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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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ARCHIVE

Homiletics

The Nassau Pericopes

LAETARE

HEB. 10: 26-31

The Text and the Day. — The Lenten season reveals the wrath of God aroused by the sins of men, and His justice visited on His own Son, who was made sin for us. The collect of the day acknowledges that we worthily deserve to be punished for our evil deeds. The text exposes the deep-seated depravity of the human heart. Man created in the divine image may sink so low as to tread under foot the Son of God and to count His blood an unholy thing.

Notes on Meaning. — “Sin willfully” (v. 26) is the sin against the Holy Ghost; evidence (v. 29): “hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.” See Matt. 12: 31-32. — The contrast of vv. 28-29. Every sin against the Law merits eternal death, but unbelief, the sin against the Gospel, reaching its lowest depth of corruption in the unpardonable sin, calls for the extreme penalty. — “No more sacrifice,” v. 26. The only sacrifice for sin is that wrought by Christ, ch. 10: 10, 12, 14. The conscience of one guilty of this sin is seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4: 2), and no light can penetrate into such a vilified heart. This hopeless condition is not objective, but subjective, for Jesus’ blood cleanses from all sins.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The preacher should not describe this sin in such a way as to rouse in earnest Christians the suspicion that they may have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. He should direct souls which labor under that tormenting thought to the grace of God, which is universal and which is free grace. Whoever desires forgiveness is a believer and innocent of this sin. Formula of Concord: “All godly Christians who feel and experience in their hearts a small spark or longing for divine grace and eternal salvation” can and shall “know that God has kindled in their hearts this beginning of true godliness and that He will further strengthen and help them in their great weakness to persevere in true faith unto the end.” *Trigl.*, p. 885.

Preaching Emphases. — The text is one of the *sedes* of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Others are Matt. 12:31-32 and Heb. 6:4-6. Its essence is that one who has been convinced of the truth of the Gospel and has tasted of the grace of God, not only rejects the truth, but also blasphemes it. Pieper, *Christl. Dogm.*, I, p. 685. — There is no Gospel in the text. It may be supplied by reference to the Lenten season and by emphasis on universal grace. Though man is capable of this heinous sin, yet the power of God operative in Word and Sacrament enables the soldier of Christ to conquer the evil within him. Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:5. God's restraining grace is a sure preservative against this atrocious sin, ch. 10:23 b.

Outline:

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, OR TREADING
UNDER FOOT THE SON OF GOD

I. How this sin develops

- A. Having received the knowledge of the truth and experienced its transforming power,
- B. To reject and blaspheme the Gospel, though convinced that it is the truth.

II. Its Nature

- A. Not against the Law, v. 22, but the Gospel, v. 23.
- B. No hope of rescue, v. 26 b.

III. Its fearful penalty.

Shall be beaten with many stripes, vv. 27, 30, 31.

Conclusion: Faithful use of Word and Sacrament will preserve us from this sin, v. 23.

L. J. ROEHM

JUDICA

1 JOHN 3:16-24

The Text and the Day. — This text is used by some eleven pericope selections for one of the Sundays in Lent. In the Propers for the day there is expressed the plea that God might mercifully look upon His people and that He would govern and preserve them evermore by His great goodness. The text is related to the Epistle lesson for Judica, which shows how Christ laid down His life to obtain eternal redemption

for us. Gratitude for our salvation is the foundation of genuine love for the brethren.

Notes on Meaning.—What is true love? Its real nature was manifested finally and completely when Christ gave His life for men, “*ekeinos hyper heemon*,” He for us, for such as we are. The supreme evidence of love is to lay down one’s life for the ungodly. The common evidence of love is to give bread to one’s needy fellow believers. “*Aleetheia*” is properly added, for hypocrites may *imitate* love even by a great deed. V. 19: Such love is vital because it reflects our relation to God. V. 22: Evidence that we are God’s children—we are constantly receiving from Him whatever we keep praying for. This is God’s evidence of love for us. Our evidence—if we keep the commandment. V. 23. You cannot believe without loving nor love without believing. The “*onoma*” is the revelation—the entire Gospel reveals His Son Jesus Christ. V. 24: The Holy Spirit is the ultimate Source of our knowing. He is given us by the Word and the Sacraments. From Him we know that God remains in us.

