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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Homiletical Studies

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 16:19-31

This pericope is to be understood as an illustrative story which our Lord told, not the narrative of an actual event. V. 19: This man had in abundance all those things that most people want in life. But he apparently gave no thought to the worship of God or the service of his fellow man. V. 20: The name given the poor man is significant; Lazarus means "God furnishes help." It is probable "that the name was bestowed by Jesus to mark the pauper as a child of God" (Arndt). The fact is that apart from God nobody paid any attention to him.

Vv. 22-23: They both died. Beyond the grave there is Paradise, containing Abraham and all other children of God that have died, but there is also hell, the place of torment. We note the complete reversal that has taken place with respect to the lots of the rich man and Lazarus.

Vv. 24-26: Abraham's reply must not be interpreted to mean that unhappiness on earth automatically brings happiness beyond the grave and vice versa. "Your good things" — the things *you* valued. This was his problem: his earthly life was centered on material things. In contrast Lazarus had none of these things, but he had God and His mercy and that is what counts.

Vv. 27-31: Miracles will not change the heart; only the Word of God can do that. In the Scriptures we have the means to keep us from the lot of the wicked in the other world. This Word must be heard and followed.

Introduction: Our text is a story that Jesus once told. It tells about two men, each of whom in his way got what he wanted in life. It gives us an excellent opportunity to consider the question:

What Do You Want in Life?

- I. Different people seek different things in life as being of supreme importance.
 - A. The problem with the rich man is that he wanted the wrong things.
 1. He wanted what most people want in life: an abundance of material luxuries.
 2. He gave no thought to God or the service of his fellow man.
 - B. What Lazarus wanted most in life was God and His mercy.
 1. This is indicated by the meaning of his name: "God is my Helper."
 2. Having God did not guarantee an earthly life of ease, but this was not his first concern.
- II. From the other side we see what really counts.
 - A. There comes a time for all of us when earth's true values are seen.
 1. Our eternal future is determined by that which our heart relies upon in this life.
 2. Only that which can stand the test of dying ought to be of real value in living.
 - B. God's mercy in Christ is that value which really counts.
 1. In this life wealth and pleasure may loom large for many; but —
 2. The one thing that accompanies us across the chasm of death and never forsakes us in God's mercy in Jesus Christ.
 3. Nothing in life is worth wanting which, in any way, gets between us and God's mercy in Christ.
- III. It is God's Word which, here in this life, gives us that which abides forever.

- A. God is our Helper.
 - 1. He sent His Son who, although He was rich, for our sake became poor, as poor and despised as Lazarus.
 - 2. God invites us to trust in Him for our eternal salvation.
- B. To this end He has given us His Word.
 - 1. Here we have the message of God's great mercy.
 - 2. The Word alone has the power to change our hearts that we may trust that mercy above all else.
 - 3. We have this Word, "Moses and the prophets"; let us hear it.

RJH

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 14:16-24

Even though Matthew's parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt. 22: 1-14) must be regarded as a different parable than this text, there are major insights to be gleaned from a comparison of the two. The stories are similar, but different in significant ways, and these differences help bring out the full meaning of this text in Luke 14.

- (1.) Luke's parable is not as intense a statement of judgment against the Pharisees. It makes no mention of a Son, a *wedding* feast, of killing the King's servant(s), or of vengeance upon the invited guests.
- (2.) The double invitation of the poor and oppressed in Israel (Luke 14:13; verse 21 of the text) and of the Gentiles (compare "hedges," verse 23, with Matt. 21:33; Eph. 2:14) stresses the aspect of the gracious invitation.
- (3.) The phrase "compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" with its purpose clause contains a powerful emphasis on the monergistic, unilateral nature of the invitation to attend the feast.
- (4.) The whole context in Luke around this parable is that of the grace and love of the Father, and of Jesus, His servant.

Introduction: Have you ever had a friend call you up and offer to take you out to dinner at your favorite restaurant? Sharing a meal with someone you like is a special thing anyway, and it is even better when he pays for it! Our text from Luke 14 is about a dinner; It is Jesus' way of telling us about our eternal home in heaven. He pictures heaven as a great feast, and this parable is about

Gaining Entrance to God's Great Feast

- I. You enter at God's invitation.
 - A. At God's own time
 - 1. The Jews delayed, even though the message of Jesus was, "come, for everything is ready now." The coming of Jesus was the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4).
 - 2. For us, and for all men, the message has become, "Now is the acceptable time" (II Cor. 6:2).
 - B. On God's terms
 - 1. Those in the great feast have humble hearts (Luke 14:7-11).
 - 2. Those in the great feast serve unselfishly (Luke 14:12-14).
- II. You enter by God's grace.
 - A. You have nothing to offer.
 - 1. Nothing you have or are makes any difference — remember this lesson which the proud Pharisees forgot (Luke 14:7-15).
 - 2. You are coming, and can only come, as one who is poor, halt, lame, and blind with the sickness of sin.
 - B. This meal is given free of charge, through God's grace.

1. Jesus picks up the tab; he pays the price through his death and resurrection.
2. It comes solely from God's own love. He wants to fill up his heavenly house; we are invited "in order that" his house may be full. We are the objects of God's unilateral love.

Conclusion: God's great feast is a secure place to be. For we have been invited to it not because of what we do, or who we are, but because of God's love in Christ, because of the eagerness of the heavenly Father to bestow the riches of his love on us.

Jeffrey A. Gibbs

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 15:1-10

As with the text for the Second Sunday after Trinity, a comparison with the parallel account in Matt. 18:10-14 shows unique emphases in the Lukan parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Also, the context on both sides of these two short parables drives home with incredible force the central thought of the enormous worth of human beings in the eyes of the God of Love.

(1.) In verse 2 of this chapter the verbs "to receive" and "to eat with" both are indications of the intimacy with which Jesus treated the tax-gatherers and manifest sinners. The Pharisees and scribes grumbled over this; they did not realize the worth which these people have in the eyes of Jesus.

(2.) The difference in choice of verbs between Luke and Matthew is significant. In Luke 15:4 "the one which is lost" is much more forceful than "one which has gone astray." Matt. 18:12. Again, the shepherd "leaves" the sheep in Luke; this verb has the primary meaning of "forsake, abandon"; Matthew's parallel verb takes this meaning only as a secondary sense.

(3.) The image of being abandoned "in the desert" (Luke) is more forceful than "on the hill" (Matthew).

(4.) The existence of a second parable which teaches the same truth (The Lost Coin) indicates Luke's desire to drive home this teaching of Jesus. The following parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is also reinforcement of this emphasis by the inspired evangelist.

Introduction: Have you ever felt that you were not worth much? In our days of fast-paced existence, many people feel lost in the shuffle; they do not think they are important. This text from Luke 15 teaches us just the opposite. It answers the question.

How Much Are You Worth to God?

- I. Enough for Him to search until He finds you.
 - A. He begins by sacrificing His most precious possession — Jesus.
 1. Jesus, who is God the Son, died for you.
 2. Jesus, who is the only truly Righteous Man, died for you.
 - B. Then, God uses every means He can.
 1. Think in those terms; your parents, your Christian friends, the radio, the newspapers, books — all are meant to get the news out to you.
 2. The News is that you are lost in your sin; but God in Christ has found you, He has come to take you home.
- II. Enough to cause rejoicing when He does find you.
 - A. God rejoices — what a celebration that is!
 - B. The angels rejoice — those mighty beings of the spirit world — they rejoice, too, when you come to faith.

C. You should rejoice as well.

1. Over your own finding.
2. Over every other finding — baptisms, conversions, etc.

Conclusion: Here is the ultimate solution for the problem of thinking, "I'm not worth much." You *are* valuable; to us, your fellow-Christians, to the mighty angels, and to God. God has searched you out in your lostness and found you. He wanted you — because you are valuable to Him.

JAG

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 6:36-42

The Gospel selection and the other readings for this Sunday (Is. 5:6-12; Rom. 8:18-23) and remind the Christian that he has been made a child of God. They also encourage him to act, not as the world acts, but as a member of God's family. Luke 6:36-42 is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49), which though similar to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), appears to have been preached on a different occasion. In this sermon Jesus reminds His disciples (v. 20) that though they suffer now, they will be rewarded in heaven (v. 23). The men described in vv. 24-26 seem very religious but inwardly they are dead and rotten (cf. Lk. 20:46, Mt. 23). The text is preceded by Jesus directing His disciples to love their enemies (6:27-35). After the words of the text Jesus points out that spiritual life shows itself not in words but in actions (6:43-49). Active love of their enemies shows the disciples of Jesus to be different than others in the world, for this is the kind of love that God Himself has shown (v. 35).

The text itself begins by picking up this theme, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (v. 36). Not only does God bestow earthly blessings upon the evil as well as upon the good (Mt. 5:45), but more importantly God lovingly put into action a plan to save a sinful world from the wrath of His holiness (Rom. 5:8, 3:25, Jn. 3:16, 15:13). We Christians should keep in mind the countless sins God has forgiven each of us. Jesus begins v. 37 by describing actions which are the opposite of showing mercy. He tells his disciples not to pass judgement and not to condemn others so that they themselves will not be judged and condemned. By being merciful the Christian avoids the condemnation of God at the Judgement, just as the disciple who endures hardship for his Lord ultimately is rewarded (6:20-23). The "good measure, pressed down, etc." (v. 38) is a description of God's abundant generosity to those who are generous. The phrase depicts a merchant dispensing grain putting as much in to a measure as possible. He shakes the container and presses it down and it still overflows. The "lap" refers to the fold of the garment in which the grain would be carried home, even as a woman might carry something in her apron. The phrase "they will give" is the Greek construction for an indefinite subject in which the third pers. plural is used. Jesus wants His followers to treat others as they themselves desire to be treated. The parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt. 18:22ff) is an illustration of the same thought.

Like a father counseling his children, Jesus introduces his attendant thought with an illustration. If a blind man leads a blind man they both will fall into a pit (v. 39). The language reminds the reader of Jesus' words to the Pharisees in Mt. 23:13-24. Christians who demonstrate the mercy and generosity Jesus has spoken of are not to do so self-righteously. It is the mercy of God, not being merciful, which saves us. Those who are unaware of their own sin and unworthiness are of no help in leading others to trust in the grace of God. People who are proud and self-righteous will teach others to be proud and self-righteous. But the disciple who trusts only in the mercy of God for salvation, will also be

able to lead others to trust in God's mercy alone, v. 40. The text ends with the familiar hyperbole of v. 42. If a man cannot see his own great sin, who is he to find fault with others. All men need the freely given mercy of God.

