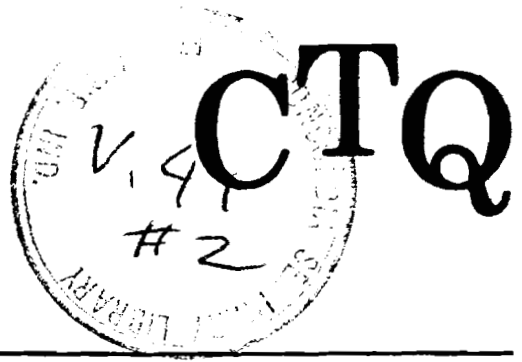


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Homiletical Studies

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT (PALM SUNDAY): LUKE 23:39-43

The first two synoptists tell us that both thieves reviled Jesus. Luke uses an even stronger term which denotes intemperate and insulting language (v.39). But watching Jesus as He hung patiently on His cross, one of these misguided men changed his opinion (v.40). He rebuked his compatriot in crime (v.41), admitting that his own sentence was just while Jesus' punishment was not deserved. According to v.42 the penitent looked forward to Jesus coming again in kingly power and glory. Thus he alone had read aright the superscription on Christ's cross, "This is the King of the Jews." The thief asked only that Jesus would not forget him at His coming. Jesus assured him (v.43) that He would remember him on this day, for before night fell he would be in paradise where the souls of the righteous find a home after death has separated soul and body.

The central thought of the text is that a saved person is one who relies on divine mercy. The problem in the hearers' lives is that they do not always grasp the magnitude of divine mercy. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would live with a keener awareness of Christ's mercy to them.

Introductory thought: Two radically different reactions to the culminating episode of Christ's passion. At first both men had reviled Christ, but then one man changed completely. No limit to the good a man can come to when God changes him. Change is evident especially from his words,

JESUS, REMEMBER ME

These words indicate:

- I. Sorrow for sin.
- II. Reliance on mercy.

I.

- A. The robber saw himself as guilty (v.41a).
 1. Now getting what he deserved.
 2. Blamed no one but himself.
 3. His observation of Jesus on the cross induced remorse over his sin.
 - B. We need to see ourselves as guilty before God.
 1. Cannot point self-righteously to the robber—so much evil comes from our heart (Mt 15:19).
 2. Our words and actions reveal other forms of sin—selfishness, indifference, hypocrisy.
 - C. Are we sorry for our sins?
 1. Not just sorry we got caught but a godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:9-10).
 2. See that our sins were the cause of Christ's death (Is 43:24).
- Jesus, remember me! Let these words express heartfelt sorrow for our sins.
Robber's prayer not only humble but hopeful.

II.

- A. The robber had amazing faith.
 1. Asked only to be remembered, leaving it to Jesus how mercy would be shown (v.42).
 2. Regarded Jesus as an innocent sufferer (v.41b) who was thus in a position to show him mercy on account of his sins.
 3. Knew Jesus to be a king who could do anything He wanted to do.
- B. Faith looks beyond what the eyes see.
 1. You may see only the sin in your life and feel only estrangement from God.
 2. Faith sees forgiveness in Christ's blood and life in Christ's death.
- C. Christ's mercy does not fail.
 1. That day the robber would be in paradise (v.43).

- a. In the first paradise the first Adam sinned and doomed all mankind.
 - b. The second Adam, Christ, repaired the damage and brought one of the most miserable of Adam's children to heaven.
 - c. What a day for this dying man! What a contrast between its opening and its close!
2. We now have the assurance of heaven and of being there when we die. Jesus, remember me! Let these words express reliance on His mercy.

GA

MAUNDY THURSDAY: LUKE 22:7-20

The passover lamb had to be slain by the head of the family (Ex 12:6) (v.7). Jesus has Peter and John take the initiative (v.8). "Passover" in this context is used of the meal, the feast day, or the whole period of celebration (Jn 18:28). Reclining was the custom when eating (v.14). Jesus here seems to have in mind the heavenly banquet (v.16). The cup referred to is one of several passed during the passover meal itself (v.17). Which one it is, is uncertain, but it is evidently just before the formal introduction of the Lord's Supper. Again a reference to the heavenly feast at the consummation of the kingdom (v. 18).

Some manuscripts omit the last part of v.19 beginning with the words, "which is given for you," and also all of v.20. According to the *Greek New Testament*, edited by Aland et. al. (Stuttgart, 1966), there is only some degree of doubt as to the genuineness of vv. 19b and 20. Yet the RSV and the NEB omit these verses. However, TEV and the New American Standard include them. The textual evidence appears to support their genuineness. If v.20 is omitted, Luke would have no reference to the sacramental cup unless the cup in v.17 is regarded as the cup of the Lord's Supper. In that case Luke would have the order reversed, the cup before the bread.

The central thought of the text is that Jesus instituted a New Testament meal which supersedes the Old Testament passover. The problem of the hearers is that they may restrict their participation of the Lord's Supper to a few special occasions in their life or once or twice a year. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would come often to the Lord's Supper.

Introductory thought: Gathering tonight for a meal that has remained the same for almost 2000 years. A very simple meal and yet the most important one this side of the heavenly banquet. It is not, like the Old Testament passover intended to be celebrated only once a year but throughout the year. It is

A MEAL FOR ALL SEASONS

- I. This meal displaces the passover.
 - A. The passover was an important meal for God's people in the Old Testament.
 1. It was a passover to the Lord in which the Jews celebrated annually God's deliverance of their forefathers from the bondage of Egypt.
 2. The passover meal required preparation (vv.7-20).
 3. Jesus was especially desirous of eating this passover with His disciples (v.15a).
 - a. It would be His last meal with them (v.15b).
 - b. He would not eat it again until in the form of a heavenly banquet (vv.16b,18b).
 - B. The passover is superseded by another meal (vv.19-20).
 1. No need to celebrate the passover meal any longer because the deliverance the passover pointed to has been accomplished.

2. The Lord's Supper commemorates the deliverance not only of God's chosen people but of all people.
3. The Lord's Supper is the uniquely Christian meal for all seasons.