Preaching Pitfalls.—The principal errors prevailing on the subject of love: basing love on the spirit of Christ rather than on the atonement of Christ. We know that it is not charity, but a living faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which makes a Christian. “Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Wrong motives in community appeals, charity appeals, home and foreign missions.

Preaching Emphases.—He who believes John 3:16 must live 1 John 3:16. Jesus Christ imparts to our love a seeing eye and a tender hand. Though our heart condemn us a thousand times, God knows what our heart has failed to tell us—He knows that in Christ our sin-stained lives have been accounted righteous in His sight. The spiritual life of the Christian dare not sink to a mere vague religiosity, and his love dare not be hypocritical or superficial.

Problem and Goal.—So long as we exist here and hereafter, we owe love. It is not optional to love, but a duty. It is a test of the quality of faith. The world still hovers on the brink of chaos because Christ’s commandment of love is not given a chance to shape the future of the world. The world really belongs to those who love most and who win by love.

Pray always that Christ's commandment of love will enlighten the minds and unite the hearts of men and nations. Then we shall have a world of love and not of hate.

Outline:

LOVE THE MOST DURABLE POWER IN THE WORLD

- I. In the exhibition of the nature of true love.
 - A. The nature of love is to make sacrifice, v. 16 a.
 - B. The greatest sacrifice is the surrender of life, v. 16.
 - C. Its real nature was manifested when Christ gave His life for us, for such as we are.
- II. In the obligation to exercise true love.
 - A. Willingness to make the great sacrifice for our brethren, v. 16 b.
 - B. Readiness to relieve the need of our brethren, v. 17.
 - C. Making love real not only by words, but by deeds, v. 18.
- III. In the information of assurance before God.
 - A. It assures our heart of the indwelling of His Spirit, v. 24.
 - B. It assures the heart of the forgiveness of sins, vv. 19-21.
 - C. It assures our heart that God answers prayers, vv. 22-23.

E. E. PIEFLOW

PALM SUNDAY

JOHN 17:20-26

The Text and the Day. — This text is equally fitting for an address on the day of confirmation and for an introduction to a Holy Week series. If for confirmation, the applications will, of course, be somewhat more specific.

Notes on Meaning. — Here is the solemn climax of the whole high-priestly prayer of the Savior. — To obtain a proper frame for the text, forget about the chapter division between 17 and 18. — "Perfection," i. e., growth in unity; cf. Eph. 4:13. "Unity": (a) all one, (b) one as we, (c) one *in* us. — "Glory": cf. v. 5 and 1 Pet. 4:14. — "Loved Me": Not only the divine Trinitarian love of the Father to the Second Person, but espe-

cially the eternal satisfaction of God with Christ, His conduct, Word, salvation.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The very richness of the text presents the temptation to go too far afield for one sermon or to limit too drastically. — Since this section treats primarily of the Savior's prayer for the believers, references to the preceding prayer for the Apostles should be used only as they are necessary to elucidate v. 20. Hence, in the outline below, *IA* should not be overstressed. — The desire to "explain" a rather difficult text dare not permit the overshadowing of the boundless Savior love, as it expresses itself in the whole section, but especially in vv. 25-26. — Although truly pertinent to the text, a too heavy emphasis on "the true unity of the believers" will detract from the equal blessings of the whole text. — Note that the entire section is not a prayer spoken in the believer's place, but by the Savior, as the Savior, for the welfare and joy of the believer.

Preaching Emphases. Picture the Savior praying for this year's confirmation class or for your congregation. — What a blessed thing that Jesus considers 'me' (confirmed — sinner) worthy to be given the inestimable blessings He asks of the Father! — If that is what my Savior wants, it must be *my* striving, desire, prayer. — The only effective motive for church work, missions, church membership, etc., is the unity of the believer with God in the love of Christ. — "We should let this expression be our soul's pillow and bed of down and with joyful heart resort thereto when the sweet hour of rest is at hand" (Luther).

