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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

### Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Matt. 22:1-14

Some stories that we hear are interesting, and we listen to them with fascinated attention; others are flat and insipid, and they bore and tire us. What is the reason for this difference? To hold our attention a story must contain the element of surprise; the unexpected must happen. That is the reason why we read the stories told by Jesus with never-ending absorption. Our text contains

#### Three Surprising Developments

1. *The refusal of the guests to come*
2. *The persistence of the king*
3. *The insistence on a wedding garment*

#### 1

Jesus tells us of a king who prepared a great banquet. It was a sumptuous meal, with the best of meats and finest of delicacies, with lavish entertainment and magnificent splendor, as was the custom. But when the king's servants went out to invite the guests, they would not come; they preferred to attend to other business. Perhaps some of the servants spoke quite strongly to the guests about their refusals, and this led to violence and bloodshed. Amazing, isn't it, that these men should refuse such an invitation? Yet that is happening all the time in the kingdom of God. The heavenly King has loaded His table with magnificent viands for soul and body: forgiveness of sins through Jesus, omnipotent protection in all danger, comfort in distress, and assurance of heaven. And God sends out His servants, messengers of the Word, with the invitation of the Gospel to all mankind: Come, all things are ready. And then the amazing thing happens: Men will not come. They say: You offer me forgiveness of sins? I am not so sure that I need that. Protection? I can take care of myself quite well. Comfort? I can stand a good deal without needing pity. Heaven? I stand a pretty good chance of going there. I really haven't much need for that banquet to which you invite me. I have something of my own that interests me more.— If *you* are one of these who have spurned God's invitation, think better of it now, and come and take what God offers!

#### 2

One might expect the king to throw his food to the swine after the base refusal of his guests. Instead, he sends his servants again and again to invite men to his banquet. He will not take No for

an answer. He gives them every chance. So God is patient and persistent with the invitation of the Gospel. He asks them again and again. He is willing to overlook their first refusal, Acts 3: 17-19. He knows the frailty and weakness of the human heart. The people at Noah's time would not listen to God, yet He was patient 120 years. God rebukes the sins of men and still promises pardon, Is. 1:18. Often today men spurn the Gospel, yet God keeps after them, using illness, trouble, and other means to reach their hearts. God's persistence brings souls to Christ and to salvation.

### 3

One would think that after all those efforts the king would be glad to welcome his guests just as they were, irrespective of their clothes. Not so; he sees one without a wedding garment, and the man is cast out. So God invites men with ceaseless persistence, yet He insists on the wedding garment—faith in Jesus, which He Himself works through the Gospel. Those who refuse to be clad in this garment, who think that their own garment of self-righteousness is good enough for God, will not have a place at the heavenly banquet table. A rich American was to be presented at the Court of St. James, and he brought the finest of clothes for the event; but he learned that he must appear in the livery of the court. We must appear before God in the livery of heaven, clad in the righteousness of Jesus. Accept this garment from your Savior, which covers your sins, and let your daily prayer be: "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness." (No. 371.)

FREDERIC NIEDNER

## Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

John 4:47-54

The Church of the Reformation exalts the Word of God. Do we as members of this Church also commit ourselves wholly to that Word with a faith that goes from strength to strength, with a trust that remains unshaken in every storm? We need the instruction of our text about

### Faith in the Word

1. *The school in which it is learned*
2. *The test by which it is proved*
3. *The reward with which it is crowned*

### 1

This official of Herod Antipas "believed the word" (v. 50). He learned this in the school of Jesus, advancing step by step. No doubt he had shared the *blasé* worldliness of Herod's court.

The armor of his carnal security, however, had one weak spot—his paternal love. There the Lord struck home. *Sore need now opened his heart to attend to the word about Jesus* (vv. 47 a, 45, 46 a), hitherto treated with indifference. The word about Jesus created the first beginnings of faith (Rom. 10:17): “the Helper of others can help me, too.” And now *that word about Jesus leads him to Jesus Himself* (v. 47 b). His entreaties, while showing the reality of his faith, reveal its imperfections. He still limits the power of Jesus and prescribes the method of help. The sign aspect of Jesus’ miracles has not yet led him to a full recognition of His divine glory. Hence the Teacher’s censure (v. 48). Thereby Jesus would remove the dross from His pupil’s faith. And as the petitioner will not let the Lord go except He bless him, He takes him a further step in faith’s ascent, *directing him to His bare Word*, which must be trusted apart from all sensuously perceived activity on His part (v. 50 a).