The central thought of the text is that the followers of Jesus have been shown great mercy and should reflect that mercy as they witness to others with their lives.

Introduction: All of us know of the old television program "Father Knows Best." Many of us remember it well. Even many of the youngsters know of it from the popular reruns. Nearly every episode of that program finds Betty, Bud, or Kathy, facing some sort of problem or dilemma. When Dad learns of their problem, he offers some fatherly guidance. To the kids that advice often seems wrong or too hard or simply silly, but in the end they learn that indeed Father knows best. It is the same with God, our Father. He has called upon us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to give and not expect in return. He tells us not to trust in our works or godly lives for salvation but to rely solely upon His mercy. Often these words seem wrong, silly, or too difficult to us. But as Jesus points out in this reading.

Our Father Knows Best

- I. When He asks His children to emulate His mercy.
 - A. God chose to save a rebellious world by His grace.
 1. Men of the world hate and disobey God.
 2. God shows mercy by offering pardon and peace through His Son.
 - B. The wise child of God emulates his Father's example, v. 36.
 1. Mercy distinguishes the Christian from the world, v. 35.
 2. God deals to you as you deal to others. vv. 37-38.
 - a. Judgement to judgement.
 - b. Mercy to mercy.
 - c. Generosity to generosity.
- II. When He warns against self-righteousness.
 - A. The self-righteous blind themselves spiritually, v. 39.
 1. Spiritual blindness is unaware of its own sin and unworthiness, vv. 41-42.
 2. The spiritually blind may seem religious but, in fact, are like the world.
 - B. True children of God are ever aware of their own faults, v. 42.
 1. Aware of their sin they depend on the mercy of God.
 2. Aware of their sin they can teach other sinners to rely upon the mercy of God shown in Jesus, v. 40.

Conclusion: God has loved us, shown us mercy, and made us His own children. Let us heed His example of mercy as we live among men, for our Father knows best.

Robert C. Zick

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 5:1-11.

Luke 5:1-11 refers to a different occasion than that presented in Mark 1:16-20 (and Matt. 4:18ff.) and hence is unique to Luke. V. 1: "The Word of God" — this term, used only by Luke to describe the preaching of Jesus, emphasizes the divine nature of the message. Vv. 2-3: The Word was God's but Jesus used both Simon's help and his boat to proclaim it more effectively. V. 4: This order constituted a test of Simon's faith. What Jesus asks is contrary to human reason

and experience; one would normally expect to catch fish at night in shallow water. V. 5: Simon evidences genuine faith. In spite of the evidence to the contrary, he acts in reliance on the word of Jesus.

Vv. 6-7: The success granted in fishing is an assurance that the disciples' labours in Jesus' service, done in obedience to His Word, would not be in vain. Vv. 8-9: They had witnessed a manifestation of divine power. Confronted with the majesty of God, Simon Peter saw his own shortcomings and declared himself unworthy of Jesus' presence. V. 10: "Do not be afraid" — a word of absolution; Jesus has come in grace to offer forgiveness and life with God. Literally, the Greek says "catch alive." The purpose of catching men is to lead them to true life. V. 11: They would be His co-workers who would devote all their time and energies to the task to which Jesus called them. We have here the beginning of the Christian ministry.

Introduction: "Let's go fishing!" Those words strike a responsive chord in many of us. For most of us, however, fishing is a sport, a hobby. So what if we fish all day (or all night, for that matter) and catch nothing? But for Simon Peter it was a different matter. For him fishing was not a sport; it was his job. Therefore, when our Lord says, "henceforth you will be catching men," He is not talking about a weekend sport. His program for catching men strikes at the essence of what discipleship is all about. That which applied so directly to Peter and his associates speaks to the primary mission of the Church today. When He says,

Let's Go Fishing

- I. Jesus calls us to the primary business of the Church.
 - A. "Catching people alive" is not a weekend sport.
 1. The primary mission of the church is to bring people to eternal life through the Gospel.
 2. The church, and the church alone, has been entrusted with this message of salvation.
 - B. Unfortunately we often act as if it were an optional, part-time activity.
- II. Jesus calls sinners to Himself for His mission.
 - A. Peter exclaims: "Depart! I am sinful!"
 1. The miracle confronted Peter with the majesty of God Himself.
 2. God's majesty makes us aware of our failure and sin.
 - B. Jesus replies: "Don't be afraid."
 1. He came to cleanse and claim sinners.
 2. He wants to use us.
 - C. "They left everything and followed Him."
 1. From that point on, Jesus came first in their lives.
 2. Is He first in your life?
- III. Jesus claims us and what we have to get His Word out.
 - A. Jesus asks for our help and resources. (Initially Jesus only asked for some of Peter's time and the use of his boat.)
 1. He asks for some of our time.
 2. He asks to use our resources (money, etc.)
 - B. Some Jesus calls to full-time ministry. (Then Jesus called Peter to full-time work in the kingdom; the beginning of the Christian ministry.)
 1. The need.
 2. The challenge.

IV. Jesus challenges our faith and blesses our efforts.

A. Mission is an act of faith. Because Jesus has spoken, we act.

B. Christ blesses us when we undertake great things at His Word.

RJH

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 5:20-26

This pericope occurs in the course of the first of Jesus' five great discourses recorded by Matthew. The narrative which immediately precedes this text establishes: (1) Jesus' lineage as son of David and son of Abraham; (2) His identity as the Son of God (1:18ff; 2:2ff); (3) Jesus' identity as the one who was to be the fulfillment of Scripture (2:15ff); (4) His own stamina to remain sinless in the face of temptation (4:1ff); (5) His lordship in calling His disciples.

The first great discourse (5:1-7:27) is Jesus' own description of true righteousness. Because only Jesus can be identified with the description of 1:1-4:25, only He can intrinsically and unequivocally claim such righteousness.

In this text Jesus enunciates two basic ideas which demand attention. These concepts must *ultimately* refer to Jesus Himself. They are the concepts of a righteousness which superabounds, and of reconciliation with our brother and opponent at law. Both these terms bring one to Jesus Himself in spite of the fact that there is no apparent gospel in this text. In applying these terms to Jesus' own work of reconciliation and His righteousness which is imputed to us through faith, the gospel can be brought into the sermon in a quite natural way — using the terms of the text itself.

Introduction: Many Christians are concerned about righteousness. Often this concern is whether their righteousness meets God's standards. Sometimes one may become very doubtful about his own salvation when he sees that even his best attempts at living do not stack up against what Jesus commands in this text. Jesus here speaks about a righteousness which surpasses the standards of even the most pious man. Jesus tells us that

An Exceedingly Abundant Righteousness

I. Is Necessary to Enter the Kingdom of Heaven

A. Our righteousness must exceed the empty shell of outward obedience (v. 22).

1. Few manage even outward purity. One may look good in the public eye, but in private this shell fades away. We all sin in thought, word, and *deed*.

2. Even an outwardly pure life is, in reality, only a whitewashed tomb (cf. Mt. 23:27) which appears beautiful, but is full of uncleanness. The example of murder shows this to be true (v. 22).

B. Without such a higher righteousness, one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven (v. 20, 26).

1. The Pharisees *looked* good. Jesus allows that such was the case, but admonishes us that our righteousness must exceed theirs.

2. Jesus also calls upon us not to count on a righteousness of outward form. With only that we can in *no way* enter the Kingdom of Heaven (vv. 20, 26).

II. Comes from Jesus Himself

A. His righteousness in no way falls short.

1. His righteousness goes beyond outward purity. He not only

preaches love, justice, and forgiveness; He loves, He is just, He forgives!

2. It does not fall short in coming to us (cf. II Cor. 5:21). Here is the significance of this exceedingly abundant righteousness: It is ours through faith.

B. Through Jesus we make friends with our opponent at law (v. 25).

1. Jesus has made us friends with God. God is no longer our opponent, but our friend in the truest sense.
2. Because of this reconciliation we can be reconciled with our brother.

Conclusion: An exceedingly abundant righteousness cannot come from within any man born of the flesh. Here Jesus has shown us this fact. We can be thankful that He was in all ways exceedingly righteous. Most of all we can be thankful that His righteousness is our very own.

David L. Bahn

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MARK 8:1-9

The compassion of Jesus spoken of in verse 2 is the key which makes this miracle text uniquely its own. When Jesus fed the five thousand He did so in response to the hasty entreaty of the disciples: "send them away" (Mark 6:36). The feeding of the five thousand shows that Jesus is compassionately responsible for His people. There also He admonishes His disciples to be responsible for those who follow Him.

In this pericope Jesus summons His disciples to Him and declares: "I feel compassion for the multitude . . ." (v. 2). He shows His awareness of their physical needs. This He can do because He is of like nature. He knows the frailties of flesh and blood. He also provides for those same needs as only God is able to provide. Verse 4 asks the question which allows us to see that this Jesus is God in the flesh. There can be only one answer to the disciples' question of "where?". This food must come from God's hand. Jesus not only satisfies them, He provides more than enough (v. 8).

It is interesting that after this event Jesus is met by the Pharisees who desire to see a sign from heaven. Their real desire had been to test Him. Had they only been with Jesus and seen the sign which the multitudes had just seen! This shows that Jesus did not perform this miracle for its own sake — He did it because He was truly concerned. It is important that the disciples did not grasp the significance of Jesus' feeding of the five thousand or the four thousand (cf. Mk. 8:18-21). Jesus was, through all of these miracles, showing just who He was.

Introduction: When you meet a great man you want to know more about him. What is his background? From where does he come? How is he able to think so clearly? What is he capable of doing? These were certainly typical of the questions which ran through the minds of these four thousand once-hungry people. Surely these who were now so completely and miraculously satisfied wondered about this man who had satisfied them with food there in the wilderness. They must have asked:

Who Is This One Who Satisfied Us So Well?

- I. He is One who has gracious tenacity.
 - A. He is not thwarted by ignorance and unbelief.
 1. The disciples seem to be skeptical about His ability to provide. They ask "Where?" (v. 4).

