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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weden*, 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

Homiletics

Outlines on the Nitzsch Gospel Selections

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 9:1-12

Jesus opened the eyes of several blind people. On several occasions he spoke of Himself as Light. In the text He does both.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

I. Illuminates the dark eyes of a blind man

A. This is a miracle:

1. "Blind from his birth," v. 1, no sham; bona fide.
2. Attested by
 - a. The astonishment of the acquaintances, vv. 8-10 (later by the hatred of the Pharisees — context);
 - b. The testimony of the erstwhile blind man, v. 11.
3. Mud, spittle, and water are not a natural cure of blindness, vv. 6-7.

B. This is a miracle which proves

1. That He works the works of Him that sent Him, v. 4; God's Son, uncreated Light, divine person.
2. That He is the Light of the world, v. 5. The darkness of the world which must end in eternal outer darkness is relieved only by hope of His redemption; divine work.

II. Illuminates two dark mysteries of life

In performing this miracle Jesus answers two questions that have remained shrouded in darkness; human thinking has not been able to dispel it. The questions that Jesus answers are:

A. Why am I in the world?

1. The answers of human philosophy range from complete uncertainty about the purpose of life to pessimism, fatalism, and frustration.
2. Jesus had a purpose in life:
"I must work the works of Him who sent me," v. 4.
"I am the Light of the world," v. 5.

3. Because Jesus accomplished the purpose of His life, we who accept Him, also have a definite purpose in life. Jesus links our lives with the purpose of His coming; co-workers.

“We (Greek text) must work the works of Him that sent Me,” v. 4.

“Ye are the light of the world,” Matt. 5: 14.

4. This answer to the question of life’s purpose
- a. Ennobles our life; part of the plan of the eternal God.
 - b. Makes every moment of our life one of urgency and compulsion. “We must work”; “while it is day.”

B. Why is suffering and sorrow?

1. The answers of human thought usually end in blind resignation to the whims of a capricious fate.
2. The disciples looked *backward* for an answer; they seek the answer in the past, v. 2., cf. Job’s friends.
3. Jesus teaches His children to look *forward* when suffering comes; He says the answer is to be sought in the future; God is using suffering for a purpose, v. 3; John 11: 4,40; Elihu.
 - a. Jesus does not deny that suffering in general is the result of sin nor that at times a certain sin is followed by a specific chastisement, John 5: 14;
 - b. However the child of God should know that every chastisement is to accomplish the purpose of God’s love.
4. This answer brings a light of cheer into every dark hour of our lives.

Conclusion: John 8: 12. _____

W. R. ROEHRS

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 10: 17-27

The Savior was always ready to teach the one thing needful, v. 1 b. This tenth chapter is replete with evidences of Christ’s teaching activity: lessons on marriage, children, the nature of His passion, humility, His Sonship. In the midst of these lessons

CHRIST TEACHES A NEEDFUL LESSON ON INHERITING
ETERNAL LIFE

- I. *The young ruler who wanted to learn*
- II. *The needful lesson he heard*
- III. *The failure of the youth to meet the test*
- IV. *The concluding salutary warning for all*

I

V. 17 a. Impressed by the Savior's love for children, and by His direction to receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, the rich young ruler hastily, yet respectfully prostrated himself before Jesus, addressed Him "Good Teacher," and asked Him the all-important question 17 b. In other words, what, in addition to that which I have already done, must I do to inherit eternal life? He was sincere, not thoughtless, indifferent, hypocritical. He does not ask *how* to gain eternal life, but *What* must I *do* to inherit eternal life? He feels convinced that some good work must be done by him to enter the Kingdom of God and that he has the ability to do it. By nature all men are afflicted with the obsession that they can contribute all, or at least something, toward attaining eternal life. Compare Rom. 10: 3. By his very question the young ruler admits that he is still without the highest gift and treasure. There is an emptiness in his soul which he is unable to fill. He admits also that Jesus is in possession of eternal life. Lord, how didst Thou attain it? Tell me, that I may do likewise!