II. It offers Jesus Christ.

A. Jesus Christ is central in this meal.

1. Christ was prefigured in the passover lamb.
2. The real Christ is given to all who eat and drink the bread and the wine (vv. 19b, 20b).

B. Christ's body given for us and His blood shed for us on the cross assure us of forgiveness.

1. The passover was essentially a remembrance, but the Lord's Supper is both a remembrance of Christ's death and a seal of His forgiveness.
2. We can be sure of forgiveness even when we feel unforgiven.

C. Christ's body and blood received in bread and wine also strengthen our faith.

1. To resist temptation.
2. To live as Christians.

Conclusion: Since we need all the assurances of forgiveness we can get and all the strengthening of faith that is possible, the Lord's Supper is indeed a meal for all seasons.

GA

GOOD FRIDAY: JOHN 19:30

The other evangelists record yet another word of divine submission, "Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit." John ends his account of the death of Christ with the climactic words spoken by Jesus, "It is finished." The inscrutable fact of Christ's death is thus presented in its awful grandeur. The debt of sin was paid. The types of the Messiah in the Old Testament were fulfilled. The great work undertaken by Christ to realize the expectations of the prophets was done. The reality arrived of which the temple, the sabbath, the priesthood, and the offerings were all shadows. Death became not Christ's shame but His glory, for God reconciled the world to Himself by the death of His Son.

The central thought of the text is the triumphant completion of Christ's work. The problem of the hearers is that they do not always think and act as if Christ had completed His work of saving men. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would be confident that salvation is an accomplished fact.

Introductory thought: A dying person is often aware that many of his tasks have been left undone. Not so Jesus. He could say just before He died:

IT IS FINISHED

I. He finished fulfilling prophecy.

A. Old Testament prophecies concerning His passion.

1. His betrayal (Zch 13:7).
2. His suffering (Is 53:1-3).
3. His death (Ps 22:7, 18).

B. Thereby showed Himself to be the promised Messiah.

1. Who revealed God to men.
 - a. Many want to know God.
 - b. Keep looking for new revelations (mysticism, esoteric religions).
2. No new revelations of God are needed, for Jesus is the final word from God (He 1:1-2).

II. He finished keeping the Law.

A. Observed it perfectly.

1. His enemies (Jn 8:46), Judas (Mt 27:4), Pilate (Jn 18:38), Satan (Lk 4:34) could find no wrong in Him. And God the Father said so (Mt 17:5).
2. Through faith in Him His perfection is ours; God does not hold against us our infractions of His Law.

B. Bore its curse.

1. Breakers of laws face the consequences.
2. Jesus took our punishment for breaking God's Law; we are freed from the curse.

III. He finished everything necessary for our salvation.

A. His death was a victory.

1. Jesus died when He chose to die, only when He knew that all had been accomplished (Jn 10:18).
2. His words, "It is finished," are like the exhausted but triumphant shout of members of a mountain rescue team who after arduous effort succeed in rescuing an injured climber.

B. It is a travesty of Christ's death if anyone thinks that by his sighs and tears, struggles and prayers, words and deeds, he must still do something to save himself.

Conclusion: When your unloveliness oppresses you and you go about dejectedly, let the words, "It is finished," give you confidence. When death comes and you realize there is still much to be done, let the words, "It is finished," calm and cheer you. Because Jesus has finished His task, Easter was possible, the resurrection is ahead of you, eternal life is yours.

GA

EASTER: LUKE 24:1-11

The angels recall to the women Jesus' promise of His resurrection (vv.6-7). The incredulity of Jesus' friends is remarkable when contrasted with the dread of the Jewish leaders that something of great moment would happen three days after Christ's death (Mt 28:11-15). The disciples were evidently amazed at His rising from the dead. The Jewish leaders would apparently have been surprised if something startling had not happened. Unique to Luke's account of the resurrection is the disciples' reaction to the women's story as idle talk.

The central thought of the text is that Christ really rose as He said He would. The problem of the hearers is that they do not take Christ's resurrection seriously enough to relate it to their total existence. The goal of the sermon is that they would relate the resurrection to every part of their lives.

Introductory thought: We sometimes engage in idle talk in the form of tall stories. The women seemed serious enough, but the disciples could not swallow their story. "Seemed to them an idle tale" (v.11). But that was not a day for tall stories, as the disciples soon learned. What happened on Easter is real.

THE RESURRECTION IS NO IDLE TALE

Therefore:

I. We Can Believe Christ's Words

II. We Can Share Christ's Life

I.

A. The women connected Christ's words with what had happened (v.8).

1. Jesus had foretold His resurrection (vv.6-7; Mt 17:9, 23; 26:32; Jn 2:19).
2. The resurrection corroborated Christ's words, and His words illumined His actions.

B. Christ's words are utterly reliable.

1. We have a tendency to distrust words, to say that words are cheap and that one doesn't know whom to believe. We are surfeited with words in the media.
2. We do well to remember Christ's words, for we can believe all that He said about who He is and what He did and will do.
3. Christ speaks to us in the words of Scripture which we can accept as true and reliable, because the resurrection is no idle tale. Jesus did what He said He would.

II.

A. He shares His life with us.

1. The purpose of His crucifixion and resurrection (v.7) was to give us life by delivering us from the consequences of our sins - alienation from God and eternal death.
2. His resurrection is proof that we have been declared righteous before God (Ro 4:25) and that death is not the end (2 Cor 4:14).

B. We can share His life with others.

1. The women told the disciples that Jesus was alive (v.9).
 - a. Their faith had grown.
 - b. Their lives had taken on new meaning.
2. Let us remind wife, husband, children, friends that Christ is risen. Our lives have a divine dimension. Christ makes our lives new, hopeful; there is no need to despair.

Conclusion: The resurrection is no idle tale; it is real. We can believe what Christ says and share in Christ's life.

