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# Homiletical Studies

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

**Matthew 24:37-44**

**November 27, 1983**

A new church year begins unnoticed by a world bent on self-destruction and preparing feverishly for a materialistic Christmas celebration which begins on the Thanksgiving weekend and culminates a month later when sentimental words about "peace on earth" and "happy holidays" serve as a narcotic against the harsh realities of modern life.

Jesus in Matthew's Gospel predicts both the fall of Jerusalem (vs. 4-22) and the signs of the end when He will come again in judgment (vs. 23-31). He tells a number of parables which describe the disciple's attitude as he waits for the end. In our text Jesus compares the end times to the days of Noah when unbelievers were totally unprepared as they continued with "business as usual." He also characterizes an unprepared householder who only counts his loss after the thief has robbed him unexpectedly. The need to watch and be ready are the key thoughts of the text. Jesus is coming again.

*Introduction:* The season of Advent begins today, ushering in a new church year of God's grace. We look to Jesus Christ our King, who first came into our world in Bethlehem's manger, who comes daily into our hearts through Word and Sacrament, and who will come again in triumph at the Last Day. This morning we look at the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24 about being unprepared for the Last Day. In a world and sometimes a church which is oblivious to the signs of the times, our text trumpets the Advent message that

### **The Son of Man Is Coming**

- I. In Judgment upon the unprepared.
  - A. Two examples describe the consequences of being unprepared.
    1. People in the days of Noah lived openly in sin and conducted "business as usual," ignoring God's threat of judgment with destruction as the consequence.
    2. An unprepared householder discovers too late that a thief has unexpectedly robbed him.
  - B. People today often are unprepared because they fail to watch for the coming Son of Man.
    1. As in the days of Noah people engage openly in sin and become preoccupied with pressing daily affairs, including hectic Christmas preparations, thus ignoring God's threat of judgment upon the unprepared.
    2. Christians too, like the unprepared householder, may fail to keep watch against the temptations of the Evil One and are caught unprepared to meet the Son of Man.

## II. In mercy toward His people.

A. A watchful and prepared Jesus came the first time to live and die for the sins of the world. As He speaks in our text He is preparing for the cross. Advent reminds us of His first coming for us.

B. The Son of Man comes to us in Word and Sacraments regularly to prepare us for His final coming. He makes us watchful.

C. The Son of Man will receive us to Himself when He comes at the Last Day.

*Conclusion:* As we prepare again to celebrate Jesus' birthday, we heed the warning to watch and be prepared because we know not the hour when the Son of Man will come. He supplies us with His unflinching mercy to make us watchful and prepared.

Stephen J. Carter

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 3:1-12

December 4, 1983

Advent stresses preparation for the coming of Christ. John the Baptist appropriately is described in the Gospel for the Second Sunday in Advent. Arriving on the scene with the credentials of an Old Testament prophet (his wilderness location, dress, diet, and message), John attracts crowds. His strong message of repentance and baptism also for Israelites alienates some but strikes home with many in preparation for the Messiah's ministry.

*Introduction:* When a presidential visit is anticipated in a local town, the word spreads; people gather; everyone is straining to catch the first glimpse of a helicopter or motorcade. An advance speaker addresses the crowd as it waits. In our text John the Baptist appears at the Jordan River as the advance man with a timely message for Israel and for us. He is

### Announcing the New Reign of God

#### I. The new reign of God stirs up interest!

##### A. Israel responds to John's appearance

1. They are dissatisfied with world conditions and Israel's plight. They feel hopeless and long for deliverance.
2. John's person and message place him in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets and raise Messianic hopes of a new reign of God in the Davidic line.

##### B. We also respond to John's message.

1. We experience a general dissatisfaction with world conditions of war clouds and national economic difficulties.
2. John's message about a new reign of God to solve our problems sounds exciting. A Disney World church sounds pleasant and enjoyable.

#### II. The new reign of God calls for repentance!

- A. John the Baptizer shocks Israel from the Pharisees to King Herod with a radical exposure of sin and a call for the baptism of repentance.
  - B. John exposes our sin and summons us to the same kind of radical repentance which exposes our desire to reign over our own lives.
- III. The new reign of God changes hearts!
- A. John's message leads many to conversion as they are prepared to embrace the Messiah's reign in their hearts.
  - B. John's message points again to the Messiah who died and rose again for the world's sin, and our hearts are rekindled through Word and Sacrament in this Advent season to embrace Christ's new reign in our hearts and lives.
- Conclusion:* As John the Baptist announces the new reign of God, we respond with more than superficial interest. Led to repentance, we find ourselves transformed by the Spirit to announce God's new reign in Christ to others.

Stephen J. Carter

### THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 11:2-11

December 11, 1983

Commentators on this text have trouble with John the Baptist's question. Some find it hard to accept that John, the great and effective way-preparer, might have doubted and they make John's disciples the doubters to whom John confidently says, "Go and find out for yourselves." Such an interpretation, it seems to the present writer, weakens the thrust of the message--that no matter who we are, our Lord sustains us in our faith by directing us to Himself who heals and cleanses and raises up. He was then, and is now, the Christ for us.

*Introduction:* There are times when all of us feel emotionally low. Our lives can be seriously disrupted by sickness or death, unmet expectations leave us frustrated, economic difficulties discourage us, or, spiritually, sin and guilt erode our well-being. Doubts about God's presence and power in our lives can be entertained. Is He really here for us? It is John's question and our question that Jesus addresses. He directs us to Himself and in Him we are made

#### Greater than the Great

- I. Questions are a part of our human condition.
  - A. John questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah. Imprisonment was miserable enough but, now that his preaching was ended, he may have questioned whether Jesus' ministry was proceeding as he had envisioned it and preached about it.
  - B. His disciples may have been part of his concern. John's faithful followers could have raised doubts as to whether he had prepared for the right person.

- C. Such questions are a part of the human condition. Sin has destroyed the once perfect relationship with God and, in our lack of full understanding, we question how God fits into our lives and we fit into His will. The paradox is that in doubt we can still believe (Mk 9:24). The danger always is that our questions can turn into unbelief and rejection of God.
- II. Jesus answers our questions
- A. Jesus' answer curbs our disbelief and rejection. Listen and see! Fruitful ministry is taking place. John's disciples were directed to healing and cleansing and proclamation that was changing people's lives. It is that power of God in the world that still redeems and saves and makes whole.
- B. For the answer centers in Jesus. "Blessed is he who takes no offense in Me," not just because he is preserved from the consequences of unbelief and rejection, but because God in Christ indeed blesses all of us who take no offense in Him. God's answer to this world's sin is the Divine Life born into the world at Christmas, given into death on Good Friday, and on Easter raised to live again victoriously. The saving glory of God is fulfilled in Jesus (Is 35:1-10).
- III. Our faith in His answer makes us great.
- A. John might have questioned, but Jesus still knew his faith. He calls to mind John's powerful ministry a man unshaken by questions or by a lack of creature comforts. He would remain faithful to the One whose way he had prepared. Jesus considered him to be great.
- B. Astoundingly, Jesus counts any of us as being greater than John. For we have heard and seen the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ as not even John experienced them. The power of God that works repentance in us sustains us also with faith and life in Christ.

*Conclusion:* Thus God brings us through the turmoil of life. We live patiently, in trusting faith, anticipating the Lord's coming, taking the prophets, like John the Baptist, as our example (Jas 5:7-10).

Luther G. Strasen  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 1:18-25

December 18, 1983

The virgin birth of Christ is clearly stated in the text and already in the prophecy of Isaiah. In Immanuel God is present with judgment and salvation throughout all generations.