2. We too may doubt Jesus' ability to provide for our needs. We may be ignorant of Jesus' capabilities.
3. But Jesus does not forget us. He provides for us. He does not give up on us.
- B. He is not stopped by limited resources.
 1. He feeds 4,000 with 7 loaves and several fish!
 2. He blesses the work of our hands today, and provides for our needs daily.
- II. He is One who has a unique identity.
 - A. He shows that He is a compassionate man.
 1. He knows hunger and need. He is aware of the frailties of human flesh (vv. 2, 3).
 2. He is willing to do something about the situation. He *cares* about these people. But being a compassionate man is really only half the story. A mere man would be stymied in such a situation. This One not only cares; He does something about this situation. He must be more than a man, and He is.
 - B. He is the powerful God.
 1. He blesses this small amount of food in an amazing way and shows His great power.
 2. It is ultimately from His hand that we too are blessed in every way, for He is in control. He works everything for the good!

Conclusion: When we begin to see just who this Jesus is, we will also begin to trust in Him more fully. One who has gracious tenacity will not give up in blessing us. He who has a unique identity will never send us away empty. That is real cause for complete trust.

DLB

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 7:15-23

There is a constant need for pastors to warn their flocks against the subtle intrusions of false doctrine. In recent years the LCMS experienced the disastrous and painful results of unrecognized and unmarked false doctrine. Every pastor knows only too well how easily Satan can sow the seeds of doubt or misbelief in a Christian's heart by one flashy evangelist, one "innocent looking" pamphlet, one appealing book purchased in the local department store. This text is a classic one in which the Savior warns His people to watch out for false doctrine, showing the destructive nature of all false doctrine by the terrifying judgement rendered on those promoting and believing it. Verse 15: "Beware" (Gk. *prosechete*) is a pres. impv. implying a constant attitude or posture. Verse 16: "fruits" refer primarily to a prophet's doctrine, since it is finally doctrine that separates a true teacher of Christ from a false one (cf. Dt. 13:1-3; Rom. 16:17). Verse 21: "the one doing" is a present part. (Gk. *poiōn*), the one who is in this state of doing; "the will of My Father" is another way of saying, "the one believing in Christ as Savior" (cf. Jn. 6:29, 39, 40). Verse 22: "have we not . . . in your Name?" — the negative *ou* expects an affirmative answer; note also that the emphasis of these false prophets is on what *they* have done. Verse 23: "I never knew you" — the verb "knew" is aorist (Gk. *egnōn*), implying that there was not even one moment when they were ever in any intimate relationship with God; "workers of iniquity" — all the superficial good they did fully expecting an eternal reward is exposed by Christ as being really iniquity literally, "lawlessness".

Are You Watching Out for False Doctrine?

Introduction: It is dangerous to be a sleepy Christian. As members of the "Church Militant" we Christians can expect to be attacked spiritually by the Devil in many devious ways (1 Pet. 5:8). Christians who are unprepared or careless can easily become Satan's victims and not victors over him.

- I. Satan's attacks on our Christian faith are very subtle.
 - A. False doctrine and false teachers usually come masked in enough truth to be believable (v. 15). The external appearance of false doctrine is often most pious (v. 22).
 - B. But false teachers and their false doctrine can be recognized and unmasked if we weigh carefully their "fruits" with the touchstone of God's Word.
 - C. It is vital that we grow in our knowledge of Christian doctrine and trust in our Savior's merits by regular study of Christ's Word and attendance at His Sacrament (Eph. 4:14).

False doctrine is never harmless! Unrecognized false doctrine can lead us away from the true Shepherd with disastrous results.

- II. The dangers of false doctrine are shown by the judgement rendered on those promoting it or believing it.
 - A. Wolves will receive a wolf's reward — everlasting rejection by the Shepherd Himself and alienation from the flock of true believers (v. 23).
 - B. False teachers will receive such a condemnation, since all false doctrine is finally rebellion against the Good Shepherd Himself. A disciple of Christ hears and follows only His master's voice (Jn. 8:31; Jn. 10:27).
 - C. Having identified false doctrine we must therefore avoid it (Rom. 16:17) following our Savior's example (vs. 23).

Conclusion: God guard us from false doctrine and give us a greater hunger and thirst for the pure milk of His Word until, by His grace, we enter His great Church of Glory.

Steven C. Briel
Fairmont, Minnesota

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 16:1-9

We have taken the liberty of including with this pericope verse 10-13 since these verses form the necessary conclusion to the parable and contain Jesus' own explanation. The central thought of this text directs the *Christian* to use all his blessings and talents properly. As the unrighteous steward used his authority as steward to insure for himself certain benefits following his discharge from service, so the Christian should be so zealous and ingenious in his use of his material power or blessings so as to insure for himself a rich reward in the life to come. (The pastor should review our Lutheran doctrine concerning the rewards promised to a Christian's good works as Melancthon explains it in Apology III, "We teach that rewards have been offered and promised to the works of *believers*. They are meritorious, not for the remission of sins, for grace or justification, which are obtained only by faith, but for other rewards, bodily and spiritual, in this life and after this life . . .").

Verse 1: Note carefully that this parable is addressed not to the general public, but to believers who are in the Kingdom already through faith in the Savior's atonement (Gk. *pros tous mathētas*, ie., "to the disciples"); "a steward" (Gk.

oikonomon) — every Christian is merely a manager of the blessings God has given Him by grace and should so use them to God's glory and the benefit of his neighbor. Verse 8: The steward is commended because he acted *shrewdly* (Gk. *phronimōs*), and this point is really the *tertium*, the point of comparison; "they are wiser (Gk. *phronimōteroi*) than the children of light" — Christians should learn from the ungodly to be so shrewd and devoted in the pursuit of their heavenly "reward" as are the ungodly in the pursuit of a temporal one. Verse 13: "mammon" — this word is perhaps related to the Hebrew root *AMN* signifying "to trust in" or "to have confidence in"; a person can serve only God *or* Mammon, never both. The way in which one uses his earthly blessings demonstrates to which god his heart is really devoted.

What Kind of a Spiritual Retirement Plan Do You Have?

Introduction: We Americans carefully prepare for a secure retirement (insurance, stocks and bonds, real estate, etc.). Good investments promise a secure future. But many people spend little effort preparing for eternity. They make their investments now as if this life were to last forever. But we know it will not. What kind of a spiritual retirement plan do you have?

- I. There are only two available plans, one being the "mammon plan" and the other being the "God plan" (v. 13b).

A. The majority of people today are investing in the "mammon plan."

1. The word "mammon" signifies anything or anyone in which we place all our trust and confidence (cf. Large Catechism, First Commandment).
2. Mammon can wear many "masks" — money, possessions, prestige, family, popularity, etc.
3. Mammon is an elusive and tyrannical master — always increasing his demands on us; never really giving what he promises (peace of mind and security); rendering one bankrupt spiritually for eternity.

Most people worship this god mammon, bending all their efforts to his service. But he insures for his investors only eternal death, and so Jesus warns us, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his soul" (Matt. 16:26)?

B. God's gospel is the alternative plan.

1. Whereas mammon's benefits are really nothing, God's gospel benefits are high — by the suffering and death of Christ our sins are blotted out; we are God's own children (baptism); we have the certain promise of everlasting life in heaven through faith in the Savior's blood.
2. Even in this present life we can begin to draw from its benefits — we can pray; we can know God is always protecting us; we can receive His forgiveness regularly through the Means of Grace.

These are the only two available plans. We cannot be serving both of them (v. 13). Which plan are you adopting for yourself? How are you making your investments now with the things God has entrusted to your stewardship?

- II. The plan we have adopted for ourselves is reflected by how we are making our investments now in this life. What does your spiritual portfolio look like?

A. Those serving mammon invest everything in the gratification of their passions and lusts, giving little concern to the life to come.

1. God always comes last in the use of their time and money (first table of the Law).

2. They are concerned only about self and not about others (second table of the Law).

In this text God warns against having such a portfolio, reminding us that if one cannot be trusted with little things (i.e., the proper stewardship of his earthly possessions and talents), how can he be trusted with eternal matters (verse 11)? We Christians should learn to use the same kind of ingenuity and care in investing for our eternal future as did this wicked steward, since we are all really but stewards of God's blessings (v. 8).

B. We should learn to use our material blessings or talents to God's glory and to the benefit of others.

1. We can be using our time, our money, our talents, our prayers to support Christ's church.
2. We should be reflecting the love we have been shown by Christ, especially in our families (v. 8).
3. Our good works produced by the Spirit dwelling in us are evidence of a living faith in Christ (evidence of a wise investment plan) and will someday be graciously rewarded by the Savior Himself (Matt. 6:20; Lk. 12:33; Matt. 25:35; Lk. 14:14).

Conclusion: Wise investors re-examine their portfolio regularly. When did you last examine your spiritual portfolio? God make us all wise investors as we place all our trust in Christ and His atonement and devote all our God-given blessings to His service and glory.

SCB

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 19:41-48

In the Third Commandment God declares, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy," meaning, of course, not that we Christians must worship on a specific day, but that we must have the proper attitude towards God's Word as Luther so aptly explains this commandment, "We should . . . hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." God's people must constantly be warned against despising God's Word and Sacrament lest they mistakenly assume (as did the Jews) that God works through His Word and Sacrament *ex opere operato* without faith in the promise. This text affords the pastor this opportunity to warn his flock against such spiritual apathy or carnal security. For if God did not spare His "holy city" neither will he spare those today who continue in sin despising His Word of grace.

Verse 41: "He wept" (Gk. *eklausen*) is an ingressive aorist indicating that He broke into loud crying (used of Peter in Mk. 14:72); "If you had known . . ." is a contrary to fact condition; "peace" (Hebrew *Shālōm*) is a state of complete bliss and reconciliation with God. Verses 43-44: Critics would deny to our Lord Jesus that ability to foretell future events claiming that Luke put these words into His mouth after the event. Obviously such a mistaken notion is unacceptable for those acknowledging the Savior's deity. This predicted destruction actually occurred in A.D. 70 when Rome sacked Jerusalem and razed it to the ground as Josephus reports. Verse 44: "visitation" (Gk. *episkopēs*) refers to God's advent in Christ bringing salvation (cf. Lk. 1: 68, etc.). Verses 45 ff.: Here Jesus cleanses the Temple for the second time (cf. Jn. 2:13-16). Verse 45: "it is written" is a perfect tense (Gk. *gegraptai*) meaning written once and for all; Jesus always took in hand the sword of the Word. Verses 47-48: The Jewish leaders seek to kill

Jesus (Gk. *edzētoun* — imperfect) while the “ignorant” masses hear Him eagerly (Gk. *akouōn* — present tcp.), recalling the Savior’s prayer in Matt. 11:25. Verse 48: “the people were eager to hear Him” is, literally, “they were hung on Him.” Pricaeus suggests this metaphor is taken from iron being “hung onto” a magnet.

