

CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
QUARTERLY

CTQ

Volume 46, Number 1

JANUARY 1982

The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology	Edwin M. Yamauchi	1
Justification: Basic Linguistic Aspects and the Art of Communicating It ..	Theodore Mueller	21
Theological Observer		39
Homiletical Studies		43
Book Reviews		85
Books Received		93

113300

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LIBRARY
FT. WAYNE, INDIANA 46825



Homiletical Studies

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 5:1-6

April 18, 1982

The person who is born of God loves God, the "parent," and he also loves God's children (v1). The two fundamental Christian duties are to love God and to love one's neighbor, and faith in the incarnation is the inspiration for both. To obey God by loving proves our love for Him (v2). The person who is born of God will not find the commandment to love God and neighbor burdensome (v3), for that which causes difficulty has already been overcome (v4) — the world, the sum of all the forces antagonistic to the Christian life. Faith conquers the world because it receives what Christ has accomplished. The remembrance of Christ's victory drives out affection for the world (v5). But how can we be sure that the incarnation that was necessary for Christ to achieve the victory has taken place? From the testimony of God at Christ's baptism and throughout His earthly life (v6). Here John is combatting the error of Cerinthus who taught that the divine logos or Christ descended upon Jesus at His baptism and departed again when Jesus was arrested so that a mere man was born of Mary and a mere man suffered on the cross. St. John makes clear that the divine Son Jesus Christ did not come only by water at His baptism but also by blood at His death. Besides these two witnesses, the water of baptism and the blood of His death, there is still a third, namely the Spirit who bears witness to the divinity of Christ because the Spirit is the truth.

Introduction: The non-Christian world is antagonistic to spiritual life. For that reason James urges us to keep ourselves "unstained from the world" (Jas 1:37), and Paul tells us not to be "conformed" (Ro 12:2). The non-Christian world is an enemy that must be overcome. How? John says that

Faith Overcomes the World

- I. Faith overcomes the world by uniting us to Christ.
 - A. Christ has already overcome the world.
 1. He began overcoming the world at His baptism.
 2. He finished the task on Calvary.
 3. His victory is real because He is the God-man who was able to take our place and do all that was necessary to make us children of God (v6).
 - B. By the faith we receive at our baptism (Ti 3:5) we put on Christ (Ga 3:27).
 1. As sharers in His victory we can stand up to the blandishments of the world.
 2. As we contemplate what Christ accomplished for us, we receive power to resist the evil in the world.

There is also a positive side to our overcoming the world.

- II. Faith overcomes the world by enabling us to love.
 - A. Faith produces love for God (vv 1-2), which moves us to speak truthfully and to deal honestly (1 Jn 3:18).
 - B. Faith produces love for the neighbor (vv 1-2), which enables us to rise above pettiness, vindictiveness, and self-seeking.
 - C. These commandments are not burdensome; keeping them flows from love for God and the neighbor rather than from legal compunction or threat of punishment.
 1. To love is the best way to deactivate hatred.
 2. As we actively love, we release God's power for good in the world.

Conclusion: We are in the world, but we do not have to be of the world, yielding to its temptations, mimicking its foolish ways, swayed by its God-dishonoring humanism. Faith unites us to Jesus Christ and enables us to love. That faith overcomes the world.

GA

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 1:1-2:2

April 25, 1982

The liturgical name of this Sunday, *Misericordia Domini* ("the Goodness of the Lord"), derives from the first words of the traditional introit in its Latin form, "*Misericordia Domini plena est terra*" ("The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord"). Another title commonly given this day is "Good Shepherd Sunday," since the traditional gospel, epistle, and gradual all portray Christ as the Good Shepherd of His people. April 25 is, however, also the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist, and such an important festival ought to receive at least mention at some point in the service.

The proposed sermon text consists in the introduction to the First Letter of the Apostle John (1:1-4) and the first of the seven parts (plus conclusion) into which the letter is best divided. The introduction is the statement of the apostle's basic point, on which he then expands in the course of the rest of the epistle. The first two and a half verses (as far as *hemon*, "us," in verse 3) are all one complex sentence. In it the following designations all refer to one and the same thing — or, rather, person — Jesus Christ: (1) "that which [*ho*] was from the beginning," (2) "that which [*ho*] we have heard," (3) "that which [*ho*] we have seen with our eyes," (4) "that which [*ho*] we have looked upon and touched with our hands," (5) "the word of life" (1:1), (6) "the life," (7) "the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us" (1:2), and (8) "that which [*ho*] we have seen and heard" (1:3). (The neuter relative is used in designations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 to include that which Christ said and did as well as His person.) Designation 1, 5, 6 and 7 stress the divinity of Christ — in terms very close to the prologue to John's gospel — by saying that He was "from the beginning" (cf. Jn 1:1a, 2); that He was "with the Father" (cf. Jn 1:1b, 2); that He is "the Word of Life" (the designation *Logos*, which is so important in John's theology, referring to Christ's role as the Revealer *par excellence*), "the Life," and "the Eternal Life" (cf. Jn 1:4; 5:26; 6:35; 8:12; 11:25; 14:6; 1 Jn 5:20). Designations 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 stress the humanity of Christ, through which the source of all life was made manifest to men (cf. Jn 1:14, 18).

The "we" (represented in the original by the first person plural ending of the verbs) of designations 2, 3, 4, and 8, the "our" of designations 3 and 4, and the "us" of designation 7 all refer to the apostles (as opposed to the "you" — other Christians — of verse 3, whereas from 1:6 to 2:2 "we," "us," "our," and "ours" includes all people or all Christians). The apostles saw Christ with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands in both His states of humiliation and exaltation (e.g., Lk 24:36-43). Such was especially true of John, the best friend of Jesus, who witnessed His transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8), leaned on His chest on Maundy Thursday (Jn 13:23-25), saw Him dying on the cross (Jn 19:26-27), and ate breakfast with Him after His resurrection (Jn 21). In designations 2, 3, and 4 there is a progressive emphasis upon the first-hand knowledge of Christ by the apostles as one proceeds from hearing to seeing to beholding (*theomai* often referring to a more intense form of observation than casual sight) to actually touching (or handling). It was the task of the apostles to bear first-hand testimony (1:2) to the Risen Christ and to proclaim (1:2, 3) His word and work to

others (cf. Ac 1:8; 2:32-33; 4:19-20). This testimony took the form not only of preaching, but also of writing (1:4). Thus, we still have the apostolic proclamation — in the New Testament, since all of it was either written by apostles or authorized by them (e.g., the Gospel of Mark was based largely on Peter's testimony and was authorized by him).

The word *koinonia* ("fellowship") in verses 3, 6, and 7 denotes a close personal bond, an intimate relationship. A sinner's *koinonia* with God involves *koinonia* with the God-man Jesus Christ (1:3b, *contra* all non-Christian theology, including unitarianism). Indeed, the only possible *koinonia* with God is based on the sacrificial death ("blood") of Christ, which washes us clean from all sin in the sight of God (1:7) or, in other words, is "the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world" (2:2). That is, the death of Christ has satisfied, with respect to all sinners who have ever lived, the wrath of God aroused by sin. God's wrath revives, however, against all those devoid of faith in the sacrificial death of Christ, for *koinonia* with God comes only through faith in the apostolic gospel (1:3) and issues in *koinonia* with the apostles (1:3) and all other Christians (1:7).

In the dependent (*ean*) clause of verse 9, "confess" is a present subjunctive in order to indicate a continuous activity ("if we keep confessing"). John does not mean that confession is a condition of forgiveness. Rather he is saying that the absence of confession shows that one feels no need of forgiveness and is consequently rejecting the forgiveness which God has already pronounced (cf. 1:10). (Those pastors who encourage private confession in accordance with Augustana 25, may wish to add this form of confession as point c. to I.B.2. in the outline below.)

Introduction: As far as church buildings are concerned, we customarily distinguish decisively between the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. But in one sense the Christian church as a whole is not only a sanctuary or holy place, but also a fellowship hall. For all Christians are in

Fellowship with God

- I. Through the confession of our sins
 - A. Otherwise we are deceiving ourselves (1:8).
 1. Either about the presence of sin within us.
 - a. From the time of conception (Jn 3:6).
 - b. Even as Christians (Ro 7:14-25).
 2. Or about the effect of sin on man's relationship with God.
 - a. God created man to live in perfect fellowship with Him.
 - b. Man disrupted His fellowship with God through sin (1:5-6).
 - B. Otherwise we are rejecting God's forgiveness (1:9).
 1. For we would be saying that we have no need of forgiveness.
 2. Therefore we live a life of confession.
 - a. Confessing our sins in private (the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Evening Prayer, etc.).
 - b. Confessing our sins weekly in public (the divine liturgy).
 - C. Otherwise we are making God a liar (1:10).
 1. We would be calling His Word of Law a lie when it accuses us of sin (Ro 3:20).
 2. We would be calling His Word of Gospel a lie when it speaks of salvation as a gift (Ro 3:24).
- II. Through faith in the death of Jesus Christ
 - A. As the death of a righteous man (2:1).
 1. He alone was conceived in fellowship with God.
 2. He alone remained faithful to God.

- a. Throughout the course of His life.
 - b. Even when God would have no fellowship with Him (Mk 15:34).
- B. As the death of God the Son.
 - 1. His death makes amends in the sight of God.
 - a. For every sin original or actual (1:7).
 - b. For every sinner of every time and place (2:2).
 - 2. His death restores us to fellowship with God (1:3; cf. 1:7).
- III. Through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - A. Which has been certified by the apostles (1:1-3).
 - 1. On the basis of their first-hand observation (1:1-3).
 - a. They heard, saw, and touched Jesus in His state of humiliation.
 - b. They heard, saw, and touched Jesus in His state of exaltation.
 - 2. As proclaimed by them to the world (1:2, 3).
 - a. Orally (Ac 2, etc.).
 - b. In writing (1:4).
 - B. Which was necessitated by His deity (1:1-3).
 - 1. He existed from eternity (1:1).
 - 2. He was in the closest possible fellowship with the Father (1:2).
 - 3. He is the source of all life (1:1, 1).
 - C. Which enables Him to serve as our advocate with the Father.
 - 1. When we sin, which is daily (2:1).
 - 2. On the basis of His past salvific work (righteousness, 2:1; "propitiation," 2:2).

DMcCLJ

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 3:1-2

May 2, 1982

"Behold (or see) what love the Father has given us!" — an amazing, unearthly love (v1). The love of God in Christ is foreign to the world, which does not recognize Christians because from the first it did not recognize God. If it had known the Father, it would have known His children. The purpose of God's amazing love is that we would be called "children of God." We have not only the name but the character — "so we are." John then goes on to speak of our future destiny (v2). The incarnation of Christ made evident our standing as God's children, but it has not yet been manifested what we shall be. We cannot conceive of our future glory. We do know we will be like Christ because "we shall see Him as He is." Seeing God implies likeness to Him in character and affection.

Introduction: Hundreds of people recently fled from Cuba, Haiti, and Vietnam to the U.S.A. While most have adjusted well, others, separated from families, friends, and familiar surroundings, feel lost and helpless, and many never develop a sense of belonging. Every person needs to feel that he or she belongs, not only in a job and in a place, but in a family. Even though we may not have been, or are not now, part of a close-knit family, we Christians can have a sense of belonging because we are

Children of the Heavenly Father

- I. So we are named.
 - A. We did not earn the right to be so named.
 - 1. By nature we were the children of wrath on account of our sins (Eph 2:3).
 - 2. We could not put ourselves into God's family.

- B. Only through God's amazing love were we given the title of children.
 1. A love given to us when Christ lived, died, and rose for us (1 Jo 3:5).
 2. A love given to us when Christ's benefits were brought to us in baptism.

Through God's unearthly love in Christ we are called children of the heavenly Father. But that is not just a name ---

II. So we are.

- A. We really are God's children, even though the world does not recognize us as such.
 1. The reason is that non-Christians have no conception of God as Father through Christ.
 2. They cannot comprehend how such imperfect people as we could be God's children.
 3. Outwardly we look like other people for we still sin and experience suffering.
- B. No matter what others and we ourselves may sometimes think, we who know Christ as our Savior are most assuredly God's children, despite our imperfections.

A great change is coming. John moves from our present dignity to our future destiny.

III. So we shall be.

- A. The day is coming when we shall be like Christ.
 1. Without sin.
 2. Never to die again.
- B. We know that we shall experience perfection because we shall see Christ as He is.
 1. We will see Christ in His heavenly glory.
 2. We will share in His glory.