*Introduction:* This somewhat embarrassing turn of events for Joseph was not just a static occurrence with no connection to what went before it or to what followed. "All this took place to fulfill" underscores that it is pertinent to the life of every person before it

took place and all who have lived since. This phrase shows that God became a human being in order to fulfill His promise to every person in this world to be

### **God with Us to Save Us**

- I. God has promised to be with us.
  - A. He never forsook His people of old—certainly not Adam and Eve, who deserved His rejection, nor in the ensuing years. His promise, “I will be your God,” can be traced through the time of the patriarchs and prophets, through the captivities of His people and their returns to Palestine.
  - B. He was with Joseph and Mary. If they had not believed in His presence and promises, their strange circumstances would have destroyed their life together and made them miserable people. Instead, today they are saints in glory.
  - C. He is still with us. The promise of Jesus who saves is for all time. Paul preached that it was fulfilled for the Romans and for us and thus the presence of God with grace and peace is ours (Ro 1:1-7).
- II. We set up barriers against God’s presence.
  - A. Mankind is not always ready to believe that God is with us. King Ahaz did not rely upon God when He promised to protect Judah from its enemies (Is 7:1-17). He refused a sign, but God persisted and proclaimed the virgin birth of God the Son as a sign of judgment upon the unbelief of Ahaz and all others who reject the salvation which He would accomplish.
  - B. Joseph set up barriers against God’s plan. But the very sign of God’s judgment against Ahaz became the sign of salvation. Immanuel would be born of the Virgin Mary. God with us to save us.
  - C. We can set barriers against God’s presence. Rejecting the virgin birth of Christ is a barrier; the basic barrier is our sin, which prevents us from wanting God to be with us to control our lives.
- III. God breaks through with His presence.
  - A. God still insists on being with us in our lives. Life without God with us does not have true peace and joy and hope. God knows that fact better than we do, and the One who saves His people from their sins comes to us to bring grace and peace from God our Father.
  - B. God instills faith in us. The celebration of Christmas is often a view from outside. We listen to carols, watch Christmas programs, are delighted by decorations. Through the operation of God’s Holy Spirit in the Word God is with us to save each of us with His forgiveness in Jesus.
  - C. We live confidently in the enjoyment of God’s blessings, no longer by ourselves or to ourselves. His grace and peace enriches our lives with forgiveness, the power to love, and the

confidence that God is with us so that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord's.

*Conclusion:* Immanuel-praise and thank God this Christmas that He has accomplished your salvation. He is with you.

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Fort Wayne, Indiana

## THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Luke 2:1-20

December 25, 1983

Because of spatial limitations, this study will be restricted to the song of the heavenly host in verse 14, "*doxa en hypsistois theoo kai epi gees eireenee en anthroopois eudokia* or "*eudokias*" ("suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host [stratia, "army"], praising God and saying," v13). These words, of course, constitute the first line and so form the basis of the Gloria in Excelsis in the main service handed down to us with loving care by generations of fathers in the faith. During the penitential season of Advent the church has denied herself the enjoyment of the festive Gloria, but now on the high feast of Christmas its ringing cries of joy seem all the more glorious by reason of a month-long absence. It was, indeed, through its use in the Christmas vigil that the Gloria most likely entered the eucharistic service of the Western church. By virtue of the angelic origin of its first line Martin Luther could say of the Gloria that "it was not made on earth, but it came down from heaven." It is in singing the Gloria in Excelsis and the Sanctus that the church is most conscious of the company of angels --however small the congregation and however humble the setting (cf vs 7, 8, 12) - as her members join in the worship of God (cf 1 Cor 11:10, He 12:22).

The song of the angels consists in two parts, in which the individual members are paired in an artful and significant manner -with a contrast between the datives ("God" and "men") and the principal prepositional clauses ("in the highest" and "upon earth") as well as a complementary relationship between the principal subjects ("glory" and "peace"). Reasonably enough, the angels sing in the first place of the divine glory of which they are always so aware (cf. Is 6:1-4; Mt 18:10). Even the Latin version of this line is familiar to most Lutherans, laymen as well as pastors, by virtue of its use as the refrain in the popular (originally French) carol, "Angels We Have Heard on High" (*Lutheran Worship*, 55): "Gloria in excelsis Deo." Although the jussive form "be" is used in most English translations which supply some form of the copulative verb, there is no verb in Greek; and in such a case the usual procedure is to understand the simple indicative form *esti*. Thus, the idea is that the news just announced by the angel (v 11) redounds in itself to the glory of God. This *doxa* is the awesome manifestation of any or all of God's

attributes to His creatures. The divine attributes which are particularly manifest at this time are (1) the grace of God in coming into the world ("the Lord," v11) to save men from His wrath (as the second half of this hymn will assert; cf. also "for you a Savior," v 11) and (2) His faithfulness in fulfilling His previous promises to do this very thing (cf. "in the city of David," with Mic 5:2; cf. "Messiah" with my studies of Is 42 and 61 in CTQ XLVI, pp. 307-312). Although the *doxa* of God in Christ is usually veiled from human view in this world (vs 7, 12, 16; cf K. Wengenroth, "The Theology of the Cross," CTQ XLVI, pp. 267-275) it is quite visible in heaven (literally, "in the highest places"), that is, to the angels and those who have died in the faith.

The second half of the celestial song consists in two coordinate clauses of parallel thought (for the purpose of emphasis) -- with "on earth" equaling "among men" and "peace" expounded as "good will." Thus, the reason why the birth of Christ fills all of heaven with divine glory is just because in Christ God declared peace on mankind. For by becoming man God the Son was able to keep the divine law perfectly in the place of all men and, in His state of humiliation (vs 7, 12, 16), to endure in the place of all men the divine wrath aroused by rebellion against God. In this way, Christ has neutralized the enmity 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" (*eireenee*) toward the whole world ("on earth"), or, in other words, "good will among men" (*anthroopois*, "human beings" without qualification). (On this concept cf. my studies of 1 Jn 1-2 and Eph 2 in CTQ XLVI, pp. 44-46, 62-65.) The word *eudokia* ("good will") refers to God's gracious desire to save people from eternal death (cf. Eph 1:5-9). For this reason Isaiah, in the traditional Christmas Old Testament reading (9:2-7, used also in the gradual), had called the divine child whose birth the angels announced (cf. Is 9:6 with Lk 2:11) the "Prince of Peace," of whose peace there would be no end (Is 9:7 cf. Is 26:3, 12; 54:10; 57:19; 66:12). Unfortunately most of the world's people have not heard God's declaration of peace on them, or have rejected it when they heard; in this way they continue their war against God; and the justice of God requires Him to take up arms once more against them through the use of His law (in creation and the word) and ultimately to surrender them to hell.

This exegesis of Luke 2:14 assumes that the correct reading is the nominative *eudokia* in accordance with the great majority of manuscripts, the reading accepted by the Authorized Version, the *Lutheran Hymnal*, and *Lutheran Worship*. If one follows most of the modern versions in accepting the genitive *eudokias* as the correct reading, the analogy of faith will, of course, exclude the synergistic dream of the Romanists and Arminians that peace with God is obtained only by "men of good will" ("hominibus bonae voluntatis" in the Vulgate), as if such men existed (cf. Ps 14, 53). This interpretation also runs counter to the common meaning of *eudokia* (which

never refers to a moral quality) and the common usage of *anthroopoi* (which is not otherwise modified by a qualitative genitive). The analogy of faith (e.g., John 3:16) would likewise rule out the Calvinistic idea, prevalent among contemporary commentators, that the work of Christ was meant to bring peace with God only to "men of His good pleasure," that is, the elect (by supplying a supposedly self-understood "His"). If *eudokias* is accepted as the reading, the best course is to connect it with *eireenee* as a genitive of source and translate the clause thus: "and on earth peace coming from His good pleasure with men" (see T. Mueller, "An Application of Case Grammar to Two New Testament Passages," *CTQ* XLIII, pp. 323-325).

*Introduction:* One of the things that makes Christmas so enjoyable is Christmas carols. There are many of them, and most we sing only at this one time of year. But the first Christmas carol, the song of the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, we are able to sing all but ten weeks of the year: "Glory be to God on high: and on earth peace, good will toward men." We have abstained from using this hymn during the month of Advent, but today it bursts anew from joyful hearts. Today we have joined with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven in singing.

#### The Original Christmas Carol

- I. Stanza 1: "There is glory for God in the highest places."
  - A. Because of His Grace.
    1. Despite our attempts to seize the glory which is His alone.
    2. Evinced by His assumption of a human nature to allow us to enjoy once again the sight of His glory.
  - B. Because of His faithfulness to His promises.
    1. Relayed by the Old Testament prophets.
    2. Fulfilled by Christmas and the saving work which followed.
- II. Stanza 2: "There is peace on earth, good will for men."
  - A. Not war.
    1. A war which man declared on God and still continues through his sins.
    2. A war which God, therefore (because of His holiness and justice), was obliged to declare on man.
  - B. But peace (referring to the attitude of God toward man).
    1. A peace which God achieved.
      - a. Becoming a human being like us.
      - b. Enduring the wrath of God which we deserved.
    2. A peace which God declares to man through the Gospel.
      - a. Which angels declared to the shepherds.
      - b. Which the Word of God declares to us today.

