comparable to it in all Israel, though the Israelites enjoyed greater advantages and better opportunities.

Jesus was prompted to utter an earnest warning, vv. 11 and 12. The great joy of seeing one of these firstfruits of the Gentiles reminded Christ of what was surely coming. Israel had enjoyed advantages but had not embraced its opportunities. "Shall be cast out," etc., would be the sad result. Those who were less fortunate shall be given opportunities: "Many shall come," etc.

What a lesson for all of us! Many Lutherans, born of Lutheran parents and given every advantage, grow careless and indifferent, while adult accessions, who have had lesser opportunities, show great interest and zeal for the cause. The confirmation certificate is not a guarantee of salvation. Only true faith in Christ recognizes the need and turns to the Savior to obtain help.

J. W. BEHNKEN

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

Matt. 8:23-27

Grave concern fills the heart of many concerning the future well-being of the nation. Even now postwar planning to avert confusion and disaster occupies the minds of statesmen and leaders.

Many feel concern also about the future of the Church. The eternal weal and woe of a lost world is inseparably linked up with the Church and its mission in this world. Hence we cannot be indifferent to the future well-being of the Church.

Thank God, the Gospel for this Sunday may well allay our fears.

The Ship of the Church upon the Sea of Time

1. *Indeed beset by storm and danger, but*
2. *Miraculously preserved*

1

A. The ship into which Christ and His disciples had entered soon found itself endangered by a sudden ("behold!"), violent storm. To make the situation more hopeless, Jesus was asleep, seemingly unmindful of the ship's plight. Above the wind rose the cry of the terrified disciples: "Lord, save us; we perish!"

B. That little craft is rightly regarded as a type of the Church beset by dangers upon the storm-swept sea of time. The history of the Church is a record of fiery trials, of storms and dangers of all description: persecutions, heresies, temptations, etc. Cf. Rev. 2 and 3. Thank God, in our times we are spared the fierce general persecution of the early and middle centuries. But Satan, aided by his unholy allies, world and flesh, is ever devising new and insidious means to bring about the destruction of the Church. From without and within danger threatens. World-wide war, with its brutalizing, demoralizing effects, will not leave the Church unaffected. Atheism is becoming ever bolder in its blasphemous attacks. So-called Modernism threatens the very life of the Church. Growing indifference as to the doctrines of God's Word, lukewarmness, love waxing cold—all conspire to bring about the downfall of the Church. Our days bear a striking resemblance to the days of unprecedented dangers which according to the words of Jesus will usher in the end of the world and the Final Judgment. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21. Indeed, the ship of the Church is riding a stormy sea!

Time and again in the dark hours of the Church's history it has seemed that the now exalted Lord was unmindful of its plights. Time and again, also in our days, the fearful prayer rises to the lips of God's children "Lord, save us; we perish!"

But, thank God, beset though it is by storm and danger, the Church is miraculously preserved.

2

A. The skill and experience of the disciples could not save the ship. Neither can human wisdom and power save the ship of the Church. Measures proposed by human reason will not avail (outward union to present a united front against dangers, without true unity—the social gospel—efficiency in externals, etc.). “With might of ours can naught be done.”

B. Jesus’ presence in the ship saved it, Jesus, true man, tired, sleeping. Jesus, true God, who had abundantly proved His deity, His power to save. Never should the disciples have feared, when He was with them. V. 26a. Majestically Jesus arises. V. 26 b.—Ps. 65:7; 89:9; Nah. 1:4. Indeed, Jesus the God-Man, whom ever the winds and the sea obey!

Application: The preservation of the Christian Church is the miracle of history. There is only one accounting for it: the presence of the now exalted Christ. He is present when the Gospel is preached. Matt. 28:19, 20. This, then, must be the very heart and center of all present and postwar planning for the preservation and functioning of the Church: Keep the Gospel in its truth and purity and, with it, the Christ, the Savior of the world through His blood, in the Church. Then Matt. 16:18; Ps. 46. Indeed, with Christ in the ship, it will safely reach “the other side” and become the Church eternally triumphant!

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

Septuagesima

Matt. 20:1-16

Many people have misconceptions concerning the Kingdom of God: Church a social organization; the Kingdom of God a period of ease, of peace, and of rest. Others expect immediate rewards for their labors in behalf of God’s Kingdom.

The Bible picture of the Kingdom of God is the picture of busy workers in a vineyard, working not for own advantage, not external reward. A beautiful picture of the Kingdom of God and the workers in this kingdom is presented to us in today’s Gospel.

Busy Workers in God’s Vineyard

1. *Are called to serve*
2. *Are rewarded by grace*
3. *Are in danger of dissatisfaction*

1

A. In a parable not every detail of the story can be interpreted spiritually. Jesus usually wishes to teach one big truth; but in teaching this one truth, He also touches upon other important truths.

B. Briefly tell the story. All workers are asked to labor in the vineyard.

C. All members in Christ's Kingdom are also called to serve. The Bible really does not know of any inactive, lazy, indifferent members of the Kingdom. God expects such service from all Christians. Ex. 23:25; Ps. 2:11; 100:2; Mark 10:43; Gal. 6:2.

D. The call to serve has also come to us, perhaps at the time of our Baptism. To some, the call to serve may have come later in life. Are we all conscious of this call to service? Only too many Christians are perfectly satisfied to enjoy the blessings of Christianity, while they are not eager to serve in the Kingdom. We are sorry to say that in nearly every congregation there are many shirkers and comparatively few willing workers.

2

A. Vv. 8 and 9. Men are called into the Kingdom to serve, but in the Kingdom of God the rewards are rewards of grace. In the world, especially in our union-conscious world of today, everything is handled by labor contracts, merit systems, and production scales. It is different in the Kingdom. Here we deal not with merit, not with earned righteousness, but with grace.

B. No man who enters the visible Church and accepts the call to work shall be left without reward. The blessings of even outward connections with the church are many. The church shields us against evil, surrounds us with the highest morality. Often the church offers social, business, and other advantages of no mean value. But even such temporal blessings referred to as the reward of working in the vineyard, are not really our just due. As Christians we know that "we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment." All temporal blessings are therefore the reward of grace and not a merited reward.

C. In a still greater measure all spiritual blessings are the reward of grace. In the parable Christ emphasizes the all-important truth that salvation is by grace alone. Eph. 2:8, 9. Certainly we are to work in the Kingdom, certainly we are to serve our Master (Eph. 2:10), but we may never expect to claim, as a pay, the reward of heaven. In short, the Kingdom of God is a kingdom where grace rules supreme, and grace alone, grace through the atoning blood of Jesus.

3

A. Vv. 10-12. Those who had worked from early morning until night were dissatisfied with their pay because those who had labored one hour only had received the same amount. Their dissatisfaction was very dangerous.

B. Vv. 13-15. God is absolutely just. They had no reason to be dissatisfied. Jealousy, envy, and selfishness has no place among Christian people, no place in the Kingdom of God.

C. When workers of the Kingdom become dissatisfied, when they become greedy of reward, when they think that they can lay down the rules for God, there is danger that they lose not only temporal blessings but that they lose also the eternal blessings.

V. 16. People who act as the first workers in the vineyard acted, reveal a condition of the heart which is incompatible with Christianity. It is well for us to examine ourselves carefully, to remind ourselves that all rewards of God are rewards of grace. Take to heart the lessons of the parable and become real workers in the vineyard, building in time for eternity, building for God, but not for selfish glory or personal benefit, but in gratitude for the riches of God's grace.

E. L. ROSCHKE