Conclusion: Children of the heavenly Father! God has so called us. That is what we are. What a future awaits us! We do belong!

GA

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 3: 18-24

May 9, 1982

Remember that John's readers were being threatened by gnosticism with its assertion that knowledge is everything, superior also to virtue, and which denied the incarnation. From the first verse of this epistle John has declared what he knew to be true about Christ, the incarnate Word and the unique, only Savior. Believers are called to live a life of light in the Lord. Some of John's descriptions of the ideal Christian life, perhaps alongside the gnostic emphasis on knowledge, lead many to wonder whether anyone could be sure of his salvation. It will benefit the preacher to review the significance of the Greek words for "know," "confidence," and "abide."

Introduction: Can a Christian be sure of where he or she stands with God? Can a believer be certain about going to heaven? Those who make evangelism calls find that most people react to such questions in terms of "I think so" or "I hope so." Many otherwise strong people of God are troubled by their failure to be "good enough" in their every-day life. In the text the Apostle John tells us how we can be

Confident Christians!

- I. Self-examination in the light of the scriptural description of a disciple could easily undermine our confidence before God.
 - A. Think of how real and powerful faith is to be.
 1. It can "move mountains" through answered prayer (Mt 17:20).
 2. It enables men and women to be heroic conquerors for the Lord (see He 11).
 3. It enables them to trust the Lord no matter what (Ps 37:5; Ro 8:28).
 - B. The requirements of discipleship are strong and demanding. (Some of the expectations Christ has of His followers are perfect love (Jn 15:12), self-denial and cross-bearing (Mt 16:24ff.), and unselfish service to others (Jn 13:14-15). Cf. also 1 John 3:9,15,16,18).

Thus we could easily be led to ask with Jesus's disciples, "Who then can be saved?" (Lk 18:26). The answer lies in looking only to God and His promises.

- II. Our confidence is based purely on the promises of the gospel (v 20b).
 - A. The amazing grace of God *has* saved us.
 1. Christ's obedient sacrifice atoned for all our sins.
 2. His victorious resurrection is our victory over sin and death.
 3. By the gift of faith His righteousness is made ours.
 - B. The Holy Spirit is our in-dwelling Comforter (v 24).
 1. Through the Spirit's testimony in Scripture we *know* that we are saved because of Christ's accomplishments, not ours.
 2. He works faith in us and maintains it through the Word and Sacraments.

Thus, although our hearts may condemn us for many and great short-comings, as redeemed people we know by faith where we stand before God in Christ.

- III. Furthermore, our confidence is demonstrated by obedience to God's will (v 23).
 - A. Faith in His promises is alive and active within us.
 1. It is evidenced in our love for and use of the means of grace.
 2. It is expressed in worship and witnessing.
 - B. We do practice Christian love toward each other.
 1. Admittedly our practice of love leaves much to be desired and is often the cause of our hearts condemning us.
 2. Love is alive and practiced and God knows it, or else faith has died out in us (Jas 2:17, cf. also Jn 15).

While there is never room for egotistical self-righteousness in a believer, there can and will be a Spirit-empowered confidence in God's grace and work in us.

Edwin Dubberke
St. Louis

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

1 John 4:1-11

May 16, 1982

As usual the context here is essential to a correct understanding and application of what the Spirit inspired. Genuine Christian love is *the* mark of new life in Christ's people. The admonition to "test the spirits" is not merely a call to make us all "heresy hunters"; we must be deeply concerned as to whether or not our faith and life are "of God." It would be useful to research thoroughly each use of *pneuma* and *ek tou theou* in the text. All of us need greatly the supportive assurance of v 4b.

Introduction: Being "in the hospital for tests" is a very common occurrence. Physical health or dangerous threats to it often can only be determined by undergoing numerous, sometimes very complicated tests. Of course, our health is more than worth the trouble and expense. Spiritual health is even more important and also calls for constant monitoring of its direction and vitality. Which "spirit" or activating principle guides and motivates what we are and do? The text calls upon us to answer this question by using

The Big Spiritual Test!

- I. The spirit that is of God is based on His truth and centers on love.
 - A. Its source is God's love for us.
 1. God is many things (power, presence, justice, etc.) but His essential being is love, *agape* (v 8b).
 2. God's love is and can only be known in Jesus (vv 9-10). (Dramatically reiterate the powerful, deep, sacrificial, victorious love that we see so vividly in the Gospel).
 3. The very nature of this love makes it an energetically seeking love (v 10a, Lk 15; 19:10).
 - B. Its presence in us is demonstrated when we put love into practice.
 1. By faith alone we personally possess the benefits of God's saving love (Cf. 3:23; Jn 3:16).
 2. God's love active and evident in our lives is both natural and to be expected (vv 7, 11).
 3. Both the presence and vitality of faith in Christ and love that reflects His love are a product of the Holy Spirit in us (1 Cor 12:3-4; 13:1f; 6:19-20). The inspired word is the key to His work in us (v 6).

As believers in Christ we are God's children (vv 4, 6a) and have and know the "spirit of truth," which alone enables us to recognize the "other" spirit against which John warns his readers.

- II. The "spirit of error" is not of God at all but of the world.
 - A. It is very evident in that it does not recognize that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," the incarnation of God's love.
 1. Such a "spirit" of religion does not proclaim Jesus, God in the flesh and the covering for all sin (vv 2, 3, 9).
 2. It is therefore anti-Christ and opposed to the salvation that is by faith alone (v 3). It is evidenced repeatedly by the many "isms" on the religious scene today.
 - B. This spirit and those who promote it are of no higher source than the world.
 1. The "prince of this world" is Satan himself (Jn 12:31; 11 Cor 4:4).
 2. The spirit of living that is under the influence of the world does not produce love but self-centeredness and leaves men in death, not life (Eph 2:1-3).

Because the spirit of error is so prevalent, powerful, and appealing even to believers, it is terribly important that we more carefully heed the urging to "test the spirits." We do so not fearfully but confidently with the assurance of v 4b.

ED

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Ephesians 1:16-23

May 20, 1982

This section is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. Verse 17: "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" — the Spirit, as the author of wisdom and revealer of truth, reveals God to us. Verse 18: "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" — the understanding is that by which we perceive truth; "the hope of his calling" — actually get to know the hope, the object of the hope, the heavenly inheritance, and the divine power which guarantees the inheritance. Verse 19: "power to us-ward" — 1 Pt 1:5 says that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; the means the Holy Spirit uses is the Word and Sacraments. Verse 20: "at His own right hand" — the place of infinite glory, power, and majesty; the human nature of Christ shares in the resurrection and ascension. Verse 21: "far above all principalities" — Christ is Lord of all, all earthly kingdoms, the good angels, and Satan's kingdom too. Verse 22: "under His feet" — supreme exaltation, particularly over His enemies, sin, death, the devil (Ps 8:6; 1 Cor 15:27; He 2:8; "The strife is o'er, the battle won"); "head over all things" — Christ is the Head (Col 1:18); we Christians are the members of His body (1 Cor 12); "to the church" — Christ rules all things in the interest of the church, Mt 16:18. Verse 23: "the fulness of Him" — when the body has all its members, it is complete; "fillet all in all" — we are in Christ, and He in us, Jn 6:56; 15:4-7; 17:21; 1 Jn 3:24.

Introduction: God is a God of power, manifested in the creation of the world and in God's mighty acts in the Old Testament. In our text St. Paul connects two other events with the power of God — the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the new life of the Christian.

God's Power at Work

- I. In Christ's resurrection and ascension.
 - A. God raised Christ, v20.
 1. To show His acceptance of the redemptive work of Christ (Ro 4:25; Ac 2:24).
 2. As the firstfruits of those asleep (1 Cor 15:20).
 - B. God set Christ at His own right hand, v 20.
 1. A place of honor and power above every power, v 21.
 2. He put all things under His feet; Christ is conqueror over sin, death, and the devil (1 Cor 15:55-57).
 3. He is Head over all things to the Church, v22.
 - a. Christ dwells in each Christian and each Christian in Him (v 21; Jn 6:56; 15:4-7; 17:21; 1 Jn 3:24).
 - b. Christ intercedes (He 7:25).
 - c. He rules all things in the interest of His Church (v 22; Mt. 16:18).
- II. In the new life of the Christian.
 - A. The Ephesians were manifesting the new life in faith and love, v 15.
 - B. Paul prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Jn 17:17; 16:13; 1 Pt 1:5).
 1. That you may know Christ (Php 3:8-10).
 2. That you may know the hope of His calling (v 18, 1 Thess 4:13; 1 Pt 1:3-5; Ro 5:2).
 3. That you may know the riches of the glory of His inheritance (v 18; Jn 14:1-6; 1 Cor 2:9; Job 19:25; 1 Cor 15:51 ff.).

Conclusion: God is a God of power. How comforting to our faith that God's power raised Christ and gave Him glory. Through the Word and Sacraments God's Spirit continues to comfort us with Christ and our Christian hope.

HJE

**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
THE SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION**

1 John 4:13-21

May 23, 1982

As is usually true of John's writing, this text is one that becomes a pretext if torn out of context. John circles in on his subject and then out again, always writing profound ideas in basic language. More than any other New Testament writer John's Greek is rich in thought while remaining simple in vocabulary. Preparing to preach this text will surely include at least one close reading of the whole letter. Phillips' Version draws out some valuable nuances.

A key to this text is *meno*, forms of which are used four times in this text and 118 times in the New Testament. (See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, p. 504.) The modern translations use "dwell," "live," "abide," "remain," "remain in union," and "continue in union." The range of thought in English demonstrates that the fullness of the Greek word is difficult for us to capture. In this text we also find forms of *agape* (but not *eros*, not even *philos*) used some fourteen times. Verse 13 repeats 3:24, and the text expands upon the thought introduced there.

The goal of the sermon is that the Christian will maintain a balance between frenzied activity which burns him out and casual indifference that gets nothing done.

Introduction: We Christians sometimes stand tensely alert watching for the return of our ascended Lord Jesus. At other times we emphasize resting in our Lord's protective care. Yet for everyday life in these end-times we not only look to the example of Jesus who now sits at the right hand of His Father, but we also claim the promise of Ps 132:11-12. We need a proper balance between tension and relaxing in the Lord. The text for this Sunday after the Ascension of our Lord teaches us

How to Sit Right with God

- I. Sitting right with God requires a genuine seat.
 - A. The world tempts us with shallow chairs.
 1. "Talk is cheap," but often a lie (v20; 1 Jn 1:10; 1 Jn 2:4).
 2. Such seats collapse, usually sooner than later.
 - B. The solid seat is built by the Spirit (v13; 1 Jn 3:24) on the Savior (v14; Jn 15:27; 1 Jn 1:2; Jn 3:17).
 1. We sit on a seat made of God's love in Christ (v14-16; 1 Jn 5:1; Ro 10:9; 1 Jn 2:2; 1 Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:7, 8). To live a love-filled life is to be God-filled.
 2. This seat is solid even in the judgment (v17; 1 Jn 2:28).
- II. Sitting right with God requires a "fitting" chair.
 - A. The world offers us awkward, frightening chairs.
 1. They try to scare us (v18b).
 2. They tempt us with popularity (Ps 1:1; 1 Jn 3:7).
 - B. Jesus molds us into God's image.
 1. Sitting with Him, we are unafraid (v18a; Ro 8:15).
 2. He changes us from our natural fallen form (v15; v19; 1 Jn 3:23; 1 Jn 4:10).

3. He expects us to return to the image (form) in which He created us (v21; Lv 19:18; 1 Jn 3:11; Jn 13:34).
- III. Sitting right with God is for the long haul.
 - A. We cannot be either too tense nor too relaxed.
 1. The tense Christian charging about with bared sword soon becomes frightened (v18b).
 2. The overly relaxed Christian sleeps away the day (1 Th 5:5, 6a).
 - B. Sitting with God, we are sustained for the time remaining until the risen and ascended Lord returns.
 1. God's love grows in us now and eternally (v17).
 2. A seat with God is abiding, dwelling, living, remaining, continuing (v13; v15; v16; 1 Jn 2:24; 1 Jn 4:12).

Conclusion: In the Savior of the world we rest, ready for action. May the Lord grant us the perspective of a proper balance between being asleep in our beds and being so frantic as to drive people away from our witness; a proper balance of leaning on Him, yet ready for action for Him.