Douglas McC. Lindsay Judisch

## SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

January 1, 1984

Against the suggestion that verse 15 teaches a typological relationship between Israel's sojourn in Egypt and Christ's, the inspired evangelist requires us to consider Hosea 11:1 a rectilinear prophecy. Only this interpretation will conform to the rule that there is only one intended sense of any assertion in Scripture—*sensus literalis unus est*. Equally significant, the grammar and context of Hosea 11:1 stand against the typological view. First, though *ki* can be rendered temporally, the causal meaning is more common. Secondly, the copulative verb is implied, *not* expressed. It is more natural to translate "Israel *is* a child" than "Israel *was* a child." Hosea 11:2 reinforces this point by showing the irresponsibility of the Israelites down through the years. Thirdly, Israel is called God's son (as opposed to "sons") in but one place, Exodus 4:22-23. "My Son" in its literal sense would suggest not Israel but the Messiah, who had been called "Son" in previous passages of Scripture (e.g., Ps 2). Fourthly, "called" obviously refers to a word the Son heeds. While this is appropriate in the case of Jesus, stubborn Israel did not leave Egypt because it was called out. It was, rather, forced out in the wake of the plagues (Ex 12:39; cf. Ex 5:19-23; 6:11-13). The total scene in Hosea 11 is God's abiding love for His rebellious people (who are pictured in this prophecy not as a son, but an unfaithful bride). This love is especially shown in the promise of One who would obey, even though Israel disobeyed. Hosea 11:1 is in some respects parallel to the first half of John 3:16.

The pericope appointed in Gospel Series A of *Lutheran Worship* focuses on the point of the prophecy, Jesus' flight into Egypt and His return. However, the danger presented by Herod is stated explicitly even though the account of the infant massacre (vv16-18) is omitted. The goal of the sermon is that the hearer live courageously and resolutely in difficult days. The problem is that the world is cruel. The means to the goal is the good news of the Savior's coming to a world that needs Him desperately.

*Introduction:* You may well be glad the rush is over. At Christmastime, you can be stuck in a traffic jam, listening to the radio play carols while you are obsessed with the idea of plowing into the rear of the car ahead. The message of peace on earth meets with contradiction. So it was when the Savior came—and found Himself on the run to escape Herod. This constitutes

### The Other Side of Christmas

#### I. This is a cruel world.

##### A. The innocent suffer. Life carries a low price tag.

1. Herod the Great even had members of his own family assassinated when he thought they were plotting against Him. He easily resorted to massacre to eliminate the "king of the Jews."

2. In our society, abortion is a ghastly parallel. For other instances of cruelty, consider any of the "this year in review" specials on television lately.
- B. Contrast Herod with Joseph.**
1. Faith versus fright.
    - a. When the angel said "go," Joseph went.
    - b. Herod left orders that others be executed as soon as he died so that grief would be associated with his death. That is insecurity.
  2. Contentedness versus contentiousness.
    - a. Joseph accepted his place in God's design that his first son would be his foster son.
    - b. Herod was never satisfied with his sway over the Jews. He wanted the place only the Christ could have.
  3. Obedience versus obsession.
    - a. Joseph carefully did all he was told. He knew his responsibility to Someone greater than himself.
    - b. Herod was moved by self-interest and bulldozed the opposition.
- II. We can do little about it.**
- A. Shall we involve the church as church in the political sphere? To do so confuses the two kingdoms and mixes Law and Gospel.
  - B. Shall we isolate ourselves into a Christian community walled off from the world? It will not work. We share the evil inclination of a Herod or a Hitler.
  - C. Shall we make the best of it? The world cannot bear us. If Christ had to flee, will Christians fare better?
- III. Into it comes the Child.**
- A. He came as a result of God's mercy (cf. Ho 11:8-9). God did not give up on His wicked people.
  - B. He came to obey.
    1. It was obedience "from below," as a Nazarene. Jesus played the game on Herod's turf, but not by Herod's rules. He won by being the obedient Son (cf. Ga 4:4-5).
    2. His obedience took Him through a substitutionary life to a substitutionary death in which He endured the punishment for all cruelty and rebellion against God. This is the focal point of the other side of Christmas.
  - C. He came to win. Jesus rose. God approved His work. The tables are turned; now the game is on Christ's turf. He has won.
- IV. He emerges--in control.**
- A. We live in His victory.
    1. He empowers us to live even in a sin-riddled world. After the plague had ravaged their city, the remaining twenty-five residents of Goldberg, Silesia, gathered in the streets on Christmas Eve, 1353, to sing carols. They risked con-

- tamination to come together and sing, "God with us--against us who dare be?"
2. He takes care of us in our daily lives. How did Joseph finance a trip to Egypt? He "just happened" to have gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
  3. His care extends even to our suffering (cf. I Pe 4:12-13, 19).
- B. We share in His work.
1. Suffering is inevitable--but we do not seek it out or stand idle when it happens to someone else.
  2. We pray. At times we even need to pray that the evil which cannot be reformed be condemned.

*Conclusion:* A boy was walking in England during World War II. "There is a house which has sent a son into the war! There is a star in the window." Then, noting the evening star, he said, "God must have sent *His* Son. There is a star in His window." God did send His Son into a difficult, dirty war. He faced the other side of Christmas--and emerged as Lord of all.

Ken Schurb  
Columbus, Ohio

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 3:13-17

January 8, 1984

Matthew expressed his message in such a way that we would not put the emphasis on the amount of water in baptism (in no way implying a complete immersion) or on anything we do but on the revelation of God and His grace in Christ. The Lutheran emphasis on the Word and Sacraments as means of grace should be specified and celebrated in a sermon on this text. The doctrines of the Trinity and of baptism are reconfirmed in this text.

*Introduction:* Just as God the Father initiates the earthly ministry of His Son with the miraculous appearance of the Spirit and the Sacrament of Baptism, so we initiate our pilgrimage through life when the Word and Spirit miraculously create faith in us at our baptism. The life and death urgency of baptism for us and our loved ones and for those unbaptized whom we ought to love is underscored at the baptism of Jesus by John at the Jordan. The living God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reveals Himself at the baptism of Jesus and in our baptism.

### The Persons of the Trinity Revealed in Baptism

- I. Jesus the Christ is revealed when He is baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (vv13-16a).
  - A. Jesus humbles Himself to become sin for us.
  - B. Jesus reveals His priestly function by being baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (v15b)
    1. In His baptism Jesus initiates an enterprise which culminates in His substitutionary atonement.

2. Our pastors apply Christ's righteousness to us through the Word and Sacrament in our baptism.
- II. The Holy Spirit is revealed when He descends upon Christ (v16b).
  - A. He descends in an objective form (the dove, v16b).
  - B. The Spirit's presence evokes non-visual effects when he "comes upon" us (v16b).
    1. He evokes John the Baptist's awe-filled faith in Christ at the Jordan.
    2. He evokes our faith in Christ in baptism.
- III. God the Father is revealed when His voice consecrates His Son (v17).
  - A. God reveals His love for us when He says of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son" (v17a).
    1. Note that, while the sense of sight was touched in the vision of the dove, here the sense of hearing is touched by the voice of the Father.
    2. The revelation of God comes as a result of His taking the initiative, not as a product of our thought.
  - B. God reveals the joyous climax of baptism when He speaks of Jesus as the one in "whom I am delighted" (v17b).
    1. At this moment God blesses baptism as a means of gracious enrichment of His children.
    2. Now God accepts Christ's obedient death for us, which we remember in our daily dying and rising with Christ.

*Conclusion:* As the Father rejoiced at the baptism of His Son in whom He was well pleased, we can rejoice that we and our children and loved ones have become well-pleasing to God through our baptism. As for those not yet reborn in baptism, we like John reach out to communicate the Word of God to them.