God’s Tearful Warning against Apathy and Unbelief

Introduction: Our Savior Christ is not only God’s eternal and sinless Son, but He also shares our humanity completely (excepting sin). On two occasions during His earthly ministry the Scriptures report that He was moved to tears. One occasion was at the death of His dear friend Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). The other was when He beheld Jerusalem, the city which from the days of King David had enjoyed God’s particular blessing and mercy, but whose history had been marked by general rebellion against God. The tears that flowed from His compassionate eyes are tears that still flow today as our Savior sadly views people like those living in Jerusalem who have rejected His proffered mercy and will have to endure God’s wrath because of their unbelief. His tears also warn us against such apathy or unbelief.

- I. Apathy is reflected in one’s use of God’s Word and Sacraments.
 - A. In His Word God offers His forgiveness and grace earned by Christ’s vicarious suffering and death.
 1. Through His prophets God had given His Word to His people in the Old Testament; through this Word and by means of the sacrificial systems in the Old Testament the people were directed to trust in that Promised Savior.
 2. Through the Word and Sacraments God points us today to the Savior who *has* come and who has paid our debt fully with His own sacrificial blood.
 - B. But many take God’s Means of Grace lightly despising the promised forgiveness offered therein.
 1. The history of Israel was marked by apathy and rebellion against God; the people assumed that “going through the motions” of religion would satisfy God (but cf. Is. 1: 11ff.; Hosea 6: 6; etc.).
 2. We also must guard against the mistaken notion that mere religious ritualism can benefit us spiritually (cf. Heb. 4:2).

God gave us His Word and Sacraments so that He might distribute to us today the benefits of our Savior’s atonement — forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. But those who despise these Means of Grace will not only forfeit the benefits, but will finally bring upon themselves God’s punishment.

- II. Continued misuse of God’s Word will result in condemnation.
 - A. God will punish those who despise His Word of grace.
 1. Because of their misuse of God’s Word (vv. 45-46), the Lord Jesus warned the people in Jerusalem that God’s wrath would come (vv. 43-44).
 2. God through the Roman armies carried out this threat in 70 A.D., destroying His “holy city” thoroughly.
 3. Jesus warns people today, “He that does not believe the Son will not see life, but God’s wrath remains on him.”
 - B. But in His mercy God gives people opportunity to repent.
 1. He gave Jerusalem some forty years to repent before allowing Rome to sack and burn the city.
 2. Today the Lord is still a patient Lord who “is not willing that any should perish” (cf. also Romans 2:4).

Conclusion: Today the Lord Jesus still weeps tears when He encounters apathy and unbelief. His tears are not tears of anger, but of deep compassion. He

loves us all. He suffered and died for the sins of all. God defend us from apathy and unbelief and give us true faith in Christ our Savior as we use His Word and Sacraments through which He bestows on us all the spiritual blessings earned for the world by His suffering and death.

SCB

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 18:9-14

What is the basis for one's justification before God? His own inherent righteousness earned by obedience to God's Law (the so-called *opinio legis*)? Or Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to him through simple faith in His vicarious suffering and death? This was the central issue in the Lutheran Reformation. And it is still the central question today as any pastor who knows his people will testify. In this classic text the pastor is able to contrast clearly these two "methods" of justification (i.e., works or faith) showing that "men cannot be justified before God (*coram Deo*) by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith . . ." (A.C. IV).

Verse 9: "to those having confidence on themselves" — note that this text is directed precisely against what our confessions call the *opinio legis*, that is, confidence in one's own righteousness apart from Christ; "righteous" (Gk. *dikaioi*), is a "courtroom" term implying legal innocence before God. Verse 10: the Pharisee represents the greatest piety in the nation at that time and the publican represents the greatest sinner in society. Verse 11: "to himself" (Gk. *pros heauton*) implies that this Pharisee had not really examined himself before God to determine His verdict; note the catalogue of sins mentioned by this Pharisee, showing that he did not really know what sin is — that it is not merely external, but begins in the heart, as Jesus so clearly shows in His Sermon on the Mount. Verse 13: "God be merciful to me" — this translation does not really communicate the rich meaning of the word used here, which is *hilasthēti*, "be propitiated." This word contains that doctrine which is central to the entire Bible, that God is angry with sin and must be pacified by a sacrifice offered in place of the sinner. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system pointing to Christ's final atoning sacrifice was certainly understood by this publican as his prayer demonstrates. Verse 14: that this publican understood the doctrine of justification by faith is clear from the Savior's own verdict on him (i.e., "he went down to his house justified" — *dedikaiomenōs*).

Do You Know How to Receive a "Not Guilty" Verdict from God?

Introduction: "How can I stand before a perfect God without being consumed by His burning anger against my sin?" This was the central question in the Lutheran Reformation. Luther had been taught to rely on his own piety and good works, but still his sins loomed before him condemning and accusing him. Do you know the way to perfect righteousness before a holy God who demands that you be as perfect as He is?

- I. Like the Pharisee, one can try to earn this "not guilty" verdict from God by keeping God's Law.
 - A. But one must not forget that God demands perfect obedience to His Law, not only outwardly in deeds and actions, but also inwardly in thoughts and attitudes (the Pharisee clearly misunderstood this, vv. 11, 12).
 - B. If we examine ourselves in the light of God's Law, we realize not only that we have not kept His Law as He demands, but also that we are unable to do so, since we have been maimed and crippled

spiritually by sin, as the Bible so clearly declares (i.e., original sin).

That which really matters in God's court, as in any human court, is not what verdict *we think* we deserve, but the verdict which the Judge renders. God, the true Judge, has rendered His verdict on those trying to earn their own pardon from God. "By the works of Law shall no one be justified in God's sight" (Rom. 3:20). How, then, can we sinners escape the "quilty verdict" we justly deserve because of our sins?

II. Like the publican, we must throw ourselves at the mercy of God's court, pleading our Savior's payment in our behalf.

A. Since our great debt must be paid our only plea is Christ's sacrifice for us. This was the publican's plea ("God, be propitiated to me a sinner").

B. Pleading His sacrifice for us God declares us "not guilty; debt paid in full." This was the Savior's verdict on this publican (v. 14). We have heard this "not guilty" verdict in Word and Sacrament.

C. Knowing that we sinners have been graciously declared innocent before God, not because of anything we have done, but solely because of our Savior's suffering and death in our behalf, how can we any longer despise other sinners around us as did the Pharisees (v. 9b)? Cf. 1 John 4: 10 ff.

Conclusion: God guard us from pharisaical pride and self-justification. May He not only give us a real knowledge of our sins, but, most importantly, teach us always to trust solely in our Savior Christ, who, with His own blood, has paid for us the great debt we owe God.

SCB

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MARK 7:31-37

During His ministry the Savior would not permit Himself to be viewed merely as a "miracle-worker." Many times, as in this text, He urged people not to spread the reports of His miracles lest His real work be overlooked. The miracles He performed were really incidental to His real mission which was to atone for the sins of the world by His holy life and vicarious suffering and death (cf. Matt. 20:28). In our own day many sects and "movements" within Christendom seem to place greater emphasis on miraculous phenomena than on the Savior's atonement (e.g., the charismatic movement and neo-pentecostalism). In preaching this text the pastor must be careful lest he give the impression that we can expect such physical healing today; Christ Jesus has not promised us this, but He has most surely promised us forgiveness and salvation through His Word and Sacrament and, as this text so vividly shows, Christ's Word can perform what it promises. With this text the pastor must be *evangelical*; he must preach Christ crucified for sinners.

Verse 31: It is important to note that this area was essentially pagan spiritually. Perhaps this accounts for Jesus' unusual procedure in healing the deaf-dumb man (cf. Edersheim, *Life and Times*, II, p. 45). Verse 32: "They urged Jesus (*hina*) to lay his hands on him" — perhaps trying to dictate to the Savior his method for healing, implying that there was some "magic" connected with the laying on of hands (another possible reason for Jesus' unique method employed here). St. Mark emphasizes that Jesus took the man, away from the crowd (Ck. *kat' idion*), perhaps so the man's attention would not be diverted from Jesus. Verse 33: commentators disagree as to why Jesus added these visible signs to His Word. Only the most naive exegete would suggest that these were "magical rituals" necessary to the healing. Luther's opinion still seems to be the

most sane theologically — that Christ attached His promise (“Be opened!”) to these visible signs to excite faith as God today attaches His promise to visible signs in Holy Baptism and the Holy Communion. Verse 35: “Ephphatha!” — Mark seems to want to emphasize that it was the Word which really healed the man and so he quotes Jesus’ command in the original; “and he was speaking naturally” — he now spoke “straightly” or “rightly” (Gk. *orthōs*), implying that previously he had not been entirely dumb but unable to speak intelligibly due to his being deaf. Verse 36: Undoubtedly Jesus’ command here was to guard against a misconception about His ministry.

Christ’s Word — Our Only Source for Spiritual Health

Introduction: Everyone wants to be healthy. We exercise, eat well, and rest so that we do not lose our good health. Spiritually we want to be healthy too. An unhealthy Christian is reflected by doubts, complaints, and general apathy toward everything godly and spiritual. The only remedy for spiritual bad health is found in our great Physician Jesus and His Word.

- I. Christ Jesus alone has authority over sin and its devastating effects.
 - A. Spiritual bad health can be traced to the sin inherited from our parents. It is sin which causes all the pain and suffering in our world; it was sin that caused this man’s malady.
 - B. Jesus came to our world to destroy sin’s power and curse. By His suffering and death He paid to God our debt, crushed the devil’s power, and broke the curse of death and hell by rising again from the dead.

As Jesus healed this man from the obvious effects of sin he shows us His authority over sin itself. We cannot expect physical healing ourselves, since God has not promised us this (cf. Acts 14:22, for example), but we can have confidence that He will heal us from our sin, for this He *has* promised us in the gospel.

- II. The instrument through which Christ heals us spiritually today is His Word.
 - A. His Word has the power to do what it promises. In our text Jesus’ Word was “Be opened!” and so it happened. Today Jesus’ Word promises, “Believe in Me and your sins are forgiven.”
 - B. Jesus attaches His Word to visible signs to make it more personal for us and to excite our faith (here Jesus took the man apart by himself (Gk. *kat’ idion*) and used very unique signs connected with His Word). Jesus attaches His promise of forgiveness to water in our Holy Baptism, declaring to us as He calls us by name, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” And in the Holy Communion He takes bread and wine and gives with these elements His true natural body and blood with the promise, “Given and shed for *you* for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Through His Word (whether oral or sacramental) Jesus restores us to spiritual health. May we use these divine means of grace more faithfully declaring with the crowds, “Jesus has done everything well.”