Warren Messmann
Connersville, Indiana

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Acts 2:1-21

May 30, 1982

The verb *sumplerousthai* is weighty; it is harvest time; it is Pentecost festival time. Lenski correctly equates *dialektos* (v6) with *glossai* (v11). Peter confronts the scoffers with his text from Joel. We too must confront detractors with the Word. The outline given below requires study of *sarx* (v17). Our translations read "flesh" (KJV, RSV, Phillips, Berkeley), "people" (NIV, AAT), "mankind" (NASV, Williams, CPV, LB), and "everyone" (NEB). Note the strength of *terata* and *semeia* (v19). The works and signs of God are not merely strange, but always significant.

The goal of the sermon is to show that in an apparently deeply divided world the Holy Spirit is uniting Christ's people.

Introduction: The everyday news is easily read as a listing of divided people: labor vs. management, Republican vs. Democrat, "hawk" vs. "dove," parent vs. child, black vs. white, denomination vs. denomination, nation vs. nation. In a world that seems as divided as it was two thousand years ago, it is with joy that we read God's assurance that:

God Pours out One Spirit on All People

- I. Fallen mankind is divided.
 - A. We see physical divisions in people. All flesh is divided by
 1. Political and ethnic nations (vs 5,8-11).
 2. Age (v17).
 3. Status (v18).
 - B. People in their sinful state are confused.
 1. They are bewildered (v6) and forever asking, "What does this mean?" (v12).
 2. Those who do not scoff (v13) are at least perplexed (v12).
 3. Division among people at all levels is evidence of sin and death.
- II. The Holy Spirit brings divided people together in Christ.
 - A. On that first "Thanksgiving Day" of the New Testament church the Holy

Spirit united people with God and one another through the inspired preaching of the apostles.

1. The apostles were anointed with God's Spirit (v2).
 2. The apostles did not have "too much wine" but the Spirit (v4), who is "living water" (Jn 7:37-39a).
 3. The apostles preached the mighty works of God accomplished in the earthly ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (vs 11, 22-36).
- C. The Holy Spirit continues to unite people with God and one another through the Word and Sacraments.
1. The Word confutes the opponents of Christ (vs 15-16).
 2. The Word creates in the hearts of men saving faith in Christ (v21).

WEM

TRINITY SUNDAY
2 Corinthians 13:11-14
June 6, 1982

The Corinthian congregation was in many ways Paul's "problem child." The forming of cliques, neglect of church discipline, Christians going to court against each other, abuse of the Lord's Supper, and errors concerning the resurrection of the dead were some of the problems Paul had to confront. Yet Paul still regarded them as "brethren" in Christ, encouraged them to mature in Him, and blessed them in the name of the Triune God. The *kataartizesthe* (v11) ties in with the noun form in v9 (used only here in the Bible). Paul challenges the Corinthians to mature, to be well equipped for His service. The *parakaleisthe* (v11) means more than to "be of good comfort" (KJV). It includes the idea of being encouraged and even admonished to be all God wants people to be. Just because of its familiarity through use in worship, the concluding apostolic benediction should be explained.

The central thought of the text is that the blessing of the Triune God enables us to live in harmony and to be a blessing to each other. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers will grow in God's love. The problem is that we often fail to see the connection between a theology of blessing and the use of God's blessing, or that we are so filled with negativism that we doubt whether human relationships (even among Christians) can improve. The means to the goal is the abundant blessing of the Almighty Himself!

Introduction: At one time or another you have probably received one of those popular — but illegal — letters asking you to copy the letter, put your name and address at the bottom of the list, and mail ten dollars (or a recipe) to the person at the top of the list. Then in several weeks you should expect to be flooded with money (or recipes). Such schemes usually do not work. Our text presents a much better idea, a plan we might call

A Chain-Blessing

- I. Recognize God's blessings.
 - A. His grace.
 1. It is needed because of sin.
 - a. The case of the Corinthian church.
 - b. We never outgrow the need for grace (Ro 7:19).
 2. It is given by Jesus (Jn 1:16).

- a. He is the Christ, the promised Deliverer.
- b. His undeserved, forgiving love comes through the cross and the empty tomb (Ro 4:25).
3. It is full and complete for each person of every age.
- B. His love.
 1. It is from our heavenly Father.
 2. It is the best kind of love — *agape* love.
 - a. It is shown in the giving of His Son (Jn 3:16).
 - b. It is shown in the giving of every good gift (Jas 1:17).
- C. His fellowship.
 1. We are part of God's family, His beloved children (Ga 3:26).
 2. The Holy Spirit is at work.
 - a. The Spirit makes us God's children (Jn 3:5-6; 1 Cor 12:3).
 - b. The Spirit keeps us in the faith (Ga 4:5-6; Ro 15:13).
- II. Then share His blessings.
 - A. We are encouraged and thoroughly fitted to do God's will (v11) though the Word and the Sacraments (1 Th 2:13; 2 Tm 3:16-17).
 - B. We can serve Him together.
 1. United in purpose (v11; 1 Cor 5:15).
 2. Harmonious in life (v11; Eph 4:3; 1 Cor 1:10; Php 1:27).
 - C. We can relate as brothers and sisters in Christ.
 1. By the titles (names) we use for each other (v11).
 2. By our demonstrations of love (v12).
 3. By our oneness in Christ (v13). What opportunities our circuits and Synod have for this!

Conclusion: Each week we begin our worship in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, thus celebrating the blessing of being His through holy baptism. During the worship we are assured of pardon, guided by His Word, and strengthened by His Supper. We hear God's words of blessing conclude the worship. Now we have the opportunity to complete the chain by sharing His blessings with others throughout the week. May that chain of blessing never be broken.

Lloyd Strelow

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
2 Corinthians 4:5-11
June 13, 1982

In addition to the other problems in the Corinthian congregation (see last week's introduction), Paul had to deal with its ideas about his ministry. He devotes a large portion of his second letter to this subject (chapters 2-5; 10-13). Paul speaks of his ministry (and of the Christian ministry today) realistically and unapologetically. For the Gospel to be proclaimed clearly and convincingly, both pastor and people need this Biblical perspective.

The central thought of the text is the power of God's grace, working through weak human vessels, to transform hearts. The goal of the sermon is to appreciate more God's plan for conveying His message to us and to support the Christian ministry in particular. The problem is that we tend to look too much at the weakness of the messenger or at the pressure of the unbelieving world instead of focusing on Christ and His Word. The means to the goal is the Gospel treasure.

Introduction: Preaching is done in as many ways as there are preachers. It may be loud and flamboyant, or quiet and subdued. Some worshippers come to church primarily to hear the preaching. Others stay away because of it. As for us, we make

No Apologies for Our Preaching

- I. No apologies for the message.
 - A. It is not ourselves (v5).
 1. That may be the message that comes across (Christian televisions "stars," religious celebrities, cultic leaders).
 2. The preacher is tempted to take center stage.
 - a. His old Adam feeds his pride. "Look how fast my church is growing compared to yours."
 - b. The members comment: "Reverend is such a nice person." "His sermons are the best." "If pastor isn't preaching, I may not go to church this Sunday."
 - B. It is Jesus Christ (v5).
 1. God's image (v4) is revealed through Him (v6).
 2. He is our only Savior (v4, 10, 14; 5:19, 21).
 3. He is the glorious Lord (Php 2:9-10).
- II. No apologies for the messenger.
 - A. He is a servant.
 1. With the ministry of the word of reconciliation (v5; 5:18-19).
 2. For our benefit (v5; 5:20; He 13:17).
 - B. He has God's light (v6).
 - C. He and his ministry are proof of God's power.
 1. Daily besieged like Paul (vv8-11). God's ministers are often criticized, since they are earthen vessels (clergy are now sold malpractice insurance).
 2. Yet always victorious.
 - a. Through His power (v7b).
 - b. Showing His life at work in us (vv10b, 11b).

Conclusion: People sometimes get turned off by a quirk, habit, or weakness of their pastor. They forget he is their minister — their servant — for Jesus' sake. Praise God and support every servant who has himself been to the cross and the empty tomb, and who verbally and by his life proclaims the good news that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Lord.

LS

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

June 20, 1982

Psalm 116, from which Paul quotes, corresponds with Paul's mood because it was written when the psalmist was in trouble but was sustained by faith. Paul believed that God who raised Christ from the dead would raise him and all Christians and bring them into His presence. Know that everything he is going through now will bring about the final salvation of even more people sustains Paul. Even though his physical body is weakening and decaying (v16), inwardly he is being renewed because he knows affliction is being used by God to accomplish His designs (v17). The affliction is light in comparison to glory; Paul

contrasts affliction with glory, lightness with weight, and the moment with the eternal. Paul is able to see both affliction and glory in their proper perspective, because he sees affliction as the temporal thing that it is and glory as the eternal and unseen reality. Verse 1 in chapter 5 continues the discussion of the topic, for Paul contrasts the earthly tent of our body, the home of our soul on earth, with the resurrection body to be furnished by God.

Introduction: Affliction is always unpleasant and often discouraging. The fourth and fifth chapters of 2 Corinthians contain Paul's magnificent statement of his attitude in affliction. He shows how we can be

Getting the Right Perspective on Affliction

- I. See affliction as opportunity for renewal (v16b).
 - A. Decay rather than renewal appears to be the hallmark of affliction.
 1. Think of how sickness weakens the body.
 2. Think of how wrongs done to us can negatively affect our body and mind.
 3. Affliction makes us keenly conscious that our body is only an earthly tent which is being destroyed (5:1).
 - B. While often accelerating the decay of the body, affliction can nevertheless direct us to Christ for inward renewal (v16c).
 1. The life of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10b) manifests itself in us when we believe that, though "we are afflicted in every way," God will not allow us to be crushed (2 Cor 4:8) and that our inner life hid with Christ in God can never be destroyed.
 2. The life of Jesus manifests itself when affliction in our lives produces endurance and character (Ro 5:3-4).
- God's purpose in affliction goes beyond this life, however. We are getting the right perspective on affliction when we
- II. See affliction as preparation for glory.
 - A. Affliction makes us more conscious of eternal values.
 1. The preciousness of a faith that confesses Christ as crucified and risen Lord (vv13, 14).
 2. Our final resurrection and acceptance by God when we stand in His presence on the last day (v14).
 - B. Affliction makes us more heavenly-minded.
 1. We become more aware of the transitoriness of our present life and of the momentariness of affliction in comparison to eternity.
 2. We wait for that glorified body which will not be afflicted in any way (v5:1).

Conclusion: Affliction is an opportunity for renewal and a preparation for glory. When we have this perspective on affliction, we will be able to say with the psalmist, "It is good for me that I was afflicted" (Ps 119:71).

GA

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

June 27, 1982

It is important that the preacher pay attention to the five verses that precede this text. The "So" (v6) makes a double demand that the immediate and preceding context be given attention, specifically verse 5 and the fact that the Holy Spirit is the very "guarantee" of all that God has "prepared" for us and that

He has "prepared us." The use of the word "faith" in verse 7 calls for special attention. Lenski in his *Eisenach Epistle Selections* does an admirable job of pointing to "faith" as used in this text as something taken *objectively* rather than *subjectively*. Thus within this text "faith" is understood to express objectively that which is believed, i.e., the doctrine, confession, or word.

Introduction: Children are classic studies in "environmental bravery." A child can be most brave, secure, and confident when he is at home. He has few, if any, fears. He knows where everything is and is completely comfortable and confident. But transplant that child into a stranger's home or into his first day in Vacation Bible School, or have the family move into a new home, and watch that bravery, courage, and confidence erode. He who once was the picture of courage has now become the personification of shyness. The Word of God that is our text enables "spiritual shyness" to be removed from us because it reminds us that

We Are Full of Courage, No Matter What

- I. This is true because we look to the *fact* of the matter, i.e., faith (v7). Courage holds us to the truth.
 - A. This courage is not self-made, self-induced, "possibility" or "positive" thinking.
 - B. This courage is grounded and centered in Christ and the Word.
 - C. The source of this courage is
 1. Initially, Baptism or the Word.
 2. Regularly, the Word, Holy Communion, remembrance of Baptism.
- II. Because of this guaranteed fact we are now being led into the *matter* of the fact, i.e., to please Him (v9). This courage moves us. While the "where" or "what" of that movement is not spelled out, we look to the Holy Spirit and to the Scriptures which He authored as our guarantee. Future courage (v10) is bestowed too.
 - A. Whether in the body -- we walk *for* Christ with that courage.
 - B. Whether out of the body -- we walk *before* Christ with that courage.

Conclusion: The courage that is ours no matter what is a courage that begins and ends objectively and outside of us. It is a courage that is totally dependent upon the guarantee that is delivered to us by the Holy Spirit because of the work of Christ and at the mandate of the Father. Because of this guarantee we have the necessary courage to walk through this life and to stand before the "seat of Christ" (v10).

