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THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 12:49-53

August 13, 1989

The “fire” and the “baptism” of which Jesus speaks (vv. 49, 50) must refer to His work of salvation on earth, especially as that work culminates on the cross. The cross is God’s symbol of judgment (hence Jesus’ metaphorical use of “fire” and “baptism”; cf. Mark 9:43, 48-49; 10:38). That judgment first came upon Christ, and then, when the cross becomes an offense and is rejected, it falls on those who are unbelieving. Rejection of Christ and His scandalous cross not only condemns individual sinners; it also tears people apart from each other in this world in a way that nothing else does. Ironically, that which brings God’s greatest blessing to mankind has the potential to produce that greatest heartache here on earth. The most intimate of relationships, those within households, have experienced division and even hostility because of Christ.

Jesus is waking His hearers to the harsher side of the reality of His presence on earth. The impression is often given today that Christianity is a benign, tolerant religion whose sole purpose is to keep the peace at all costs. After all, Jesus came to bring “peace on earth.” By the very nature of the conflict, however, true peace requires division. Nothing is so contradictory and, therefore, divisive as God’s supernatural grace and man’s natural self-righteousness. Being forewarned and even expecting the division of which Jesus speaks brings to light more clearly the true peace which we have with Christ and all true Christians. In that awareness, we are comforted.

Introduction: “Don’t argue politics or religion!” This advice is given because of the deep convictions people generally have in these two matters, convictions which are not easily changed through argument and which, if pressed, can cause deep hurt and division even among family and friends. Jesus did not come into the world to argue religion. He came to win and then to offer mankind the only way of salvation. But, in doing so, He ignited a controversy which divides the world into two hostile camps. Indeed, His death on the cross has created

A WORLD ON FIRE

- I. Jesus started the fire by bringing God's judgment to earth.
 - A. The judgment was brought against Him for the world's sin.
 - 1. The world would have continued in its blissful darkness on the road to destruction.
 - 2. Christ's death on the cross makes possible the salvation of every person.
 - a. The cross was the baptism He was to endure (v. 50).
 - b. He longed to complete it for us.
 - B. The judgment proceeds to all who are offended at the cross.
 - 1. Unbelief rejects salvation through the cross for any number of reasons—as being too simple, too exclusive, unreasonable, or unnecessary.
 - 2. The consequence is eternal fire (Matthew 3:12; 25:41).
- II. The fire continues to burn as the Gospel of the cross is proclaimed.
 - A. The great paradox is that peace on earth (Luke 2:14) requires division among men.
 - 1. The Gospel call to believe unites us with total strangers and divides us from those with whom we have intimate relationships.
 - 2. No amount of watered-down sentiment or cover-up can extinguish the fire.
 - B. In the midst of our disunity Christ would have us find comfort and hope in the cross.
 - 1. As Christians, the division we experience from close acquaintances over the cross causes us great hurt (cf. Paul's sorrow in Romans 9).
 - 2. Knowing that Jesus Himself suffered this division and that He told us to expect it enables us to glory in the cross of Christ.

Conclusion: The message of the cross to which our Lord was condemned continues to condemn all those who brush it aside and refuse to see in it God's only offer of life. But the cross remains the only hope for a divided world.

Paul E. Cloeter
Bessemer, Michigan

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 13:22-30

August 20, 1989

The verses of the text will be most powerful when seen in their immediate context. Jesus has been on His way to Jerusalem (9:51). This theme is renewed and intensified in 13:22. The thought that is conveyed is that Jesus is on His way to establish the kingdom of God. References to the kingdom occur in 13:18,20,28,29. The expectations of the people led to speculation regarding the number of people who would be saved. Jesus is not drawn into such speculation but rather stresses a recurring theme of the chapter, "Repent, turn from your false securities" (13:3, 5, 9, 15, 27, 34).

Introduction: As was often the case when Jesus was drawn into a discussion with people, He issued stern warnings along with prophetic insight into the coming kingdom of God. The warnings are usually followed by a call to repentance. The full impact of His call is often missed by us. We tend to concentrate on the hypocrites of Jesus' day without becoming personally involved. We see them, but not ourselves. Today we will concentrate on our own entrance into the kingdom of God. Picture yourself as moving toward the entrance of the kingdom, observing those who are trying to get in

THE OPEN DOOR

- I. The kingdom has four doors.
 - A. One door faces east.
 1. The East is the Orient where many heathen live.
 2. Many trying to enter were at one time Buddhist or Hindu.
 3. Those approaching have different colors of skin and different languages.
 - B. One door faces west.
 1. Masses are coming from Africa, Europe, and North America.
 2. Some are ancient Christians; others are new Christians; some were once Moslem.
 3. There are all varieties of people; some are very hungry.

- C. One door faces south.
 - 1. Large numbers are coming from South America.
 - 2. Some are like ourselves, but many are poor.
- D. One door faces north.
 - 1. These people are from the developed nations of the earth.
 - 2. Every Christian denomination is represented.
 - 3. Most of these people are familiar.
 - 4. It is the door most of us might try.
- II. The doors are narrow.
 - A. Many who are trying to enter are wearing badges.
 - 1. Some badges carry a denominational label.
 - 2. Some badges carry the label of a country or nationality.
 - 3. Some badges denote social status.
 - B. Those who wear badges are being turned away.
- III. The door is shut.
 - A. No mere password is enough to open the door ("Lord, Lord").
 - 1. Religious name-dropping will not open the door.
 - 2. Religious knowledge (on its own) will not open the door.
 - B. Not even the most impressive performance in the church will open the door.
 - 1. Not even church attendance.
 - 2. Not even church activity.
- IV. The door is opened.
 - A. The banquet hall is filled with people who have faith in Jesus.
 - B. People of faith from every land and background find the door open.

Conclusion: A personal question must be asked by each one of us: "Will the door be opened to me?" Faith is too easily placed in the externals of religion. Faith must be in Christ alone. True faith is "faith active in love." The blessed are still "those who hear the Word of God and keep it."

David Schlie
Fort Wayne, Indiana

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 14:1, 7-14

August 27, 1989

Some things are easier said than done. Resolving to live life God's way is the prime example. The word constantly calls forth from us a new mind, a change of mind (*metanoia*—because God's thoughts are so different than those of sinful man; cf. Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33). This pericope forces us to realize this truth anew. Our thoughts, habits, patterns of behavior—even those deemed socially acceptable by all—need to be reexamined in the light of God's Law and Gospel. Living life God's way does not mean doing business as usual. The objective of the sermon suggested below is to bring the hearer to assume God's call to humble service. The problem is our tendency toward the worldly standards of prideful self-service. The means to the goal stated is the empowering presence of Him who came to serve and save us from sin's self-centeredness.

Introduction: I am sure not revealing some great secret when I say that being a Christian is not easy. Sometimes I think fitting a round peg into a square hole is easier than living a life as a disciple of Christ. Sinful man does not easily gravitate toward the mind and values of God. Yet we are all people who like to think of ourselves as being Christians. Indeed, I am certain we all want to be Christians. So today's text is a welcome one. By it we are again forced to rethink what it means to be a Christian. In the process we find ourselves being issued the daily challenge to live like Jesus.