Every mature faith has been trained in the same school in essentially the same way. Need knocks down the props of carnal security; the Lord touches the vulnerable spot so that the old life palls and conscience cries in pain. “The faithful saying” about Jesus, 1 Tim. 1:15, now at last finds a hearing, and the heavy heart comes to Jesus. At first, faith, yet weak, may feel rebuffed when Jesus does not help in the way expected but points solely to the Word of His grace. But this is the supreme lesson which must be learned in His school, that we must renounce our own will and desire, all dependency on sight and feeling, and rest on the naked Word. Happy is he who passes that test.

## 2

V. 50 a. The nobleman faces a fiery test (1 Pet. 1:7). Has his faith the gold content of firm confidence and unquestioning obedience? “Thy son liveth”—the son who was at the point of death and for whom the father had no other hope than the presence of Jesus at his bedside. Will he trust the promise and quash all doubt? “Go thy way.” Alone? Without Jesus, his last recourse in his need? (V. 50 b.)

Putting ourselves in his place, we feel greatly humbled at this lofty faith. But we, too, must reach that height. The Word has been given to us as our stay in every need. That Word abides even when the transporting feeling of the Lord’s presence and grace departs. What shall prevail, our own unstable heart with what it fears, feels, and sees, or the eternal truth of the abiding Word? This is the test by which faith is proved, whether in storm or in sunshine we live by the motto: “I cling to what my Savior taught, And trust it, whether felt or not.”

## 3

Such faith is ever crowned with the Lord's gracious reward. V. 51: he has believed without seeing, and now he sees what he has believed. Vv. 52, 53 a: he receives new insights into the Savior's glory, knows now that His power to help is not a matter of miles but of His will and word. V. 53 b: his whole household is united with him in the bonds of a common faith.

If we believe the Word of Jesus, He rewards our confidence and obedience by confirming our faith through the experience of many fulfilled promises and by granting to us new visions of His glory that bind us more closely to Him in faith and love. And as we grow in love and trust, our faith, too, will prove propagative, leading others, especially those dearest to us, to admire and desire and, by God's grace, to share our faith. The best reward is when in our last hour the Lord bids us "go our way," and we can then jubilantly say: 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. VICTOR BARTLING

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### Reformation Festival

## Gal. 5:1

The great Reformation was primarily and essentially a religious movement. It marked the emancipation of the Church from spiritual bondage and ushered in an era of glorious freedom. — By the grace of God that freedom has been preserved unto us to this day.

But the Papacy has never ceased its sinister efforts again to entangle men with the yoke of bondage, and the exhortation of our text has no less significance today than it had when first St. Paul addressed it to the endangered churches of Galatia.

**"Stand Fast in the Liberty Wherewith Christ Hath Made Us Free!"**

1. *The need of this exhortation*    2. *Urgent reasons for heeding it*

## 1

A. The need of the exhortation in the case of the Galatians. — False teachers of Judaizing and Pharisaic tendencies had opposed St. Paul's Gospel of salvation by the free grace of God, through faith in Christ, without the deeds of the Law. They had insisted upon observance also of the Ceremonial Law as a condition of justification before God. — Observance of Jewish festivals (chap. 4:10), circumcision (chap. 5:2, 3), etc. The Galatians had begun to give heed to these errors. — The Galatians were indeed in danger of relapsing into a bondage equally hopeless as that which their former heathen state had imposed upon them. Chap. 4:8, 9. — There was urgent need of the exhortation "Stand fast!"

B. The need is as great today. — Since the days of the Reformation, Rome has sought by every means to re-establish her sinister

power. We, too, "marvel" (chap. 1:6) that after the Reformation and its recognized importance in the annals of the world, there should be so much indifference and blindness in our day over and against the danger and menace of the Papacy. Rome's record seems to be forgotten or ignored. Rome has never changed essentially. While the so-called Counter Reformation removed certain abuses and outward corruption, not a single false doctrine has been revoked. Many false doctrines have been added. Still traditions, church councils, papal decrees, are accorded co-authority with the Scriptures. Still the cardinal doctrines of Scripture, justification by grace, through faith in Christ, without the deeds of the Law is denied. There is still the blasphemous sacrifice of the Mass, idolatrous worship of saints and relics, etc. Nor has Rome relinquished her arrogant claims of sovereignty not only in the spiritual but also in the secular realm (Vatican state, current political efforts, etc.). By world-wide missionary, educational, and benevolent operations Rome seeks to entangle us again with the yoke of bondage. Surely, St. Paul's exhortation to "stand fast" is needed today.