SCB

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 10:25-37

Christians must always fight that *opinio legis* which expresses itself most crassly in the lawyer’s question in this text, “What good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?” Evangelical pastors must constantly be urging their people to believe the gospel, that it is Christ’s atonement alone upon which we must base

our hope for salvation and forgiveness and never upon our own piety. In interpreting this parable the lawyer's initial question must be kept in mind (v. 25), lest the pastor forget the context of this entire pericope (i.e., how a sinner is justified before God) and leave the mistaken impression that, if one acts like the good Samaritan toward others (something no one really does, as even this proud lawyer had to acknowledge), he can somehow earn God's favor. Luther's treatment of this pericope is still the most evangelical — the Samaritan represents Christ, the robbed and beaten man along the roadside represents the sinner maimed by the devil and sin, and the priest and Levite represent the Law, which will never help us to reach eternal life.

Verse 25: "What good thing must I do . . .?" (Gk. *ti poiēsas*, aorist participle). This man believed that by one great heroic deed he could merit eternal life. Verse 28: "This do" (Gk. *poiei*, present). While this lawyer thought that by one great deed he could merit eternal life, Jesus quietly reminded him that one's entire life must be perfectly in tune with the Law if he would merit such a thing (an attitude shattered by the following parable). Verse 29: "wishing to justify himself" — apparently Jesus' point was driven home to this man and so in desperation he made one last attempt to save face. Verse 33: "a Samaritan" is in the emphatic position in the text (the pastor should review the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, e.g., John 4:9); "he had compassion on him" — the Gk. word used here, *esplangchnisthē*, is used in the gospels exclusively of God's compassion on sinners, a significant fact lending credence to Luther's identification of this Samaritan with the Lord Jesus. Verse 37: "You, go and do likewise" (the verbs here are in the present tense, *poreuou . . . poiei*) — quite obviously Jesus is making the point that no one has ever nor can ever live so sacrificially in behalf of another. Jesus alone has done this for all mankind and He alone deserves our trust and faith.

What Is the Price-tag on Eternal Life?

Introduction: Everything in life today seems to have a price-tag on it. Before buying anything we must be certain we have enough money to pay for it at the checkout counter. Some people seem to think they can buy eternal life from God. Before trying to do this we had better ask, "What is the price-tag on eternal life?"

- I. The price is high — complete obedience to God's Law in thoughts, attitudes, and actions.
 - A. The Law promises life, but its promise is conditional (vs. 28, "If you do this you will live"). God demands absolute obedience to all His Law, threatening, "The person who sins (breaks my law in even one point) must die."
 - B. In telling this story of the Good Samaritan Jesus shows us clearly that we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves (summary of the Second Table), and if we have not kept the Second Table of the Law, we quite obviously have not kept the First Table either requiring love for God above everything.

None of us can pay the price set on eternal life. The Bible declares that we are all by nature spiritually bankrupt, by nature "dead in our trespasses and sins"; someone must pay this price for us if we sinners are to receive from God the priceless treasure of eternal life.

- II. Jesus has take on our nature and paid our debt to God for us.
 - A. The poor man in this story who was robbed and beaten is really you and me and our world. We have all been stripped and left naked spiritually by the devil and our sin.
 - B. The priest and Levite represent the Law, which seems to offer help to us ("This do and you will live"), but, like the priest and Levite in the parable, passes by on the other side, giving no comfort or help.

- C. Jesus is our Good Samaritan. Like the Samaritans who were despised by the Jews, our Lord Jesus was despised and rejected by men (Is. 53:3; Jn. 1:11). Having every reason to pass by us on the other side, He did not. But, having compassion on us, He paid us our debt to God by His innocent life and vicarious suffering and death. And like the Samaritan who took the wounded man to the inn, our Lord Jesus has brought us to the inn of His Church where we are nurtured and strengthened through Word and Sacrament.
- D. Having been shown such love, we should now reflect it in our dealings with others (v. 37). Cf. also I John 4.

Conclusion: God give us a firmer faith in our Good Samaritan Christ who, by His blood and death, has rescued us from certain eternal death. May we live for others as He lived and died for us — sacrificially — until He returns giving us His Divine commendation, “I was hungry and you gave me to eat . . . anything you did for one of My brothers here, however lowly, you did for Me” (Matt. 25).

SCB

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 17:11-19

God’s mercy and benevolence extends not only to the believers but also the ungodly (cf. Matt. 5:45). However, as Luther points out in the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, we Christians should learn to acknowledge God as the Giver of all good gifts and receive His blessings with thanksgiving. This text affords the pastor the opportunity not only to encourage Christians to remember that it is God through Christ who daily showers us with material and spiritual blessings, but also to encourage them to receive His blessings with thanksgiving.

Verse 11: “through Samaria and Galilee” explains the presence of the lone Samaritan leper. Verse 12: “lepers” — were considered dead while still living and were required by Mosaic Law to separate themselves from the living (cf. Lev. 13:45). Verse 13: “have mercy” (Gk. *eleēson*, aorist impv.) — “do an act of mercy for us” (what faith and confidence is contained in this short word!). Verse 14: the text clearly implies that they were suddenly cleansed while on their way to the priest, their faith being based solely on Jesus’ word and not on sight, since they left Jesus still leprous but believing that they would be healed. Verse 15: “glorifying God” (Gk. *doxadzōn*, present pct.) implies a continuous action. Verse 16: the fact that this Samaritan was glorifying God (Gk. *ton theon*), coupled with the fact that he “fell before Jesus’ feet” in an act of divine homage, implies that he believes in Jesus’ deity. Verse 17: “were there not . . .” — the negative *oūch* expects an affirmative answer; “ten cleansed” (Gk. *ekatharisthēsan*) — even though the nine did not thank the Lord Jesus they remained cleansed of their leprosy (God still gives His blessings to the unthankful). Verse 18: Jesus receives this man’s homage because He is God, unlike Peter in Acts 3, who refused such homage. Verse 19: “your faith saved you” — Jesus here praises faith, not as though faith in itself possessed the miraculous power to save which only Christ’s Word possesses, but faith as the way in which the sinner receives the benefits of Christ’s Word to himself.

God Deserves Our Thanksgiving!

Introduction: “Thank you!” What simple words, but how precious they can be, often more valuable than a fistful of dollars. Surely as we consider our gracious God, whose generosity surpasses even our wildest comprehension, we are moved to sincere thanksgiving.

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- I. God is a very merciful God who always cares for us and daily floods us with His blessings, both material and spiritual.
 - A. We are surely not deserving of the least of His benefits when we consider our sin. The lepers as outcasts of society, being considered dead while still living, did not merit the Savior's time and attention.
 - B. But due simply to His mercy God showers us with His blessings.
 1. Materially He gives us and all people everything we possess in this life (cf. Luther's explanation to the first article).
 2. But not the least of His mercies is the compassion shown our world in giving us His only-begotten Son to pay our debt of sin for us by His vicarious suffering and death.
 - II. God gives us all His gifts putting no conditions on them.
 - A. We should learn to trust His Word and not waver in our faith in Him.
 1. The ten lepers took the Savior at His Word, not knowing initially how Jesus would help them, and went confidently to the priests believing that Jesus would deliver them.
 2. We should learn to trust God also with firm hearts. We should pray to Him in confidence as did these lepers ("Have mercy"), believing that He will hear our prayer and answer it.
 3. We should believe the promises given in His Word (i.e., promises of forgiveness and salvation given us in Word and Sacrament).
 - B. We should learn to receive His blessings (both material and spiritual) with thanksgiving.
 1. Jesus praised this lone leper who returned for a moment to thank Him.
 2. We should remember to "give thanks to the Lord for He is good."
 3. We who have received so much at the hand of our gracious God should learn not only to thank Him, but to thank those through whom our gracious God gives us His benefits (i.e., parents, spouse, employers, etc.), even if we might be met with ingratitude.

Conclusion: God give us faith to trust in Christ as our greatest Friend, placing all our confidence in His Word. And God give us thankful hearts to receive His benefits gratefully, extending our thanksgiving also to those around us.

SCB

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 6:24-34

The god "mammon," whatever mask he wears, is a tyrant. Servitude to mammon promises only discontentment, general unhappiness, and everlasting misery and condemnation. Christian people, no less than others, are tempted to put their trust in this elusive god called "mammon" and they also reap his dubious rewards at times. In this text the Savior warns against serving mammon and He urges us to place our trust and confidence in Him alone. Worrying and complaining are always symptoms of misplaced trust and confidence. In preaching this text the pastor must guard against giving the impression that material blessings are in themselves wrong. The point Jesus is making here is one of priorities as He Himself puts it so aptly, "Seek *first* the Kingdom of God . . ."

Verse 24: “. . . and love the other” — the Gk. word *agapēsei* is used here, indicating a love of purpose moving the person to sacrifice in behalf of the object which is loved (the same word used of God’s love for a sinful world moving Him to sacrifice His Son in our behalf); “mammon” — perhaps related to the Hebrew root *AMN*, meaning “to trust” or “have confidence in.” “Mammon” would be whatever we trust in for happiness and for all good (cf. especially Luther’s Large Catechism under the first commandment). Verse 25: “do not worry” (Gk. *mē merimnate*) means “stop your worrying and resist the urge to worry in the future”; “is not your soul . . .?” — the Gk. negative *ouchi* implies an affirmative answer. Verse 26: “(He) cares for them” (Gk. *trephei*) is present tense; “God is constantly caring for them.” The word carries the picture of a mother’s tender care for her nursing infant. Verse 27: “worrying” is a circumstantial ptc. of means showing the sheer folly of worrying. Verse 28: “learn . . .” (Gk. *katamathēte*) is aorist impv. and an intensive verb meaning “observe carefully.” Verse 31: “the gentiles” (Gk. *ethnē*) are those who do not have the true God as their Father. Verse 33: “seek first” (Gk. *zēteite*) is a present impv. implying continuous action (a posture in life); “first” addresses a question of priorities; “the kingdom” — as Luther correctly observes in the Large Catechism the Kingdom is really Christ and His gospel; for when you have the King, you have the Kingdom; “all these things” — not the luxuries but the things necessary for contented living. Verse 34: “tomorrow” (Gk. *aurion*) is personified here. If tomorrow is to do the worrying, then we can be carefree since tomorrow never really comes; we are always living in today.

Who Is the Master of My Life?