THE DAILY CHALLENGE

- I. The world challenges us daily to live life its way.
 - A. One such challenge is this one: "Do yourself a favor!" (vv. 7-11).
 1. How clearly Jesus perceived that selfish value in those with whom He ate. They proudly maneuvered to obtain the choicest seats, each one vying for a position of greater honor and importance.
 2. The world challenges us to do the same because "everyone else is!" Even the disciples knew how to play the game (James and John wanted the choice seats next to Jesus; we note the others' response, Mark 10:35-45).

Summary: The world challenges us: “If you try to live by the Golden Rule, sooner or later you will realize that many others are getting ahead of you. Do yourself a favor!”

- B. Another such challenge is this one: “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours!” (vv. 12-14).
 - 1. Jesus accused His host of playing life that way—turning the Golden Rule into this principle: “Do good to others so they will do good to you in return.”
 - 2. Again the world challenges us to see how sensible its way is. “ ‘Tit for tat’ is the way the ‘real’ world operates,” we are told.

Transition: Like it or not we all need to realize and admit this fact:

- C. We have bought the world’s arguments lock, stock, and barrel.
 - 1. Because of our sinful nature we are proud and jealous of our positions.
 - 2. Like fallen Adam we are self-centered, selfish, and self-serving people.

Illustration: Consider the way many trim their Christmas card lists: “Did they send me a card last year? If not—drop them!” One begins to wonder what those cards and Christmas itself are all about! Or consider how obligated we feel to reciprocate dinner invitations and what we will serve when we do. How silly we are! How self-centered!

II. Jesus challenges us daily to live life His way.

- A. His way would not render Him a very good businessman by our worldly standards.
 - 1. He never showed any material success for His efforts.
 - 2. The people He chose to fill “top positions” (the twelve) were laughable candidates by worldly standards.
 - 3. Most people He tried to help responded indifferently at best.
- B. He says, “True living comes in humbly giving yourself to others.”
 - 1. Paul wrote the classic statement on this point in Philippians 2:1-11. Because of our sinful self-centeredness Jesus “humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross”!

2. Jesus gave Himself into death for *all* people—a service none could repay, a service most, he knew, would disdain. To the world His conduct is ridiculous since He would get so little return on His investment.

Summary: Do you see how poor, cripple, lame, and blind (v. 13) you are without Jesus? Have you humbly answered His invitation to receive all His undeserved, cross-won riches in faith?

Transition: If so, then get set for a new, otherworldly challenge:

- C. Jesus challenges His Christians to live life His way every day.
 1. We are challenged to give Him and the world our best; He pleads, “Stop aping the world. Think and give like Me, just as I continue to love and give to you.”
 2. He says, “Trust My Father to reward you in His time and way.” While everything we have is given completely by God’s grace (undeserved on our part), Jesus does talk of rewards. Whatever we do for those who cannot repay us in turn, the Father does see. One day we will hear these words: “well done, good and faithful servant” (cf. Matthew 25:21).

Conclusion: Jesus lived a life of humble service. That is what He challenges us to do too. On our own we could never answer that call. But He empowers us with the Spirit of His presence, forgiveness, peace, and joy through His Word. With all those spiritual resources, let us answer His challenge every day with a hearty “yes!” Amen.

Ronald W. Weidler
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THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 14:25-33

September 3, 1989

The theme of the sermon suggested below is that the follower of Christ must be willing to count the cost of discipleship and determine to pay it. There are three parts to this sermon (1.) the call to discipleship, (2.) the cost of discipleship, and (3.) the way of discipleship.

Introduction: At first glance some verses in the Bible strike one as confusing, overdone, even fanatical. Take Psalm 137:9: "How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock." The Christian may react to this verse with a sense of horror: "Surely, God would never say anything like that!" Yet look at other examples in Scripture: Jericho, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. God presents His people with some breathtaking observations and shocking commands: "Put it all to the sword!" If nothing else, the Christian (or unbeliever) concludes that God's invitation to faith and discipleship is most serious. It is a call to serve the living God—or die!

ON COUNTING COSTS

- I. The Call to Discipleship
 - A. The religious zeal and ignorance of the multitude are apparent (v. 25). So often people want a "Bread King" as a Savior. God is the Great Treasurer on high dispensing favors to His faithful followers and preventing any harm from touching their lives. The electronic church is evidence enough. So often the people flocked to Jesus for free medical help and food; the faith was ignored. Natural man always rebuilds God in his own (man's) image. We face the question: Why do we seek to follow Him?
 - B. Sin is the primary stumbling-block to discipleship (v. 26). Sin warps man's understanding of faith in God. Sin focuses man on himself. Sin perverts every call, every invitation, every command that God addresses to man. Sin places man under God's judgment, temporal and eternal. Unbelief, like cancer, consumes man and destroys his communion with God.
 - C. Christ came to destroy sin and reconcile man to God (2 Corinthians 5:19). Christ in the flesh carried man's guilt, sin, and death. By His sacrifice on the cross, Christ made peace between God and the world. His redemptive life and death opens up communion with God and eternal life.
 - D. On this atonement Christ also based His call to all men to follow Him (v. 26). Christ calls all men to become His believers and His followers.
- II. The Cost of Discipleship
 - A. Christ compares His love and worldly love (v. 26). No one, nothing can claim primacy in my life over Christ. Discipleship to Him is complete and permanent. Faith in Him accepts the blessings He won for us and sets us on

the road to discipleship, but there is a cost! He must be first in life. His follower must say "yes" to all His claims and promises.

- B. We must understand the total cost of this discipleship (vv. 28-30). Here a tower is to be built! Workers, salaries, material are all calculated for the projected task. Here every nail, screw, and hourly wage must be taken into account. Thoroughness is demanded. The demand is no less for the disciple of Christ. We need to see what is involved in the call to discipleship. Membership in the kingdom is not a nominal thing.
- C. We must understand the commitment involved in discipleship (vv. 31-32). The analogy of the military operations stresses the seriousness of the call. Danger, warning, combat is indicated. A college professor once complained: "The trouble with you orthodox Christians is you play for keeps; you play hard ball!" The professor was right. The call to discipleship and renewal is for keeps, forever.

III. The Way of Discipleship

- A. Trust in Christ as Redeemer is the first step in discipleship (v. 26). The calling begins with saving faith in the Redeemer, the only Redeemer! There is no discipleship without saving faith in the Christ of the cross. Faith in Christ makes one His disciple forever. This love excludes all others; He alone is first in heart, head, and life. Only then does one "qualify" for discipleship and serve in the kingdom.
- B. The disciple places all at the service of Christ (v. 33). There is no corner of life that can be excluded from service to Him. The Christian's lifestyle reflects the call of the Savior; it is renewal under grace. The disciple is God's new man with new goals in his life.
- C. The disciple takes up even the cross to follow Christ (v. 27). The disciple of Christ faces the sure enmity of the world and the devil. The wrath of the Evil One is directed against the follower of Christ. He must suffer in this world *because* he is a Christian. The war is not make-believe; Satan will bring his heavy guns to bear on the soldier of Christ. He will dog our steps until the last breath we take.
- D. The disciples of Christ follow Him until the end (v. 33). Does all this talk mean that salvation, redemption, and discipleship is a good work that God's people must do in

order to earn their way to heaven? Of course not—the gift of life and discipleship itself is absolutely free! But the world, the devil, and the flesh will do all they can to pull us from the Savior. Here is the “cost” to God’s people—pressure, pressure, pressure! We are pilgrims in a foreign land; we have a long way to travel before the darkness falls and we stand in His bright presence. “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 15:1-10

September 10, 1989

With opposition mounting from the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, Jesus continues to welcome tax collectors and sinners into the kingdom. He leaves the flock to seek the lost sheep and after much searching rejoices at finding the lost coin. On the road to Jerusalem Jesus prepares to lose His life so that the lost will find life forever.