R. Robert Krueger
Platte Woods, Missouri

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

July 4, 1982

This year (1982) the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost falls on our national holiday of Independence Day. The preacher should not ignore the fact that his hearers are "in the world." On this Sunday it might be helpful to focus on vv14-15 as the sermon text.

Introduction: It has been a while since the Fourth of July, Independence Day, has fallen on a Lord's Day! In fact, the last time it did, we, as a nation, seemingly "pulled out all of the stops" as we celebrated our bicentennial. Over the past 200-plus years we have taken pride in our nation's freedoms, in our corporate and individual "freedoms of choice." The "right to choose" is very much at the core of

our national heritage and ideology. It is a privilege we enjoy as Americans. It is, indeed, a blessing from our Father. Consider, for instance, the many choices we have, as Americans — to work where we want to work, to live where we want to live, to worship where we want to worship, to shop where we want to shop, to drive the kind of car we want to drive, etc. After 206 years of having this “right of choice” ingrained into us, the Word of God before us this day rather abruptly pulls us up short with the announcement:

Free, and Yet We Really Have No Choice

- I. The source of our freedom is that One died for all and now all are dead.
 - A. In Christ’s crucifixion the death of all sinners was effected (Jn 3:16).
 - B. Trace the route of the “One . . . for all” source.
 1. From Bethlehem where we witnessed the birth of One.
 2. To Calvary where the pronouncement of “It is finished” was for all.
 - C. See the proof of the “One . . . for all” source.
 1. On Good Friday, as One was buried.
 2. On Easter morning, as all were raised.
 - D. Enjoy the fruits of the “One . . . for all” source.
 1. We are out of debt to sin.
 2. No one is any longer obligated to pay sin’s debt.
- II. The purpose of our freedom is that we acknowledge that we have no choice but to proclaim life for all.
 - A. Know what real living is.
 1. It is not living for self (v15a).
 2. It is living for Him (v15b).
 - B. It is the “should” that underlines our lack of choice.
 1. While Christ crucified and Christ resurrected has made real living possible, not all are really living.
 2. The lack of proclamation leaves the actualization of really living unfulfilled for many.
 - C. Have you reached that Pauline “conclusion” (v14)?

Conclusion: As paradoxical as it may sound today on the 206th anniversary of our nation’s independence, the Word of God towers over those years of celebration of the “right of choice” and reminds us, yes, even compels us, to come to grips with the 2,000 year old declaration of the Word that we have no choice.

RRK

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14

July 11, 1982

The “churches” of Macedonia (v1) refer to those at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Their generosity was proof of God’s grace to them. *Liberality* is a response to grace and is itself a gift of God. *Haplotes* (v2) is single-mindedness or heartiness of giving. All of northern Greece was in dire poverty at this time and so the contribution of the Macedonian Christians was comparable to the widow’s mite (Mk 12:44). They voluntarily and energetically carried out the collection (v3), asking to be allowed the privilege of giving for the relief of the suffering Christians in Jerusalem (v4). Not only had they consecrated themselves to God (v5), but they had devoted themselves to the work of spreading the Gospel. While Paul does not wish to depreciate the “beginning” (v6) the Corinthians had made in the collection, they probably had been slack in following through. Since giving is to be unselfish and genuine, Paul does not

command them to give (v8). Nor is the collection to be made to help the Judean Christians while putting undue pressure on the Corinthians. If there ever came a time when the Corinthians would be poor, Jerusalem should in turn contribute to their support (vv13-14). The primary motivation for the giving is the magnificent grace of Jesus Christ which was manifested in making us who were spiritually poor rich in the treasures of grace. Christ is not only an example of self-sacrifice for others but the source of our power to give sacrificially (v9).

Introduction: We hear the word "grace" so often that its meaning may become blurred. Defining grace as undeserved kindness or favor still leaves it abstract. The text invites us to experience grace. Here is

Grace in Action

- I. The one who was rich became poor.
 - A. The riches of Jesus stretch back into eternity.
 1. Jesus has always existed (Jn 8:58; He 13:8).
 2. He has always had all power (Mt 28:18; Col 1:16), dominion (Ps 8:7), and glory (Jn 17:5; Php 2:9-).
 - B. Jesus took on a servant form and poverty (Php 2:7).
 1. He experienced human limitations (Jo 4:7; Mt 8:20).
 2. He experienced suffering and a shameful death.

Here was grace in action — for us (v9).
- II. The ones who are poor become rich.
 - A. By nature we are spiritually poor.
 1. With no goodness of our own (Is 64:6; Gn 8:21).
 2. With no way to gain acceptance with God (Jas 2:10).
 - B. In Christ we have become incredibly rich.
 1. We have forgiveness of sins — knowledge of it by the Spirit's enlightenment, faith by which to receive it, and the ability to speak of it (v7a).
 2. We have all things working for our good (1 Cor 3: 21-22; Ro 8:28).
 3. We have heaven's eternal riches. Here is grace in action, we have become rich.
- III. The rich ones give their riches to others.
 - A. By giving money.
 1. The Corinthians were to complete their collection of money for the relief of the poor among the Christians in Jerusalem.
 2. Their inspiration and model for doing so was Christ and also the Macedonian Christians, who by their liberal giving despite their extreme poverty were demonstrating Christ's love and generosity (vv2-3).
 - B. Giving is to be generous.
 1. We sometimes find it hard to be generous because our money represents our hard work and we do not always see tangible returns from our giving.
 2. Generosity does not come about by demand (v8) but only as we contemplate the riches we have in Christ, who then moves us to share these riches in practical and concrete ways.
 - C. Giving is itself a gracious work (v7b).
 1. To be able to give generously and cheerfully is a gift of God's grace.
 2. Our giving benefits others — our financial gifts can relieve not only people's physical needs but can provide for their spiritual needs through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

Conclusion: Grace is not just a word; it is action by Christ, for us, and through us, for others.

GA

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

July 18, 1982

To the age-old question, "Why does God allow trials and sufferings?" Scripture gives many practical answers. Job confesses, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). The psalmist admits the element of good in afflictions (Ps 119:71). Jesus teaches that the pruning knife leads to more fruit-bearing (Jn 15:2,5). Peter says that trials purify faith (1 Pet 1:7). The writer of Hebrews says that chastisements produce the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (He 12:11). The text sheds further light on the age-old question.

Introduction: Once there were two frogs. They were brothers. They lived together in a spring house. One day one of the frogs fell into a vat of cream. As he felt himself slowly sinking, he felt sorry for himself and thought, "Why does this have to happen to me? I always tried to be a good frog." He sank deeper and deeper and died. Shortly afterwards, his brother came looking for him and fell into the same vat of cream. "Oh, dear," he thought, "I'm really in trouble. But I've heard that where there's life there's hope." And he paddled his legs madly, and churned and churned until, to his surprise, the cream turned into chunks of butter. He floated on them and finally jumped to safety. Just a simple story! But it reminds us how we can deal with life's trials and afflictions. The text deals with the question we have when troubles come:

Why Does God Allow Trials?

- I. Trials have a way of humbling us (v7).
 - A. By making us realize our "humanity."
 1. The apostle Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. Perhaps it was headaches, malaria, or eye trouble (cf. Ga 4:13-15). We all have our "thorns" and trials.
 2. The apostle found it "a messenger of Satan to harass me" (cf. Job 2:2-7 on Satan being allowed to impose afflictions). Life is full of trials: crippling diseases, accidents, failing senses, marks of aging, etc.
 - B. By reminding us of our spiritual need.
 1. The apostle experienced a special lesson in life — "to keep me from being too elated." Paul received many visions and revelations from the Lord, even a glimpse into Paradise itself. He might have become proud and boasted about it as if he merited the favor.
 2. When we experience spiritual joys and blessings, we might feel we are deserving of them and boast of ourselves. But trials remind us of our poverty of spirit so that we trust God alone. We should remember Eph 2:3b-5 and Mt 5:3.
- II. Trials have a way of deepening our experience with God's grace (vv8-9b).
 - A. By driving us to earnest prayer to the Lord.
 1. The apostle besought the Lord three times about his thorn. He wished it would be taken out of his life, if God willed.
 2. We need to talk over our trials with the Lord in prayer and leave the matter to His gracious will.

- B. By opening us up to the wonders of God's grace.
 - 1. God answered with the promise of His sufficient grace. Grace is God's forgiving love through Christ's sacrifice. His grace proved mightier than Paul's thorn.
 - 2. If God provided such wonderful grace to save us, that same grace will not let trials separate us from His love (Ro 8:28, 35-39).
- III. Trials have a way of strengthening us for living (vv 9b-10).
 - A. By a daily experience with Christ's power. The apostle made it his motto in life to boast of his weaknessess, for then he was open to Christ's constant power. "My power is made perfect in weakness," said the Lord.
 - B. By cheerful resignation to God's gracious will.
 - 1. Paul met life's trials with the power of Christ's grace (v9b).
 - 2. He resigned himself to what trials came his way (v10) (cf. 2 Cor 6:4-5 and 11:23-29 for a list of his trials).
 - 3. He gives us the key to finding a victorious life amid trials: "when I am weak, then I am strong" (cf. TLH 521, "What God Ordains Is Always Good").

Don Poganski
San Luis Obispo, California

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 1:3-14

July 25, 1982

The text comprises the apostle Paul's "great doxology." When Paul begins with this lofty doxology, he shows that his whole heart and life is filled with the experience of God's grace in Christ. He is caught up in the grandeur of personal salvation and soars to the heights of eloquence in describing God's plan of salvation. He writes breathlessly, as it were, of his wonderful experience. In the Greek language these verses (3-14) comprise one, long sentence. In translations like the RSV it is broken up into six sentences. The text is a pean of praise to the Triune God. It is like a three-stanza hymn, each stanza ending with a tribute of praise (3-6; 7-12; 13-14). Christ is the core and center of the text, "the golden string on which all the pearls of this doxology are strung, the central diamond around which all the lesser diamonds are set" (Lenski).

Introduction: The text is a doxology, or hymn of praise to the Triune God for His glorious grace. The Bible scholar Wm. G. Moorehead made this remark when contemplating the content of this hymn of praise: "God's plan is dateless, timeless, formed before the foundation of the world. The Fall was no surprise to Him, nor was redemption an after-thought. In His love He thought of us and provided for our salvation before one star glittered in the infinite expanse. Our lives should continually give:

Praise to God for His Glorious Grace

- I. Praise to the Father for acting in grace before time (vv3-6).
 - A. The Father is eternity elected us to be His children.
 - 1. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (v4). Our election took place in the Father's heart before we were born, or before the world was made (Ro 9:11). "In the heavenly places" (v3b) refers to the eternal nature of our blessings as expressed in our eternal election.

2. "He destined us in love to be His sons . . ." (v5; Ro 8:28-30).
 - a. Election was motivated by God's love (v5).
 - b. Election was effected by grace alone (v6; 2 Tm 1:9; Eph 2:5, 8-9).
 - c. Election results in us being "holy and blameless before Him" (v4b). We are declared holy and blameless before God by faith in Christ.
- B. The Father in eternity desired us to live "to the praise of His glorious grace" (v6b); we aim to live "holy and blameless" lives as a fruit of saving faith (Eph 5:26-27; Col 1:22).
- II. Praise to the Son for His revelation of grace in time (vv7-12).
 - A. The Beloved Son brings us redemption, "According to the riches of His grace" (v7).
 1. Grace is blood-bought, involving His cross (1 Pe 1:19-20; Mt 20:28; Ro 3:24-25).
 2. Grace results in the forgiveness of our trespasses (v7; Mt 9:2; Ps 103:12).
 3. "Grace" spelled as an "acrostic" is: God's Riches At Christ's Expense."
 - B. The Son unites "things in heaven and on earth."
 1. The Son will bring the work of salvation to completion (v10). He will administer the affairs on earth for the proclamation of the Gospel (Mt 24:14). On the Last Day the church on earth will be united with the church in heaven.
 2. The Son is the revealer of God's saving will (v9).
 - C. The Son executes the Father's election plan in time (vv11-12).
 1. The plan involves coming to faith in Christ (v12a). Paul sees himself and his fellow believers as first of the New Testament era to believe. We follow after (Jn 3:16; 6:40).
 2. The plan flows from the decree of eternal election, "in Christ have been destined and appointed" (v12). To ask, "Am I one of God's elect?" is the same as asking, "Am I saved?" We get the answer to both questions, not in merit or works, not in feelings, not in a small voice within, but in Christ's plan of redemption which enables us to say: "I believe Jesus shed His blood for me."
 3. The plan appoints us "to live for the praise of his glory" (v12).
- III. Praise to the Holy Spirit for His grace in time (vv13-14).
 - A. The Holy Spirit implements the plan of salvation in time by calling sinners to faith in Christ by the Gospel (v13; 1 Cor 3:12b).
 - B. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our future inheritance of glory (v14). Faith by the presence of the Holy Spirit is the "down payment, the guarantee" that God will carry through on his plan of salvation and finally get us to glory (1 Jn 3:2; Phm 3:20-21; 1 Pe 1:4-5).