Harold Zietlow

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 1:29-41

January 15, 1984

John's account in the text avoids two extremes: (1) an overemphasis on human effort as in the "I found it" religious experience and (2) an emphasis on God determining everything in such a fatalistic manner that people become apathetic toward witnessing.

*Introduction:* Here is authentic human searching for a more profound relationship to God in Christ. God uses the questions raised by John the Baptist and by his disciples to lead to a discovery of Christ.

### God Leads Us to Discover Christ

- I. As the Son of God.
  - A. Christ ranks above the prophets such as John the Baptist (v30).

- 
- B. John the Baptist said, "He was before me" (v30, Christ's pre-existence).
  - C. We need a Christ who tenderly approaches us in our needs but who also has the divine power and love to raise us up through our problems.
- II. As the Messiah.
- A. The priestly office of Jesus was revealed to Israel by John (v41).
    - 1. John said, "For this purpose I come baptizing with water" (v31).
      - a. John preached repentance.
      - b. John preached the urgency of the Kingdom of God.
      - c. John preached the forgiveness of sins.
    - 2. The purpose of Christ's coming was "that He might be revealed to Israel" (v31) and later to us.
  - B. The priestly office of Jesus consisted in offering Himself up as the Lamb of God in our place (vv29, 36).
- III. As the One chosen of the Spirit (v33).
- A. The disciples address Him with honor as "Rabbi" (v38).
    - 1. Their question, "Where are you staying?" (v38), indicates a searching-finding process.
    - 2. The answer, "Come and see" (v39), invites the inquiring potential disciples to learn from the greatest prophet of all.
  - B. The function of the Holy Spirit in leading people to Christ is seen in "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain. . ." (v33).
    - 1. The Holy Spirit remains with Jesus, showing the Trinitarian nature redemption.
    - 2. By the Spirit's guiding the seekers discover and remain with Jesus.
  - C. Jesus is manifested as "He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (v33).
    - 1. The Holy Spirit finds seekers through the witness of "brothers."
    - 2. Those whom Christ has found then follow Him by bringing others to Christ.

*Conclusion:* As I was writing this outline I answered the telephone. A woman responded to my advertisement about the formation of Bible study groups. "Who are you? Are you one of those sects which doesn't believe in the Trinity?" "No," I said. "I belong to a church which teaches the authentic message of the New Testament, according to which God works through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit." "Good," she said. "Your group can meet in my living room and I'll furnish Bibles for study and cake and coffee for refreshments." Thus began another encounter in which people came

to God through Christ. God led new brothers and sisters to discover Christ.

Harold Zietlow

### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 4:12-23

January 22, 1984

Jesus' ministry had been inaugurated with His baptism and temptation (Mt 3:13-4:11). John, the last prophet to operate solely under the old testament, is removed from the scene (v12.) But John was also the herald of the immediacy of the New Testament Kingdom (Jn 1:29). Now the kingdom is near (v17), or better, "rubbing up against you." Jesus had to begin His teaching - preaching - healing ministry (v23) in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali (v15) to fulfill Isaiah 9:1-2. He comes not only to a certain place, but also with a particular purpose (v16), thus fulfilling Isaiah 42:6,7. We see that the urgency of Jesus' mission is conveyed to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, because they all respond immediately (*eutheos*, vv20,22). The urgency of the call to the disciples contrasts with the more leisurely attitude of Elijah in I Kings 19:20. For Jesus the fullness of God's time had come (Ga 4:4), and He had to get on with the task. Note that nowhere in Scripture are we told that these professional fishermen ever caught any fish without the direct intervention of the Lord. In Acts they are fishers of men (v19) through whom the Word of the Lord grew, but certainly this was the work of God, not of men.

*Introduction:* Too often church people today have a cavalier attitude toward our commission. Jesus' coming "soon" (Re 22:20) seems delayed and somehow remote. But the Epiphany light is shining now and Jesus urges us to

#### Welcome God's Kingdom!

- I. God's saving activity is everywhere (v17b).
  - A. Under the old testament, most of God's saving work was localized, but John was removed (v12) and the scene was set for the new testament (Mt 3:13-4:11), which is world-wide.
  - B. Jesus began His work remote from Jerusalem and Judea (vv13,15,16), thus signaling a wider mission than John had.
  - C. God comes to us where we are (vv18,21).
  - D. Jesus sends us everywhere--where the "fish" are (v19b).
- II. God's kingdom is here now (v17b).
  - A. When the time came for Jesus He was anxious to do His work.
    1. He immediately proclaimed the kingdom of God (vv17,23).
    2. The power of His public ministry was the cross in His future (cf. Mt 9:5,6).
  - B. Jesus communicated His sense of urgency to the disciples (vv18-22, esp. vv20,22).
  - C. God's working changes people *now* (Mk 1:15).

1. They are healed in spirit and bouy (v23).
2. They are called out of an old life (vv20, 22).
3. They are called to a new life (vv19, 21c).

*Conclusion:* Welcome the kingdom of heaven. It is God working through you. The kingdom of God is working where you are. God's kingdom is here now.

Warren E. Messmann  
Rushville, Indiana

#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 5:1-12

January 29, 1984

Because of distortions of the Sermon on the Mount are today, in Luther's phrase, "really the devil's masterpiece," the preacher will want to take care to avoid two common extremes. The Beatitudes are not a description of conditions in some millennium. On the other hand, Jesus was addressing His disciples (v1), and His words ought not be cast as pearls to swine. Jesus is not outlining good works by which men gain heaven. Rather He is presenting the condition in this world of those who already know their Savior. A word study of *makarioi* is always blessed (pun intended).

The poor in spirit are those who do not depend on their own resources-this is, the penitent (v3). The mourners lament the status of a sin-sick world (v4). A person can be meek as an individual even while firmly exercising his office as parent or employer or pastor or whatever, and such meekness results in true rule and possession of material blessings (v5; see Ps 37). Hunger and thirst after righteousness is not an emotional reaction, but a real concern (v6). Mercy not only forgives the frail, but also does good to the needy (v7; Mt 10:42; 25:35ff). Only the Word of God can purify the heart (v8). Peace with God must precede true peace among men. Therefore, makers of true peace among men must already have and offer peace with God (v9). We have two choices-either peace with Christ or peace with the world. To have peace with Christ implies persecution by the world (v10). Jesus makes this Beatitude emphatic by repeating it in another form (v11) and yet more emphatic by commenting on it (v12).

*Introduction:* Just as the collective Church has its marks in Word and Sacrament, so the individual Christian has "marks" that set him apart from the world. Our problem is that too often we permit the marks of the world and the world itself to woo us into forgetting or even denying the blessings Jesus has already given us. In our text He calls us to

#### Rejoice in the Marks of Your Faith

- I. There is a price to pay in this world for claiming Christ.
  - A. We can no longer claim any worth of our own (v3).
  - B. The world's sickness saddens us (v4).

- C. We must separate a man and his office (v5).
  - D. Righteousness requires sacrifice (v6).
  - E. Charity requires sacrifice (v7).
  - F. We must renounce human wisdom (v8).
  - G. Peace can come only on God's terms (v9).
  - H. Persecution must follow the proclamation of Jesus (vv10-12).
- II. But "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Ro 8:18).
- A. We already have and will soon fully enjoy heaven itself (v3).
  - B. "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Re 21:4; v4).
  - C. We will be stewards of the new earth (v5).
  - D. "Those who lead many to righteousness" will shine "like the stars" (Dn 12:3; v6).
  - E. God will tell us "Well done!" (Mt 25:23; v7).
  - F. We shall see God (V8).
  - G. "The peace of God will guard" our "hearts and minds" to eternity (Php 4:7; v9).
  - H. We are persecuted only because we already have heaven (vv10-12).

Warren E. Messman

### FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 5:13-20

February 5, 1984

Preaching a sermon based on a sermon would ordinarily be out of the question. It is a different matter, however, if the sermon comes from our Savior's lips. Such is the case with these pericopes from Christ's Sermon on the Mount. We dare not tinker with the texts even if there is a preponderance of Law. The One who speaks is the Word made flesh to fulfill the Law. He is the Gospel in person. His sermon is heard aright when we are led by it to see how inadequate we are on our own and are drawn to Him by faith to receive His righteousness.