Introduction: In today’s world we are surrounded by the lost—the homeless in our cities, illegal aliens across our borders, yuppies bound only for success, wealth, and pleasure, language groups worldwide without the saving Gospel. It is much more comfortable to ignore their cries and go our separate ways. Jesus startles our complacency with not one but two

PARABLES FOR THE LOST

- I. We need parables for the lost.
 - A. The Pharisees despised sinners (vv. 1-2).
 1. They did not seek them out but avoided them.
 2. They did not find them because they themselves were lost.
 3. They did not rejoice over sinners found but muttered against Jesus’ actions.
 - B. We often despise sinners too.
 1. We do not seek the lost but avoid them in our homes, community, job, and world.
 2. We do not find them because of our own hard hearts.
 3. We do not rejoice over sinners found but mutter about having our comfortable setting disrupted by “new” people who do not understand our ways.

II. We hear parables for the lost.

- A. The shepherd leaves the flock for a lost sheep (vv. 3-7).
 - 1. He diligently seeks out the sheep.
 - 2. He finds the lost sheep and puts it on his shoulders.
 - 3. He rejoices along with his friends and neighbors.
- B. The woman with ten silver coins goes after the lost one (vv. 8-10).
 - 1. She diligently sweeps the floor to seek that coin.
 - 2. She finds it after exhausting effort.
 - 3. She rejoices with her friends and neighbors.
- C. Jesus reaches out to the lost in a similar fashion (v. 7, 10).
 - 1. He diligently seeks us out in our Pharisaic sin and goes to the cross for us.
 - 2. He finds us repentant and forgives us our sin.
 - 3. He rejoices with the angels in heaven over our salvation and the world's.

III. We live parables for the lost.

- A. Found like the lost sheep and the lost coin, we diligently seek others around us.
- B. By God's grace through the Word and Sacraments, we find the lost as Jesus saves them from their sins.
- C. With the angels in heaven we rejoice over one sinner who repents.

Stephen J. Carter
St. Louis, Missouri

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 16:1-13

September 17, 1989

This is perhaps the most controversial of all the parables. Jesus uses an unrighteous man with unrighteous acts pursuing unrighteous ends to teach a lesson. Conversely, God's people (this is addressed to Jesus' disciples) strive to do what is right before God—including use of the possessions for righteous ends.

Verse 9 does not advocate some sort of works-righteous "back-up" plan in case of failure to reach heaven otherwise. "When it fails" appears to refer to the end of one's ability to use his money, to his death. When I die my wealth is gone; even my bodily

remains are controlled by another. Verse 9 expresses the joy God's people will share in heaven with those who have been eternally blessed by our sharing here on earth.

The problem is that we tend to get all caught up in our possessions; they easily dominate and dictate our lifestyle. The solution is to serve God wholeheartedly as those redeemed by His Son's blood. In His service we are stewards of all our possessions.

Introduction: Even Christians who believe their pastors should preach the "whole counsel of God" sometimes get a bit squeamish when his sermon has much to say about money. For some reason the subject of money—wealth, possessions—raises a red flag. Yet Jesus talked a great deal about money. The text presents us with the Parable of the Unjust Steward and its interpretation. It shows

WHAT YOUR USE OF MONEY REVEALS ABOUT YOU

- I. It reveals your goals.
 - A. The unjust manager's goals were these:
 1. To enjoy life—if at the expense of his employer.
 2. To continue to enjoy life at the expense of his employer, even after his crookedness was exposed.
 - B. The Christian's goals are these:
 1. To enjoy Christ and His love.
 2. To share His love for the salvation of others.
- II. It reveals your resources.
 - A. The unjust manager creatively used his last official act to further cheat his employer and create a future safe refuge for himself.
 - B. The Christian seeks creative ways to serve God and other people (one might note the uniqueness of "The Lutheran Hour," "This Is the Life," or the LLL Rose Parade float when they were first introduced).
- III. It reveals your wisdom.
 - A. The unjust manager's investments were foolish.
 1. They were self-centered.
 2. They were short-lived in value.
 - B. The Christian uses his God-given wealth wisely.
 1. He cares for others and shares with others in many ways—especially sharing the Gospel.
 2. There are eternal dimensions to his sharing (v. 9).
- IV. It reveals your values.
 - A. It is axiomatic that, if you can trust someone with unimportant things, you can trust him with valuable things (v. 10).

- B. If you cannot manage your money well (which belongs to someone else—God), how can you responsibly handle the precious Gospel (vv. 11-12)?
- V. It reveals your master.
 - A. Everyone has one—and only one—master. The question is this: who or what is your master (v. 13)?
 - B. If money is your master, then your religion is really a sham.
 - C. If God is your master, then your use of money will be important to serve Him who died for you and rose again.

Conclusion: It is frightening to look at yourself in the mirror of your use of your money. But remember that you are forgiven through Christ. With God as your master, money becomes one means of effectively serving Him and other people.

Lloyd Strelow
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THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 16:19-31

September 24, 1989

The account found in Luke 16:19-31 has often been classified as a parable. There is, however, no introductory statement in the text or context which would lead to that conclusion. There is no statement to this effect: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto..." What Jesus relates about the rich man (in Latin called *Dives*) and Lazarus could be a historical account of the lives and ends of two men who lived in Palestine during Christ's time. The similarities between parables and historical accounts are so many that there may be times when an interpreter will not know precisely how to classify them. Luther held that this pericope could be either a parable or a historical happening. P.E. Kretzmann believed that the account about Dives and Lazarus was relating historical events. The latter approach will be taken in this study.

Introduction: Thinking people in all ages have asked questions about three concerns: "Where did I come from? Why am I living?" "What will be my end?" Does the grave write *finis* to my life? The account of Dives and Lazarus deals with the third of these great

questions. Let us consider Jesus teaching about life's most important question:

"WHERE WILL I SPEND ETERNITY?"

- I. A man's worldly existence does not indicate where he will spend eternity.
 - A. There were great differences between Dives and Lazarus.
 1. Dives lived sumptuously each day of his life.
 2. His sumptuous life-style, however, did not guarantee him a happy eternity.
 3. Lazarus was a beggar and sick man who lived a miserable existence, which did not deter him from spending a blessed eternity.
 4. His poverty and sickness, however, did not guarantee him eternal happiness in heaven.
 - B. There was a spiritual difference involved in the ultimate destinies of Dives and Lazarus.
 1. Dives was heedless of God and His Word.
 2. Lazarus feared God and believed the promises of God contained in the Old Testament.

Application: Let no one think that he will be judged according to his income, education, or social status; because all men are sinners before God and share the same plight, needing of repentance and faith in Christ for their salvation.

- II. Death is common to all classes of mankind; it ends the lives of rich and poor, educated and illiterate.
 - A. Death is the "Great Equalizer." It shows no partiality.
 1. Against the inequalities of life, death is the great antidote.
 2. In death the respective fortunes and misfortunes of Dives and Lazarus were reversed.
 - B. Many individuals live as if death will never come to them, and they make no preparation to meet the final enemy.