GA

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER: JOHN 20:19-31

Verse 19: The scene is Easter Sunday evening. The fearful disciples were aware of the preceding events: the report of the women, the appearance to Mary, the account of Peter and John, and the report of the Emmaus disciples. Luke implies that more than the eleven had gathered. "Jesus stood in the midst" in His glorified body, subject to the laws neither of time nor space. "Peace be unto you": This is the peace He won and He alone can give, Jn 14:27. V.20: "He showed them His hands and His side": He is the living One who was dead but is now alive. "Glad": extreme dejection and fear are converted into the joyful conviction of the truth. The disciples heard, saw, and handled the Word of Life, 1 Jn 1:1. V.21: The first "peace" gave a new revelation; the second "peace" was a summons to service. "As my Father hath sent me, etc.": This is Christ's divine commission to His Church. V.22: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost": The Holy Spirit is Christ's parting gift to His Church. V.23: "Whosoever sins ye remit, etc.": This is the office of the keys, the peculiar church power to forgive the sins of penitent sinners and to retain the sins of the impenitent. Cf. Mt 18:15-19; Ac 2:37-39. V.24: Thomas is an example of an anxious skeptic. "Thomas was not with them": That was his first mistake. V.25: Thomas' second mistake was that he discounted the testimony of witnesses. V.27: Note the patience of Jesus. V.28: Thomas is now convinced and boldly declares Christ's divinity. V.29: Believing is seeing; that is faith. V.31: The miracles are a part of Christ's proclamation of Himself as the Son of God; they are Christ's sign language intended to bring men to faith. The goal of the sermon is to encourage the hearer to live by faith and to bring forth faith's fruits in a life of service.

Introduction: We worship no dead Mohammed, but a living Lord who is with us always.

Jesus Is In The Midst Of His Church

I. To commission His Church.

A. He gives the command. V.21; Ac 1:8; Mt 28:18-20.

B. He gives the message. Vv.21,23,25.

1. A message of peace, the peace He won. Lk 2:14; Col 2:14.

2. A message of pardon. V.23; 2 Cor 5:19.

C. He gives the power. V.22.

1. The Holy Spirit's power at Pentecost.

2. The Holy Spirit is Christ's abiding gift to the Church. Jn 16:7-15; Ac 1:8.

What a challenge we have! What a power! But, alas, we are sometimes faithless when we ought to believe. But Jesus deals with our doubts.

II. To strengthen the faith of the doubters.

A. Thomas lived by the philosophy: "Seeing is believing." V.25.

1. Thomas was not with them.

2. He discounted the testimony of witnesses.

3. In times of adversity we are tempted to behave just like Thomas.

B. Jesus encourages the philosophy: "Believing is seeing." Heb 11:1.

1. We have a sure Word to guide us.

a. The Word is given by inspiration. 2 Tim 3:15; 2 Pet 1:21.

b. The Word points to Christ and His promises. Jn 5:39; Mt 28:20.

2. Faith clings to the Word.

a. Against circumstances. Lk 5:5.

b. Against feeling. Ps 42:5.

c. Faith is rewarded by sight; cf. Abraham; the children of Israel at the Red Sea and at Jericho; Gideon against the Midianites.

Let's walk in the confidence of faith, bringing forth the fruit of Christian witness, because Jesus is alive and with us.

HJE

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER: JOHN 21:1-14

The disciples left Jerusalem for Galilee to await Christ's appearance. Mt 28:10,16. Galilee was the place where Jesus gathered all of his disciples except Judas, led the five thousand, and walked on the water. V.2: The other two disciples may well have been Philip and Andrew. V.3: Waiting for Christ's appearance, the disciples would not be idle. "They caught nothing": without God's blessings our best efforts are futile. V.4: Christ comes when people have reason to be most despondent. V.5: "Meat": literally, anything eaten at a meal with bread. V.6: When the ingenuity and industry of the disciples failed, Christ came to relieve that. So great was the catch that they could not get it into the boat. V.7: John is the first to recognize Jesus. V.8: Two hundred cubits is about 100 yards. V.9: God will provide our daily bread. Ours is but to work faithfully at our calling without giving up to sloth or anxiety. The provision of bread and fish is the second miracle in this narrative. The goal of the sermon is to encourage people to live with a consciousness of the Lord's presence, power, and grace.

Introduction: Many people look at life simply as a dog-eat-dog existence. Life to them is simply a matter of the survival of the fittest. Christians count God in the equation of living. That makes all the difference in the world. Ro 8:31; Phil 4:13. In the midst of fruitless toil John cries out:

It Is The Lord

I. The Lord is with us.

A. The disciples toiled fruitlessly.

1. Waiting for Christ's appearance in Galilee, the disciples returned to their vocation as fishermen.
2. A night of fishing proved fruitless.
3. So often life is like that
 - a. When we do not seem to get ahead.
 - b. When reverses, like sickness or unemployment, cause us to go backwards.
 - c. We become anxious and ask: "Where is God?" Mk 4:38.

B. Jesus appears.

1. He knows about the disciples and appears to them.
2. He, our loving Lord, knows about us too. Jn 10:14; Mt 28:20; Ps 27:5; Jer 23:24; Ps 139:7; 1 Pt 5:5.

If God knows, we should take comfort, for He also has power to help.

II. The Lord is with us with His power.

A. Jesus performs a double miracle.

1. He gives the disciples 153 large fish.
2. He prepares a table before them. Ps 23:5.
3. Jesus often proved his power: lepers were cleansed; the blind received sight; the lame walked; the dead were raised.

B. Christ's power is available to us, too.

1. He supplies our daily bread. Ps 145:15.
2. He helps us in every need.
 - a. At times He removes our trial.
 - b. At other times, He gives us strength to bear our trials. Phil 4:15; 1 Cor 10:13.

What a power we have available. Hence we pray. Phil 4:6. As we pray, we trust. Mt 21:22.