## 2

A. (a) "Christ hath made us free." At the price of His own life the incarnate Son of God has procured for an enslaved, lost world precious freedom from the bondage of the Law, from the obligation to keep it in order to be saved, and from its curse. Chap. 4:4, 5; 3:13. — "For freedom," for being and remaining free, Christ has freed us. (b) This freedom, so dearly bought by Christ, was almost entirely lost under the Papacy. By His chosen vessel Dr. Luther and through the great Reformation, Christ restored it. — The Reformation was a great fight against fearful odds. Much toil, care, danger, etc., was connected with it. A freedom so dearly bought should not be lightly regarded or relinquished. Often we are reminded of the cost of our nation's freedom and its preservation (Revolutionary and Civil Wars) as an inducement to appreciate and to guard our political liberty. Infinitely more does this apply to the freedom from spiritual bondage.

B. "Stand fast," because of terrible consequences of failure to stand fast. "Be not entangled *again* with the yoke of bondage." — Condition of Galatians in the bondage of heathenism was terrible. Chap. 4:8, 9. — Describe spiritual misery before Reformation — The very thought of it must dispel any complacency with which so often the bondage of the Papacy is viewed. Failure to heed text leads to relapse into bondage.

Conclusion. "Stand fast, then." Cling to the Gospel of God's free grace in Christ. Reflect its power in your lives. Chaps. 5 and 6; John 8:31, 32.

AUG. F. BERNTHAL

## Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity

**Matt. 18:23-35**

The occasion of this parable: Christ had taught the lesson of brotherly admonition, forgiveness and discipline, vv. 15-18. Peter, as is his custom, speaks aloud what the others may have thought. Linking up with v. 15, he asks v. 21. He is willing to forgive, yet felt that forgiveness had its limitations. Jesus not merely points out the insufficiency of limited forgiveness, v. 22; He adds a parable containing

### A Warning Against Limiting Our Forgiveness

1. *Such limitation is utterly inconsistent with Christian experience*
2. *Such limitation is fraught with dire consequences*

#### 1

A. V. 23. God is our King, we His slaves whose person, time, and talents belong to their Lord. We must render account, Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10. We are guilty, Rom. 3:19. Our guilt surpasses hope of payment, v. 24. It seems impossible that a servant could have contracted so huge a debt, and so it seems impossible to natural man that he is hopelessly indebted, that his guilt is incredibly enormous. — V. 25. The Holy God demanding perfection pronounces judgment upon the sinner. Rom. 2:8, 9; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. Unbelief, ridicule, blasphemy of man do not change this horrible fact.

B. V. 26, 27. God freely forgives sin to the sinner, 2 Cor. 5:19-21. This is the forgiveness, free and unlimited, we have experienced and which we look for daily. Jer. 31:3; Hosea 14:4, 5; Micah 7:18-20. We could not live without it, Ps. 119:92.

C. Surely, we cannot be satisfied with granting a limited forgiveness to our neighbor. God demands unlimited forgiveness, vv. 22, 33, 35. This forgiveness is to flow from the heart, v. 35, loving the neighbor as ourselves and willing to grant him a measure of forgiveness like to that we have received and daily ask of God. Note also the difference between our guilt against God (rebellion against the Most High; 10,000 talents; repayment impossible) and our neighbor's offenses against us (fellow sinners; 100 pence; payment possible).

Limiting our forgiveness is utterly inconsistent with the Christian's past experience and daily hope.

2

Dire consequences follow in the wake of limited forgiveness.

A. V. 28-30. Limited forgiveness makes us unjust, harsh, cruel, toward the offending neighbor, while God demands Matt. 22:39.

B. V. 31. It saddens the fellow Christians. They must apply Matt. 18:15-18; note the close connection of the parable with vv. 15 ff.

C. V. 32-35. It provokes God's holy wrath. Matt. 5:23-26; 6:14, 15.

May God give us a heart willing to forgive even as we have been forgiven. Col. 3:12-14.

THEO. LAETSCH