II

V. 18. The resourceful Teacher asks a question in return but quickly answers it Himself. The young student considered Jesus a mere good man and not the Son of God. Thousands today admit that Jesus is good, an ideal man who is close to God, but they do not confess that He is the true God, the God-Man, who came into the world to save sinners, 1 Tim. 1: 15.

The Teacher proceeds with the lesson, v. 19, pointing to the Commandments, which embody the goodness God requires of all men. He gave the right answer to the question: "What shall I do, etc.?" Whoever wants to attain eternal life by *doing*, that is, by good works, is required to keep every Commandment of the Law in desires, words, and deeds, loving God above all things and the neighbor as himself, James 2: 10;

Deut. 27:26. The Lord is convincing the young ruler of his sinfulness, of not having done *that good thing* — the keeping of the whole Law. The young man found himself in the Lord's school.

Surprisingly he replies, v. 20. Matt. 19:17 adds the question: "What lack I yet?" A note of disappointment is heard in the young man's words. He recalls no sin of commission or omission. This is the result of his Pharisaic schooling in self-righteousness. Many today are like this rich man. They boast of blameless lives, civic righteousness, outward church righteousness, charitable endeavors. However, the young ruler's question reveals a troubled conscience, a distinct feeling that there was still something missing in his works of righteousness to date.

III

V. 21 a. The heavenly Physician located the deep-seated hurt. He taught not only the Law, but also the Gospel. He desired to save this soul also, 2 Pet. 3:9. The gracious Teacher said, v. 21 b. These words do not mean that the young ruler had kept the whole Law, and that now he need only add one more good work. V. 21 c. By these words voluntary poverty is not demanded as a means of accumulating a surplus of good works. The Lord impressed upon the young man that it would be hard for him to supply what he lacked. By his own strength he would be unable to root out of his heart the innate love of mammon. Therefore He invites the young ruler: "Come to Me, your Savior, and be My disciple. I have fulfilled the Law for you, I have made satisfaction for your sins. Come as a weary, heavy-laden sinner. I will not cast you away from My presence. You will find rest for your soul, grace, forgiveness, life eternal. This will be hard for you to do. It will seem to you as a heavy cross. But even though you sacrifice this world's goods, you will have a treasure in heaven, Matt. 6:20. Follow Me, and you will receive what you are still lacking."

What was the reaction to this gracious appeal? V. 22. The young ruler failed to meet the test. His heart had been correctly appraised. It clung to great possessions as barnacles cling to the bottom of a ship. Mammon was his highest good. It meant more to him than God. He turned his back to the good Teacher, who had sought to save his soul, Luke 13:34.

IV

V. 23-25. The possession of wealth is fraught with spiritual hazards. Solomon therefore prays, Prov. 30:8. Wealth is not sinful in itself, but it can easily lead the possessor to the abject service of mammon. No man can save himself. The Lord emphasizes the great difficulty of leading a rich man into heaven. This is true of all men, for all are attached by nature to material things. Man must be changed in his thinking and wanting. A camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle. Man as he is constituted by nature cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. What an enormous undertaking to bring about this complete change! Who can accomplish this? No man, but God alone, Eph. 2:8-9.

When the disciples were amazed and began to despair of their own strength, asking, v. 26 b, the good Teacher graciously answered, v. 27. Left to himself, man would be eternally lost. But man need not despair. God is present and abides with him in His saving Word and grace. God alone can save to the uttermost, Heb. 7:25. The rich young ruler attempted to save himself. But on the way through life he heard a salutary lesson. He failed to learn. He did not meet the test. He loved his wealth more than God. He rejected the offered salvation. — The disciples despaired of their own strength to save themselves. They took refuge in Christ and were saved by grace. In Word and Sacrament the heavenly Teacher still offers eternal life to all. May we accept it by faith. Is. 55:1-3; John 7:37; Hymnal 380.

H. C. HARTING

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 12:38-44

With regard to worship and giving a large variety of excuses is devised. "I ought to; I would like to, but. . . ." There is much temptation to deception and self-deception.