DP

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 2:13-22

August 1, 1982

The phrase "now in Christ Jesus" (v13) refers to the New Testament era — the period of proclamation to the Gentiles (including the Ephesians) of the good news that God's wrath against mankind has been fully satisfied by the vicarious obedience, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. "But now in Jesus Christ" thus

stands in dramatic contrast to that time prior to the proclamation of this gospel to the Gentiles which is described in the previous two verses (vv11-12) and earlier in verses 1, 2, 3, and 5a of this chapter. In this previous period (the Old Testament era) the Gentiles were "far away" (v13) from God and His church (v19), and there was "enmity" between the Gentiles, on the one hand, and God and His church, on the other hand (vv15-16). The point of demarcation between these two grand eras of history lies in the Messiah's surrender of His "flesh" (*sarx*, v15) to death as a sacrifice to God (by the shedding of His "blood," v13) in such an excruciating and humiliating way ("the cross," v16) as to satisfy the wrath of God against all sinners of all times. In other words, Christ has reconciled all people to God — that is, He has made them acceptable, rather than repugnant, to Him (2 Cor 5:19); more specifically, Christ has made acceptable to God all those who would put their trust in this truth and so constitute the church (the "one body" of verse 16). Christ Himself is, in effect, "our peace" (v14) because by His self-sacrifice He has "put to death" (*apokteino*) "the enmity" (v16) toward all people aroused in a just God by human sin and, in its place (in the mind of God), He has established an attitude of peace toward all people (vv16-18) — both Jews ("those who were near") and Gentiles ("those who were far away").

The church did exist, to be sure, even in the Old Testament era (the "saints" of verse 19) — among the Jews. Since all of history is simultaneously present to the mind of God (Re 13:8), His attitude was one of peace toward men even before the occurrence of the event on which it is predicated; and people were saved through faith in the future testamentary death of God the Son promised by the prophets (vv12,20). Nevertheless, it was the plan of God that (at least, from the time of Abraham on) the gospel would not ordinarily be preached more widely than Israel until the Messiah should die and rise again. Indeed, in the intervening period Israel was to live as a very distinct people so that at least one nation might be prepared to receive the Messiah (when He should rise from death) and spread His gospel to the other nations. While the main purpose of the Old Testament ceremonial code ("the law of the commandments in decrees," v15) was to symbolize the future person and work of the Messiah (e.g. the sacrifices of spotless lambs symbolizing His future self-sacrifice), a subsidiary purpose was to fence off Israel from other nations by prohibiting things considered desirable or necessary by other nations and requiring things considered ridiculous or obnoxious by others. Thus verse 14 calls the ceremonial code "the dividing wall of the barrier" between Jews and Gentiles. The unbelieving Gentiles, therefore, directed toward the Jews, not only that natural enmity which (also today) nations usually feel toward some other nations (and, indeed, which individual people usually feel toward some others), not only resentment of the exclusivistic claims of the church (as is the case today also), but also mockery of seemingly bizarre dietary laws and the disgust which the Graeco-Roman world felt for the practice of circumcision (v11). Believing Jews, on the other hand, entertained that spiritual enmity toward unbelieving Gentiles which Christians in all ages must direct toward the world as it seeks to conform us to its ways (even as we simultaneously love unbelievers and, in this age, seek to lead them to faith in Christ).

In the course of His atoning work, however, Christ fulfilled the ceremonial code — He actually accomplished what it merely symbolized — and thereby He abolished it (vv14-15). Then He preached the New Testament gospel (v17) through the inspired words of the apostles (v20) to both Jews and Gentiles; so that, for those who came to faith in this gospel and so comprised the church,

there was spiritual peace between Jews and Gentiles insofar as they were Christians (v15). This spiritual peace still exists between all Christians of all nations and denominations insofar as they are Christians. If Christians must struggle against each other politically, this does not necessarily affect their spiritual peace with each other at all. The spiritual peace of the church is disrupted, of course, when some Christian teaches contrary in some way to the inspired and infallible words of the prophets and apostles (which for the church today are equivalent to the Holy Scriptures), since God has constituted them the very foundation of the church (v20). But when a Christian teaches falsely in some way — and so requires other Christians to rebuke him and, if he prove incorrigible, to separate from him — such a man is acting, insofar as he teaches falsely, not as a Christian, but as a non-Christian (“the old man”). Insofar as he is a Christian, even a man who teaches falsely in some respect is still at peace spiritually with orthodox Christians.

Introduction: American coins bear the Latin motto “E pluribus unum,” which means “Out of many one.” The phrase reminds us that the one indivisible nation called the United States of America consists in people drawn from every race, nation, language, and culture in the world. Yet the unity of any nation is superficial and fleeting compared with the unity of the Christian church. The church, in a much deeper and more enduring sense than any nation, can be described with this phrase:

Out of Many One

I. Out of Many — The Disunity outside of Christ

A. The fact

1. Enmity between people in general.

a. On a national level — e.g., Greeks vs. barbarians in ancient times, Vietnamese vs. Cambodians in modern times (even though both nations subscribe to a common politico-religious philosophy).

b. On a personal level.

2. Enmity between Jews and Gentiles in ancient times in particular.

a. Its existence (vv 12, 14, 19).

b. Its symptoms (cf. Mt 15:26).

B. The cause

1. In general — enmity between God and mankind.

a. Because of the sin in which we are all conceived (2:1-3; 4:17-19, 22).

b. Because of the wrath which sin necessarily arouses in a just God (2:3; 5:6).

2. In particular (re enmity between Jews and Gentiles in ancient times) — the ceremonial code of the Old Testament.

a. Designed to point forward to Christ (Col 2:17).

b. Designed to separate the Jews from the Gentiles until Christ should accomplish His saving work (“the dividing wall of the barrier,” v14b; “the law of the commandments in decrees,” v15a).

II. One — The Unity in Christ

A. The fact

1. With respect to the internal (spiritual) unity of all Christians insofar as they are Christians.

a. Removal of the separation between believing Jews and Gentiles of all nations (vv13,14).

b. Common membership of believing Jews and Gentiles of all nations in the church (vv19,22).

- c. Oneness of believing Jews and Gentiles of all nations ("one," v14; "one new man," v15; "one body," v16).
- 2. **Despite external disunity and even conflict between Christians.**
 - a. Politically (within nations and between nations).
 - b. Doctrinally (4:14).
- B. The cause — Christ Jesus
 - 1. His vicarious death ("the blood of Christ," v13; "His flesh," v15; "the cross," v16).
 - a. Reconciling us (making us acceptable) to God (vv 16, 18).
 - b. Creating peace between God and mankind and so between man and man (vv 14a, 15b).
 - 2. His fulfillment thereby — and abrogation — of the ceremonial code (vv 14b, 15a).
- C. The means
 - 1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - a. God's declaration of peace to man (v17).
 - b. The central teaching of the prophets and apostles (v20b).
 - i. Whose words were taught to them by the Holy Spirit (3:1-9; 1 Cor 2:13; 2 Pe 1:21).
 - ii. Whose words, therefore (in the form of Holy Scripture), constitute the sole source and norm of the church's teaching (v20a).
 - 2. Faith wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments (vv18, 22).

DMcCLJ

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

August 8, 1982

In the first half of his letter to the Ephesians (chapters 1 - 3) Paul presents the great doctrine of the *Una Sancta*. In the next section (chapters 4 - 6) he tells how God's people are to shape their life in keeping with this great doctrine. The ecumenical age in which we live makes it imperative that people understand what the church is and the unity which it has. The text spells out the gifts which Christ has given to preserve the unity and to help the church reach its ultimate goal.

Introduction: To be chosen for a much-sought-after position is indeed an honor. But along with the honor comes responsibility. There is also a need for understanding the "why's and wherefore's" of the position in order that the end result may be attained. This can also be said in regard to our membership in the Holy Christian Church.

We Have Responsibilities as Members of Christ's Church

- I. To recognize the unity we have.
 - A. A spiritual unity (v4).
 - 1. The Holy Spirit brought us into this unity at our baptism.
 - 2. We who by the power of the Spirit believe that God is our Father through Jesus, our Lord and Savior, are one body (vv4-6).
 - B. A hope-filled unity
 - 1. Our sure hope is that we will be eternally saved.

2. Our sure hope is that God who called us into unity will continue to work through and in us all until that final consummation.
- II. To maintain the unity we have.
- A. Christ gives gifts to each of us (v7).
 1. The gifts are for serving the Church.
 2. Each believer's gift is different, dispensed according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
 - B. Teachers of the Word are Christ's most important gifts to the Church (vv11-12).
 1. He gave them for the purpose of building up the Church.
 2. He gave them so that we might better minister to one another.
 - a. In lowliness and meekness (v2).
 - b. With patience and forbearing.
 3. He gave them to enable us to reach full Christian maturity.
 - a. Expressed in a oneness of faith based on a common doctrine (v13).
 - b. Expressed in a thorough knowledge of Christian teaching (v14).
 - c. Expressed in speaking the truth in love (v15).

Conclusion: How important it is for any organization to have members who function properly, adequately fulfilling their obligations. So let us as people, called by God into His church, faithfully carry out the responsibilities He sets before us!

Gerhard Bode
Wyzata, Minnesota

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 4:17-24

August 15, 1982

Verses 17 to 24 Ephesians 4 contain the first of four groups of admonitions given by Paul. Putting off the old and putting on the new summarizes what the apostle says in all these admonitions. The total depravity of the ungodly is pictured by Paul in the first part of this text: vanity of mind, a darkened understanding, alienation from God, ignorance, a hardened heart, and unrelenting excessiveness in doing everything sinful. At one time the Ephesians lived in such depravity. But no more. This lifestyle is now to be forever impossible for them because they have "learned Christ." They were "taught in connection with Him." They learned the truth, for "there is truth in Jesus."

One would have to be blind not to see the similarity between our society today and the way in which the Gentiles walked in Paul's day. We, as God's people, need to be ever aware of the condition and consequences of unbelief. We need also the continual reminder that we learned differently from Christ! A totally opposite life is now to be ours. No more a life that is "in process of corruption in accordance with the deceitful lusts." There is now to be a completely new life that begins with the renewal of our minds. To live a God-pleasing life by getting rid of the old man and putting on the new is the goal of the sermon.

Introduction: Children at times are admonished by teachers and parents to be more diligent in their school work. Young people are admonished to take more seriously their responsibilities. Adults are admonished by their physicians to change habits and lifestyles. So God also admonishes all of us in these words of the Apostle Paul to live in a manner pleasing to Him.

Live the Life You Learned from Christ!

- I. Put off the old man.
 - A. The old man is seen in the vanity of the Gentile mind (v18).
 1. Their understanding is darkened.
 2. They have been alienated from God.
 3. Their hearts are hardened.
 - B. The old man is headed for destruction.
 1. Those who follow after the old man give themselves over completely to uncleanness (v19).
 2. God's judgment rests upon all who follow after such things (Ga 3:10).
- II. Put on the new man.
 - A. The new man is the opposite of the old.
 1. The new man is founded on the truth (v21).
 2. The new man is created after God in righteousness and holiness (v24).
 - B. The creation of the new man begins with renewal of the mind (v23).
 1. Renewal is an inner process.
 2. Renewal is a continual process.
 3. Renewal leads to a new life (Ro 7:6).

Conclusion: Let us by daily contrition and repentance drown the old Adam with all sins and evil lusts and again let a new man daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

GB

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

August 22, 1982

The Holy Scriptures are rich in anthropomorphic language. Anthropomorphic metaphors become the language of linkage between the Wholly Other and mankind, serving as a vehicle for understanding the living God and establishing a more personal relationship with Him. Thus we have ample evidence in God's Word that our God is a feeling God. He becomes angry; He feels compassion; He loves in extraordinary ways -- the height and breadth of such love we cannot begin to fathom. As we think of God in terms of feelings, we find a step has been taken in the direction of a more personal relationship with God. Such language helps us move from the "I - it" framework to the "I - Thou" context with respect to our relationship with God. Given a clear understanding of the genre of anthropomorphic language we can speak of God the Holy Spirit smiling (being pleased) or weeping (being grieved).