III. The Lord is with us with His grace.

A. It was love that brought Jesus to the seashore.

1. To provide for the immediate needs of the disciples.
2. To strengthen them for their future work as fishers of men.

B. Jesus is with us with His grace, too.

1. He showed His love for the world by His sin-atonement death. Jn 10:11.
2. His resurrection guarantees His victory for us over sin, death, and hell. 1 Cor 15:55-57.
3. This love attends us, too. Is 49:15.
 - a. To guide in life. Ps 73:23-24; Mt 6:31.
 - b. To bring us to our heavenly home. 2 Tim 4:8.

"It is the Lord." He is with us. Therefore, let us live in humble dependence; let us be grateful for the blessings he daily gives; let us trust His love to provide also for the future.

HJE

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: JOHN 10:22-39

The feast of dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus, 165 B.C. It was celebrated for eight days with lights in homes and in the temple. V. 24; "Make us to doubt": Hold us in suspense, literally, steal away our hearts. Christ was not

their kind of Messiah. They wanted to lay a trap for Jesus, for one who pretended to be a Messiah would be killed for blasphemy, cf. v. 31. Unbelief does not see the sun at noonday. Their problem was not one of evidence, but lack of faith. They had the Old Testament promises, Christ's preaching, and Christ's miracles; yet they would not believe. V. 27: Jesus is a stone of stumbling to some; to others He is precious. Sheep hear His voice and follow; He knows them and gives them eternal life. Their security is that no man is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand, cf. Rom. 8:35. "Hear my voice": This implies faith. "I know them": Christ distinguishes them from others, 2 Tim 2:19, and He has a particular regard for every individual, Ps 34:6. V.28: "Shall never perish": They shall by no means perish forever. "Out of my hand": All things are in God's hand, Deut 33:3. V. 29: "Greater than all": Greater than all the enemies, Ps 46. "My Father which gave them to me": He that secured the glory of the Redeemer will secure the glory of the redeemed. V.30: "One": One in essence, in power and glory.

Introduction: What do you think of Christ? This is a most important question because a man's eternal destiny hangs on his answer.

What Do You Think of Christ?

- I. Some do not believe.
 - A. They have the evidence.
 1. The words of Jesus.
 - a. Concerning His deity, Jn 1:1; 8:58.
 - b. Concerning His Messiahship, Jn 10:11; Mt 20:28.
 2. The works of Jesus, v.25, Mt 11:5; Jn 20:30.
 - B. They refuse the evidence.
 1. They fail to see themselves as sinners, Mt 19:20; Lk 18:11.
 2. They fail to see Christ as Savior, Ro 1:20-21.
 3. They bring judgment upon themselves, Mt 11:21; Lk 13:34; Jn 15:22.
 4. These people must be the object of our missionary concern, Jn 10:16.
- II. Some believe.
 - A. The relationship of sheep to their shepherd.
 1. Christ's sheep hear His voice, Jn 8:31-32; Lk 11:28.
 2. Christ's sheep follow Him.
 - a. In faith, Ac 16:31.
 - b. In life, Lk 5:11.
 - B. The relationship of the shepherd to the sheep.
 1. The shepherd knows the sheep, Ps 139:1.
 2. The shepherd gives them eternal life, 2 Tim 4:8; Jn 14:1-6; Ro 8:35.

God, give us all the faith to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

HJE

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: JOHN 13:31-35

Jesus announces His going away in terms which the disciples are slow to understand. He is to be "glorified," by which He means that He is to be revealed as the Savior and the divine Son of God by His suffering and death (v.31) and also by His resurrection and ascension (v.32), in all of which the Father is active. The disciples would not be able to walk the same path of suffering He would walk, nor could they immediately follow Him into heaven (v.33). Nevertheless, they would not only share in His glory but, while on earth, they themselves would glorify Him through their love for one another.

The commandment Jesus gives to love is new in the sense that Jesus has provided a new standard and motive - "even as I have loved you" (v.34). The love He was to show in His death for others was a self-sacrificing love. Such love shown by His followers would be the witness to the world of true discipleship (v.35).

The central thought of the text is that Jesus is glorified or honored by submitting to death, by God exalting Him, and by the love of Christians for one another. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would let the glory of Jesus which they see by faith be reflected in their lives. The problem is that Christians sometimes let other kinds of glory overshadow the glory which is theirs in Christ.

Introductory thought: "The paths of glory lead but to the grave." Acclamation of men is ephemeral. One enjoys it no more in death. Jesus walked on paths of glory much different from the world's, paths which give all other glory a new dimension.

Paths of Glory For Jesus Christ

I. A path of humiliation.

A. He was about to suffer and die.

1. Judas had left the room in order to carry out the betrayal (v.31a).
2. Jesus was now seemingly helpless against the worst that sin, Satan, and death would do.

B. Yet Jesus was glorified in suffering and death (v.31b).

1. Here the brightest manifestation of God's righteous love (Ro 3:21-22).
2. Here the clearest demonstration of vicarious sin-bearing (2 Cor 5:21).
3. Here the complete redemption of the human race (Col 1:14).
4. None of us could go with Him on this path of humiliation (v.33). He went for us. A path of glory indeed.

II. A path of exaltation (v.32).

A. He descended into hell (1Pe 3:19-20).

1. To proclaim victory over Satan.
2. To announce to the condemned irrevocable judgment because of their unbelief.

B. He rose from the dead (Mt 28:6; 1 Cor 6:14).

1. Conquering death for us (Jn 11:25-26).
2. Giving us new power (Pho 3:10a).

C. He ascended into heaven (Eph 1:20-22).

1. To be the head of the church.
2. To be the ruler of all.

We share in His glory, for we have been delivered from eternal death and assured of new life here and hereafter (Eph 2:6). A path of glory indeed.

III. A path of love.

A. We Christians are to love one another "as I have loved you" (v.34).

1. It is a new commandment because of the principle of self-sacrifice (*agapē*).
2. It is a new commandment because of the motivation. His love enables us to love.

B. When we live in love, the glory of Jesus shines through us.

1. Such love is the most evident demonstration to the world that we are Christ's disciples (v.35).
2. It is a marvelous power for healing and service.