For our warning, Jesus exposes the hypocritical worship of the scribes, and for our encouragement and emulation He praises the giving of the poor widow. The text impresses upon us that

GOD KNOWS THE QUALITY OF OUR WORSHIP
AND OUR GIVING

Therefore

- I. *Be not misled by the praise of men*
- II. *Honestly examine your worship and your giving*
- III. *Let not unjust criticism disturb you*

I

The scribes were highly regarded in the Jewish Church. They were greeted respectfully in market places and given seats of honor in synagogues and at feasts. Christ's disciples were tempted to look upon them as model worshipers. But Luke 16:15. Jesus exposed them as hypocrites, John 2:25. Their long garments covered deceitful hearts; their long prayers were a pretense, prompted by greed.

Hypocrites often have a way of gaining popular favor. But a prominent position, public acclaim, favorable publicity, cannot make anyone's praying or giving acceptable with God. Let us not be blinded by impressive outward appearances. Even if we are at times deceived by those who have merely the form of godliness, God is never deceived. He knows the hearts, 1 Sam. 16:7; Rev. 3:1, 8, 15. God detests hypocrisy, Is. 1:11-15. Punishment, Matt. 24:51.

II

He knows also our hearts. We may be unable to determine whether the worship of others is sincere, whether their giving is prompted by love, but we should not be in doubt about ourselves, Lam. 3:40; 1 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 6:4.

Because of the ever-present danger of self-deception, Jer. 17:9, we should honestly examine ourselves: Is *my* worship sincere? Do I rejoice in the Lord and in His Gospel of grace? Is my worship characterized by humility and by gratitude for the forgiveness of my sins through Christ's blood and for all the gifts of His favor?

Jesus praised the widow's gift. Does He also approve of *my* giving? Or do I deceive myself with one or more oft-quoted excuses? "I have so little that it won't matter whether I give or not. The poor should be excused from giving." V. 43. — "The small amount I could give would not accomplish anything anyway." John 6:9 ff. — "I must first provide for

my own needs." 1 Kings 17:13; Matt. 6:33. — "As long as I contribute, it does not matter whether I do it cheerfully or grudgingly." 2 Cor. 9:7. — "I'll give the widow's mite." V. 44. — "If I had as much as So-and-so, I would gladly give." 2 Cor. 8:12; 1 Cor. 16:2.

The only excuse from Christian giving is: I am not a Christian. The Lord knows, and we, too, should know, how much we give for the Lord's work; whether our church envelope is in proportion to our pay envelope and to our spiritual blessings; whether our giving is a sacrifice, prompted by love; whether we give gladly, in faith, confident that we are not the losers. "What can I spare?" We say: "Ah, this and this from mine array I am not like to miss. And here are crumbs to feed some hungry one. They do but grow a cumbrance on my shelf." — And yet one reads: Our Father gave His *Son!* Our Master gave *Himself!* 2 Cor. 8:9.

III

Genuine worship and generous giving are not always commended. There is frequent criticism of regular churchgoers — "they just went to please the pastor"; generous givers — "they are trying to show off." When the rich give — "they can afford it." When the poor give — "they should rather supply the needs of their family."

Have you been unjustly criticized? Do not be disturbed. Not what men say, be it praise or criticism, is going to count. God knows. And when the Master praises, what are men! Jesus praised the widow, the woman who was a sinner, Luke 7:44 ff.; Mary, Mark 14:6, 8. So your gifts of love are pleasing to Him. He takes note of every contribution, large or small, given out of love to Him, Heb. 6:10; Mark 14:9; Matt. 25:35-40.

God knows! A stern warning against hypocrisy, but a precious comfort to those who worship and give in sincerity and in truth.

V. L. MEYER

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 12:15-23

Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools, says St. Paul of the unbelievers. No denying that men of this world frequently are wise in earthly matters, wiser even than the

children of God. But for all their wisdom they display the greatest folly in their relation to their God and to eternal values. A case in point is the man in our text whom the Lord addresses, "Thou fool" (v. 15). Christ had been preaching on things pertaining to the soul, when He was interrupted by a man coming to Him with a strange request, viz., to settle a dispute regarding an inheritance (v. 13). Thus He found occasion for relating the Parable of the Rich Fool.