Problem and Goal. — The true Christian wants to be what Jesus wants him to be. Jesus tells us what is nearest His heart by praying for this in His great prayer. All other things in Christian living will fall into place when that prayer is not thwarted.

Outline:

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS OWN

- I. For whom does Jesus pray?
 - A. For those to whom He has entrusted the preaching of His Word.
 - B. For those who believe that Word.

- II. For what does Jesus pray?
- A. For unity of the believer with God.
 - B. For unity among the believers.
 - C. For their influence, by love, on the world.
 - D. For their eternal presence with Him.

H. B. ROEPE

MAUNDY THURSDAY

MATT. 26: 26-29

The Text and the Day.—The day derives its name, Maundy Thursday, from the Middle English word *maundee* or *maunde*, a command, the Latin *mandatum*. It has reference to John 13:34, the “new commandment,” given on that first Maundy Thursday. The text, which shows our Savior’s love for us in instituting this Sacrament of grace for our earthly pilgrimage, is an incentive to follow this “new commandment.” The Propers for the day sound the keynote of true humility, which flows from a realization of God’s mercy to us and which shows itself in the fruits of faith.

Notes on Meaning.—“As they were eating”—the Passover, the Old Testament sacrament typifying the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God. This prophetic type was about to be fulfilled. This the disciples’ last Passover. Henceforth they would receive “the blood of the *New Testament*,” v. 28. The flesh and blood of the paschal lamb merely memorialized the love of God in saving from *temporal* death. But in this New Testament Sacrament the Son of God, God’s own Lamb, gives His body and His blood for the “remission of sins,” thus saving from *eternal* death. “This is My body”—the Greek word for “this” is a neuter demonstrative. But the Greek word for bread is masculine. Jesus does not say, “This bread is My body,” or still less, “This bread has been changed into My body.” It can only mean the sacramental presence of Christ’s body, since this neuter demonstrative is connected with the positive “is.” So also “*this is my blood.*” “Shed for many”—not as the blood of the paschal lamb, which was shed only for a few in each home, but for the mass of humanity, for whom Jesus died. “Drink it new in My Father’s kingdom” turns our eyes to the heavenly home, where the Sacrament of

the Altar, which restored our souls again and again, will no longer be needed by us, but where as perfected saints we shall sup with our Lord forever and partake of heavenly joys.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Since so much controversy has raged about this text, we might be tempted to make it a mere polemical sermon. Reference to the false doctrines of the Reformed sects and of Rome should be used to show what greater comfort Christ's true Sacrament offers. We must stress that it is a Sacrament of love.

Preaching Emphases. — Jesus is binding the Old and New Testaments together. God's love for His people was shown in the Passover. Each year the Israelites were to observe it as a reminder of God's merciful love. This accentuated their own faithlessness over against God's faithfulness. — The Holy Supper is our Lord's Sacrament of love in which He gives us His body and blood, in, with, and under the bread and wine, for the remission of our sins. This accentuates our sinfulness over against God's forgiving mercy. — This Sacrament is our Savior's pledge that we are His own, whom He will one day forever satisfy at the heavenly table in His Father's kingdom. — The love here shown must incite us to serve our Lord with deepest gratitude. This will also show itself by keeping the "new commandment," suggested by Maundy Thursday.

Problem and Goal. — The temptations, trials, and sins of life often cause us to lose heart, to doubt God's love, to grow weary and weak in faith. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus in a unique manner comes to us to assure us of His everlasting love, thus to strengthen us in our faith and to fill our hearts with the joy of our salvation. Can He give us more than the very sacrifice wherewith He overcame sin, death, and the power of the devil? The joy this gives is a foretaste of that heavenly joy which awaits us when we "drink it new" in His Father's kingdom. Refreshed by this Sacrament, we push forward with new strength towards our heavenly goal.