Conclusion: Because Jesus' paths of glory have intersected with ours, we need not glorify ourselves. It is glory enough to share in His and to reflect it.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: JOHN 14:23-29

Jesus is interrupted by the question (v.22) as to how He is to be manifested as the Messiah only to the disciples and not to the world. Jesus replies (v.23) that the manifestation of which He has been speaking is spiritual and is conditioned upon love for Christ and obedience to His word. A result of Jesus manifesting Himself will be the abiding in the believer of the Father and the Son. Jesus further assures the apostles that the Counselor, whom He now designates as the Holy Spirit, will teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all His words (v.26). In view of these promises, Jesus bequeaths to His disciples the legacy of peace (v.27). He reiterates (v.27) words of comfort spoken earlier (14:1). In spite of His promised spiritual coming, the disciples were to endure the anguish of losing His bodily presence. Jesus assures them that His going away was a necessary condition of His spiritual coming, that His very prediction of His bodily departure would later strengthen their faith (vv 28-29).

The central thought of the text is that Jesus nurtures our love for Him by His indwelling, teaching, and consolation. The problem is that the hearers are often insensitive to the ways in which Jesus keeps their love for Him alive. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would grow in their love for Jesus Christ.

Introductory thought: Human love in marriage and in other family relationships often wanes and dies. The same can happen to our love for Christ. Jesus is concerned about keeping that love affair going (vv.23a,21,15). He has His own plan for increasing our love for Him.

Jesus Strengthens Our Love For Him

- I. By coming to live in us.
 - A. He and the Father make their home with us (v.23b).
 1. Actually live in us (Eph 3:17a; Re 3:20).
 2. The life of God permeates us and affects our being (Ga 2:20; Php 1:21).
 - B. Our close relationship with Jesus fosters love for Him.
 1. Our relationship with Jesus is similar to the marriage relationship (Re 21:2).
 - a. Love wanes when the marriage relationship is no longer close.
 - b. Commonality is needed in marriage.
 2. Jesus takes the initiative in maintaining a close relationship with us. In that closeness our love for Him grows.
- II. By teaching us.
 - A. Jesus teaches us by means of the Holy Spirit.
 1. Though Jesus is not present bodily, the Spirit is a wonderful Counselor (v.26).
 - a. The Spirit recalled to the apostles what Jesus said, so that the words of Him whom we love are kept before us in the apostolic writings.
 - b. The Spirit teaches us how to relate Jesus' words to our life.
 2. The Spirit's teaching takes place always through the word of Jesus (v.23a). For us, that word is the Holy Scripture. We who love Jesus treasure His words.
 - B. A characteristic of a close relationship is the desire to learn.
 1. We want to learn something we did not know before, to gain insight and grow.
 2. Through Jesus' teaching we learn more about God and ourselves. We grow in love for Him who teaches us so well.

III. By comforting us.

A. Jesus comforts by giving us peace (v.27a).

1. Not as the world gives (v.27b).
 - a. His peace is not dependent on outward circumstances.
 - b. Troubles remain, but our hearts need not trouble themselves (v.27c).
2. Our comfort is based on Jesus going to the Father to reign over all things for our good (v.28b).
3. He will come again to take us to Himself (v.28a). What comfort!

B. In a maturing human relationship comfort is needed and given.

1. Husbands and wives, parents and children, members of the Christian church need to support one another.
2. Without that support love stagnates. Jesus' comfort is His way of revitalizing our love.

Conclusion: There is no need for our love for Jesus to stagnate. He has a plan to keep our love alive. Intimate closeness. Stimulating teaching. Encouraging comfort. Our love for Him is strengthened.

GA

ASCENSION DAY: LUKE 24:44-53

In point of time, although vv.44-49 may well have been spoken by Jesus on Easter Sunday, it is possible that the evangelist here condenses various reports into one, relating in one paragraph what happened on a number of occasions. In any event, we have recorded the commission to carry on Christ's work and not to begin a new one. As the Father sent Christ--in the past, for His mission was completed; so now Jesus sends His disciples--in the constant present, till His coming again.

Christ's mission was now complete. Jesus indicates that the unalterable agreement introduced by "it stands written" has now been fulfilled. The "must" of fulfillment of the whole Old Testament touching on the work of the Messiah was now completed. In the word translated "must be fulfilled" we have what one can call the key to the work of Christ. Why was it necessary, this suffering, dying and rising again? Arndt in answer insists:

- 1) "It had been prophesied and the divine Scriptures have to be fulfilled."
- 2) "The fact that the prophecies were in the Scriptures shows that God had decreed the passion and resurrection of Christ."
- 3) "It was necessary for the salvation of the human race that these things come to pass."

To these things the disciples had been eye-witnesses. The proclamation of this "in His Name" was to be their principal task and that of the church until Christ's return.

Thus the continuity not only of the work but also of the message was established. For even as the burden of the Messiah's proclamation was the summoning to repent and receive the Kingdom, so now "repentance and forgiveness of sins was to be proclaimed." To the changed heart that in faith laid hold on Christ and His atoning work there was the free offer of forgiveness of sins.

In this work the disciples had the promise of the Christ for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and also for His abiding presence and help. For even though His visible presence was removed by His ascension, invisibly Jesus continued with them.

Introduction: Paradoxically, rather than experiencing sorrow at their parting from Jesus Christ, the disciples found joy. This joy is pegged on three specifics that come out of the text: Joy in the fulfillment of God's promises prophesied in the Old Testament; joy in the call to purpose and meaningful service; joy in being blessed and finding its response in joyful worship in the temple.

Text and context: Relate the events, resurrection to ascension, as indicated in the text.