THE FOLLY OF THE RICH FOOL

I. This man did not give God credit for his goods (v. 16).

Engaged in an honorable occupation, a farmer. In an honest way had gained riches, through the tilling of the soil. Was to become still richer through the prospect of a bountiful harvest. But this man did not concede that the Lord was the Giver of all good gifts. Makes no mention of it. Acts as though it were quite self-evident that he was rich. Did not the Lord send rain, etc.? Yet speaks of "my fruits," "my goods," "my barns." — In this materialistic age there are only too many who think and speak likewise. Their earthly possessions are things about which they boast. Little inclined to give credit to God. And so they proudly speak of their possessions, their riches, their hard-earned money. Do not regard themselves as stewards, but rather as owners of earthly goods; think they can do with these as they please.

II. This man considered earthly things of chief concern and trusted in them.

When prospects bright for bumper crop, planned and studied how to take care of rich harvest (v. 17). Finally hit upon plan (v. 18). This could not be criticized, all things being equal. But now the true nature of the rich man comes to light (v. 19). Does not appreciate the Lord's blessing, nor does he plan to put his wealth into the service of God and his neighbor. Selfishly seems to know of no other use of his wealth than to serve his own interests. His chief joy is the possession of riches. Future bright because of it. Why worry? Why care? Has all he needs. Trusted in his wealth.

The chief concern of men of this world is money, how to make it and how to keep and enjoy it. They are covetous since they desire more all the time; trust in riches. So much

engrossed in task of acquiring wealth that they seem to have no time for anything else. Least of all for needs of soul. And if they attend church, preoccupied with thoughts of earthly affairs. Even Christians ever in danger of placing too much importance upon their well-being, their income, their temporal wants. Are you such a person? Covetous, not satisfied with what the Lord has given you, prone to worry as soon as it is necessary to reduce standard of living? How often are we inclined to make earthly things our chief concern. As though all depended on them, as though there were no God whose blessing and help, after all, makes us get along. Who of us is free from the sin of anxious care? Who not ready to say, What shall we eat, etc.? Forget that life consisteth not in the abundance of the things we possess. Of far greater importance than man's earthly possessions is the soul and its welfare. Foolish, indeed, he who thinks as the rich man did.

III. This man ignored the possibility of death.

That was a further proof of his folly (v. 19). Enjoy what you have. You have all you need for many years. These are his plans for the future. For an indefinite time he wants to be happy, thanks to his riches. But the Lord interrupts him (v. 20). Fool, indeed, he who ignores the brevity of life. Many years? Says God, "No, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Believers commend their souls to the Lord, are ready to die in the faith of their Savior. Unbelievers do not want to meet their Judge, and so their soul is required of them. This man's life was in the Lord's hands; He alone could dispose of it, not the man himself. And when you die this night, whose shall those things be that you have hoarded? Rich man retired that night. Ere morning came, dead. Whose were his goods? Not his, had to leave all behind. And his soul was unprovided for, went into a terrible eternity. Was he not a fool? Because of earthly matters, lost his soul.

Such men found at all times. Wise in business affairs, shrewd in amassing fortunes, but ignore death and the probable fate of their soul. Act as though they were to live forever (Prov. 27:1). Why not? Because tomorrow may never come. Foolish they who have not learned of the vanity of

earthly things and the permanency of heavenly things. A German verse, found as a wall motto in Christian homes, reads in translation:

This house is mine, and yet not mine,
 Thou second owner, 'tis not thine,
 The third, too, they shall bear away,
 Whose is this house, O pilgrim, pray?

Whose shall those things be? If men were only to think of this question more frequently, would realize the folly of living only for this life, would make proper preparations for eternity. Let us search our hearts. In danger of being like this man? If so, let us repent.

