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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 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

The Nassau Pericopes

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 6:19-23

The Text and the Day. — “Our children return to school.” Text gives good material for a “school,” or an “education,” sermon. Complete training of child includes as a major point the presentation by word and example of a proper set of values (goals) for life. Adequate presentation demands a knowing and a doing by presenters (parents, pastors, teachers, Christians). In today’s text, Jesus helps to establish this.

Notes on Meaning. — The word “*corrupt*” may be equally well translated *consume*. The latter will probably give our hearers a clearer approach. — “Lay up” does not mean earn. Gifts may be accumulated to form treasures. — “Light of the body,” as sun is the light to the earth. — “Single eye,” in contrast to moral double sight, which obscures and blurs. Cf. v. 24. Example: The Pharisees saw double: would have God and a carnal Messiah. “Light that is in thee,” the light of revelation by the Spirit of God, which is unobscured, unblurred, a true presentation.

Preaching Pitfalls. — Vv. 19-21 is not a denunciation of treasures per se. The “treasures” of the text are more clearly defined if we say “what we treasure on earth.” This is more in harmony with v. 21. We should not give the hearer the impression that the text speaks primarily of dollars and cents.

Vv. 22-23. Three sermons and an exegetical study left this reader in utter confusion because an attempt was made to base applications on known eye ailments of our day. That probably would be the plight of the hearer if done in a sermon by us.

Preaching Emphases. — Although no direct Gospel statement is made in the text, the whole tenor of the text leads into Gospel messages. “Treasures in heaven”: God’s love, forgiveness, assurance of eternal life, etc., are the heavenly treasures. “Light that is in thee” — the knowledge of divine promises and their acceptance at face by faith is the light that

drives out the darkness of sin, ignorance, despair. That light has its inception and continuance in the revelation of God's love by the Holy Ghost.

Problem and Goal. — Men live by the set of values they adopt for life. Christians are conscious of the wrong evaluations which the flesh and the world will present to us and our children. Only those values set by God in Christ are absolute and totally worth while.

Outline:

TWO WORTH-WHILE GOALS FOR LIFE

I. Lasting treasures

- A. The possibility of establishing what constitutes real treasures, v. 20
- B. The importance of establishing what constitutes real treasures, v. 21
- C. The result of possessing such treasures

II. An enlightened perspective

- A. Is the result of illumination of the Spirit of God
- B. Demands a single eye
- C. Removes darkness

H. B. ROEPE

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

EPH. 3:14-19

The Text and the Day. — This is the time of anniversaries and openings of Lutheran seminaries and colleges (*Luth. Annual* 1948, Aug. 29—Sept. 15) and of Christian day schools and membership classes. Knowledge is power.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 14: The cause is advanced (chap. 2:13—3:13) as the salvation of the Gentiles, their incorporation into the body of Christ, their adoption into the family of God, the invisible Church. Paul's tireless missionary activity in view of the Gentiles' participation is on bended knee, intercessory prayer attending his ardent efforts in indoctrinating the new and old, the young and aged, members. May God have mercy on pastors and congregations who neglect indoctrination! — V. 15: The whole family are those to whom God has given Himself as Father, to whom He has

given power to become the sons of God. The reference to those in heaven indicates their intimate relationship with those on earth. The family of God is the invisible Church, Militant and Triumphant. Num. 6:27; Jer. 14:9; 15:16; Hos. 1:10; John 1:12; Rom. 9:26; 1 John 3:1. — V. 16: The chief concern here are those on earth, who are to be blessed by the Father with an ever-growing glory: knowledge and faith. Paul is not asking here for numerical growth. The blessing requested is the glory of increased indoctrination. Ch. 4:11-15. Indoctrination is the work of the Holy Spirit, who operates by the means of grace, not by the Law, to strengthen spiritually the man reborn of Him, for (v. 17) He leads to Jesus, John 14:26; 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 12:3, and He indoctrinates, John 16:13; 2 Cor. 3:18. God's love to us is the root and ground. Our love to Him or the brother is sometimes shifting and fickle, and we cannot know God by our love to Him. — V. 18 will have been apprehended after we have the doctrinal and practical view of the wondrous love of God revealed in Christ; for the emphasis in v. 19 is on *know*, the result and achievement of indoctrination, **knowledge accumulated** by faith. See ch. 4:11-15.

Preaching Pitfalls. — No statement of Scripture ascribes to God a universal fatherhood, not even by reason of His creatorship. His fatherhood is confined to His family, which He has named and which bears His name. Refrain from reference to a fictitious and dishonoring universal fatherhood except to drive it out of the mind of the mistaught hearer. — This text in its context is sometimes applied to the visible Church for the promotion of visible racial integration. Such application is a severe pitfall.