Application: Human beings need to realize that death can occur at any age in life, and so it is important to be prepared for it.

- III. The souls of believers are taken to God in the hour of death.
 - A. When Lazarus died, he was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, that is, to heaven.
 1. While much about death and what follows is a mystery, yet Christians are not alone when they

embark on this journey to a place they have never seen; as Christ said, He has prepared a place for them.

2. God's angels, His messengers, take Christians to their eternal home.
- B. This glorious experience was not accorded Dives when his life ended; instead he went to a place where God was not, a place of condemnation.

Application: The knowledge that God sends His angels to take the souls of believers to heaven is a great source of comfort in the hour of death.

IV. Jesus teaches the reality of heaven and hell (heaven is being in the presence of the Lord; hell is the absence of the Lord and being in the company of the devil and his cohorts).

A. Jesus says that Dives' destination was hell.

1. Dives is in great agony.
2. Dives can never escape.

B. Jesus says that Lazarus went to heaven.

V. Unconverted individuals in hell will discover too late the necessity, while living, to prepare for their ultimate destination.

A. In hell Dives was concerned about his relatives whose life-style was the same as he had lived.

1. Dives realized that they would eventually join him in hell if their way of life was not radically changed.
2. Dives asked Abraham to send a messenger to warn them.

B. Not even a messenger from the dead, however, would have convinced them.

1. Dives sought help for his brothers in a wrong, sensational way.
2. Dives' brothers had the "law and the prophet" (i.e., Holy Writ) to show them how to escape damnation.

Conclusion: God does not desire the destruction of the wicked but that they repent. It is God's will "that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Faith saved Lazarus; unbelief condemned Dives. God grant us all the one thing needful—faith in Christ!

Raymond F. Surburg

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 17:1-10

October 1, 1989

The text seems to be a collection of Christ's sayings. Matthew reports much of the same wisdom of Christ, elaborating extensively and ordering the words differently. There are three parts to the text: verses 1-2, verses 3-4 and verses 5-10. Each section speaks of danger to disciples. In each section a caution is given. In the first we find the word "woe," in the second the expression "take heed," and in the third a series of rhetorical questions. A fairly tight deductive approach would be to discuss the dangers to faith which accompany discipleship.

A couple of points are worthy of note. First, the word "shame" or "offense" is relatively rare in the synoptics. It always refers to that which detracts from Christ. In Paul and Peter its use is the opposite. Christ becomes the "scandal" which trips up pride and glory. Secondly, verse 2 and its parallels in Matthew and Mark prove the possibility of infant faith, since the "little ones" certainly do believe in Jesus. Thirdly, the word "disciple" in verse 1 is changed to "apostle" in verse 5. Which means that the audience is changed by Christ.

Introduction: Faith is endangered at all times. In accord, certainly, with the popular conception, sins of passion are the ruin of many believers. But Satan is often more subtle. More often he attacks faith at its center, trying to destroy our faith by making us deny the Gospel.

THE DANGERS OF DISCIPLESHIP

- I. The Danger of Giving Offense.
 - A. Giving offense means destroying faith.
 1. Jesus does not refer to offending the unbiblical and sometimes silly sensitivities of others.
 2. The "stumbling block" was like a rabbit trap or the baited stick which lead to a rabbit's destruction.
 3. So many temptations can destroy faith.
 - a. Like the temptation to live without the Word (without Bible class or worship).
 - b. Like the temptation to disparage faith alone.

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- B. Giving offense is damnable.
 - 1. Others are destroyed.
 - 2. It is like taking candy from children.
 - 3. God takes a "soul for a soul."
 - C. But Jesus is an offense.
 - 1. He is an offense to those who threaten faith (Peter 2:8, 1 Corinthians 1:23).
 - 2. Accepting His offense protects us from faith-destroying offense.
- II. The Danger of Being Unforgiving
- A. To deny forgiveness implies certain things.
 - 1. It implies that we deny universal grace.
 - 2. It implies that we are better than others.
 - 3. It implies that there is a limit to God's grace.
 - B. If we refuse absolution, we deny the Gospel.
 - C. God's love is unlimited. (Illustration: In the Book of Judges God forgave the people many times.)
 - D. Disciples dare not forbid forgiveness.
- III. The Danger of Pride in Oneself
- A. We court this danger when we argue our worth.
 - 1. Active Christians must be especially careful.
 - 2. When we compare ourselves to others, we must be especially careful.
 - B. But the joy of serving Christ protects us.
 - 1. When we value Him, we cannot value ourselves.
 - 2. Serving him shows how much we value Him.

Conclusion: The dangers of discipleship are giving offense, being unforgiving, and being proud. God through the Gospel protects us from these dangers by the offense of Christ, the forgiveness of Christ, and the humility of Christ.

Klemet Preus
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THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 17:11-19

October 8, 1989

Introduction: Whenever I read the account of the healing of the ten lepers, my mind immediately jumps to the topic of thanksgiving, not only because this text addresses the issue of gratitude and ingratitude, but primarily because this is the traditional gospel lesson for Thanksgiving Day. After years of reading this text on Thanksgiving, one goes with the other, like turkey with all the trimmings. So I must admit that it feels a bit awkward to consider this text on an ordinary Sunday of the church year. Yet perhaps there is a message here for all of us that gratitude is an attitude worth cultivating all year long. Today we can learn much about

DEVELOPING A GRATEFUL HEART

- I. A grateful heart comes as we stop to consider where we have been.
 - A. For the nine thankless lepers the duty of giving thanks was lost in the excitement of getting on with their lives.
 - B. Human nature acts in this way. We are so quickly caught up in new endeavors that we forget where we have been and how God has blessed us in the past.
 - C. We must take time to look back and review where we have been as the Samaritan did. Paul never lost sight of the grace shown him (1 Corinthians 15:9ff.).
- II. Developing a grateful heart requires humility.
 - A. The nine who failed to give thank were Jews. It is quite possible that they were presumptuous about their healing because of their privileged background and status (Romans 9:4).
 - B. Pride can enter our hearts, too, because of our privileged status as God's chosen ones. As baptized and confirmed Lutherans who have faithfully and sacrificially given of ourselves to the Lord over the years, do we presume to think that God owes us something? Do we deserve a break today?

- C. The Samaritan, perhaps because of his lowly status in society, knew he was not worthy of the least of all the mercies the Lord has showered upon him (Genesis 32:10). Because of his humility he was mindful of God's grace.
- III. A grateful heart comes as a gift of God's grace.
 - A. The Holy Spirit worked faith in the Samaritan's heart, so that he recognized the healing *and* the healer.
 - B. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are moved to be truly grateful and to see that every good and perfect gift is from above.

Conclusion: Jesus is looking for grateful recognition every day, not just on Thanksgiving. He asks, "Where are the nine?" We will be at His feet offering thanks when we, with the Samaritan, take time to review where we have been, as we in all humility have proper understanding of ourselves before God, but, above all else, as He Himself grants us grace by His Holy Spirit through His Word to see Him as the source of every blessing

Dennis S. Perryman
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THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 18:1-8a

October 15, 1989

Luke 11:5-8 and Luke 18:1-8 are unique to Luke and typical of his emphasis on prayer. Worthy of note is the imperfect tense of "kept coming" in verse 3. In verse 5 "wear me out" is a weak translation of a Greek word which has the literal sense of "pounding with a fist to inflict a black eye" (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27). Here we see what motivates a man who admits that he gives not a fig for God or man. Noteworthy also is the grammar of verse 7 where the subject is placed in the emphatic position and is followed by a double negative expression introducing a question and thus demanding a positive answer. Normally we preach a parable and its application as a unit. In this case Jesus provides an interpretation which is not parallel, but in contrast, to the parable. We want to contrast the unjust judge (v. 6) with the God of righteousness. In any parable we look for *one* point of comparison, and Jesus clearly identifies what we are to learn in the first verse. Thus He gives us the theme.