*Introduction:* The Epiphany season is the right time to talk about witnessing. It is sacred truth that Christ was revealed to the whole world as its Savior. We are marking this truth almost every Sunday during Epiphany. No Christian seriously wants to escape the joyous task of sharing Christ with anyone. However, excuses abound why a person feels inadequate for the task. One of them is the feeling that a person is not good enough to witness to Christ. The fact of the matter is that

#### You are Good Enough to Witness

- I. Your righteousness is a gift.
  - A. It is given through Jesus.
    - 1. He fulfilled the Law as the perfect life and perfect sacrifice (v17).

- 
- 2. He grants to believers His own righteousness (Ro 4:5).
  - B. It is better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (v20).
    - 1. Their veneer of holiness was glued on by their own effort.
    - 2. Their veneer of holiness came off with every sin.
    - 3. Christ declared them unfit for life eternal.
  - C. The gift qualifies you for heaven.
    - 1. Even though the qualifications for heaven are high-perfection.
    - 2. Since he who is righteous by faith shall live.
  - D. It qualifies you to witness by word and deed.
    - 1. The Pharisees said in effect: "Look at me!"
    - 2. We boldly confess: "Look at Christ!" Our witness is not based on works of righteousness which we have done any more than our salvation is.
- II. Your righteousness is your witness.
- A. It provides the saltiness of your salt.
    - 1. Salt has many uses.
    - 2. Your righteousness in Christ is your basis to effect a change in the lives of others. It works!
  - B. It is the source of light which lets people see the Father when they watch your works.
    - 1. Our witness of words is backed up by deeds. We do good works for all to see. The source of our piety is God's grace.
    - 2. Our deeds are seen but the praise is directed to the Father. We are doing the good for the Father's glory.
    - 3. Our deeds assist our witness when we lead people to praise the Father.
  - C. It is the doing and teaching of all the commandments.
    - 1. Because our righteousness is complete, we teach and obey the whole Law.
    - 2. We do not have to pick favorites. We witness with the whole Law even though it condemns us too.
  - D. It produces a witness better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.
    - 1. Their witness drew people to a life of bondage and destruction.
    - 2. Ours leads people to freedom and eternal life.

*Conclusion:* Are you good enough to witness? Yes, you are, by faith in Christ. What makes you good enough is also the content of your witness.

Lowell F. Thomas  
Fort Myers, Florida

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 5:20-37

February 12, 1984

Sometimes flaws are hard to find, especially when they are hidden beneath the surface. Flaws can lead to serious consequences when

they cause a malfunction in an airplane or automobile. Flaws in our humanity can be equally disastrous. Jesus taught that even though people looked good on the outside, inner flaws could cause their destruction. The only lasting comfort for people who are concerned about their eternal future lies in being flawless. Jesus assures you that

### **You Are Good Throughout!**

- I. Thorough righteousness is impossible through works.
  - A. Many, like the Pharisees, try to find comfort in outward behavior.
    1. They do not murder people (v21).
    2. They do not abuse people verbally (v22).
    3. They live in peace with their neighbor (v23).
    4. They keep their marriages intact (v31).
    5. They use God's name carefully (v33).
    6. The disruption of their comfort is but a slip away.
  - B. The sinful activities of the mind and heart trip us all.
    1. Jesus teaches that anger is murder of the heart (v22).
    2. Jesus teaches that lust of the heart is adultery (v28).
    3. Jesus makes it impossible to find comfort in the Law.
  - C. Jesus wanted His hearers to repent of all sin.
    1. Deeds, to be sure, but also thoughts and words which break God's Law call for repentance.
    2. Our trying to be good on our own also calls for repentance.
- II. Thorough righteousness produces obvious good works.
  - A. Jesus makes us good throughout.
    1. He was righteous in His life for us (Ro 5:19).
    2. He took our sins and died for them on the cross (Is 53:4, 5).
    3. He returns to us His perfection through faith in Him (2 Co 5:21).
    4. Our sins are all forgiven (Ps 103:2,3).
    5. We are declared good throughout by faith (Ro 4:5).
  - B. Our lives are empowered by Him to do good.
    1. We are outwardly just as godly as the Pharisees were, but our motive is God's grace.
    2. We are leaders in piety because our power is not pride but God's grace (2 Co 5:17).
    3. We are good outwardly because our hearts and minds are reconciled to God through Christ (Eph 2:10).

**Conclusion:** Believers in Christ need not wonder how good they are. They can be confident that because of Christ they are flawless. Their works show it.

Lowell F. Thomas

**SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY****Matthew 5:38-48****February 19, 1984**

The language of these verses is startling for the words oppose what seems reasonable and natural (vv39-42). We tend to surround ourselves with walls of security. We are cautious with whom we love (v43). But in this text Jesus bids us to love as He Himself did--to love even those who are loveless (v44). Our Lord's concern is that we practice the same kind of love the Father has shown us--a love without qualifications.

The central thought of the text is that disciples should be willing to follow the example of their Master and demonstrate love toward all in every situation. The goal is that the hearers will broaden the scope of their love to include those who seem least deserving. The problem is that we resist loving those who treat us in any unreasonable way. The means to the goal is the Savior who loves us when reason would deny us love.

*Introduction:* We feel good when we hear stories of amazing love. These can be stories about communities that rally to the support of fellow citizens who suffer from some natural disaster, or stories about people who risk their lives to save someone in need, or stories about farmers and ranchers who pitch in to help a neighbor who cannot do his own work. In the text for today Jesus does not tell us a love story; instead, He invites us to participate in one. It is a story of

**Unqualified Love for Unreasonable Times**

- I. It is natural for us to qualify love.
  - A. Jesus observed that this is the way of the world (vv46, 47).
    1. We love those who love us.
    2. We love those who belong to our families.
  - B. The world denies love to those who make unreasonable demands.
    1. The Law recognized this fact by placing limits on revenge (v38; Ex 23:4, 5; Lv 24:19, 20).
    2. The scribes allowed for hatred (v43; Lv 19:18).
- II. The Father does not qualify His love.
  - A. He loves when reason would qualify love.
    1. This is true in the realm of nature.
      - a. We might expect God to bless only the "deserving."
      - b. His love provides for all (v45).
    2. This is true in the Person of His Son (Ro 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10).
      - a. Jesus loved those who might offend us (Lk 5:30-32).
      - b. Jesus loved those who despised Him (Lk 23:34).
  - B. He loves even us.
    1. We are not worthy of His love (1 Jn 1:8, 10).
    2. He still forgives and accepts us (1 Jn 2:1, 2).
- III. The Father's children love as He loves.
  - A. We belong to the Father's family.

1. We belong because of the gracious working of God in our lives (Jn 1:12, 13; 1 Cor 6:11).
  2. We are new creatures different from the mold of this world (2 Cor 5:14-17; Eph 4:17).
- B. We are to live as members of the Father's family (vv44, 45; Eph 5:1, 2).
1. This means loving like the Father (1 Jn 4:11).
    - a. This love is not qualified (v44; Ro 12:14, 19-21).
    - b. This love takes a risk (vv39-42; Ac 7:60).
  2. This means we need the enabling power of the Spirit which comes through the means of grace.
    - a. The Spirit reminds us of how we have been loved (I Pe 2:23-24).
    - b. The Spirit gives us the strength to love (Php 2:13).

*Conclusion:* Loving others may not always seem reasonable. Loving others may not always be easy. But nowhere does Jesus call us to do the reasonable and easy thing. He calls us to live the love we have received from our gracious Heavenly Father.

Lawrence W. Mitchell  
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## EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 6:24-34

February 26, 1984

How is it possible for Mammon (v24-earthly goods, money, riches, etc.) to master life? How is it that a person becomes enslaved to things? It happens when people allow themselves to be controlled by the desire to accumulate things. It makes no difference if people want many things or only a few basic necessities. If the desire to acquire these things is directing a person's life, that person is enslaved by Mammon. In addition to being a form of idolatry this slavery to Mammon results in the totally useless activity of anxiety (v27). If our priorities are right--if we are serving God and pursuing the goals of His Kingdom--we have the assurance that God will provide for our needs (v33).