Introduction: Do you ever worry or complain? All of us do, but such things can be symptoms of misplaced trust. If we worry and complain we must re-examine our faith and ask, “Who is really the master of my life?”

- I. Many worship and serve the god Jesus calls “mammon” and they reap his dubious rewards.
 - A. What is the god “mammon?”
 1. “Mammon” is anything we trust in above the true God; possessing it we are happy and secure, and losing it we are discontented and unhappy (cf. Luther’s Large Catechism under the first commandment).
 2. Mammon can wear many masks in our lives — wealth, property, children, popularity, education.

We are often guilty of bowing before this god “mammon.” Our worrying and complaining illustrate our misplaced trust.

- B. But mammon is a dubious god.
 1. He constantly increases his demands on us (Ecc. 5:10).
 2. He never really gives those things he promises — peace of mind, security, contentment.
 3. And he certainly cannot bring eternal happiness and security (Matt. 16:26).
- II. There is only one master in whom we should place our confidence — only one true and faithful God in whom we should trust — the Triune God as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - A. Unlike mammon who never does anything for us but requires everything from us, God has done everything for us.
 1. He took our sin upon Himself and paid our debt to Himself by His vicarious suffering and death.
 2. In His Word and Sacraments He has bestowed on us individually all the blessings of salvation earned for the world.
 - B. He also cares for us and watches over us now.

1. He knows our smallest needs and is concerned about them (v. 32).
 2. St. Paul reminds us, "If God spared not His own Son . . . will He not with Him give us everything we need?"
 3. If God cares for the most insignificant of his creatures (v. 28, will He not care for the crown of His creation for whom He suffered and died?
 4. He will not only give us everything we need for contented living now, but also promises us an eternity of sheer happiness in heaven.
- C. We should, therefore, learn to seek Him first in life.
1. We seek the Kingdom by seeking to have Christ the King as *our* King and Savior.
 2. We should seek Him first by studying His Word faithfully and attending His Sacrament regularly.

Conclusion: Mammon is a vicious tyrant, an elusive god offering us no real rewards but heartache and eternal misery. God alone merits our trust and faith. Let us, therefore, seek first in life His Kingdom by trusting in Christ as our only Savior from sin. And let us devote all our energies and talents to the study of His Word and to serving Him alone, leaving all our problems and cares to His divine providence.

SCB

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 7:11-17

Our Savior's Word is a powerful Word! During His ministry He was able to awaken the dead as from sleep by a mere word, and He is able today to awaken souls out of spiritual death to new life by His Word. In preaching this text the pastor will not only want to demonstrate the Savior's power over death, but will also want to show the power of Christ's Word as we have it today in our Holy Scriptures and Sacraments to forgive sins, awaken faith, and bestow eternal life.

Verse 12: Here the Prince of Life meets Death carrying its helpless prey (Lenski); this poor mother had walked this lonely road to the grave previously; first her husband died and now her only (Gk. *monogēnes*) son (all means of sustenance now were gone); Elijah the great Old Testament prophet had once encountered a similar situation (1 Kings 17), but in Jesus a greater than Elijah has come, as the text demonstrates. Verse 13: "seeing her" — see here the Savior's intimate knowledge of and compassion for the individual; "he had compassion" is an aorist (Gk. *esplangchnisthē*); Jesus' compassion is never abstract but moves Him to beneficial action; "do not weep" (me with a present impv.) implies "stop your weeping and resist the urge to weep in the future" (unlike the others Jesus alone is able to give her reason to stop her crying). Verse 14: "he touched the coffin" — such an action was forbidden by Mosaic Law to guard against defilement, but Jesus is the Lord of Life and by raising this dead boy He rendered that which is unclean, clean; "young man, to you I say, 'Arise!'" — Jesus speaks to this dead corpse as if he is living; note the sharp contrast between Jesus and Elijah (1 Kings 17). Elijah must wrestle in prayer with God, while Jesus merely says "I say." Verse 15: "the dead one" — Luke emphasizes the fact that the boy was dead; "sat up" is an aorist, indicating a sudden awakening, as if suddenly startled out of sleep; "he gave him to his mother" is a direct quote from the LXX of 1 Kings 17:23 (an obvious allusion to Elijah's miracle). Verse 16: "God has visited His people" is a Messianic phrase, and in the following section (verses 18-23) Jesus points to this miracle (among others) to prove that He is "the coming One," i.e., the Messiah of God (cf. verse 22, "the dead are raised").

Jesus Provides Certain Comfort for All Our Troubles

Introduction: We have many troubles and disappointments in life. The greatest enemy we face is death. Jesus alone is able to deliver us from our heart-aches and troubles, whatever they might be. Since He has power over death, our last great enemy, He shows us that He also has the power over all the other things that cause us such misery and suffering. In our text He urges us not to grieve hopelessly as do the ungodly who have no hope, but to learn to trust in Him.

I. Jesus knows all our troubles and they are a concern to Him.

A. We do not deserve His compassion.

1. All our troubles and suffering have been brought down on us because of our sin inherited from our parents.
2. In the midst of our suffering we may be tempted to think that God has forgotten us or is punishing us for some reason.

B. But the Savior never forgets His people in their suffering.

1. The Savior took the time to notice this poor woman and have compassion on her specifically (v. 13).
2. Jesus is always concerned about what happens to us too (cf. Matt. 10:30).
3. Knowing that our greatest problem is sin, Jesus out of sheer mercy, took on our nature in order to pay for us the debt we owed God.
4. St. Paul reminds us that God cannot forget those for whom He died (Rom. 5).
5. In his Sacraments the Savior speaks to the sinner individually offering comfort and help.

Jesus never forgets us. Our troubles concern Him. We should learn from Him to extend this kind of concern and compassion toward those around us as St. Paul urges us, "Weep with those who weep; rejoice with those who rejoice."

II. But not only is Jesus concerned about our troubles and problems, He alone has the power to lift our burdens from us, to deliver us from our troubles.

A. Jesus' promises to us are not empty ones.

1. He promised this widow woman that she would stop crying and, in raising her son from the dead, was able to take away her reason for crying.
2. Jesus has this same power today to deliver us from our troubles. Death is a mere sleep to Jesus; He can awaken the dead more easily than we awaken someone from a sound sleep.
3. In all our troubles Jesus urges us, "Call on Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me."

B. The instrument through which Jesus delivers us is His Word.

1. His word to this woman was "Young man, I say to you, Arise!" and His word worked life in the boy's body.
2. We today hear the Savior's promise in His Word and Sacrament where He offers new life and awakens from spiritual death.
3. We should learn to listen to His Word and believe it, knowing that if the Savior promises to us forgiveness and salvation (as He does in His Word and Sacraments), we have it.

C. We should learn from our Savior not only to feel compassion for other people in their troubles, but to help them in their troubles in any way we can (cf. James 2:14-17).

Conclusion: May we learn in all our troubles to place our trust in our Savior's all-powerful Word knowing that He not only is concerned about us individually,

never forgetting nor forsaking His own, but also has the power to carry out His promises whatever they might be. As we await the day when we will each realize the fulfilment of all His promises completely, may we live sacrificially for those around us, showing to others the compassion and help that Christ has shown to us.

SCB

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: LUKE 14:1-11

The Sabbath-day healing of the man suffering from dropsy was only one action in a series which aroused the anger of the Pharisees (cf. Lk. 6:6-11; 13:10-17). Verse 1: Better food was served on the Sabbath and it was customary to invite friends to the meal (Ylvisaker). Verse 2: The medical term used here is unique to Luke the physician. Dropsy is caused by a stagnated circulatory system. Also called edema, its symptoms are swelling in the subcutaneous tissue and distention of the stomach. Verse 5: The rabbis were divided on this question. Some felt that the animal could only be fed, others that it could be removed. Apparently removal was permissible in Perea (Arndt). Verses 7-11: Jesus is not merely providing guidelines for attending a Jewish wedding feast. He is telling a parable and therefore teaching a spiritual lesson. The divine principle of verse 11 makes this plain. The point of comparison is the necessity of practicing humility (Arndt).

One element common to both the miracle account and the parable is the attitude of pride. In the first case, pride is involved in the Pharisees' lack of concern for the man suffering from dropsy. In the latter, pride is involved in the selfish, rude striving for the seat of honor. The outline is developed around this common element. The problem is that pride is a constant enemy of every Christian. The goal of the sermon is to portray the destructive force of the sin of pride.

Pride: The Relationship Ruiner

It can ruin your relationship:

- I. With yourself (vv. 7-10)
 - A. As a child of God you daily want to express Christian humility.
 1. Since your eternal worthiness is not self-gained, but in Christ.
 2. Since your temporal successes are gifts of a gracious God.
 - B. But pride produces sinful superiority complexes.
 1. It did in the case of the Pharisees.
 - a. They viewed themselves as being morally, socially, and spiritually superior.
 - b. So they loved to pick out places of honor whenever possible.
 2. It can in your life.
 - a. When you view yourself as being a better student, athlete, businessman, or housewife than you really are,
 - b. Christian humility can be replaced by Pharisaic rudeness and arrogance.
- II. With your fellow man (vv. 1-6)
 - A. Loving others as oneself is the proper Christian attitude.
 1. Since they also are creations of God.
 2. Since they also have been redeemed by Christ's death.
 - B. But pride prevents the proper demonstration of love to the neighbor.
 1. It did in the case of the Pharisees.

- a. Mercy towards the man with dropsy was overcome by legalistic pride.
- b. They "viewed others with contempt" (Lk. 18:9).
2. It can in your life at home, work, and school.
 - a. When arrogance belittles others along with their wants and needs.
 - b. When selfishness saps your ability to be compassionate.

III. With your Lord (v.11)

- A. He blesses those who are humble.
 1. They are aware of their sin and its condemnation.
 2. They are aware of God's undeserved forgiveness through faith in Jesus.
- B. But He punishes those who are proud.
 1. In their pride they break His commandments.
 2. In their pride they tend to reject the Savior (cf. Lk. 18:9).

PWB

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 22:34-46

V.34: Jesus had just put the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, to silence. Now the Pharisees tried to embarrass Jesus in their specialty, the Law. V.35: "A lawyer" is a scribe, an expert in the Law. V.36: "What sort of command is the great commandment?" If Jesus had singled out one, He would have implied that the others were of lesser importance. The rabbis reckoned more than 600 precepts in the Law. The schools made a distinction between light and heavy commands. A person could neglect some if he kept the big ones (cf. Jas. 2:10). V.37: Jesus avoids the pitfall by giving a summary of the whole Law. The Law demands an undiluted love of God (Dt. 6:5) and the neighbor (Lv. 19:18, 34).