Introduction: In the gospel a few weeks ago (Luke 11:1-13; Tenth Sunday after Pentecost) Jesus taught us that prayer is an act of stewardship, a response. Today the Holy Spirit teaches us two more lessons about prayer. We learn the answer to this question:

WHAT IS PROPER PRAYER?

- I. Proper prayer is persistent (vv. 1-5).
 - A. In today's Old Testament reading, Jacob-Israel was persistent in his wrestling with the Lord (Genesis 32:22-31).
 - B. The widow was persistent in coming repeatedly (v. 3).
 - C. Proper prayer is even more persistent in that it is continual.
 1. Jesus says that we "should always pray and not give up" (v.1).
 2. Paul uses the word rendered "not give up" in Galatians 6:9
 3. Paul uses the same word again in 2 Thessalonians 3:13.
 - D. We "cry out to Him day and night" (v. 7; Psalm 35:28; Psalm 44:8; Psalm 71:8, 15; Psalm 88:1-2). Our prayer is proper and persistent when our praying cannot be distinguished from our living, when our whole life is a prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- II. Proper prayer is confident (vv.6-8).
 - A. The justice of this world serves special interests; sometimes the special interest of an unjust judge (vv. 2,6).
 - B. We are confident in our God of true justice (v. 7).
 1. True justice finds us guilty—not least of inconsistent and faithless prayer (Mark 14:37-38).
 2. But for the sake of Jesus' death and resurrection we are declared innocent before the Judge (Romans 3:22-26).
 - C. We are confident because we live in a marvelous fellowship with God as His chosen ones (v.7).
 1. We know that, even when He keeps putting us off, He is always wise in accord with His own purpose.
 2. We approach Him "with all boldness and confidence as dear children ask their dear father" (Hebrews 4:16; Luther's introduction to the Lord's Prayer).
 - D. We are confident because we have Jesus' specific promise of swift and true justice (v. 8).

Conclusion: Proper prayer is a response to the love of our just Father in heaven as shown in Jesus. Proper prayer is persistent and confident.

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THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 18:19-14

October 22, 1989

In Luke 19:10 we have the theme of this gospel: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple has a surprise element. The "lost" are not those we think are lost, the terrible tax collectors or coarse sinners, but the "lost" are instead the proud Pharisees. The preacher ought to use great diligence in stressing this surprise element in this parable. It is the point of comparison as is stated in verses 9 and 14b of the text. It is at the center of man's relationship with God. Who is justified or forgiven? It is the churchgoer who humbly confesses his sin and who looks to Jesus Christ.

LOOK WHO IS JUSTIFIED TODAY!

- I. The man whom everybody judged was righteous is not justified.
 - A. Though he had a high pedigree and enjoyed material blessings, he lacked true righteousness.
 1. The Pharisees were the spiritual leaders of the day.
 2. His "standing in Front" or "with himself" sets him forth as seeking only his own honor. The Pharisees could not believe in Jesus because they were seeking personal glory (John 5:44).
 - B. Though he had works of which he could boast—even before God—yet he was not righteous.
 1. His pride in not being guilty of the coarse sins of the publican show how futile his works were.
 2. There is no repentant humility, no broken heart or spirit in him (cf. Psalm 51:17).

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- C. The real fault in the Pharisee is his spiritual pride—the worst kind (cf. Luke 5:30-32; 15:2-16:15; John 9:40-41).
1. His boast is negative—that he is not like the rest of the people, that is, average people. Hence, he exulted in his own pretended superiority.
 2. His boast is positive.
 - a. Fasting beyond the Old Testament requirements (Leviticus 16:29-31; cf. 1 Samuel 15:22; Mark 7:7).
 - b. Tithing heavier than required, that is, a tenth of everything, not just grain, wine, oil, and herd (Leviticus 27:30-32 cf. Luke 11:42; Matthew 23:23).
 - c. He says nothing of his sins and imperfections or of sins he has been forgiven (Luke 7:47). He is confident that he is righteous (v. 9) and thus feels entitled to God's blessings in the world and the next.
- D. Others saw him as the “model Israelite, citizen, and leader.”
- II. The man whom everybody judged a loser is justified.
- A. We look at the publican on the outside.
1. He stands “afar off,” at a distance, and especially far from the “saintly” Pharisee (v. 13).
 2. He does not lift his eyes to heaven since he keenly feels the weight of his sin against God (v. 13).
 3. He beats his breast, again and again, to indicate his profound sorrow.
- B. Jesus looks at the publican on the inside.
1. A prayer arises from a heart that is broken (Psalm 51:17; 66:18; 102:17; Job 36:21).
 2. The prayer of this sinner is “pleasing” to God (v. 13d).
 - a. His prayer recognizes and confesses his sin.
 - b. He expresses a firm faith in God's mercy to forgive sin. The aorist passive imperative, *hilastheti*, asks God “to be reconciled” or “to be merciful” to him. This verb always implies a sacrificial offering as necessary to render God reconciled with sinners. The sacrifice, of course, is Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world”, (1 John 2:3; 4:10).
 3. Surprise! The publican is justified, that is, forgiven.
 - a. By his own confession he is a great sinner.
 - b. A divine pardon is declared in the death and

resurrection of Jesus (Romans 4:23-25). This pardon is a gift of forgiveness that cannot be earned.

III. Conclusion: Look who is justified today! It is whoever confesses his sin from a repentant heart "O God, be merciful (reconciled)," whoever by faith accepts the proffered absolution, in Christ our justification is already accomplished. Therefore, "let him who boasts boast in the Lord!" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; cf. Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Waldemar Degner

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 19:1-10

October 29, 1989

Zaccheus was a big man in terms of power, ability to intimidate, and wealth. He was a little man in spiritual terms; a tax collector was a "sinner" in the eyes of the Jews. People, therefore, looked down on him; almost anyone would think of himself as better than he. He was also a short man. Injury was added to insult in this case. This fact, no doubt, hardened him.

Jesus' use of *dei* announces the necessity of His messianic mission. It is to Zaccheus' house that Jesus "must go." If Jesus is to fulfill the mission the Father has given Him, He must consort with sinners. I.H. Marshall notes that, in the minds of the Jews of His day, Jesus was sharing in the sin of Zaccheus by staying in his home.

Zaccheus' response to Jesus' gracious visitation is extravagant. There is no reason to make the conditional sentence of verse 8 suggest that Zaccheus may not have defrauded others. He is simply showing that he has now left behind a life of corruption. The usual prescribed restitution for ill-gotten gain (the amount plus twenty percent) was far less than the fifty percent Zaccheus gave to charity and the four times as much he pledged to return to those whom he had defrauded. He shows beyond all doubt that he realized the deep impact Jesus' visit in his house. The objective of the sermon outlined below is that the hearer humble himself before God, being moved by God to use his influence for

God's purposes. The problem is that we too often use our influence for our own good. The means to the proposed goal is the news that the great God has become a little man, taking our sins upon Himself and bringing us salvation through his death and resurrection.