The central thought of the text is that Christian lives should be controlled by the pursuit of godly concerns rather than by the desire to accumulate things. The goal is that the hearers will commit themselves to lives of faithful service to God. The problem is that we sometimes feel that we must live in the pursuit of things to provide for ourselves. The means to the goal is the way in which our gracious God provides for us so that we can serve Him in faithful devotion.

*Introduction:* Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land and helped to establish them there. Near the end of his life he assembled the people of Israel and challenged them to be faithful to God and to put away the false gods which their fathers served in

Egypt and neighbors served in Canaan. He said to the people: "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Jos 24:15). Although we are far removed from the days of Joshua, his challenge still applies to us. A false god--Mammon--would divide our loyalty to our Heavenly Father. This twentieth-century idol would have us live in the service of accumulating things. What will we do? Joshua would urge us:

### Choose Your Master

- I. There are only two options.
  - A. Some will serve Mammon.
    1. Mammon becomes a master when people are controlled by the desire to accumulate things (1 Tm 6:9, 10).
      - a. It was a popular master long ago (1 Kgs 21:1-4).
      - b. It is still a popular master today.
    2. Mammon is a disappointing master.
      - a. Things can be taken from us (Mt 6:19).
      - b. Things have no lasting value (Lk 12:20; 1 Tm 6:7).
  - B. Some will serve God.
    1. God is the Creator of all things.
      - a. He made the earth and all that is in it (Gn 1:1; Ps 24:1).
      - b. He made us (Ps 139:13-18).
    2. God will not disappoint us.
      - a. He knows how to give us the things we need (vv26, 28b-30; Ps 145:15, 16).
      - b. He gives us the best in Jesus (Jn 3:16).
        - (1) Here is eternal treasure (1 Cor 15:55-57; 2 Tm 1:10b).
        - (2) It is God's free gift (Ro 3:28; Ro 6:23).
- II. There can be no compromise.
  - A. God will not tolerate compromise (v24).
    1. God demands complete devotion.
      - a. God is completely faithful to us (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tm 2:13).
      - b. He expects us to be faithful to Him (He 13:5).
    2. A divided loyalty despises God.
      - a. To serve Mammon is to deny service due God.
      - b. God will not share His glory with anyone (Mt 4:10; Is 42:8).
  - B. Compromise results in anxiety.
    1. Any service to Mammon implies that we are left alone to care for ourselves.
      - a. The result is anxiety that causes us to miss the point of life in the Kingdom of God (v25; Lk 10:41, 42; Ro 14:17; Php 3:18, 19).
      - b. The result is anxiety that causes us to miss the business of living one day at a time (v34; Ex 16:19, 20).
    2. Service in the Kingdom of God is rendered with the assurance that He will care for us (vv31-33; Ps 37:4; Php 4:6; 1 Pe 5:7).

*Conclusion:* Joshua was not willing to compromise his service to God. He boldly proclaimed: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." May God enable us to stand with Joshua in the resolve to serve God alone.

Lawrence W. Mitchell

## LAST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

**Matthew 17:1-9**

**March 4, 1983**

The transfiguration was an important event in the earthly ministry of Jesus. He was on the road to Jerusalem, going there to be crucified, Peter had only days before made the great confession of faith, "You are the Christ..." (Mt 16:16). Peter had also argued with Jesus regarding the prophecy that Jesus would be crucified, die, and rise in three days. The same Peter who had been praised for his confession of faith was chided for his effort to hinder the Lord's work. From Peter's perspective, what might have been the purpose of the transfiguration? Does our Lord function in a similar manner with us today?

*Introduction:* At times it would be nice to be able to hide from everyone and everything, crawl up in a corner, and go unnoticed. Life is a struggle. Life as a Christian is a struggle. Peter found life to be that way. One time he was patted on the back for confessing Jesus to be the Christ (Mt 16:16), and a short time later he was scolded for offering to defend Jesus from those who would try to put Him to death (Mt 16:23). As disciples of Jesus we sometimes feel it would be best in dealing with life's struggles and confusions, to say:

**"Let's Hide and Maybe It Will All Go Away"**

- I. The desire to hide.
  - A. Who would want to hide?
    1. In the Old Testament David prayed for escape from his struggles (Ps 55:6).
    2. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration wanted to remain there.
    3. All of us at one time or another, feeling the pressures of life, think that it would be easier if we could be insulated in some way from all of it.
  - B. Why would anyone want to hide?
    1. Peter had reasons for wanting to hide.
      - a. Peter was possibly tired of traveling, of being hassled by crowds, of being challenged by Jewish leaders.
      - b. Peter was confused as to what all of the Lord's teachings meant for him and the other disciples.
      - c. Peter was afraid as to what might become of him and Jesus if they journeyed on to Jerusalem.
    2. We have reasons for wanting to hide.
      - a. We too are often weary of standing against the sinful flow of the world around us.

- b. We are frequently confused when life is difficult. How do divorce, unemployment, drugs, and forms of blatant sin creep into Christian's lives?
- c. We are afraid that God will change His mind about us, afraid that our faith is not strong enough, afraid of life.

*Transition:* Peter thought he had found a safe haven there on the mountaintop. But hiding does not work. Hiding does not change or remove fears, frustrations, or struggles; it only heightens them. Even when we use religion as our hiding place, it does not work. God in His grace wants to equip us so that we will not need to hide, but rather we can cope with and ultimately overcome our fears, frustrations, and struggles.

## II. The power to live through Christ.

### A. Because hiding does not work, God intervenes in grace.

- 1. He intervened in Peter's life.
  - a. God intervened in Peter's life when Jesus called him as a disciple.
  - b. The moment on the mountain was designed to strengthen and reaffirm the faith given to Peter.
  - c. Peter himself (2 Pe 1:16f) identifies the event as a revelation of God's majesty and glory.
- 2. He intervenes in our life.
  - a. God has intervened in our lives by working faith in us in order that we can know Jesus as our Lord and Savior.
  - b. We are given moments through God's grace that allow us to see that God is there active in our lives, forgiving, loving, strengthening.
    - (1) The absolution - the pastor's words are as certain as if God spoke them Himself.
    - (2) The Word - the Scriptures are still able to give comfort and strength.
    - (3) The Lord's Supper - the meal nourishes the struggling spirit.
    - (4) Faithful witnesses - those around us who witness to Christ's love are instruments of His grace to strengthen us.

### B. Coming out of hiding is not easy, but we are not without help.

- 1. Peter was being equipped to go to Jerusalem.
- 2. We are being equipped to face the challenges of our daily lives.

*Conclusion:* God in grace gives us a glimpse of His glory. He transports us to the mountaintops so that we by grace may overcome in the everyday struggle on the plains below.

Wm. G. Thompson  
Utica, Michigan

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Matthew 4:1-11

March 11, 1984

The temptation of Jesus follows chronologically His baptism. Having been baptized by John, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. Lenski says, "It was God's own will that this mighty battle should be fought now." In the devil's efforts to tempt Jesus we find nothing unusual. The cunning, the attack on personal need, the play to ego are all tactics that are common to Satan. Jesus' temptations are not vastly different from those which come to us. Hebrews 4:15 ". . . For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

*Introduction:* Recently while trying to lose weight, someone who was well aware of my diet waved a large piece of chocolate cake under my nose inviting me to eat it. That is temptation! Daily Satan waves temptations under the nose of Christians in an effort to persuade them to transgress their relationship with God. Satan, as the tempter, is so bold that he even tempted Jesus. This Biblical account of Jesus' temptation is recorded for our benefit to offer us both a pattern and the power that we need in answering the tempter. Therefore, on the basis of this Biblical account, we will do well to look at the matter of

### Temptation: His and Ours

- I. Tempted to distrust.
  - A. Satan encourages distrust.
    1. Jesus was encouraged to distrust that God the Father would provide for his physical needs.
    2. We too are tempted by Satan not to trust our Heavenly Father.
      - a. We give in to despair over inflation and unemployment.
      - b. We fall prey to get-rich schemes, lotteries, etc.
  - B. Jesus answered Satan and turned temptation away.
    1. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3.
      - a. He stops Satan's attack, at least for the moment.
      - b. He reminds Satan and Himself that one must put God first.
    2. In following Jesus' pattern, we too can find the power to shun temptation.
      - a. Satan and temptation even today cannot stand against God's Word.
      - b. The Word reminds us to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt 6:33).
- II. Tempted to trust falsely.
  - A. Satan encourages false trust.
    1. Jesus was encouraged by Satan to tempt God.