The heart is the seat of understanding; the soul, of the living power; the mind, of the intellectual powers. Love is the fulfilling of the Law (Ro. 13:16). *Agapao* means "to love with affection and corresponding effect and purpose" (cf. 1 Jn. 4:21; Mt. 7:12). V.40: "Hang all the Law and the prophets" — all moral and religious precepts are comprehended in these two statutes. V.41: Now Jesus moves in to try to win the Pharisees (cf. Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44). If they accepted his argument, they might be persuaded to accept Him as the Messiah. Only after they refused, did He utter His woes (Mt. 23). V.42: The Pharisees commonly referred to the Messiah as the Son of David, nothing more. "What think ye of *the* Christ, the Messiah?" V.43: If David calls him Lord, Jesus must be divine. Otherwise, how could David call him son and Lord? "In spirit" means under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. V.44: Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 ("Utterance of Jehovah to my Lord (*adonai*)"). Here the eternal Father speaks to the eternal Son. "Right hand" refers to the place of honor and power (Mt. 28:18). "Thine enemies they footstool" — the enemies (Sin, death, the devil) are under His feet in utter defeat (1 Cor. 15:25-27; He. 1:13). V.45: How could the Messiah be both Son and Lord of David? The Pharisees could not answer that question without admitting that Jesus was both man and God, the true Messiah. A man's estimate of Christ will decide his eternal fate. V.46: The Pharisees could not refute Christ's argument. They would not believe and so they went away empty.

Introductory thought: People have many questions about religion, but they ultimately boil down to two.

The Two Great Questions of Religion

- I. Which is the great commandment of the Law (v.36).

- A. The Pharisees ask the question to try to discredit Jesus.
- B. If He selected one above the others, they would charge Him with discounting the importance of some laws.
- C. Jesus' answer: The highest law is love.
 - 1. Love the Lord they God (Dt. 6:5). with all your
 - a. Heart (seat of the will).
 - b. Soul (your living being).
 - c. Mind (intellect).
 - 2. Love your neighbor as yourself (Lv. 19:18, 34).
- D. The Law is important because it serves as a
 - 1. Curb (Ro. 7:7).
 - 2. Mirror (Ro. 3:20).
 - 3. Rule (Ps. 119:105).
- E. The Law can save no one.
 - 1. The tragic thing about the Pharisees was that they thought they could be saved by the Law (Mt. 19:20).
 - 2. Because no one can keep the Law perfectly (Jas. 2:10).
 - 3. The Law shows only the wrath of God (Ga. 3:10).
 - 4. It leads to despair (Ro. 7:9; Judas; Cain).
 - 5. It produces contrition (2 Sm. 12:13; Ac. 2:37; Ga. 3:24).

Let us thank God for His Law and seek to live by it. But let us not make the Pharisees' mistake of thinking we can be saved by it. Let us rather repent of our sins, confessing with the publican: "God be merciful to me, the sinner."

Transition: The Pharisees asked an important question of religion, but not the ultimate question. Jesus asked that one in order to bring them to faith.

II. What think ye of Christ?

- A. The Pharisees were quick to answer: "The son of David."
 - 1. The truth was plainly written in the Old Testament (Is. 9:7; Mt. 21:9).
 - 2. But they expected a Messiah who would be no more than a man, only a political Messiah (Jn. 6:15).
- B. To lead them to a saving knowledge Jesus asks: "If David then called him Lord, how he is his Son?"
 - 1. Jesus is indeed David's Son, true man, except for sin (Lk. 1:35).
 - 2. But He is also true God (Jn. 1:1-14; Lk. 1:35).
 - 3. He is God and man in one person (Col. 2:9).
- C. The personal union is important to man's salvation.
 - 1. As the God-man, Christ put all enemies under His feet.
 - a. He had to be a man to be our substitute (He. 2:14).
 - b. He had to be God to offer a sufficient sacrifice (Ps. 49:7).
 - 2. As the God-man He kept the Law for us (Ga. 4:4) and paid the penalty of our sins (Is. 53:5-6).
 - 3. Now our mortal enemies are conquered: the Law, sin, death, and the devil (Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:55-57).
 - 4. As the God-man He is seated at the right hand of God.
 - a. To make intercession for us (He. 7:25).
 - b. To be the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22).
 - c. To be worshipped by men and angels (Re. 5:12).

Christ did not win the Pharisees, and finally He could only weep over Jerusalem. May He not have to weep over us. Let us continue in faith to worship Him as true God begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, our Savior and our King.

HJE

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 9:1-8

Verse 1: Jesus had returned to Capernaum. His presence and preaching had gathered a large crowd (cf. Mk. and Lk.) Verse 2: "Their" faith includes "his" faith. Jesus deals with the sin before the sickness! Verse 3: Since it was not the Sabbath, the scribes and Pharisees were forced to employ another plan of attack against Jesus. They realized that by claiming authority to forgive sin, Jesus was claiming divinity. From their point of view, that was blasphemy. Verse 4: Jesus' divinity also becomes apparent at this point of the account. But also impressive in His compassion for those who were rejecting Him. He wants them to believe. Verse 5: Jesus combines simple logic with divine power. It is a rhetorical question. The answer is obvious. "Anyone can say, 'Your sins are forgiven.' But visual evidence will either verify or refute the statement, 'Rise and walk.' Then if I can do the harder, must you not believe that I have done the 'easier'?" Verse 6: Here becomes manifest the purpose of the miracle. It is not done purely out of compassion for the paralytic. Its goal is to convince the unbelievers of Jesus' own authority to forgive sins — His divinity. Verse 8: The miracle was effective . . . at least for some.

One unique feature of this particular miracle account is the great emphasis on the forgiveness of sins: man's need of it and Jesus' authority to provide it. Forgiveness of sins is mentioned explicitly three times (vv. 2, 5, and 6) and implicitly once (v.8). The following outline is built around this unique feature of the text.

The problem is that it is easy for us Christians to lose sight of the most important aspects of life. Satan loves to confuse Christians as regards their life priorities. Predominant worldly attitudes provide him with an effective resource.

The goal of the sermon is to instill in the believer a fresh awareness of the most important and basic aspects of human existence.

Life Priorities: A Christian Perspective

- I. Our greatest problem is sin — in spite of our amoral society (v. 2).
 - A. It was for the paralytic.
 1. He had other problems (paralysis).
 2. But Jesus showed the priority of his sin by dealing with it first.
 - B. It is for us.
 1. We have many other problems (sickness, depression, loneliness, etc.).
 2. But they are only symptoms of the big problem.
 - a. Sin is the root of temporal problems.
 - b. Sin is the cause of eternal separation from God.
- II. Our greatest helper is Jesus — in spite of our man-centered society (vv. 3-7).
 - A. He was for the paralytic.
 1. The paralytic had other helpers (his four friends).
 2. But only Jesus could give him what he needed most.
 - a. Jesus claimed this authority with His words (v.6).
 - b. He demonstrated this authority with His deeds (v.7).
 - B. He is for us.
 1. We have other helpers (parents, teachers, pastors, counsellors, etc.).
 2. But only Jesus has dealt with other greatest problem — sin.
 - a. By means of His perfect life.
 - b. By means of His sacrificial death.
 - c. By means of His victorious resurrection.
- III. Our greatest blessing is forgiveness — in spite of our materialistic society (v.2).

- A. It was for the paralytic.
 - 1. He had other blessings (physical health).
 - 2. But forgiveness was his new power source ("Take courage").
- B. It is for us.
 - 1. We have other blessings (freedoms of democracy, spouse, leisure time, etc.).
 - 2. But only forgiveness provides what we need most.
 - a. The strength to deal with temporal problems.
 - b. The assurance of eternal life with God.

PWB

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 22:1-14

V.1: "them" refers to the disciples and others. Mark says the Pharisees left after the withering parable of Matthew 21. "Answered": This word often does not signify a response. It means, "took occasion to observe," here concerning the schemes of His enemies. This parable is like the parable of the Great Supper (Lk. 14), but is spoken earlier and in a different locality. V.2: *Gamous* refers to marriage festivities lasting several days. V.3: In the East the original invitation is followed by reminders (Est. 6:14). "His servants": Here we are to think of the prophets and John the Baptist. "Them that were bidden" are the Jews (Ro. 9:4). "They would not come" is, literally, "they did not wish to come." V.4: "Other servants" may refer to the Apostles and to the seventy. "My dinner" refers to the lighter mid-day meal which began the festivities. The blessings of the Kingdom are compared to a feast (Mt. 8:11; Lk. 22:30). V.5: "They made light of it": This is a case of studied insolence and insult. These people were careless and indifferent, busy with worldly concerns (Lk. 16:14). One guest was a landed proprietor. The second was a busy trader. V.6: Other guests were actively hostile, like the Scribes and Pharisees. "Took his servants": Cf. Ac. 4:3; 9:2; 12:4; 5:4; 19:19; 16:23. "Slew them": Ac. 7:48; 12:2. V.7: "His armies": Think of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by Titus and his legions. The tares shall be gathered by the angels and cast into the fire. V.8: The guests were "not worthy" because they rejected the gracious call (Ac. 13:46-47). V.9: "The highways" is, literally, "the partings of the ways, places where roads met beyond the city limits." Many would pass through such places. "As many as ye shall find": The invitation is no longer exclusively for the Jews (Ac. 8:5, 38; 10:28, 48; 13:46). "Bad and good": The visible Church contains a mixed company (Mt. 13). "Guests" is, literally, "recliners at meal." V.11: "To see" is, literally, "to gaze at intently." "Wedding garment": An Oriental custom was to present each guest invited with a wedding garment. At any rate, this man wanted to come on his own terms, without faith. V.12: "Speechless" is, literally, "muzzled, tongue-tied." His silence condemned him. V.13: God will lay bare man's deceit, if not before, then on the day of judgment. V.14: "Few are chosen" because some refuse, some are open enemies, and some want to come into the Kingdom without the garment of Christ's righteousness. Luther: "One of the two it must be: either receive the Gospel and believe and be saved, or do not believe and be condemned eternally."

Introduction: When you receive a wedding invitation, you rejoice. You consider it an honor to be invited, and you look forward to sharing the hour of joy with the bride and groom.

To refuse an invitation is a serious breach of etiquette; it insults the couple and deprives you of sharing in the joys of the wedding. All this is true also in the spiritual realm. Let us reflect upon this as we hear God's invitation.