Introduction: In the minds of many, little Zaccheus was not so little. He had influence and power far beyond his short stature. He could impose taxes, seize property, and make life miserable for anyone who crossed him. He was also wealthy, this little big man. But when Jesus comes along, Zaccheus' world was turned upside-down. Jesus is willing to become small in other peoples' eyes so that He can do a big work—to bring salvation to every home. In this familiar story we can see through Jesus

WHEN BIG IS LITTLE AND SMALL IS LARGE

- I. Being big is little when we try to "throw our weight around."
 - A. Zaccheus was a man with much influence and power, bigger than his short stature would suggest.
 - 1. Tax collectors were fearsome people. He was more to be feared and heeded than the most fearsome IRS auditor. He had broad and virtually unchecked powers to seize, hold, and tax.
 - 2. He was also wealthy. This, allowed him to influence people who made decisions and deal with leaders and other important people.
 - 3. He was also little in ways other than his small frame would suggest. He was willing to use his power and influence for his own good, defrauding people and seizing whatever he could for his own good.
 - B. Sometimes we act in the manner of Zaccheus.
 - 1. When we claim a special privilege because of our work, position in the community, or money, we really become rather petty and small.
 - 2. Even if we do not have much influence, it is all too real a temptation to look up to those who can pull the right strings—even trying to get them to pull some strings for us.
 - 3. Sometimes we puff ourselves up like a frightened cat in an effort to protect our own interests apart from the good of others.

- C. God has a word of warning for us in such a case.
 - 1. "Pride goes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18) "let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).
 - 2. Unchecked pride will eventually be a person's downfall. God exalts the humble and brings down the mighty.

Transition: Being a big man or a great woman may really cause us to be quite small in the sight of God. Left to ourselves, we would bring on our own destruction with this pettiness.

II. Small is large when Jesus is at work in us.

- A. We see how small and insignificant God was willing to become for our sakes.
 - 1. Born in a stable, living in humility and cast aside by the Jewish leaders of His day, Jesus came to this earth. He so for one reason—to save the lost.
 - 2. For this cause He went to the home of Zaccheus. He *had* to go there. It was His mission to identify with sinners, take their sins upon Himself, announce the good news of salvation to them, lift up the lowly, make little people big in God's eyes.
- B. We see what a large work He accomplished.
 - 1. In identifying with sinners, bringing salvation to their homes, healing diseases, and fulfilling His earthly ministry, Jesus accomplished so much—effecting the salvation of the whole world!
 - 2. Zaccheus was changed dramatically. What brought on this change? Jesus' visit and the Holy Spirit's work in Zaccheus' heart made the difference.
 - 3. What about you and me? Has God changed us? We are, indeed new creatures in Jesus Christ; so the Bible says of all those who believe in Jesus Christ.
- C. We become truly large through Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Counting ourselves as nothing as far as our own righteousness or ability to save ourselves, we find that Christ becomes all that we need to stand before God.
 - 2. Giving ourselves completely to His calling—letting His grace make a difference in our lives in big ways—we find the greatest and largest joy in living.
 - 3. Being small in our own and others' eyes so that we can be a blessing to them and others, we find large rewards.

Conclusion: Sometimes we may feel small. At other times we may overestimate our importance. We may be tempted to believe that we have more power than we actually have. Or we may believe that we have nothing to give. At such times we need to recall God's great glory in becoming as nothing to save us. Through Jesus we who are small can become truly large through His grace.

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THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 20:27-38

November 5, 1989

Most of what is known of the Sadducees comes from New Testament references. It is clear that they were influential, controlling most of the priesthood (Acts 4:1;5:17) and basically rationalistic in their theology (v. 27; Acts 23:8). Josephus mentions that they did reject strict adherence to the elders' oral tradition, but the claim that they accepted only the Pentateuch appears to be of dubious origin. They came to Jesus addressing Him as "teacher," but their real intention was to prove that He was no teacher at all, or at best a poor one. The conundrum which they present is intended not only to confuse, but also ridicule Christ and His teaching. However, it is based on false premise and a misunderstanding of the biblical concepts of marriage and the resurrection. Levirate marriage had been commanded in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, but it is reported that it had almost fallen into disuse by Jesus' time. The question was purely academic and really a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Jesus first attempts to correct the Sadducean concept of marriage and then offers a biblical proof for the resurrection. In the first place, as Jesus explains, marriage presupposes a mortal race and was instituted for a specific purpose, that is, the propagation of the human race (Genesis 1:27-28). Christ points out that those deemed worthy (*kataxiouthentes*) of attaining the resurrection (note: *tes anastaseos tes ek nekron*, and not *tes anastaseos nekron*) would have no need for marriage or propagation, since they would be *isaggeloi* ("like the angels," not "equal to angels" here). The likeness meant is chiefly immortal-

ity. Jesus also points out from Scripture that God would be a God of dead men. Since He said He was ("is") the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, these men must be living (Ex. 3:6). Edersheim remarked: "More grand or noble evidence of the resurrection has never been found."

Although Christ's teaching regarding marriage and the resurrection is instructive and insightful, one must remember that the text is an account of being "delivered from wicked and evil men," as Paul prayed in the epistle (2 Thessalonians 3:2). It shows to what extent some will go to pervert and discredit the Gospel. The teaching regarding the afterlife is secondary.

Introduction: A college professor, in order to prove his wisdom, would often propose seemingly unsolved questions to his class. Sometimes the answer to the riddles would be so simple that none of the students could figure them out. Or other times the question simply had no correct answer. The cry was often heard: "That was a trick question." In the text some people came to Jesus with such a question—a question for which there seemed to be no correct answer. The text concerns

THE TRICK QUESTION OF THE SADDUCEES

- I. It was made with evil intent.
 - A. The Sadducees did not care about the resurrection (v. 27).
 1. They did not believe in it.
 2. They sought to prove it ridiculous (vv. 29-33).
 - B. The Sadducees wished to discredit Jesus.
 1. Others had tried (chief priests, scribes, v. 19).
 2. They saw Christ as a threat.
 - C. Today also there are those who seek to tear down God's truth.
 1. Human reason is elevated above revelation.
 2. Some are threatened by Christ's message (2 Thessalonians 3:2).
- II. Jesus turned it to good.
 - A. He used an opportunity to set forth God's truth (vv. 34-38).
 1. We can be faced with someone who wishes to discredit our beliefs (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.).
 2. Unfortunately we sometimes cower when presented with an attack on God's Word.
 3. Jesus calmly but forcefully refuted the Sadducean reasoning.

- B. He was prepared to answer on the basis of Scripture (vv. 37-38).
 - 1. We also should be prepared to defend our faith based on Scripture.
 - 2. For this reason study of Scripture is important.
- C. Perhaps some were saved through Christ's clear instruction (v. 39).