IV. This man was not rich toward God (v. 21).

That the height of rich man's folly. He laid up treasures for himself and was not rich toward God. To be rich toward God is to have our riches in union and communion with Him, with an eye towards Him. To be thus rich is to have spiritual treasures, forgiveness of sins, favor of God, faith in Christ, hope of heaven. He is rich who knows that spiritually he is poor and naked and blind and doomed to damnation, unable to contribute aught to his own salvation; he is rich who, repenting of his sins, learns to believe in Savior, leads a life of sanctification, is rich in good works. Such people rich amid poverty; look upon earthly blessings as lent by God to be used for His honor. Not selfish. Place time and talents into service of God and fellow men.

Conclusion. "So is he." The parable like a photograph at the bottom of which Jesus signs the man's name. Let us look whether it is our picture. Are we poor in God, rich in earthly matters? Let us repent. Turn to Jesus, learn true heavenly wisdom. Let us heed the Lord's word, Matt. 6:33.

PAUL KOENIG

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

DEUT. 6:1-7

There is much debate at present about the advisability of having universal military training in our country. Other nations have had it; shall we introduce it? Many forceful arguments are brought out in favor of the proposal by statesmen

and writers; equally strong arguments are marshaled against the plan. Citizens have the right to favor or to oppose universal military training. But there can be no well-founded opposition to

UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN TRAINING

I. Christian training is needed by everyone

No one questions the needs of education for all the children of all the people. No child should be permitted to grow up without an elementary education; as many as possible should attend college and university. Our country provides wonderful opportunities for the education of the masses. But more is needed than the education of the mind. Every person needs education in religion; everyone should receive Christian training. God commands it (vv. 2, 7). Everyone needs it. People learn natural religion by themselves, but this is insufficient and often erroneous. Revealed religion must be taught and learned. Everyone must be taught what *sin* is and that God is angry at every sin, and that God threatens to punish sin. Everyone must be taught what repentance and faith in Jesus means. Everyone must be taught how to live a God-pleasing life in gratitude to God. Everyone must be taught the way to heaven. Every child needs Christian training. The more important the subject, the more time is given to it in a child's education. What is more important than the child's religion? Some prefer to let the child grow up without Christian training and to let it choose its own religion in adult life. But how silly it would be to say: I shall not let my child learn arithmetic now. I shall wait till the boy grows up, and then he can choose whether he wants to know how to figure or not. No, every child needs an elementary education, and every child needs Christian training.

II. Christian training is needed for the nation's homes

God commanded the Israelites to teach religion in their homes (v. 7), because the homes of the nation need a religious foundation. The greatest threat to the nation today is the breaking up of the American home. The divorce evil is appalling. Marriage is often contemplated with no thought of adhering to the Scriptural demand "let no man put asunder." Many homes are only houses. There is a great shortage of houses; there is a still greater shortage of Christian homes

where children are trained in religion. Not enough parents say "I and my house, we will serve the Lord." Some have beautiful wall mottoes in their homes, but do not lead their home life according to them. Many homes are cursed with selfishness and dissension, and speakers and lawmakers are asking: What can be done to save the American home? The stability of the nation depends on the strength of the nation's homes. There is only one answer—religion in the home. Children must be taught the truths of the Christian faith, and through them they will be trained in the things that will save the American home.

III. Christian training is needed for the country's welfare

God desired the welfare and prosperity of Israel (v. 3), and to that end He commanded religious education. Our country needs Christian training for its continued welfare. The wave of lawlessness, of vandalism, of juvenile delinquency can be adequately checked only by teaching God's Word. More stringent laws alone will not solve these problems. More penal institutions will not do it. The work of social welfare agencies will alleviate the trouble but will not entirely suffice. Only the teaching of God's Word will give the country a Christian law-abiding citizenry.

Conclusion. So we should have universal Christian training. We cannot have it in the public schools because the religious convictions of people are divergent, and it would be impossible to have a religion suitable to all. But the Church can have its own schools. We have been blessed by God with our Lutheran schools, and in them we have given our children the Christian training that everyone needs, that is needed for the nation's homes, and for the country's welfare.

FREDERIC NIEDNER