Introduction: In the body language of human beings, we know what it means to put a smile on somebody's face or to cause them to frown or weep. We have seen a spouse, a parent, or a child laugh or weep as a result of our behavior or words. But this morning let us consider how our words and actions affect God the Holy Spirit in such a way as to bring a smile to His face or tears to His eyes. Let us see how we can

Put a Smile on God's Face

- I. The Holy Spirit has feelings too.
 - A. The Holy Spirit weeps (is grieved, v30) when the children of God frustrate His will for them.

1. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "bitterness" festers untreated (v31).
2. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "wrath and anger" exercise themselves without control (v31).
3. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "clamor and slander" flow freely (v31).
4. The children of God frustrate the will of the Holy Spirit when "malice" rules actions rather than love (v31).
- B. The Holy Spirit smiles when the children of God reflect His will for them.
 1. The Holy Spirit smiles when God's children are kind to one another and tender-hearted (v31).
 2. The Holy Spirit smiles when God's children forgive one another as God in Christ forgives them (v32).

Transition: God the Holy Spirit is affected by the way we live our lives, but . . .

- II. Why should we be concerned about the feelings of the Holy Spirit?
 - A. We should be concerned about the feelings of the Holy Spirit because in Him we " . . . were sealed for the day of redemption" (v30).
 1. Through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, against all the odds, we were brought to faith.
 2. Through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit continues to hold us in the true faith.
 - B. We should be concerned about the feelings of the Holy Spirit because we are " . . . beloved children of God" (v1).
 1. As beloved children of God we are part of a family where each other's feelings are important.
 2. As beloved children of God we know our family membership was made possible by our brother Jesus Christ, who " . . . loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (v2).
 3. As beloved children of God, we should be " . . . imitators of God" (v1).

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit is personally involved with each one of us. He is not a stone; our behavior, thoughts, and actions affect Him. This week, motivated by our experience of Christ's love, let us put a smile on the face of the Holy Spirit!

Mark Oien
Duluth, Minnesota

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 5:15-20

August 29, 1982

The central concept the following sermon outline is based on time (*kairos*). As one examines the concept of time in this text, as well as other portions of Scripture, one discovers that time is a gift. As with all other gifts, God calls us to stewardship of time. Time is neutral, like a radio wave; it can be used wisely or foolishly, for good or for evil. The image of time is one with which most hearers can readily identify. Our awareness of time is highlighted by clocks of all sizes in all sorts of shapes and places, and by the perpetual acknowledgements of birthdays and anniversaries, etc. Life every non-renewable resource, time and our use of it are important.

Introduction: The late Jim Croche wrote and sang a song entitled "If I Could Put Time in a Bottle." The lyricist in this song proceeds through a litany of aspects of life that he would alter if, in fact, time could be captured. However,

time does not stand still. Therefore, time becomes a precious commodity in this life. St. Paul picks up on this very thought when in v16 he speaks of "making the most of the time." (See Lenski on Ephesians 5:16 for further discussion of *kairos* in this context.)

Make the Most of Your Moments

- I. Why should we be concerned about making the most of our moments?
 - A. Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us (a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God) (v2).
 1. Christ gave His time for us.
 2. Christ gave His life for us.
 - B. Because "the days are evil" (v15).
 1. The world seeks to occupy all of our time so that little or no time is left for the Lord.
 2. The world entices us to use our time in selfish and unhealthy ways.

Transition: Without question, as Christian people we ought to be making the most of our moments. The question now, however, is

- II. How do we make the most of our moments?
 - A. We make the most of our moments by seeking to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (v17).
 1. We discover the will of the Lord as we listen to the preached Word.
 2. We discover the will of the Lord as we search the Scriptures individually and in groups.
 - B. We make the most of our time when we take every opportunity to "be filled with the Spirit" (v18).
 1. We are filled with the Spirit by means of the Word.
 2. We are filled by the Spirit by means of the Sacraments.
 - C. We make the most of our time when we keep focusing on Christ.
 1. We keep focusing on Christ by "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (v19).
 2. We keep focusing on Christ by "always and for everything giving thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (v20).

Conclusion: No, time cannot be put in a bottle, but it can be used wisely. Christ not only gave His time for us, but His very life as well. Let us then seek to understand the Lord's will, to be filled with the Spirit, and to remain always focused on Christ; and we will, by all means, be making the most of our moments!

MO

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Ephesians 5:21-31

September 5, 1982

The illustration used by St. Paul to describe the union and commitment of marriage is magnificent. Surely such images help to highlight the importance the Lord places upon the marriage bond. Verse 21 is a summary exhortation. All that follows is but a more detailed explanation of how a husband and wife are to look upon one another in Christ. Two concepts are pivotal in expounding the significance of the text — subjection and love. Jesus, motivated by divine love, subjected Himself to the state of humiliation, that He might pay the all-sufficient price to redeem the church. In turn, having received the benefit of Christ's love, the church should subject itself to Him in love. This truth is applicable to the

Christian corporately and individually. The Christian male and female who desire to live in holy wedlock should see their relationship as one of subjection to one another, motivated through faith and in love for Christ.

Introduction: The institution of marriage faces a crisis in today's society. The foundational relationship of man and woman on which the family is built is in serious trouble. Due to low morals, self-serving attitudes, zealous ambitions, and an overall decline in commitment to spouse and family, the sacred union of husband and wife is becoming an endangered species. The words of Paul that compose our text offer a practical and workable approach for the couple truly seeking

A Fulfilling and Christian Marriage

I. Fulfillment comes in giving.

A. Self-centeredness works against the marriage relationship.

1. Living as if you were still single.
2. Allowing a career or special interest to take priority over the relationship.

B. "Subjection" is giving yourself to the other.

1. "We" becomes more important than "me."
2. Sharing of ourselves is the most genuine gift we have to offer a relationship.

Transition: Subjection of one's own self-interest for the good of the spouse and marriage is difficult. It opposes our sinful nature. We have few models after which we can pattern such loving conduct. Finally, where do we find means adequate to empower us to love in such an extraordinary way?

II. Love comes in Christ.

A. Christ is the perfect divine model of love.

1. He submitted Himself to humiliation for the needs of each of us.
2. He gave Himself to establish a relationship between us and Himself.
3. He was motivated by His love for us; there was no personal gain in it for Him.

B. Christ, in establishing a faith relationship with us, transforms and empowers us, thereby equipping us to establish God-pleasing earthly relationships.

1. Christ's work brings forgiveness and freedom from condemnation, releasing us to see beyond our selfish, sinful existence.
2. Having experienced Christ's love, we are equipped to love as we have been loved — in marriage, in friendships, in family life, etc.
3. Knowing ourselves to be children of God by grace, we also recognize our spouse as one for whom God has shown all love, and one to whom our love should be extended in support, compassion, and forgiveness.

Conclusion: Marriage can be a blessing to the couple and the family, and a witness to the glory of our God. It can be fulfilling and God-pleasing when husband and wife make their commitment to one another on the basis of living, growing, faith relationship with the God of all love, Jesus Christ.

Wm. G. Thompson
Utica, Michigan

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**James 1:17-27****September 12, 1982**

The text's emphasis upon the sanctified life can be developed well around the thought of the believer as the "first fruits" (v18) of God's creation. A brief study in a Bible dictionary will help one to recognize the significance of the concept. Briefly, the first fruits of the harvest were to be set apart for God's use.

Introduction: Even as the summer draws to a close, many of us are still reaping the benefits of the efforts put forth in our gardens earlier this year. We planted, toiled, and tilled, and fruits were produced. Our text from James has reference to a type of fruit-bearing, fruit brought forth by the will of the gracious God, a Father who has created us by the power of His Word, who has cultivated us by the water of regeneration, and continues to supply us with all things necessary in order that we may

Bear Fruit to His Glory

- I. God creates and cultivates us as His.
 - A. The Father has created us by the power of His Word.
 1. He created us physically from the dust of the ground.
 2. He created us spiritually by the water of Baptism.
 - B. He in grace continues to provide us with all things needful.
 1. He changes not; therefore, there is no need to be concerned about too little or too much.
 2. His provisions are just right for us at the proper time in our growth.
 - C. He does this all that we might be the "first fruits" of His creation.
 1. He sets us apart for service to His name.
 2. Our service to Him and to our neighbor bears witness to His grace.

Transition: The fruit which a tree or plant bears is appropriate to the type of plant — peach trees bear peaches. The fruit of those set apart by God should be appropriate to their name, "Christians."

- II. We strive to bear fruit appropriate to our Creator.
 - A. We should avoid bearing the fruits of the world.
 1. We should avoid evil: anger, gossip, wickedness of every sort.
 2. We should seek not to fall prey to the sins of apathy and hypocrisy.
 - B. We can bear fruit as we are equipped and directed by the Word of God.
 1. He gives to us the Word of forgiveness and life.
 2. He gives to us the Word of direction and guidance.
 3. He gives to us the Word of empowerment and growth.
 - C. We can bear appropriate fruit as we are responsive to God's love.
 1. We can share God's love with those of the household of faith.
 2. We can share God's love with our other neighbors.

Conclusion: Our Father in heaven has set us apart as His. By the power of His grace active in us, let us bear fruit to His glory.

WGT

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**James 2:1-5****September 19, 1982**

Verse 1: "My brethren" is a friendly address; "let not the faith" — their faith ought to put them above showing favoritism; "faith of our Lord" — Christ is the

object of faith. — Here “the glory” emphasizes Christ’s deity. His greatness. His exaltation (cf. Jn 1:14). Verse 2: The two contrasted visitors are outsiders. Verse 3: Note the special attention to the rich man; “under my footstool” — most people sat cross-legged on the floor; only higher persons had elevated seats. Verse 4: “judges of evil thoughts” are judges marked by evil thoughts. All men, rich and poor, are equal in God’s house. The soul of the one is worth no more than the soul of the other. Verse 5: Many of James’s hearers were poor, 1 Cor 1:26. But they were rich spiritually, in connection with faith. They were joint heirs with Christ (He 1:2). As kings they would join Christ sitting in royal splendour, 1 Jn 3:2. James asks by implication: “How many of you would be heirs of the Kingdom of God if God would act as you do?” Neither the Christ faith nor the name of the Lord Jesus should be disgraced by showing favoritism. Men are to be regarded in the church on the basis of their Christianity, not their wealth. To defame someone on the basis of his poverty is to sin against the Eighth Commandment.

Introduction: Clothes usually do make the man. The man who dresses well is generally rich. He can provide himself with comforts of life which make him the envy of others. Generally he is treated with deference. But in the Kingdom of Christ it is different.

Clothes Do Not Make the Man

- I. In the Kingdom of Christ.
 - A. God chose the poor of this world.
 1. There is no special merit in poverty.
 2. There is no special curse in riches.
 - a. Riches are a gift of God.
 - b. The danger is that riches turn the heart away from God.
 - B. God chose the poor to be rich in faith (v5).
 1. Faith’s object is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory (v1).
 - a. He is the Lord of glory, God made manifest in the flesh, Jn 1:14.
 - b. He is Jesus Christ, the Savior.
 - i. He came to seek and save the lost.
 - ii. He paid the price.
 2. Faith makes all Christians rich.
 - a. It receives all that Christ earned.
 - i. Deliverance from sin, death, and the devil.
 - ii. Forgiveness, fellowship with God, Ro 5:1; Ro 3:28; Ga 3:26; 1 Jn 3:2.
 - b. It makes us heirs of the promised Kingdom, Ro 8:17; He 1:2.

Application: Faith, not clothes, makes us all very rich. Let us thank and praise God for the riches He gives to all who believe.

II. In the Christian congregation.

- A. James rebukes his hearers for showing favoritism.
 1. They treated the rich deferentially.
 2. They treated the poor meanly.
- B. Their attitude was patently wrong.
 1. They were judges who harbored evil thoughts (v4). They judged and condemned.
 2. They did not act as faith dictates (v1). Faith is active in love; their actions were loveless, 1 Cor 12:21-23.

- C. In dealing with fellow members of the congregation we are to remember these truths:

1. We are all brethren in Christ, Jn 15:1-8; Jn 10; 1 Pt 2:9; 1 Jn 3:2.
2. We are to deal with one another in love, Ro 12:10; Ga 6:2.