An Ascension Message of Joy

- I. Joy in the fulfillment of God's prophesies in the Old Testament.
 - A. Fulfilled are the Messianic prophesies of the Old Testament.
 1. "It stands written," the formula introducing God's unalterable agreement.
 2. The whole Old Testament bears witness to Christ.
 - B. "It was necessary."
 1. That the scriptures must be fulfilled.
 2. "It pleased God to bruise Him." God's decree concerning Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.
 3. For the salvation of the human race.
 - C. Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand. Here merely an intellectual comprehension.
- II. Joy in the call to purpose and meaningful service.
 - A. You will be witnesses of these things.
 1. The "what" and "why" of the suffering, dying, and rising again of Christ.
 2. They were to carry on the work of Christ—this command is in the "constant present"—until Christ's coming again.
 3. Beginning in Jerusalem and going out into all the world.
 - B. Proclaiming repentance and forgiveness in His name.
 1. True repentance involves two things.
 - a. Sorrow and contrition.
 - b. Faith which trusts the promise of God's forgiveness.
 2. "In His Name."
 - C. The Holy Spirit would empower them.
- III. Joy in the blessing that found response in joyful worship.
 - A. They receive the blessing of Christ, not the least of which was the promise of His abiding Presence (cf. Matt 28:20).
 - B. Their worship in the temple anticipates their joyful worship in heaven (cf. Jn 14:1-6).

The Ascension joy is also available to us in the same way and on the same terms. God has promised, called, and blessed us. We in that blessing respond in joyful service and worship, until in Christ's coming again, we are taken "so that where He is we may be also," in heaven where we shall serve and worship our God in the fulness of joy that knows no end.

NHM

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER: JOHN 17:22-26

The estranged are reconciled through the atoning work of the Savior. In that work we come to know the Father, not merely intellectually, but more importantly in the intimacy of trusting faith and thus experience His love. This, in part, is what it means to be one with Christ. This also, the text suggests, makes us heirs of Christ's glory. This is the glory to which Christ was raised in heaven after He had achieved His work on earth—indeed, that same condition that was His before His incarnation and even from eternity. Oneness with Christ incorporates the idea of "participation in" and "enjoyment of."

Introduction: It is amazing in the light of what was ahead that Jesus had no concern for Himself but only for His disciples, and this includes us. So close was the relationship between Jesus and the Father that Jesus speaks of it in terms of being "one." No one, because of this relationship, ever knew the Father as Jesus did, nor experienced the Father's love as He had, nor received the degree of glory that was His. All of this that Christ has He desires that we should have. This, then, is the burden of His prayer.

Text and Context: Relate setting, past, present, future.

In Christ We Become Heirs of His Glory

- I. In Christ.
 - A. We come to *know* God.
 1. The inability of natural man to truly know God.
 2. Christ reveals, makes the Father known to us. (Cf. Heb 1:1-2; Jn 1:18; Jn 17:3.)
 3. We come to know Christ most surely in the redemptive act wherein God revealed His divine purpose for us for eternity.
 - B. We experience the Father's love.
 1. A love that had its origin before the foundations of the world.
 2. A love that found greatest expression in the sending and offering up of His Son for our sins.
 - C. We become one with Christ.
 1. By faith through baptism we are united, grafted into Christ.
 2. The serenity and security this yields.
 3. The powerful dynamic this affords.
- II. We Become Heirs of His Glory.
 - A. The glory given Christ by the Father.
 - B. The glory in which we participate, for His prayer is ever, "that we may be where He is."
 - C. Our Easter joy made more full, for in the resurrection in which we participate we live now and eternally.

NHM

PENTECOST: JOHN 15:26, 27; 16:4b-11

An integral part of the last discourses of Jesus is His treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. John contains frequent references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of His coming to the disciples. We have long since been drawn to the awareness that the ability of people to embrace Christ and what He said and did, in faith and trust, is furnished by the Holy Spirit, for He above all things bears witness to Christ. In the words immediately before this pericope Jesus had explained that the hostility of the Jews to Him was sinful, for they ought to have recognized His divine mission in His works and words. They hated Him, not knowing Him, although they ought to have known him; but when the "Paraclete" came, He would bear true testimony to Jesus, being indeed the Spirit of Truth. Thus Jesus in the text calls the Holy Spirit the "Paraclete," the divine advocate, defending "The Righteous One" against false accusers, pleading the cause of Christ with the world. The Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father and bears true witness to the world concerning Christ. He is indeed the Spirit of Truth, bearing witness to the Truth, the Christ of God.

Because, as Jesus says, He was going to the Father (a reference to His death, resurrection, and ultimately His ascension), the persecution that found focus in Him would, with His leaving, be directed to His disciples, His witnesses. The Paraclete, whose office has already been described as one of witness, would also vindicate the apostles in the testimony which they were to deliver.

Exposed to persecution they would have a powerful advocate at their side. "He will be their Paraclete, no less than the Paraclete of Jesus, or rather He will be theirs because He is His."

It is interesting to note that emerging from the text is the conviction that the Paraclete will not only provide the defense of the apostles, but will also assume the part of the prosecutor of their enemies, convicting their accusers and the accusers of Jesus of being in the wrong.

Jesus renders not only an indictment but also a conviction on three counts (the word used for convict is straight out of the court room): (1) the Paraclete will expose the sin of failure to discern God in Christ and thus "to believe in Him." The world is to be convicted of that sin inherent in the rejection of Jesus. (2) The righteousness of which the world will be convinced to its shame is the righteousness of Christ, that absolute righteousness that could only be revealed in the risen Christ. "He goes to the Father" is the statement which authenticates His mission. For with the Passion, His revelation of the Father is completed, and henceforth the Paraclete will convince the world of that perfect righteousness which is revealed in Christ and made accessible to people. (3) The Paraclete will convince the world both of the justice of God and the inevitability of God's judgement. The world will be judged and the outcome of that judgement is already determined, because the prince of this world has been judged. In the redemptive act Jesus is victorious. Satan's hold is broken, death is destroyed, and the final expulsion of Satan from the domain over which he claims rule is assured. (Luther's words are appropriate: "He's judged, the deed is done; one little word can fell him.")

The message is plain. The Paraclete is both the advocate of the disciples and Jesus Christ, and the accuser or prosecutor of the world. As we witness to our Lord, the Spirit performs the same functions yet today for and through us.