2. Satan puts many things before us too that would cause us to challenge God's lordship in our lives.
    - a. We tempt God by taking a fatalistic attitude.
    - b. We trust improperly when we fail to use our God-given talents and abilities.
  - B. Jesus answered Satan and turned temptation away.
    1. Jesus uses Deuteronomy 6:16. He confronts Satan with the truth. It is not that God could not do what Satan said, but we are not to test Him in such a foolish manner.
    2. We too should recognize that we are not to tempt God.
      - a. We are to seek to lead our life in ways that glorify God.
      - b. We are to trust God's care for us, knowing that He will not allow anything to separate us from His love.
- III. Tempted to misplace trust.
- A. Satan encourages misplaced trust.
    1. Jesus was encouraged to remove his trust from His Father and to place it in Satan.
    2. Satan regularly places tempting scenes before our eyes and invites us to misplace our trust.
      - a. We are tempted by power and prestige.
      - b. We are tempted by the glitter and glamour of the world.
  - B. Jesus answered Satan and turned temptation away.
    1. Jesus uses Deuteronomy 6:13.
      - a. Jesus confronted Satan in the knowledge that the world which he offered was not his to give, for there is only one Lord and God.
      - b. Jesus knew that only in God can one find true life and purpose in living.
    2. Like Jesus we should affirm God's lordship in our life.
      - a. There is no substitute for God. All other things will pass away.
      - b. Our service and worship should all be directed toward Him who is our Creator and Redeemer.

*Conclusion:* Jesus, with God's Word, turned Satan and his temptations away. Equipped with that same Word of God, we too can say, "Satan, be gone."

Wm. G. Thompson

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

John 4:5-42

March 18, 1984

The account of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well in Sychar is an eloquent expression and exposition of the antiphon for this day: "Remember, oh Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old." Though He asserts the primacy of the Jews in the extension of salvation, Jesus excludes no one from salvation. The smoldering antagonism between Jew and Samaritan

and the vulnerability of an unaccompanied rabbi speaking to a woman—a Samaritan woman no less—are surmounted by the Savior's purpose "to seek and to save the lost." The Jews often spoke of the thirst of the soul for God and of quenching that thirst with living water. The promise given to the chosen people was that they would draw water with joy from the wells of salvation (Is 12:3; Ps 42:1; Is 44:3; Is 55:1). Jesus was stating that He was the Anointed One who would bring in the new age in which His people would "not hunger or thirst" (Is 49:10).

*Introduction:* Our thoughts and experiences resonate to the longing articulated by the psalmist: "As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:1-2a). This is a longing for eternity which God has put in man's soul. It is a thirst which only Jesus Christ can satisfy. In the text before us Christ offers living water and promises a well of water springing up to give us eternal life. As our Lord dealt with the Samaritan woman so He deals with us, ever creating the desire for the living water, reminding us of what or whom the living water is and dispensing that living water freely to us and through us to others.

### Living Water

- I. Living water desired.
  - A. Jesus takes the initiative.
    1. An unexpected step (v9).
      - a. Mutual antagonism existed between Jews and Samaritans.
      - b. Rabbis did not talk with women under such circumstances.
    2. A step typical of Jesus: He had come to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10), eating frequently with tax gatherers and sinners (Mt 9:11).
  - B. Jesus' words are misunderstood.
    1. Although He uses a way of speaking which is common in the Old Testament, the woman at the well takes the words literally (v11).
    2. She makes virtually a jeering jest in response (vs 11-12).
  - C. Jesus pierces the heart.
    1. He brings the woman to an awareness of her sinful state (vs 15-19).
    2. He sees a heart estranged from God.
      - a. Restless and unsatisfied.
      - b. Trying to "play games" with God.
    3. He arouses the proper thirst: "Give me of the water" (v15).
- II. Living water defined.
  - A. Jesus Himself is this living water.
    1. Jesus makes the Messianic claim (vs 25-26).
    2. His life and ministry is the fulfillment of the Messianic promises (Mt 11:3-5).

3. The climax of His work was reached at Calvary and the empty tomb.

B. This living water alone satisfies spiritual thirst (v14).

C. This living water is the fountainhead of refreshment and blessing-forgiveness, eternal life, peace, well-being, power to serve, meaning to life (v14).

### III. Living water dispensed.

A. Jesus gives the woman living water.

1. She knew "Messiah cometh"; and Jesus said, "I am He" (v25).

2. She confesses Jesus as the Messiah (vs 19, 29).

3. She is assured of adoption as a child of God (v23).

4. She is enabled to worship in the fullest sense (i.e., "in spirit and truth") the God of her salvation.

B. Living water is dispensed through her to others.

1. In confidence in spite of her past (vs 17-18).

2. In boldness (vs 39-42).

*Conclusion:* Almighty Father, who has so formed man for Thyself that his heart is restless until it finds rest in Thee: by the ministry of Thy church and the lives of those who humbly love and follow Thee daily, convince the world that Thou art the sure refuge of all who are weary and distressed in mind and life, the safe harbor to all who are restlessly seeking certainty and peace of heart, and the eternal salvation of every burdened soul; so that coming to Thee they may find and possess that peace which Thou givest in Thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Norbert H. Mueller

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

**John 9:13-17, 34-39**

**March 25, 1984**

It was common belief, promulgated by the Pharisees, that affliction was a direct result of a person's sinfulness and that suffering was an expiation for sin. But in this instance the man was born blind. Who therefore sinned, the man or his parents? It is not surprising that Jesus and the Pharisees came to conflicting conclusions. When Jesus restored sight to the man born blind, the Pharisees were confronted with a dilemma: on the one hand, how could Jesus be from God if He broke the Sabbath law; on the other hand, if He were a sinner, how could He perform such signs? The miracle, though a sign of the dawning of the Messianic kingdom (Is 35:5), only made the Pharisees more adamant in their unbelief. The familiar phrase "Son of Man" (v35), drawn from Daniel, was a Messianic title familiar to the Jews at Jesus' time. Jesus' very presence in the world constituted a separation between those who believed in Him and those who rejected Him. Those who lack the light shall have it as a free gift of the Son of Man; those who refuse the light shall have the darkness which they have loved as God's judgment on their unbelief.

*Introduction:* The familiar proverb, "None are so blind as those who will not see," articulates a truth and warns of a danger to which all of us are susceptible. Though born "blind," through the waters of Holy Baptism the Holy Spirit has given us "spiritual sight." Yet we are constantly bombarded with ideologies, claims, and counterclaims that purport to be "light" which dispels the "darkness." These often challenge our faith and affect our relationship with Chrst. Thus, the introit for today sounds the admonition, "my eyes are ever on the Lord." On the basis of the text before us this morning we focus our attention upon

**Jesus a Prophet, But More than a Prophet**

- I. Jesus is truly a prophet.
  - A. The relation of sin to suffering is explored (vs 1-3, 34).
  - B. The identity of Jesus is questioned (v16).
    1. The miracle could not be denied or explained away.
    2. The Pharisees were in a dilemma as to the origin of Jesus.
  - C. Jesus is a prophet (v17).
    1. The simple testimony of him to whom Jesus restored sight was forthright.
    2. The man knew who healed him, but he did not know Him fully.
    3. This miracle was but another "sign and wonder" showing the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the prophet sent from God (Is 35:3).
    4. The man, because of his confession, was ridiculed, insulted, and thrown out of the synagogue (v34).
- II. Jesus is more than a prophet.
  - A. Jesus confronts the man whose sight He restored (v35).
    1. He seeks him out (v35).
    2. He asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (v35).
      - a. Who does signs and wonders.
      - b. Who is the Suffering Servant (Mk 8:27-31).
  - B. Jesus is confessed and worshiped.
    1. "Lord, I believe" (v38), said the man.
    2. The man worshiped Jesus (v38).
  - C. Jesus, as the Son of Man, is the watershed of humanity.
    1. Those who "see" become "blind" (v39).
    2. Those who are "blind" are made to "see" (v39).
    3. "Lord, I believe help thou my unbelief" (Mk 9:24), says the Christian.