Conclusion: At first the Sadducees thought that they would be able to trick Jesus and have a good laugh at His expense. But when they twisted God's truth to prove a point, Jesus was ready to refute them with the Word of God. We, too, can defend our faith, for it is sound. It is based on the Word. We can, as Paul says in the epistle, ". . . stand firm and hold to the teachings passed" on to us (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

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THE THIRD LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

Luke 17:20-30

November 12, 1989

Like most of the pericopes in use at this point in the twilight of the church year, Luke 17:20-30 has an eschatological emphasis. Verses 20-23 speak of the church throughout the course of the New Testament era, while verses 24 and 26-30 describe the end of the era in which we live. We have no reason to attribute any nefarious motive to the question of the Pharisees (v. 20), but it does, of course, assume the exclusive futurity of the messianic kingdom of God predicted in the Old Testament (as if it were not then already in existence by virtue of the incarnation and, as to the kingdom of grace, then already in operation during the public ministry of Jesus). The question, therefore, although not intentional defiance of Jesus, betrays a false conception which most of His countrymen, even most of His own disciples (cf. v. 22), were attaching to "the kingdom of God"—as the millennialists, indeed (especially the dispensationalists), continue to do down to the present day. For the Old Testament prophecies had ascribed to the Messiah a threefold kingdom: (1.) In the kingdom of

power He was to rule all creatures—not only as God, but also as man (cf. Matthew 28:18). (2.) In the kingdom of grace He, as God and man, was to rule, specifically through His Word, those in this world who trust in Him—in other words, the church on earth (cf. John 18:36-37). (3.) In the kingdom of glory He was to rule, as God and man, in glory visible to all (cf. 2 Timothy 4:10; Luke 21:31). Jewish contemporaries of Jesus, however, like the modern millennialists, wished to ignore the kingdom of grace altogether and to jumble up the kingdom of power with the kingdom of glory in an imaginary political empire which the Messiah would rule within the course of history. To correct this popular misinterpretation of the kingdom of God Jesus, in answering the question of verse 20, first describes the kingdom of grace (vv. 20b-23) before speaking of the prime interest of His countrymen (and unfortunately of His fellowmen in general, including ourselves), namely, the kingdom of glory (v. 24). Verse 25 underlines the temporal relationship between these two kingdoms (“first” the way of the cross), and verses 26-37 proceed to speak of the transition from the time of grace to the eternity of glory (cf. my study of the passage from Luke 21 assigned to the First Sunday in Advent).

Of the kingdom of grace, then, Jesus describes it as invisible to human eyes (*paratērēseōs*, “accompanied by observation”). The NASB paraphrase, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed,” is erroneous, because (1.) Jesus and the apostles provided many miraculous signs of its arrival (although significantly, to be sure, these signs were restricted to the apostolic period) and (2.) the kingdom of grace, although invisible itself, does have visible signs, or “marks,” of its presence, namely, Word and Sacrament. Verse 21a reiterates this point, and 21b states the reason why. The kingdom of grace lies within the hearts of people (*entos hymōn*, “within you”), so that only God can draw its compass; although we must relate to people in this world on the basis of profession and conduct, we cannot see into the hearts of others to descry faith in Christ or the lack thereof (cf. C.F.W. Walther’s Altenburg Theses, especially I, and his Theses on Church and Ministry, especially 1:3).

Millennialists, to be sure, attempt to escape from the usual meaning of *entos* and the weight of the context (translating, not “within you,” but rather “within your midst,” referring the statement to the presence of Jesus Himself, the Divine King, in the midst of the Pharisees) by arguing that “the kingdom certainly was completely unconnected with the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking” (*Ryrie Study Bible*). In the first place, however, Jesus is addressing not just the Pharisees but His audience in general, including His disciples (v.

20). At this time, secondly, the Pharisees as a general group had not yet rejected the messianic doctrine of the Old Testament or even the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah (the Pharisaic response being much less predictable than the Sadducean).

Verse 22 assumes the *theologia crucis* ("theology of the cross") which Jesus states explicitly elsewhere. The church, which rests upon the vicarious suffering of Jesus (v. 25), must itself lead a life of suffering throughout the remaining course of its history (cf. Luther's Heidelberg Theses). The reference to "one of the days of the Son of Man" arises from the Old Testament usage of *yōm-Yahweh* ("the day of the Lord"). The prophets employ this phrase to denominate a particular time in which the glory of God (in wrath or grace) comes into special prominence—as God, in fulfilment of prophecy, directly intervenes in history. The particular time intended varies from passage to passage and can be identified only from an examination of the context (whether it be a unique locust plague, the destruction of a city or country, the first coming, or the second coming). The point here is that the New Testament era would soon expend its share of such occasions (indeed, with the destruction of Jerusalem, which was to come within the apostolic generation). There would come a long period (the "days" to come, in which we still live) in which people would erroneously point to certain events as signs of the arrival of the only "day of the Lord" predicted in prophecy still unfulfilled (v. 23). This final day of the Lord, however, the second coming of Christ ("His day," "the day in which the Son of Man is revealed"), will, in fact, come suddenly without further ado (v. 24) and, indeed, at a time when people are carrying on "business as usual" in a spirit of security (vv. 26-30). These considerations dispense with all the wild and wonderful phenomena which the chiliasts imagine as paving the way for the return of Christ.

Introduction: Francis Scott Key composed the poem which became America's national anthem as the lingering darkness prevented him from seeing whether the star-spangled banner was still waving aloft the ramparts of Fort McHenry—that is, whether the fort had survived the British bombardment throughout the course of the night. "Oh, say can you see," he asked, "by the dawn's early light, what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?" The flag was there, of course, even when he could not see it; the morning light revealed its presence. It has been a long time since anyone on earth has seen Jesus Christ. How should we answer if anyone were to ask us this question about Jesus:

OH, SAY CAN YOU SEE?

- I. We cannot see Him now.
 - A. Once people saw Him in a state of humiliation (v. 25).
 - 1. We deserved the rejection of God.
 - 2. He suffered the rejection of men because of His faithfulness to God.
 - 3. He suffered the rejection of God, in our place, on the cross.
 - B. Now we see Him no longer (v. 22).
 - 1. Except by the faith which He has created in us (v. 21).
 - 2. Except in His Word and sacraments.
- II. We shall see Him soon.
 - A. It is useless, yes dangerous, to guess how soon He will reappear (v. 23).
 - 1. The prophecies of preceding events have all seen fulfilment (v.22).
 - 2. The identification of more signs of the end is, therefore, counterproductive (v. 23).
 - B. It is certain that He will reappear.
 - 1. Without warning (vv. 24-29).
 - 2. With a final judgment of all men (Luke 21:34-36; Matthew 25:31-33).
 - a. To condemn unbelievers to eternal damnation (vv. 24-29).
 - b. To translate believers from the kingdom of grace (v. 20) to the kingdom of glory (Luke 21:31).