The Holy Spirit—Advocate and Prosecutor

- I. The Paraclete Is an Advocate—a Divine Helper.
 - A. To the disciples.
 1. In persecution and need.
 - a. Jesus had warned them.
 - b. With His leaving, the hatred that focused on Christ would be turned on them.
 - c. They would need the advocacy of the Holy Spirit.
 2. In support of their witness to Jesus Christ.
 - a. They along with the Holy Spirit would bear witness to Jesus.
 - b. They were witnesses because they had been with Christ from the beginning.
 - c. The coming of the Holy Spirit was to complete Jesus' presence.
 - B. Of and for Jesus Christ, bearing witness to Jesus and His works.
 1. Defending the Righteous One, pleading the cause of Christ with the world.
 2. Pleading the cause of Christ before false accusers.
 3. Bearing true testimony to Jesus as a Spirit of Truth.
- II. The Paraclete Is Also the Prosecutor. He will not only provide defense, but He will also take the role of the accuser. He will accuse the accusers of Jesus and His disciples of being wrong. He will convict the world to its shame:
 - A. Of sin.
 1. The sin inherent in the rejection of Jesus.
 2. The failure to discern God in Christ and to believe in Him.
 3. The failure to recognize Jesus' divine mission through His words and works.

- B. Of Christ's righteousness.
 - 1. Righteousness absolute and authenticated by the passion and resurrection.
 - 2. A righteousness revealed in Christ and made accessible to man.
- C. Of judgement (its justice and inevitability).
 - 1. The outcome is already determined and assured.
 - 2. Satan will be expelled from the domain over which he claims rule.

NHM

HOLY TRINITY: JOHN 16:12-15

On the Festival of the Holy Trinity the pastor calls upon the hearers to worship the Triune God: the Father who created us, the Son who redeemed us, the Holy Spirit who made and keeps us as the children of God. Each work, though ascribed especially to one of the Persons in the Godhead, is at the same time spoken of as the work of the Trinity as such. For such a thought a single text of Scripture is difficult to find. Consequently the sermon usually becomes quite topical. But John 16 clearly speaks of the Trinity. Each of the Persons is mentioned. More than that, the text deals with one topic, the testimony of each of the Persons of the Trinity with regard to our salvation.

What do these verses actually teach? Here clearly the Son testifies concerning the Father that He has given the Son all that is His in such a way that it still belongs to the Father even as it belongs to the Son. Compare Psalm 2 where the Father says to the Son, "Ask of me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." To look at it from another angle, by His action in giving all to the Son, the Father is certainly testifying of the Son that He is the Only-Begotten from eternity, one with the Father. Furthermore, the Son testifies of the Spirit that He has been given the whole message of salvation to proclaim to the world through the apostles. The Spirit, in carrying out this glorious work, has thereby testified of the Son that He is indeed the Savior.

To sum it up, in this short pericope each of the Persons of the Godhead is testifying of the others, and in doing so is actually giving this testimony to us to assure us of our salvation. The truth is thus drawn from these four verses that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are truly the God of our salvation.

GOD THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST—THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION

- I. The Father gave to the Son all that He needed to be the Savior of the world. This is the testimony of Christ Himself (text) as it has always been the testimony of the Father (Gn 3:15; Ps. 2; etc.).
- II. The Son went the way appointed through suffering, death, and resurrection to be the Savior of the world. This is the testimony of the Holy Ghost through the apostles, as foretold by Christ (text).
- III. The Holy Ghost is the reliable witness to the eternal plan for our salvation. This is the testimony of the Son of God regarding Him (text).
- IV. What glorious unity is here proclaimed! What an assuring message for believers, that the Triune God is truly the God of our salvation.

MJS

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: LUKE 7:1-10

In this season of the church year in which the Christian life is to be clearly set forth, the strengths and the weaknesses of our hearers in confessing Christ and trusting in Him are to be uppermost in our minds as we apply the Gospel to their several needs. This text certainly serves well also for such a purpose. We focus our attention especially on the centurion, whose faith causes even Jesus to marvel. He would have us consider the centurion as a man of great faith and thus as an example to every Christian. The centurion, a Gentile, shows great concern for a servant who was dear to him, which seems perfectly natural. Another point, quite significant in the text, seems also perfectly natural: the centurion sees himself as in full control in his relation to the soldiers under his authority. But note the other features of this text. The centurion, so fully in control in some areas of life, is perfectly willing to admit his complete helplessness in dealing with what appeared to be the fatal illness of his servant. There is no thought here of using his authority, of demanding the service of some physician or surgeon, expecting him to perform a "miracle." There is no thought at all of using his good deeds, as the elders of the city were trying to use them, to ingratiate himself with the Lord. There is no thought at all on his part of any worth that he would have with Christ; yet he appears to have perfect confidence in Christ's power to heal and in His willingness to heal. He had confidence in Christ's Word. Confidence in something which cannot be seen is faith. The centurion had faith in Christ. Christ Himself said that it was a great faith.

THE CENTURION OF CAPERNAUM, AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH

- I. As we are faced with varying conditions of life.
 - A. We may feel fully in control in some areas of life, as was the centurion.
 1. This is not wrong in itself.
 2. The Christian should have confidence that God will continue to supply him with energy and strength to do his daily work.
 - B. Yet how helpless we can become in the face of difficulties.
 1. They may come upon us so unexpectedly.
 2. We recognize them at once as beyond our control.
- II. As we seek a solution to our problems as children of God.
 - A. It is good for us to admit that of ourselves we are not worthy to come to God in our need.
 1. In this already, the centurion is an excellent example for us.
 2. Note that he was a good man but used none of his goodness to earn favor with God.
 - B. Yet in all confidence we come to God in our need.
 1. We are confident that Christ can help. He need only speak the Word.
 2. We find our full worth in Him.
 - a. He it is who has made us the children of God (that was His chief work on earth).
 - b. He knows each of us as surely as He knew the centurion.

MJS

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: LUKE 7:11-17

See the sermon on this text by the writer in the 1977 *Concordia Pulpit* (pp. 171-174) for views of death which may seem quite strange to some, judging from what one hears about the death of Christians in many a funeral sermon. Some even go so far as to say that the death of the Christian is the wages of

sin, which completely ignores the fact that the wages of sin have all been paid by Christ.