Outline:

OUR LORD'S NEW TESTAMENT SACRAMENT OF LOVE

- I. It was instituted at the Passover meal, v. 26 a.
 - A. The Passover was a mere memorial.
 - B. It reminded of God's love and faithfulness.
 - C. It was an incentive to serve God better.

- II. It is a better covenant than that of the Old Testament, vv. 26-28.
- A. It is more than a mere memorial.
 - B. It is sealed with the very body and blood of God's Son.
 - C. It is for the remission of sins.
 - D. It strengthens us to live for God and our fellow man.
- III. It reminds us of the consummation in heaven, v. 29.

F. E. SCHUMANN

GOOD FRIDAY

2 COR. 5:18-21

The Text and the Day. — The message of Good Friday is the climax of Christ's vicarious Passion as it took place on Golgotha. The text will serve well to bring this message. — The lections for the day and the text make up a striking series on the vicarious atonement from the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles. References to the lections in the sermon will help to unify the service around its great central theme.

Notes on Meaning. — The unifying thought of the text is: "And all things are of God." Everything that is necessary to make man "a new creature" (v. 17) is done by God alone. It was God who reconciled man to Himself; it is God who through His Gospel ministry brings to man the good news of accomplished reconciliation and invites him to become reconciled; it is God who creates in him faith, the ability to accept reconciliation in Christ (for the "Word of reconciliation" is the "power of God unto salvation," Rom. 1:16). — For emphatic presentation of the truth that God reconciled us to Himself note: "Es ist ein schriftgemaesser Gedanke, dass der die Genugtuung Beschaffende und der die Genugtuung Empfangende ein und derselbe ist" (Pieper, *Christl. Dogm.*, II, 455).

Preaching Pitfalls. — No Good Friday sermon should be without a prominent presentation of Christ's vicarious suffering and death on Golgotha. Subdivision I, B is intended to serve this need and should therefore be treated more ex-

tensively and prominently than the rest. Here is Gospel in the supremest sense.

Preaching Emphases.—The sermon is centered around the thought that the extreme earnestness with which God seeks to reconcile us to Himself must arouse us to correct our own attitude toward our reconciliation with God. The dreadful-ness of being at enmity with God appears in the strongest light when we view the earnestness with which God seeks to save us from this state. There is such great earnestness, such willingness to bring the greatest sacrifices, there is such a terrible urgency about God's work of reconciliation that it must arouse us from laxity, indifference, and satisfaction to a new awareness of the blessedness of being reconciled to God and to a desire to grasp more firmly and more securely the reconciliation which is ours in Christ.

Problem and Goal.—Laxity and indifference are constant and real dangers in the spiritual life of Christians. Nor should the Christian be satisfied with the present state of his faith.—The goal of the sermon is to disturb the hearer in his present state of spiritual laxity or satisfaction and to raise him to new heights of faith and consecration.

Outline:

THE DISTURBING EARNESTNESS WITH WHICH GOD
SEEKS TO RECONCILE US TO HIMSELF

- I. How earnestly God seeks to reconcile us to Himself.
 - A. God humiliates Himself to become the Reconciler.
 - B. Golgotha, the awesome spectacle of God's paying the debt of our sins.
 - C. God pleads with us to accept reconciliation.
 - D. God even works in us the ability to accept reconciliation.
- II. This must disturb us and arouse us out of spiritual indifference and satisfaction, because it shows—
 - A. The dreadful-ness of the state from which God in His love and mercy strives to rescue us.
 - B. The importance of remaining in the blessed state of reconciliation by a life of daily repentance.
 - C. The need of rising to ever greater heights of faith and consecration.

A. R. RIEP

EASTER SUNDAY

LUKE 24:1-9

The Text and the Day. — Easter, as the oldest Christian festival, controls the entire church year. Some other pericopes may be chosen arbitrarily, but Easter demands a specific text proclaiming the Gospel of life in Christ Jesus.