Douglas MacCallum Lindsay Judisch

THE SECOND LAST SUNDAY IN THE CHURCH YEAR

Luke 19:11-27

November 19, 1989

Our people are being bombarded by media "evangelists" with descriptions of Christ's return to rule. Lutherans prefer to concentrate on the objective, biblical facts of how Christ set up His rule at His first coming. This text allows us to bridge the gap between the two with sanity. Arndt calls the story "an allegorical

parable" (*Luke*, p.392) because so many details correspond to the reality of Christ's departure, commission to His disciples, and return to judgment. Any number of doctrines could be highlighted in this text: Christ is to receive a kingdom (v. 12; cf. *John* 14:2-4) through His impending (v. 11) death, resurrection, and ascension; Christ is Lord (v. 12) as the Son of God (looking ahead to Advent; cf. *Mark* 11:10); our faith is shown by our works ("do business," v. 13 NKJV; cf. *James* 2:22) through faith in Christ we are His servants (v. 13; cf. 16:13; *Romans* 6:16-23); the "citizens" who are unwilling to have Christ as ruler "deny the Lord who bought them" (2 *Peter* 2:1); final judgment is according to works (v.15;cf. 2 *Corinthians* 5:10 and *Revelation* 20:12); Christ will reward good works (vv. 17,19; cf *Matthew* 16:27 and *Deuteronomy* 12:3); these rewards consist in "authority" (v. 17; cf. *Luke* 22:29-30); the unfaithful slave's fear shows a lack of love (v. 17, cf. 1 *John* 4:17-18); sins of omission are truly sin (vv. 22-26; cf. *James* 4:17); God's judgment condemns even on the basis of limited knowledge of God's ways (v. 22, cf. *Romans* 1:20-21, 32;14:23); God expects us to use the gifts He has given (vv. 13, 15, 26; cf. 1 *Peter* 4:10-11 in context)

Christ's purpose in telling this parable (that His kingdom would not appear "immediately" v. 11) needs to be modified in preaching today, since "the end of all things is at hand" (1 *Peter* 4:7). Yet our commission remains the same as that of the disciples: "Do business till I come" (v. 13). The emphasis of the text is not on the type of business to be done. (Lenski, wrongly, limits this business to the use of the Word of God.) The business we are to do includes our use of all gifts of God, including "that by His grace we believe His holy word and lead a godly life," according to Luther. A part of the godly life will be teaching the Word, but it includes all that we do to serve God and our fellow man—our "calling"). The emphasis here is on our motivation for doing Christ's business, namely: our identity as His servants (by grace), Christ's bestowal of His gifts on us, Christ's command, the promise of rewards for faithful service, and the proper fear of God (to avoid the punishments which are depicted here).

The sermon suggested below begins with basic Gospel and moves on to good works. Otherwise the mention of rewards for service may be misunderstood as "works-righteousness." The objective of the sermon is to motivate Christ's people to serve Him in this life and not wait idly for His return.

Introduction: People do not enjoy taking orders. They also do not enjoy working to carry out orders. "While the cat's away, the

mice will play.” Yet Christ has given us orders and then went away.

WHY SHOULD WE “DO BUSINESS” UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS?

- I. Christ is our King.
 - A. He is the “nobleman” of verse 12 (Sons of God)
 - B. He went to receive the kingdom (v. 12 death, resurrection, ascension).
 - C. He reigns over all, even His enemies (“*his* citizens,” vv. 14, 27; 2 Peter 2:1).

Transition: We need not be among His enemies.

- II. Christ, by grace, makes us His servants.
 - A. Those who trust Him as King are His servants (v. 13; 2 Corinthians 5:15).
 - B. God’s servants have the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:22-23).
 - C. He gives us all we need to do His business (v. 13; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
 1. He gives the ability to speak God’s Word.
 2. He gives the ability to serve God with all of life.
- III. Christ will “reward” His servants at His return. (2 Corinthians 5:9-10 may be used here if it is chosen as the epistle for the day.)
 - A. Faithful servants will receive unmerited blessings.
 1. They use God’s gifts to earn profits for God (vv. 15-16, 18).
 2. God blesses such faithfulness beyond what it deserves (vv. 17,19).
 - B. Fearful, wicked, lazy “servants” lose all blessings (vv. 20-26).
 - C. Each of us must ask himself, “which kind of servant am I?”

Conclusion: We “do business” for Christ until He returns because He, as Savior and King, deserves our obedience. We “do business” for Christ because He graciously converted us from slaves of sin into His gifted servants. And we look forward to His blessing of our “business” with eternal rewards (1 Corinthians 15:58, the day epistle).

THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (CHRIST THE KING)

Luke 12:42-48

November 26, 1989

This gospel fits between the gospels of the twelfth and thirteenth Sundays after Pentecost. In Luke 12:35-40 Jesus told two parables urging watchfulness. In verse 41 Peter asked whether He was speaking to the Twelve or "everyone." In response Jesus not only requires watchfulness of all Christians, but also assigns us stewardship responsibility. The Old Testament reading assures that the distinction of faithful and unfaithful shall become clear. A parallel passage is Matthew 24:45-51. In verse 42 the Lord merges stewardship into watchfulness. The *en kairo* combines the themes. The word *makarios* in verse 43 is used often in the New Testament; the form of *poiouonta* is present tense. Verse 44 begins with Jesus' authoritative *alethos lego*. Most translations retain the juxtaposition of *polu-polu* in verse 48; *perissoteron* is emphatic.

Commentators apply this parable to pastors, perhaps beyond the intended point of comparison. We dare not underestimate the gifts of some lay people. Jesus' answer may be paraphrased: "What I said applies to all—and to you in a very special way" (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:2.)

Introduction: While standing watch on board ship, an officer of the deck has more to do than watch clouds and waves. He is responsible for the ship and for the well-being of all hands. We, too, as watchers aboard the ship of the church, are to be more than spectators. On this last Sunday of the church year, Jesus exhorts us to

STAND A WISE AND FAITHFUL WATCH!

- I. A faithful watch is more than observing.
 - A. A sailor standing watch must steer a true course, keep a good log, and raise the alarm when an iceberg threatens.
 - B. The servant in the parable is expected to manage his master's goods in a wise manner and provide for other servants (v. 42).

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- C. We are to stand a faithful watch in these last days.
 - 1. We are surrounded by a most needy world.
 - 2. We are entrusted with ample material wealth.
 - 3. We are entrusted with God's good news in Jesus.
 - II. A careless watchman will be harshly punished.
 - A. By nature we humans are not good watchmen.
 - 1. Human arrogance and indifference were more responsible than an iceberg for the sinking of the Titanic.
 - 2. The servant in the parable not only misused his master's property, but also abused the other servants (v. 45).
 - 3. Some church members are not standing a faithful watch.
 - a. Many church members, the majority in most congregations, are uninvolved in weekly or daily Bible study.
 - b. Many church members are poor stewards of material wealth; they fail to use it for the welfare of the needy and glory of God.
 - c. Many church members, the majority in some congregations, are little more than spectators at worship services.
 - B. The Lord's warnings are not idle threats (vv. 46-47).
 - 1. He is coming again and, we do not know when (v. 46a).
 - 2. The punishment for unfaithful servants is terrible.
 - a. The loss of the Titanic was small as compared to the loss of lives from it.
 - b. One translation describes the faithless servant as being drawn and quartered (v. 46b).
 - c. Jesus warns us of the pains of hell more than any other biblical character.
 - C. The punishment for unfaithful servants will be proportional to the gifts with which they were entrusted (vv. 47-48).
 - 1. The punishment of the servant in the parable was proper considering that he had charge of all his master's goods.
 - 2. We who are so greatly blessed risk terrible punishment if we stand a careless watch.
 - III. A wise watchman is faithfully obedient.
 - A. Lessons learned in the sinking of the Titanic have made the seaways much safer today.

- B. The blessed Servant in the parable is the one who continually tended the property and people placed in his care (vv. 43,44).
- C. Jesus promises us great joy in this life and eternal life with Him as reward for standing a faithful watch.

Conclusion: We know our Master's will while we wait for His return. Let us stand a faithful watch. We have been given much. Let us stand a faithful watch. We have been entrusted with much. Let us stand a faithful watch.

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