Preaching Emphases. — Whoever resents indoctrination neglects God's glory and His means of grace, blurs within himself God's glorious image and hampers its restoration, renders ineffective in himself and others God's answer to the First Petition, and is in danger of frustrating his own personal salvation. — To the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit, the work of indoctrination is ascribed. He has called us into His service for this work, Matt. 28:20; Acts 20:27-28. Pastor and people are to grow in the knowledge of God, in faith, in sanctification, that is, in the image of God. Spiritual ignorance is not consistent with God's gracious will to fill us with

His fullness and to dwell in us as in His temples. Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; Col. 1:9-10; 2 Pet. 3:18.

Problem and Goal.— We must arouse each member to bear a burning interest in the welfare of his congregation and the entire Church by praying unceasingly for its indoctrination, for more glorious reflection of God's image, for the greater beautification of Christ's bride on earth. — Each member must be reminded of his duty to God, to himself, and to the congregation to seek indoctrination. Membership classes, Bible classes, refresher courses, schools, exceed in importance any other considerations, and regular church attendance to hear and do indoctrinating sermons must be conscientiously and evangelically stressed.

Outline:

OUR INDOCTRINATION

- I. It is the gracious concern and work of the Holy Trinity.
 - A. Of the Father, who never declines the petition for spiritual growth;
 - B. Of the Son, who has called Paul and us to indoctrinate in His name;
 - C. Of the Holy Spirit, who strengthens the inner man with the power of knowledge and faith by the knowledge of Christ, the means of grace.
- II. It is the restoration and perfecting of the divine image in us.
 - A. The divine image is knowledge, righteousness by faith, v. 17; holiness, v. 20 b, 16 a.
 - B. The effect of indoctrination in us is progression in the divine image.
 - C. Consistent with the riches of God's glory.
- III. Therefore our desire must be to become indoctrinated and to indoctrinate others.
 - A. Express this desire by prayer and intercession.
 - B. Subdue the natural tendency to spiritual loathing, lethargy, and laziness.
 - C. Diligently use the means of indoctrination by which God satisfies our growing desire.

Conclusion: 2 Cor. 4:6.

G. H. SMUKAL

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 2:23-28

The Text and the Day. — The emphasis in the Propers for this Sunday is on the spirit of unity and humility among Christians. Very appropriately the Gospel brings the legalistic attitude toward the Sabbath observance as an example of pride which would disturb Christian unity. Into that picture our text fits perfectly.

Notes on Meaning. — Cornfields were fields of small grain. Footpaths ran through these fields. Disciples picked off heads of grain, rubbed them out, and ate them. The *Patres Traditionum* stated: "He who reaps the very least on the Sabbath is chargeable; and to pluck ears is a species of reaping." Mark and Matthew say the Pharisees spoke to Jesus, Luke says they spoke to the disciples. There is no contradiction. They did both. . . . It is interesting to note that Jesus did not pluck ears, and thus He was in a better position to defend His disciples. . . . Showbread "shall be Aaron's and his sons; and they shall eat it," Lev. 24:9. . . . "House of God" includes also the courts attached to the Tabernacle, Ps. 122:1. . . . There is some confusion regarding the names Ahimelech and Abiathar, cf. 2 Sam. 8:17 and 1 Sam. 22:20. Simplest explanation is that father and son were both active.

Preaching Pitfalls. — There was nothing wrong with their plucking. The smallness of the labor does not excuse it, but the Law explicitly permitted such plucking, Deut. 23:25. . . . Don't use sermon time on chronological or geographical placing of this text, since it is not given by Mark nor by the parallels, Matt. 12:1-8, Luke 6:1-5. . . . There is much we should like to say about worldliness and the Sunday, but this text does not provide a basis for such discussion. . . . These Pharisees had not tasted the real love of Jesus for sinners; therefore they still based their theology on legalistic tradition. . . . In applying this text, drawing parallels between the Sabbath and our Sunday can become very dangerous.

Preaching Emphases. — Here is a precious opportunity to emphasize the glory of our Christian freedom, based on the love of Jesus. He is not our slave driver, but our dearest Friend. His commandments do not flow out of tyranny, but out of fervent love. This must influence our whole behavior

toward Him and His Word. We want to read His Word more and man's word less as guidance in our life. Whenever man tries to give us spiritual direction, let us demand such specific passages of Scripture as Jesus quotes in our text, not mere generalities. This underlying principle of spiritual freedom applies today to giving, prayers, home devotions, church and Communion attendance, etc. We must base all admonition concerning these, not on tradition, not on Old Testament standards or laws, not on decisions of conferences or congregations, not on quotations of Luther or other church leaders, but only on the Word of God, which is filled with the freedom which Jesus earned for us.