HJE

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 2:14-18

September 26, 1982

The implicit answer to the question in v14 is that faith which does not produce works does not profit for salvation. A person who does not do the works mentioned in the preceding context, who does not bridle his tongue, does not visit orphans and widows, does not keep himself unspotted from the world, does not carry out the royal law of love or show mercy may say he has faith but that faith is not true and saving faith. In verses 15 and 16 James gives an example of such pseudo-faith. A person who refuses to act charitably (v17), who fails to give even minimal help to someone in need shows that he lacks true faith. In v18 James indicates his conception of faith to be no different from that of St. Paul. James is not teaching another way of salvation. For him, faith is trust in the Savior Jesus Christ, and that faith alone saves. But faith is never alone. Wherever true faith exists, even when that faith is weak, it will produce good deeds. That is why James can conclude by saying: "I by my works will show you my faith." Faith is a confidence of the heart and cannot be seen, but the evidence of faith lies in the deeds it produces.

The central thought of the text is that saving faith is always accompanied by good works. The problem is that we often minimize the importance of good works. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would be concerned to demonstrate their faith by their works. The means to the goal is that faith which relies on Christ for salvation is a power within us for doing good.

Introduction: Faith is individual and personal. I cannot believe for you, and you cannot believe for me. Nor can we look into each other's heart to see faith. Saving faith is an inner confidence in Jesus as our Savior. Yet it is possible to give evidence of our faith. James urges us:

Let Your Faith Show

- I. Faith that does not show is a sham.
 - A. We show faith by practicing mercy (vv15-16).
 1. Offering to help in physical need.
 2. Doing whatever we can for anyone in need.
 - B. Consistently declining mercy to others makes a pretense of our faith.
 1. We may say we have faith, but we do not have it.
 2. In a church that stresses salvation through faith rather than by works, it is easy to slip into the notion that, since good works do not save us, we do not need to be concerned about doing them.
 3. Then our "faith" may be nothing more than intellectual assent to certain doctrines; that is not saving faith.
- II. Faith that is real will always show.
 - A. Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone.
 1. Faith always produces good works (Luther: "Oh, it is a living, active, energetic, mighty thing, this faith . . .").
 2. Even weak faith is accompanied by some good deeds.

B. Faith will show in infinitely varied ways.

1. A mother caring for her children, a preacher proclaiming the Gospel, a father disciplining his child, a factory worker doing his job well.
2. We have only to let our faith express itself in the faithful carrying out of our duty where we are.

Conclusion: Faith is a matter of the heart. Yet we can demonstrate our faith by doing good. Let your faith show.

GA

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 3:13-18

October 3, 1982

We are very concerned about wisdom today. Our colossal educational system indicates this. But James points out that there is wisdom and there is wisdom; this is, there is a wisdom which comes from this world and a wisdom which comes from God. God's wisdom is other-centered rather than self-centered as is worldly wisdom. Christ, who is called the "Wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24), pictures true wisdom best, for He "came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many (Mt 20:28)."

Verse 13: *Tis*, placed in the emphatic position, calls every reader to examine himself. *Deixato*: James is always concerned about a living and active faith rather than a faith which is only talk (cf. 2:18ff). *Prautei*: this word sets godly wisdom apart from worldly wisdom which is hardly ever characterized by meekness. Verse 14: *Ei*: a condition of fact or reality; James is not saying that the readers are necessarily guilty of all this but merely, "if the shoe fits, wear it." *En te kardia*: this is where such ungodly attitudes fester (cf. Mt. 15:19). *Aletheias* must here refer to the gospel which has nothing at all to do with enmity and strife but with love and sacrifice. Verse 15: *another katerchomene*: true wisdom is never self-produced but is always a gift from God (cf. 1:5); from within come only adultery, murder, fornication, false witness, coveting, etc. (Mt 15). *Daimoniodes* is not too strong a word for that which is found within the unregenerate human heart. Verses 16-17 are paralleled by Paul's description of the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit in Ga 5. Verse 18: While worldly wisdom produces *akatastasia* godly wisdom produces *eirene*, two words lying at opposite ends of the spectrum.

Introduction: Most of us want to be wise — wise businessmen, wise farmers, wise housewives, wise students. James reminds us that there is wisdom and there is wisdom; that is, there is a worldly wisdom and there is godly wisdom. He urges each of us to examine ourselves today asking,

Do I Have the Wisdom That Is from Above?

- I. Worldly wisdom and godly wisdom come from different sources.
 - A. Worldly wisdom comes from within the human heart and is anti-God and anti-neighbor (v15, "earthly," "fleshly," "demonic").
 - B. Godly wisdom is a gift from God and so reflects the God who gives it (v17; Jas 1:5).
- II. Worldly wisdom and godly wisdom differ in their attributes.
 - A. Worldly wisdom is self-seeking, jealous, spiteful, etc. (14).
 - B. Godly wisdom is meek and self-sacrificing, exemplified by our Lord who came to our world in the person of his Son "not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt 20) (v13b, 17).

III. Worldly wisdom and godly wisdom produce different fruits.

A. Worldly wisdom produces only hatred and strife and dissension (v16).

B. Godly wisdom produces peace and harmony (v18).

You cannot learn godly wisdom at school. It is a gift from God. And so James urges us all, "If anyone lacks this godly wisdom, let him ask from God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him (1:5)."

Steven C. Briel
Winfield, Kansas

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

James 5:1-11

October 10, 1982

"Grab for all the gusto you can"; "you only go around once." So cries out a world which is concerned only about its own hedonistic lusts and desires even at the expense of the rights and needs of others less fortunate. Christians must be cautioned against such a self-seeking attitude and encouraged to look to God for all good, patiently enduring whatever suffering He permits, seeking to live in love and compassion and generosity with those around them. Verse 1: *Hoi plousioi*: certainly James would not condemn all rich people since he praises Job in this same chapter; he is condemning those who have acquired their wealth at the expense of others; it would also be inappropriate to think that James is directing this blast against his readers whom he addresses as *adelphoi* in v7. Verse 2: Note all the perfect tenses in this section emphasizing the finality and totality of the destruction. Verse 3: *Ethesaurisate*: they have no one to blame but themselves. Verse 4: These *plousioi* have built their wealth and power on the bones of the poor and helpless, and God has always been the defender of the poor. Verse 6: *Ton dikaiou*: some have referred this phrase to Christ, but the context seems to favor the poor or helpless man who has legitimate rights which have been ignored and trampled upon. Verse 7: *Makrothumesati* is emphatic and sets the theme for this next section. Verse 8: *Makrothumesati* is repeated for added emphasis. *He parousia . . . engiken*: then the believers will receive their full reward of grace; believers should always be encouraged to "seek those things which are above where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father" (Col 3:1), for where their heart is there will also be their treasure (Lk 12:34). Verse 11: *Telos kuriou*: God blessed Job many times over in the end; the preacher should be cautious, however, lest he give the impression that the suffering believer can always expect such blessing and deliverance in this life as Job experienced. There is really no English equivalent for *polusplagchnos*; it is a highly emphatic word; note how this clause opens and closes with a word denoting rich mercy and how James artistically places the word *kuriou* in between them both.

Introduction: "Grab for all the gusto you can!" cry our television commercials. In contrast to this selfish, loveless, pleasure-seeking attitude our God urges us:

Wait on the Lord; He Will Always Provide

- I. Those who grab for themselves in life, stepping over and ignoring the rights and needs of others, will reap the bitter rewards of their own greed.
 - A. The wealth and power and material goods of this life are unstable and passing (vs 2, 3).

- B. God will avenge those who despise the helpless and deprive them of their legitimate rights (v4).
 - 1. God often brings down worry and grief on those who think only of themselves (v1).
 - 2. God will punish them eternally (v5).
- II. Those who wait on the Lord will enjoy the rich rewards of his grace.
 - A. God has always cared for and blessed his people (vv 10-11).
 - B. It is God's nature to be compassionate towards His people, as the gospel more than proves (v11b).
 - C. As the farmer waits for his harvest, so the believer should wait on his gracious Lord, knowing that, if God does not deliver him in this world, He most certainly will do so in the next (vv7-8).
 - D. Looking to God's grace we can patiently suffer wrong, if need be, and not grumble at those who enjoy more material blessings and advantages than we (v9).

Conclusion: May God grant us this grace, to live in humility and patience as we await His glorious return to lead us into the everlasting mansions He has so carefully prepared for those who love His appearing.

SCB

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 2:9-11

October 17, 1982

Introduction: One of the most perceptive preachers of our century said that modern mankind has crashed on the doctrine of God. He compared this doctrinal crash to that of the supposedly unsinkable ship, the Titanic, which crashed on an iceberg and took many passengers to a watery grave. Yet man cannot fulfill his destiny without the help of God, the God who has personally and historically manifested Himself in Jesus Christ. Our text tells us that

Jesus Determines Our Destiny

- I. As a person of the Godhead, Jesus participates in the creation and preservation of the world (v10).
 - A. "By Him" (the Triune God) all things exist.
 - 1. Each of us confesses that He "created *me*" (Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed).
 - 2. Jesus' participation in the creation as the second person of the Godhead gives *meaning* to all that exists in contrast to godless theories of the origin of things.
 - B. "For Him" (the Triune God) all things exist.
 - 1. Jesus has destined and elected us to be His own brothers and sisters.
 - 2. Jesus' participation in the creation provides us with a goal in life.
- Jesus is a person of the triune Godhead and therefore participates in the creative work of the Godhead.
- II. Jesus has achieved our redemption (v9).
 - A. His "suffering of death" atones for our sins.
 - 1. In His state of humiliation He was made "a little lower than the angels."
 - 2. By the grace of God he tasted death for us. (Here one may speak of anxiety in the context of death and dying and of how Jesus identified with this anxiety when He tasted death.)

- B. Because of his obedience in suffering and dying for us, He "was crowned with glory and honor."

Having identified with us by becoming one of us, Jesus takes us by the hand through His redeeming death. But Jesus identifies even further with us.

III. As a person of the Godhead, Jesus participates in our sanctification (v11).

- A. The Holy Spirit who sanctifies us proceeds from the Father and the Son.

1. By our own reason we cannot understand the nature of God, but by the Holy Spirit He reveals Himself to us as Triune.
2. By our own reason we cannot come to faith, but the Triune God creates faith within us through the Word and Sacraments.

- B. The Christ-centered self-revelation of the Triune God touches our lives in a personal way.

1. Christ is not ashamed to call us "brethren" (v11).
2. As the "captain of our salvation" He takes us by the hand and leads us to our destiny in the family of those who inherit His crown of righteousness.

Conclusion: Already as children in catechetical training most of us encountered the profound teachings of Scripture about the work of the Triune God in our lives. It is appropriate that we learn again and again of this work of God for us. May the work of the Triune God comfort and uphold us as that work is revealed in the way that Jesus determines our destiny.

HHZ

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 4:12-13

October 24, 1982

Introduction: During the Abscam trials videotapes showed politicians stuffing illegal money in their pockets, providing evidence which clinched their guilt and demonstrated the need for punishment. We all carry a burden of hidden guilt. We would like to deny that we have done wrong. We search for peace of conscience. The Word of God exposes our secret sins like a hidden camera. It is as if our sins were permanently recorded on a videotape. Yet the Gospel can free us from the burden of guilt.

Let the Word of God Counsel Us

- I. Let the Law of God diagnose our crucial problems.
 - A. The Law is like a sharp scalpel, exposing the sin hidden in the deepest crevices of our hearts.
 - B. The Law is like a lance, piercing the infectious tumors of sin and aggravating guilt.
- II. Let the Gospel of God heal our stressful disorders.
 - A. The Gospel is active.
 1. Our own best efforts only demonstrate our inability to cure ourselves.
 - a. We are like the prodigal son whose efforts to serve his self-interests brought him to the far country of sin.
 - b. God in Jesus Christ is loving and gracious and prepares a welcome feast for us prodigals. We cannot initiate our own therapy. We cannot heal ourselves. Christ is the physician. We are the objects of his healing ministry.

2. The Gospel is the "miracle" medicine which heals the sinner, knitting together once again the severed "joints and marrow" of his soul.
- B. The Word of God focuses on Jesus Christ.
 1. Who is our advocate before the Father on the basis of His substitutionary atonement.
 2. Who offers us rest from all our burdens.

Conclusion: Let the Word of God counsel us. Let it show us what we are in our sin. That will hurt. But only then can the Word heal by bringing us to Christ.

HHZ

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE FESTIVAL OF THE REFORMATION

Romans 3:19-28

October 31, 1982

This text, the classical text for the Reformation principle of justification by faith, offers the pastor an opportunity to preach a sermon on the very theme that underlies every sermon and each page of Scripture. The message of this text is essentially two-fold. Two ways of achieving a righteousness which avails before God are contrasted. One way, through the law (the adherence of man to God's moral standard), is utterly ineffectual. The other way, through faith in Jesus' perfect righteousness, is uniquely effectual.