If it seems strange that a text dealing with death would be chosen for the Third Sunday after Pentecost, let it be borne in mind that the Christian's attitude toward death is likely to color his attitude toward all of life. It is proper, then, in that portion of the church year in which the Christian life is being discussed, that the proper view of death be considered.

WHAT A LIFE IS OURS IN CHRIST OUR LORD!

- I. For those who die in Him death is not really dying.
 - A. The miracle proved Christ to be the Messiah.
 - B. As Messiah He died the only death that truly pays for sin.
 - C. He thus removed from us the sting of death.
 - D. To die a death that has no sting is not really dying at all. It is a falling asleep in Jesus.
- II. For those who live in Christ, life is more than just living.
 - A. True, even Christians may get some very morbid thoughts about life.
 - C. But why these morbid thoughts? Is Christ also dead? Are we who mourn the loss of loved ones ever left alone?
 - D. The living Lord has power over death and its consequences in the lives of those still living.
 - E. He also has power to make our earthly life a life of joyful service.

Note that dying was discussed before living, in line with the statement at the beginning of this study, that the Christian's attitude toward death so often colors his attitude toward life. If we can help our people to face death without fear, regardless of when it comes, they should be able with the help of Christ to live their lives in joyful service to Him who makes even death a blessing for His people.

MJS

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: LUKE 7:36-50

This account is found only in Luke. A synopsis of the text is something like this: Works matter, after all. Simon had no works; hence, no faith. The woman showed that she had forgiveness, for she loved much. Her much loving was the fruit of her faith. V.36: Simon was not an outspoken enemy of Jesus. However, He was a real Pharisee, who knew neither the fact of his sinfulness nor the meaning of forgiveness. V.37: This woman remains unknown except for this narrative. She was a sinful woman, not necessarily a prostitute. She had heard Jesus preach and accepted Him in faith. She comes now to show her gratitude. V.38: "His feet": Jesus reclined on a couch as He ate. This woman recalls her many sins, and tears course down her cheeks. She wipes His feet with her hair. The greatest humiliation for a woman was to unloosen her hair in the presence of men. V.39: Simon is unable to understand wither what is going on in the heart of Christ or in the heart of the woman. Jesus teaches Simon how unsound is his reasoning by telling the parable of the two debtors. V.47: "For she loved much": This clause expressed the logical connection between the proof and that which is proved. The woman's much love expressed her trust in Christ's forgiveness.

Introduction: Luther once described faith as a living, active thing.

Faith is living and active

- I. It takes the forgiveness freely given by Christ.
 - A. Simon knows "this woman" but not himself.
 1. She is a sinner, and he knows it.
 2. He doesn't realize that he is, too, Lk 11:42
 - B. Jesus forgives her.
 1. Out of pure grace, Eph 2:8-9.

- a. He came for such as she, Lk 19:10; 1 Jn 3:5.
 - b. She takes the forgiveness in repentance and faith, Ro 4:5; 5:1.
2. Simon forfeits forgiveness because he doesn't look to Christ as Savior.
 - a. Christ to him is only a great man.
 - b. He doesn't see Christ as his Savior, Ro 3:12; Mt 23:37.
- II. True faith manifests itself in love.
- A. Out of grateful appreciation this woman anoints Jesus' feet.
 - B. Simon manifests no such love.
 - C. The parable of the two debtors sets the record straight.
 1. Those who are forgiven little, love little.
 2. Those who are forgiven much, love much, I Pe 2:9; Mt 5:16; Mt 25:34-36.
- Let's joyfully accept in faith the forgiveness God so freely gives us in Christ and reflect our joy in works of Christian love.

HJE

**THE FOUR HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMULA
OF CONCORD: MAY 29, 1977
HEBREWS 13:7**

May 29, 1977, marks the fourth centenary of the signing of the Formula of Concord. This event belongs to the great historical occasions of the Lutheran Church. The Formula of Concord reunited the divided Lutherans after a generation of controversy following Luther's death. To bring this event closer to our time it is profitable to make a partial comparison of the twentieth and sixteenth centuries:

1. The Lutheran Church now, as then, has a yearning for peace after decades of conflict. A serious meditation on the Formula should bring us all closer to the faith of the Bible and the Confessions.
2. There was a communications-explosion in the sixteenth century (the invention of printing) and another has occurred in the twentieth century (radio and television).
3. The Reformation period possessed a sense of eschatological anticipation which is evident again today as we approach the end of the second millennium.
4. There was an awareness of an expanding world in voyages of discovery and the studies of the heavens (Copernicus, Bruno, Brahe).
5. Social experimentation was very evident in the Peasants' Revolt and the various *Schwaermer* (fanatic) movements. It was an age of commercial and military progress as well.
6. The art of printing brought with it new translations of the Bible in most of the languages of Europe.
7. In the sixteenth century nationalism was on the rise throughout Europe. We pray that our age may produce something better.
8. Waves of speculative doctrine are hardly peculiar to any age, but they deserve to be mentioned in this comparison of centuries. Even ill-considered ecumenical efforts were not lacking in the sixteenth century.
9. The Reformation period, finally, saw the sort of lay leadership in the church which is only beginning to reveal itself again in our times.

A PATTERN FOR HARMONY AND RENEWAL

- I. "Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you."
 - A. The authors and signers of the Formula of Concord deserve remembrance.

- B. Their efforts to prepare a valid confession deserve special remembrance.
- II. "Think back on how they lived and died."
 - A. Both lay and clerical leaders confessed their sins and praised God for their salvation.
 - B. The task before them in preserving and transmitting the pure Gospel was very great.
 - C. The benefits to them and to their churches in a fruitful life and blessed death were also very great.
- III. "And imitate their faith."
 - A. The church of the Reformation stood the test (Counter-Reformation, Pietism, Rationalism), though also needing repeated renewal.
 - B. The content of their faith (*quae creditur*) was that of the Scripture and the Creeds.
 - C. The trust and confidence of their faith (*qua creditur*) was nourished by Word and Sacrament.

OFS