Problem and Goal. — Our object must be to emphasize that Jesus is interested far more in the right spiritual condition of the heart than in living up to any ceremonial regulations or human traditions. All ceremonies were given to help, not to hinder, Christian faith and love and joy.

Outline:

WHAT ABOUT CEREMONIAL REGULATIONS?

- I. They were never intended for tyranny but rather for help.
 - A. Those who do not know God rightly may make His regulations look like tyranny to themselves and others.
 - B. Our text shows us by the example of David and by Jesus' own statement about the Sabbath that God is a God of love and help.
 - II. Christ is the Lord over all of them.
 - A. All Old Testament ceremonial regulations have been abolished.
 - B. Jesus wants the underlying principle of love and worship to be in evidence also today.
 - C. Only when we love Jesus, will we gladly learn His Word and do His will. W. W. STUENKEL
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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MARK 12:28-34

The Text and the Day. — This text relates the same incident as the Gospel of the first series. The difference in approach and conclusion need not be dwelt upon. The stress in the texts at this time of the year is on reducing to practice what we know.

Notes on Meaning. — V. 28: "well"; this scribe had been impressed by Christ's authoritative tone (v. 27). "Which," not so much "which one" as rather "what sort of." — "The first" not in order, but in importance (Matthew has "the great"). Possibly the scribe had in mind the undue emphasis on ceremonial regulations at the expense of the Moral Law. Note the comparison made by the scribe (v. 33). — V. 29: Basic to the keeping of the Law is to know the Lawgiver. — V. 33: Note the forceful repetition of "all" (Ps. 103:1: "All that is within me.") — V. 31: Though Christ quoted the first commandment from Deut. 6:5 and the second from Lev. 19:18, He was the first to put these two into this juxtaposition. V. 34: "Not far," because he had the correct concept of the Law; yet not *in* the Kingdom, because he lacked faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

Preaching Pitfalls. — The difference between the account in Matt. 22 and Mark calls for no consideration in a sermon on this text. The motive back of the scribe's question is here of no significance. We are concerned with the Master's answer. — Observe that our text is restricted to Christ's answer to a query pertaining to the Law. In the treatment of His answer care must be taken not to give the impression that such perfect love to God and unselfish love to one's neighbor is possible to the extent of meriting God's full approval and consequent reward. The question here is *not* like that in Mark 10:17. The Gospel of salvation by grace must be introduced somewhere in the sermon.

Preaching Emphases. — Apparently the scribe had been so impressed by Christ's clean-cut and authoritative reply to the question of the Sadducees that he was ready to accept Christ's answer to his own question. For us Christ is indeed the "Teacher come from God." And the Holy Spirit, as Christ's gift to His Church, has given us an infallible record of Christ's

words and by them will also lead us into all truth, according to Christ's promise, JOHN 16:13. — Here, as in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ emphasizes the *source* and *motive* of our conduct. It is the attitude of mind and heart that gives quality to our speech and action. The corruption of the human heart may not be overlooked (Matt. 15:19).

Problem and Goal. — Caution, on the one hand, against ceremonialism and any form of worship that does not spring from faith and love. Caution, on the other hand, against all "good works" that do not proceed from sincere love to God and unselfish love to the neighbor. Set forth how the failure to obey this fundamental law of love is the source of the world's ills and how only the love of God in Christ can redeem us individually and improve society collectively. Luther revealed not only keen spiritual insight, but also social understanding and sound pedagogical psychology when he introduced his explanation of each Commandment with "We should fear and love God." (Reflection: Would we not do well in our preaching to draw more frequently on Luther's Catechism, thus reminding our confirmed youth and adults of the abiding value of the words they once committed to memory?)

Outline:

LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

- I. Only as we love God supremely, will we
 - A. Worship Him truly;
 - B. Serve Him gladly.
- II. Only as we love our neighbor rightly, will we
 - A. Refrain from doing him harm;
 - B. Render him all possible help.
- III. Failing in this perfect love, we are in need of forgiveness
 - A. From God, whom we chiefly offend;
 - B. From our neighbor, whom we also have grieved.

Conclusion. — We live in a hard and selfish, cold and cruel world. Be not conformed! The great need of the day is *more love*: in our homes, churches, and in society. Such love among men — love that is pure and unselfish — can be engendered only by the Holy Ghost, who through Word and Sacrament imparts to us the love of God in Christ. 1 John 3:14-17; 4:7-11, 19-21.

MARTIN WALKER