Come to the Wedding

I. Because a gracious God invites.

- A. The king prepares a marriage feast for his son.
 - 1. There are provisions enough for a week of celebration.
 - 2. He extends his invitations far and wide.
- B. Like this king, God has prepared a wedding feast.
 - 1. He provided for the world of sinners forgiveness, life, and salvation.
 - 2. He did this at a tremendous cost: the life and death of His own Son.
- C. Like the king, God invites men to share in the feast of grace.
 - 1. He invites those who are by nature His enemies.
 - 2. He repeats his invitation: "Come to the wedding."
 - 3. We accept by repentance and faith.

Application: Come to the wedding. Take in faith the treasures of God's grace: the forgiveness of your sin, eternal life in Christ. Let no one think that he is excluded. Come to the wedding.

II. Because refusal brings dire consequences.

- A. The attitude of men toward the king's invitation. You would think that all would accept, but
 - 1. Some refused outright.
 - 2. Some were preoccupied.
 - 3. Some treated the messengers meanly.
 - 4. One insulted the host by being attired in his own wedding garment.
- B. Throughout history many have responded to the invitation in the same way as those in the text.
 - 1. Some simply refuse: "O Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not."
 - 2. Some are pre-occupied: they have no time for God; the rich fool.
 - 3. Some are moved to anger: persecutions throughout history.
 - 4. Some want to come to God on their own terms: the do-it-yourself generation.
- C. All of these suffer the same fate.
 - 1. They suffer loss of heaven.
 - 2. They suffer eternal damnation.
 - 3. They have only themselves to blame.

Application: what a solemn warning. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." When God invites: "Come to the wedding," may your answer be:

Just as I am without one plea
 But that Thy blood was shed for me,
 And that thou bid'st me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

HJE

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: JOHN 4:46-54

The nobleman who came to Jesus showed remarkable faith. He trusted the promise when Jesus said of his son, who was about to die, "Your son will live." He believed without, "signs and wonders", a requirement typical of the Galileans

(cf. Luke 4:23ff.). Upon the word of Jesus, the nobleman confidently was proceeding on his way when he was met by his servants who relayed the good news of his son's recovery- "that his son was doing nicely." The ultimate result of this man's faith in Jesus was that "he and his whole household believed", i.e., they acknowledged Jesus as Savior and devoted themselves to Him.

He Brought His Concern to Jesus and Left It There

- I. The nobleman brought his concern to Jesus.
 - A. The nobleman had a concern.
 1. A sick child-because of infirmities about to die.
 2. Something that we can identify with.
 3. A very difficult burden to bear.
 - B. He brought his concern to Jesus.
 1. All his other resources, which must have been considerable, were useless.
 2. Through the other miracles of Jesus he had become acquainted with Christ.
 3. He turned to Jesus, the only source of help.
 - C. Jesus seemed to rebuke him.
 1. Jesus said, "Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe."
 2. The people of Nazareth were well known for being "sign seekers" (Lk. 4:23ff.).
 3. Jesus' apparent rebuke was intended to test motives and purify faith.
 4. There are those today who are more interested in "signs and wonders" than in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- II. He left his concern with Jesus.
 - A. Jesus sent him away with the word of promise.
 1. He went with the promise that his son would live.
 2. The nobleman believed without "signs and wonders."
 - B. His faith was vindicated.
 1. "As he was going down", his servants met him with good news.
 2. The son "began doing nicely" at the time when Jesus spoke the promise, "about the seventh hour."
 - C. Jesus' ultimate purpose was accomplished.
 1. The nobleman and his whole household believed, i.e., they acknowledged Jesus as Savior and devoted themselves to Him.
 2. The more significant "healing" took place.

NHM

**THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY:
MATTHEW 18:23-35**

We will recall that in parable preaching the *tertium*, or "point of comparison" of the parable, is to govern its treatment. In this particular parable, the Lord Himself articulates for us in verse 35 the *tertium*, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." There is a connection between this parable of "The Unmerciful Servant" and the parable of "The Pharisee and the Publican." The connection lies in this, that pharisaic self-righteousness and contempt of others may easily lead to unforgiving and unmerciful conduct, which is utterly incompatible with a sense of one's own need of divine mercy and forgiveness. The parable follows the exhibition of a form of self-righteousness which would keep score of how often

we should forgive, being unmindful or forgetful of our own need of unconditional and unlimited forgiveness at the hands of our God. It is in the exercising of our own forgiving spirit that we reflect God's great mercy and grace in dealing with us and we give evidence of our faith in the forgiveness of sins.

The Forgiven are Forgiving

I. Our Forgiveness.

- A. We are called to give an account before God.
 - 1. The day of reckoning can no longer be put off.
 - 2. Before the King we are unmasked.
 - 3. The enormity of our debt and sin is realized.
- B. The hopelessness of our situation is brought home.
 - 1. There is no way in which the debt can be repaid.
 - 2. Even our best effort could not meet the minimum of what our God demands.
 - 3. Our only recourse is to cast ourselves upon the mercy of our God.
- C. God's forgiveness is complete.
 - 1. God's declaration of forgiveness is full and complete—on account of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. God's forgiveness is unconditional.

II. Our Forgiving.

- A. We are to keep on forgiving, as God keeps on forgiving us.
 - 1. Factors that limit our forgiving of others are
 - a. Pride.
 - b. Self-righteousness.
 - c. Unmerciful attitudes.
 - 2. Has God ever said to us, "So many times, but no more"?
- B. Failure to forgive undercuts our faith in the reality of the forgiveness of sins.
 - 1. This removes the possibility of healing and wholeness.
 - 2. This ultimately brings down upon us the judgement of God.
- C. We are forgiving because God's forgiveness changes us.

NHM

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: MATTHEW 22:15-22

It was a strange alliance, to say the least — this newly formed coalition between representatives of the fiercely nationalistic Pharisees and a party of Herodians who accepted the house of Herod as the rightful rulers of Palestine. It was their mutual hatred of Jesus of Nazareth that forged this temporary alliance. The question posed, "Should one pay taxes or refuse?" was intended to entrap. We bear in mind that the accepted view at that time was that the right of coinage implied the authority to level taxes and so constituted evidence of *de facto* government and one's duty to submit to it. Christ's response: "pay off" or do "your duty" to Caesar, and "what your duty" is to God, do that. Edersheim says: "It answers for all time that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world; a true theocracy is not inconsistent with submission to the secular power in things that are really its own; . . . The state is divinely sanctioned and religion is divinely sanctioned, and both are equally the ordinance of God."

Our Duty to God and Government

I. Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's.

- A. This was a question of entrapment, i.e., an attempt to elicit some

remark which could be turned into an accusation against Jesus.

1. The people who posed the question were allied against Jesus.
 2. The payment of taxes constituted evidence of government and the duty to submit to it.
- B. Jesus Christ reminds us that government is ordained by God (cf. Rom. 13:1-7).
1. The type of government is beside the point.
 2. The quality of government is not germane.
 - a. Government is of God and is, in and of itself, not evil.
 - b. We take issue with those who would view all government as satanic.
 3. Respect and obedience to government is enjoined.
 - a. There are no conditions here.
 - b. We are to render or pay our duty to Caesar in the things that are his.
- II. We are to render to God that which is His.
- A. We are summoned into a new relationship with God, by God.
1. Through the redemptive act of Christ we are reconciled to God.
 2. And in faith we live the new life which is ours in Christ.
- B. We are to render unto God the things that belong to Him.
1. We are called and set aside to live the Christ-like life in all that it entails.
 2. From this text we also conclude that among the duties we are to pay to God as Christians is to take seriously our duty to the government under which we live. (cf. 1 Pe. 2:13-17).
 - a. More prayer for it.
 - b. More personal and active involvement in it.
 3. Obedience to human governments, however, is not a blind obedience.
 - a. Obedience to law is not tantamount to supporting corruption, and wrong-doing.
 - b. In point of fact, because something is "legal," does not make it right or moral or permissible for a child of God, e.g., divorce, abortion, alternative life-styles.
 4. "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Pe. 2:17).
- C. Thank God that His forgiveness in Christ avails also to cover our sins of unfaithfulness and neglect against the government which He has ordained.

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THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY:

MATTHEW 9:20-22 (LUKE 8:43-48)

The Gospel holds before us two miracle accounts, "The Recovery of the Woman" and "The Raising of Jarius' Daughter." We consider in this study and outline only the miracle of the recovering of the woman. The disease was of long standing. The text tells us twelve years. We can be sure that this woman had tried every remedy. The Talmud lays down no fewer than eleven cures for affliction. Some of these cures could be quite effective; some were merely superstitious remedies. The real remedies of the physicians as well as the superstitious remedies only served to leave the woman disillusioned and in virtual despair. Yet the more

acute tragedy of her illness was that, according to Jewish law, it made her unclean. This meant she could never attend a synagogue service. She could not associate with other people, sit on their chairs, etc., because to do so would render them unclean. In short, she was cut off from all religious and social life. In addition to her pain and trouble, due to her illness she also had to bear the loneliness of being shut out from the worship of God and from the society of her friends and even of her family. Still this woman had faith, but it was such that it threatened to run over into superstition. It was a faith that needed to be called forth, purified, and perfected. The source of power was not the garment, but the Christ. The healing came not from touching the fringe, but from coming into personal contact with Jesus Christ.

In Her Seemingly Hopeless Plight the Woman Turned in Faith to Jesus

- I. The plight of the woman was seemingly hopeless.
 - A. The woman was in a sad state.
 1. It was in part physical. Her pain and suffering were of a long duration.
 2. Her illness made her, according to Jewish law, unclean.
 - a. Thus she was cut off from religious services.
 - b. She was cut off from the society of her friends and even of her family.
 - B. Her plight was apparently hopeless.
 1. No physician had helped.
 2. All other remedies had failed.
 3. The only recourse she had was to turn to that Jesus who was at hand.
- II. She turned in faith to Jesus.
 - A. A faith that Jesus called forth.
 1. She cannot remain anonymous in the crowd.
 2. Jesus actively seeks her out.
 3. She acknowledges and makes confession.
 - B. A faith that Jesus purified.
 1. Hers was a faith that appeared to border on superstition.
 2. Jesus lead her to realize that the healing came not from the touch of the garment, but from coming into contact with Jesus Christ Himself.
 - C. A faith that Jesus perfected.
 1. Not only was she healed physically.
 2. But, more importantly, her faith had made her whole. She had found spiritual health through faith in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ as her Savior.

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