The righteousness of God (Lenski calls it a genitive of origin — cf. his discussion of this concept, pp. 78ff.) has been revealed at this time. Jesus has shown what it means to be righteous. He did not fall short of the glory of God (cf. Mt 3:17; 17:50). He was put to death so that God's justice would not be compromised even while declaring the sinner righteous. By faith we gain the benefit of Jesus' work of redemption.

The central thought of this text is that there is only one way for us to approach God, and that way is through faith in Jesus Christ. The goal of this sermon is that the hearer may recognize his faith in Jesus as a priceless possession.

Introduction: What would you consider to be your most precious possession? In worldly terms we might think of our home or car. Along less materialistic lines we might name our family or our good health. While we might think of our faith as a precious possession, we know that it is easily taken for granted. The faith which we preach, which Luther stressed over 450 years ago, which Paul proclaimed, and which is based on Jesus and His work is a valuable asset. Yes,

Our Faith in Christ is a Priceless Possession

1. Because we cannot approach God on the basis of law.
 - A. God's law speaks clearly.
 1. A. Its demand that the law be kept perfectly is clear and unambiguous.
 2. It brings a word of judgment: all the world is accountable to God.
 - B. We have no defense in the law.
 1. Through the law we learn that we have all sinned (v23). Jesus says that to hate is tantamount to murder, to lust is a commit adultery (Mt 5:22, 29).
 2. We cannot earn God's favor by our works of law; even teaching Sunday School, being a congregational leader, a good father, an uncomplaining wife will not justify us.

As a result, every mouth is closed before God. At the judgment bar of God all who approach on the basis of the law will have to plead: "Guilty as charged, I have no defense." Our faith in Christ is a priceless possession

II. Because we can approach God confidently on the basis of our faith in Jesus.

- A. God's gift of righteousness comes to us by faith.
 - 1. Our faith brings a righteousness which comes from outside, apart from law.
 - 2. This righteousness is Jesus' righteousness credited to the one who believes in Him.
- B. This faith enables us to approach God Because of what Jesus did.
 - 1. He sacrificed Himself to turn away God's anger over our sin.
 - 2. He showed us that God is not only the one who gives us His righteousness, but that He remains perfectly just in doing so. Jesus satisfied the justice of God on the cross by shedding His blood for us.
 - 3. By faith we know that Jesus did all this for us. Our confidence is in Him.

Conclusion: Therefore we maintain that a man is justified by faith in Jesus. With our faith in Christ, we have confidence. Our faith in Christ is a priceless possession.

David L. Bahn
Vernal, Utah

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 4:2-10
November 7, 1982

To appreciate the meaning of this text, it will be necessary to note the history of Israel from the Exodus until their entry into the promised land, for this history is the fabric of the author's instruction. The great theme of the epistle to the Hebrews, "The Superiority of the Christian Faith," is shown also in this text. The Christian faith offers a rest greater than that which Joshua gave Israel (v8). Without faith the Israelites did not enter the promised land but wandered in the wilderness for 40 years (3:16-19; 4:3, 6). Those in whom the hearing of the Gospel is combined with faith will enter the rest of God (v3). The rest which God offers is superior to any other since the one who enters this rest has rested from all his labors, just as God did (v10).

The central thought of this text is that as people of faith (and therefore people of God) we look forward to rest with the Lord. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer will anticipate the rest in heaven which is his through faith in Jesus Christ. The means to this goal is the promise that there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (v9).

Introduction: Do you get tired? People do. Some of us have physically taxing jobs which literally drain our energy by the end of the day. Others of us tax our brains so much that we feel all wrung out. Even young children whose supply of energy many of us envy finally drop in exhaustion at the end of an active day. We even get tired of resisting Satan and temptation. Although we may get a moment's respite, in different ways, in church and on vacation, the work remains. That is why the message of this text is a welcome one for tired people. God is telling us that

The Best Rest Is Yet to Come

- I. This rest is even better than Israel enjoyed when they reached the promised land.
 - A. Moses brought Israel out of Egypt and slavery.
 1. The Israelites were relieved from their terrible work load as slaves of Pharaoh.
 2. Yet they did not all enter the promised land because of their idolatry and disobedience but wandered outside for 40 years.
 - B. Joshua finally brought those of the second generation into the promised land.
 1. This was a land flowing with milk and honey — far better than the wilderness in which the Israelites had wandered, much better than the land of other nations.
 2. Still Joshua did not give the Israelites the “best rest” (of which David spoke many years later in Ps 95:8-11). It was still to come.
 - C. We can look forward to this rest.
 1. We may be able to relax a little now and then, but we still have to get up and do the work which God has given us. We go on vacation only to come back to more work. Even three-day weekends end.
 2. The rest to which we look forward is yet to come. As Christians we wait for the best rest.
- II. This rest is entered by faith.
 - A. Unbelief prevented the Israelites from entering the promised land.
 1. The deliverance from slavery, God’s guidance, the promised land were all preached to them.
 2. But “they will never enter My rest,” said God, because they refused to believe.
 3. This is a stern warning to us today who hear the good news (v7). Do not harden your heart to God’s message and offer of true rest.
 - B. We who believe will enter that rest.
 1. Jesus offers rest (Mt 11:28) to all who come to Him
 2. Receive it by faith. The “best rest” is surely ours through faith in Christ.
 - C. This rest is a peaceful repose with God in heaven.
 1. Here we struggle. We serve God and fight Satan.
 2. In heaven, we will rest from all our works as God did from His.

Conclusion: When you get tired of struggling against sin and striving to make a living, take a moment to enjoy the rest you have right now with God through Christ, and remember — the best rest is yet to come.

DLB

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Hebrews 7:23-28

November 14, 1982

There was a succession of Levitical priests (v23), but Christ gives place to no successor (v24). Therefore He can perpetually save (v25). The ground of this confidence lies also in Christ’s intercession. As His life on earth was spent on our behalf, so He continues to spend Himself for us. His intercession with God is based upon His sacrifice on the cross, which guarantees that His intercession is real and comprehends all our needs. “Such” (v26) seems to refer to Melchizadek (described in the preceding verses). Christ was not only *hagios* but *hosios*,

personally and inwardly holy, free from all evil and undefiled by sin. *Hosios* denotes Christ's oneness with God. The primary difference between Christ and the Old Testament priests is that Christ, being without sin, has no need to purify Himself before God (v27). So here (v28) is the fulfillment of the priesthood of Melchizedek by a Son who, though He became a man and was exposed to human temptations, did not yield to sin and to infirmity as did the Levitical priests. Having passed through human experience, having completed His atonement, and being forever perfected in His exaltation, He is indeed the perfect Savior and intercessor. The reference to the "word of the oath which came later" harks back to God's statement recorded in Ps 110:4 regarding the Son, the greater high priest, who by His own sacrifice of Himself would complete what the whole priestly institution was intended to predict.

Introduction: A few athletes and musicians have occasionally achieved a perfect score in their specialty, but perfection for most of us remains a goal. We even excuse ourselves by saying, "Nobody's perfect." The popular song which has the refrain, "I'm perfect in every way," is a satirical parody of people foolish enough to flaunt perfection. The one exception to imperfection is the appointed Son who has been made perfect forever.

Jesus Christ is Perfection Personified

- I. Christ is the perfect sacrifice.
 - A. The Old Testament high priests demonstrated the need of sacrifices.
 1. They had to offer sacrifices continually for their own and for the people's sins.
 2. God's demand that sacrifices be offered demonstrated His displeasure with man's imperfection, with sin.
 3. Had it not been for Christ's sacrifice, sacrificing like that done by the Old Testament priests would still be going on (as it is still going on in some religions and even in some branches of Christendom).
 - B. Christ's sacrifice of Himself has ended the need of all other sacrificing for sin.
 1. The reason is that Christ had no sin in Himself, and so He was already perfect even as a man (vv26-27).
 2. His sacrifice on the cross had atoning value; God regarded it as an all-sufficient sacrifice for all sin of all people of all time.
 3. There is not a single sin of which anyone is guilty that was not completely atoned for by Christ's sacrifice. That is why Christ's perfection is so important to us in our imperfection.

Our imperfection shows itself in that we keep on sinning. That is why we also need to know that

- II. Christ is the perfect intercessor.
 - A. The Old Testament priests had an intercessory function.
 1. An intercessor or intermediary was required between the holy God and sinful people.
 2. This intercessory function was performed by a succession of high priests over the centuries.
 - B. Christ has made all human intermediaries unnecessary.
 1. He lives permanently to make intercession for us before God (vv24-25; 1 Jn 2:1).
 2. We now have direct access to God through Christ and do not have to go through priests or pastors or saints.

3. Because of Christ's intercession we can be sure that He is able to save eternally all of us who come to God through Him.

Conclusion: Absolute perfection is illusory and unobtainable in every area of life. But when it comes to our status with God we Christians have a perfection that makes us acceptable to God. It is not a perfection that we have obtained but rather a perfection given us through faith in Jesus Christ. In Christ we too are perfection personified.

GA

LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Revelation 1:4b-8

November 21, 1982

This is a fitting text for the end of the church year. Verse 5 summarizes beautifully Jesus' entire ministry as "the faithful witness" (God's "beloved Son," the One who glorified the Father), "the firstborn of the dead" (a title which brings to mind the Passion account, the crucifixion of Jesus, and His resurrection as the First One and the Guarantee), and "the ruler of kings on earth" (a title which brings to mind the ascension, Pentecost, and the hope of eternal life). Jesus rules victoriously. He is Lord of all! We are part of His kingdom now. The King is near to each believer. He wants us to know that and to live accordingly.

Faith Sees the King

- I. See the King presents problems. We can hear the words, "Jesus is Lord," and nod our heads and agree with them. We can believe them fully. But the reason that we believe them is not because we have any proof of this rule of Jesus. It is in spite of the lack of proof.
 - A. The seven churches of Revelation were weak, persecuted, small. Where was the glory, the Kingdom, the power?
 - B. To see the King and the Kingdom takes faith.
 1. At the bedside of a dying child, who is the winner? Death? God is!
 2. Powerful nations prepare for war. Who is the winner? God is!
 3. A research project results in a significant discovery. You hear the accolades. And you also hear in the Word: "Jesus Christ is Lord." Do you believe that? Does it matter? What difference does it make?
 4. Your child is exposed daily to drugs, pornography, casual sexuality, selfish using of people. Who is winning?
 5. A marriage is failing. There are many reasons to give up. You do not and yet you suffer misunderstanding and abuse. Who is the winner?
 - C. The King seems to be losing. The Kingdom seems terribly weak. God's "kings and queens" appear to be helpless. Is Christ the King? Yes!
- II. It is in the problems of life that we see the King by faith.
 - A. "Behold your King" in His time of humiliation.
 1. Jesus was asked by Pilate, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ("Then say so! Do something! Show it!") Jesus was mocked by the soldiers: "Hail, king of the Jews!" ("How silly he looks! How helpless!") Jesus heard the mob shout: "We have no king but Caesar!"
 2. Attached to the cross was a taunting sign which read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

- B. "Behold your King" in His time of exaltation.
 - 1. The King sent the promised Holy Spirit, the Church began, and the confession was made: Jesus Christ is Lord!
 - 2. Yet most of the first witnesses to the King died for their confession.
- C. "Behold, your King," then, where trials, conflicts, tensions force the question: Where is your power, your glory, your victory, Christ?

III. Faith sees beyond the problems of life.

- A. Faith sees a crown of life.
 - 1. Now is the time of the cross.
 - 2. But the glory is to come.
- B. The King calls for faith to believe.
 - 1. That one plus God equals a majority.
 - 2. That our life is to be that of the King's servants — in spite of the bullies, the mockers, and the abusers.
 - 3. That we cling to our King by hearing His Word and by eating and drinking His body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar.
 - 4. That, despite what our eyes see — sometimes eyes that brim with tears or shut with fear — Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, who is, who was, who is to come, the Almighty.
 - 5. That we believe that He is faithful despite our unfaithfulness.

Conclusion: Christ is King! As we say this, we anticipate that moment when the King will come to call an end to church year calendars and will begin an endless age of the Kingdom. Then what we believed by faith will suddenly burst upon our sight, and we shall say it again and again: Jesus Christ is King! Then we shall say it with the crown of life on our heads. But in the meantime we continue to pray: "Lord, Thy Kingdom come."

Richard G. Kapfer
Ames, Iowa