Notes on Meaning. — The text is not only an historical account. It is doctrine. The center of the text is v. 6, and the quintessence of v. 6: He is risen; remember how He spake unto you. *Hoos* here refers to the manner and quality of His statement. As He said He would, so He is risen. The statement was made before He was delivered, crucified, risen. His suffering, death, and resurrection are not merely a series of consecutive acts, but the three are so closely related that they constitute *one* work, the absence of any one act rendering the other two void of purpose. Since He passed through suffering and death, His resurrection was inevitable, according to His Word. His Word had been forgotten by the women and the men, and all acted as forgetters do. Reminded, they remembered. Now, instead of serving a dead savior with spices, they served the living Savior by bearing and bringing the Word of life to the disciples.

Preaching Pitfalls. — On Easter Day millions throng the churches. For the reproof of skeptics, supposedly present, one may feel inclined to delve into a learned and convincing, probably railing, dissertation on the fact of Christ's resurrection by argumentation not indicated in the text. No amount of oratory will help those who believe not, though Jesus is risen from the dead. Luke 16:31. Other texts are more appropriate for reproof. Preach only the text at hand, and to the regular attendance, the flock. Since we cannot speak in the tongue of angels, and the public does not understand the terms of the learned, we must speak in the effective, simple language used by the text angels, as directly, childlike, majestically, and as convinced as they, to the people who, like the text women and men, desire to hear that wonderful Word of life. Do not place the stone, or the brightness of the morning, allegorically, or the angels, or the women, in the center of the text.

Preaching Emphases. — The angels stress the spoken Word

of Jesus. Before appearing to His own, the risen Lord wanted them first to hear and believe the Word. In doctrine, reproof, comfort, God ever causes His Word to precede His acts. The act follows and proves to the senses the truth of the Word. Because of the Word the act *must* follow. In all of God's dealings with men the same relation between Word and act is to be seen. And the angels emphasize the truth, the fact of Christ's resurrection, by reference to His Word. His Word proves the validity of His work. No Word, no work; if Word, then work. The majesty of the ever-repeated "Thus Saith the Lord" appears in the text in the dazzling splendor and glory of the everlasting, living Truth. The content of Christ's Word as cited by the angels and emphasized by the *hoos* (not *hoti*) leads to the very Person and heart of Jesus as the Savior who suffered, died, arose, and lives for us. Let us dwell on this Gospel, so sweet to the penitent sinner: Christ's humiliation, His exaltation; His death, His resurrection; His seeming defeat, His glorious victory. But we must emphasize that the sinner must remember the Word of Christ and, with it, His redemptive work. It is so easily forgotten. No, we do not idolize the Word. But we have the Lord and worship Him only when we remember the Word, not just historically with the head and intellect, but confidently and gratefully by an active faith. Now see the remembering women speeding to be spreading the Word of life, vv. 8-10; for they remembered. Let us, remembering, go and do likewise.

Problem and Goal. — Is there no Law in the text? The *hoos* (v. 6) and the *dei* (v. 7) remind us of the element of sin and death, from which Jesus has now redeemed us. The Word and work of Jesus is to be brought to remembrance, that the hearer may return to his home remembering, believing, justified, comforted, a doer of the Word, living to the Lord now and forever. 2 Tim. 2:8; John 11:25-26.

Outline:

JESUS CHRIST, THE VICTORIOUS LORD OF LIFE

- I. He speaks the *Word* of life.
 - A. Before His resurrection.
 - B. After His resurrection by His messengers.
 - C. To all who need it.

- II. And performs the redemptive *work* of life.
 - A. Suffering and dying in our stead.
 - B. Triumphant in the victory of His resurrection for our justification.
 - C. Sealing and validating His Word of life by His work of life.
- III. Ever remembered and worshiped by the redeemed.
 - A. His Person, Word, and work, easily forgotten, sometimes neglected.
 - B. Must be grasped, constantly recalled by faith.
 - C. Celebrated by daily consecration to Him.

G. H. SMUKAL