*Conclusion:* As we continue our Lenten pilgrimage, keeping our eyes clearly focused upon the crucified and risen Christ, we follow the exhortation and the admonition of the gradual, "Oh, come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (He 12:2).

Norbert H. Mueller

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT****Matthew 20:17-28****April 1, 1984**

Dwight Moody used to say that it was always a problem for him why none of the disciples seemed to understand that Christ was going to die in the manner in which it happened. On five separate occasions (Jn 2:18-22; Mt 16:21-23; Mt 17:22-23; Mt 20:17-19; Mt 26:1-5) the Lord had revealed this future event to them, yet they never fully accepted what He was saying. The text for this Fourth Sunday in Lent is a case in point. Despite His plain words to them on the way to Jerusalem for the final showdown with His adversaries, the disciples were still hoping that Jesus was on the threshold of establishing an earthly Messianic kingdom. With that in mind, Salome, speaking for her sons, James and John, approached the Lord with the request that her offspring (perhaps because they belonged to the inner circle of three apostles distinguished from the rest by Jesus Himself), be accorded a place of special honor in this kingdom. With great patience, the Lord deals with this misguided request. Instead of chiding them, Jesus uses their question to teach His followers the important truth that the way to greatness in His kingdom lies along the path of suffering and service. And it is to Himself that He points as the supreme example of what it means to suffer and serve when He says, "even as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

*Introduction:* "Going to Jerusalem" is a game children sometimes play. In our text Jesus and His disciples were going to Jerusalem, not to play games, but to engage in a most serious mission. It was there that Jesus would accomplish that for which He had been sent by the Father. On the way He teaches His followers a much-needed lesson on true humility and service.

**Going to Jerusalem**

- I. Going to Jerusalem requires suffering.
  - A. Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing full well the fate which awaited Him (vs 18-19).
    1. He would be delivered to the chief of priests and scribes that we might be delivered from sin, death, and the power of the devil.
    2. He was despised that we might be revived.
    3. He was crucified that we might be justified.
  - B. Suffering is the fate of Christ's followers: "...you will drink My cup..." (vs 22-23a).
    1. His disciples would become partakers of Christ's suffering through persecution and martyrdom (1 Pe 4:13).
    2. As Christ's followers today, we must be ready and willing to suffer for Christ's sake.
- II. Going to Jerusalem results in satisfaction.
  - A. Through Christ's substitutionary death and glorious resurrection in Jerusalem God the Father received satisfaction.

1. By His death Jesus paid a ransom for the world that was sufficient and acceptable to God (Ep 1:7; He 10:5-10).
  2. By rising from the dead we are assured that God was "satisfied" with the sacrifice of His Son for the redemption of the world (Ro 1:4; 4:25).
- B. As we are buried with Christ through baptism, so we shall receive satisfaction both now and in eternity.
1. We walk in newness of life (Ro 6:4).
  2. We have certain hope of eternal life (Ro 2:10).
- III. Going to Jerusalem involves service.
- A. Jesus is the supreme example of one who served (v28).
1. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve (e.g., Jn 13:1-17).
  2. He gave His life willingly and voluntarily as a ransom for many.
- B. Christ's disciples are called to follow in His footsteps of service (vs 26-27).
1. Christ-like service is not motivated by sinful pride or the hope of temporal reward (vs 20-25).
  2. Christ-like service puts others first and self last.

*Conclusion:* "Behold, we are going to Jerusalem," Jesus says to us. The journey will not be easy. It will mean sacrifice of time and willingness of service. It will mean bearing the cross and drinking from the bitter cup. It will mean laying aside pride and walking in humility. But the journey is possible because Jesus is with us. In Him we have forgiveness. From Him we receive strength. Because He gave His life for us and rose again we know our final destination. What a privilege to go to Jerusalem, sharing in His suffering and serving Him!

Ronald Irsch  
Rochester, Michigan

### FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**John 11:47-53**

**April 8, 1984**

The text for this Fifth Sunday in Lent follows immediately upon the Lord's miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead. The result of this miracle was that many believed on Him (v45)-but not all! Blinded by selfish pride and the desire to perpetuate their position of power in the Jewish community, the majority of the Sanhedrin reacted in a spirit of retaliation. Jesus must be eliminated.

*Introduction:* Do good deeds ever backfire on you? Did you ever help someone only to be criticized for interfering? Take heart! Jesus faced similar problems. After miraculously bringing back to life His friend Lazarus, His enemies, the ruling priests and Pharisees, instead of glorifying Him, plotted to get rid of Him. But God used their evil scheme to bring about the greatest good for all mankind.

### Evil Turned into Good

- I. The world will often reject the good in favor of the evil.
  - A. The ruling priests and the Pharisees rejected Jesus and the good He was doing (vs 46-47).
    1. They resented His popularity and the influence He was having on people (vs 47-48).
      - a. They regarded Him as a threat to their position of power (v48).
      - b. They feared the destruction of their nation (v48).
    2. The enemies of the Messiah sought to do evil to Him.
      - a. They took counsel against Him (vs 48-50).
      - b. They proposed to kill Him (v53).
  - B. People today also reject Jesus despite the good He can bring to their life.
    1. They do so when they live in the false hope that their own goodness is sufficient for salvation.
      - a. They refuse to recognize and acknowledge their depravity (Ps 51:5; Ro 7:18).
      - b. They are blind to the fact that their own works do not merit God's favor (Eph 2:8-9; Tt 3:5).
      - c. They do not look to Christ as the only hope for eternal life (Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12).
    2. They do so when they live with the mistaken fear that by following Christ their life will be stifled.
      - a. They are afraid that He will take all the "fun" out of life.
      - b. They are afraid of being rejected by friends and associates.
      - c. They are afraid they cannot survive in business, which too often operates by unchristian principles.
- II. In the hands of God evil can be transformed into good.
  - A. The evil action of the ruling priests and the Pharisees was used by God to accomplish His good purpose.
    1. It was God's eternal plan that "one man should die for the people," namely, His only-begotten Son (2 Tm 1:9).
    2. Through Christ's death, plotted and carried out by His enemies for an evil purpose, the world was reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-21).
  - B. Throughout history God has turned evil into good.
    1. The story of Joseph in Egypt provides a meaningful example.
      - a. His brothers sought to do Joseph evil by selling him into slavery (Gn 37ff).
      - b. The Lord turned their evil action into good for many people, both Egyptians and Israelites (Gn 45:1-15; 50:15-21).
    2. We have the Lord's sure promise that He will continually bring good from that which we perceive as evil (Ro 8:28, 31).

- a. Pain alerts us to sickness.
- b. Sickness can lead to a deeper understanding of the purpose and meaning of life.
- c. Death for the follower of Christ becomes the gateway to eternal life.

*Conclusion:* As people of God we can live in the confidence that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." As the hymn puts it,

Beloved, "It is well!"  
 Though deep and sore the smart,  
 The hand that wounds knows how to bind  
 And heal the broken heart.

Ronald Irsch

## PALM SUNDAY: SUNDAY OF THE PASSION

Matthew 27:11-26

April 15, 1984

*Introduction:* Holy Week, which begins today, brings us face to face with the most decisive and important event in all of human history. We witness a trial which in every respect, from arrest of the accused to His execution, violates every law of equity, justice, and right. From that standpoint alone, it is a landmark case, amazing in every respect. Behind its facade, however, are the dynamics of higher justice, which are even more amazing, as they combine in the resolution of crime and conflict, debt and failure between man and God. All is centered in one person, Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who is taking the place of everyone who ever came into the world or shall come till the end of time. We are directly involved. Therefore, we look most intently at

### Amazing Justice in the Trial of Jesus

- I. The evidence at hand demanded an acquittal.
  - A. The testimony of Jesus in answer to Pilate's question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" was a direct reply: "It is as you say."
    1. He was so identified in prophecy.
    2. He was thus revealed and thus acclaimed by the people.
  - B. The testimony of the priests and elders brought many accusations against Him.
    1. They were all unsubstantiated accusations.
    2. In silence Jesus negated their validity and fulfilled Isaiah 53:7.
  - C. Pilate's wife offered testimony in His favor.
    1. She pointed to His innocence: "that just man."
    2. She revealed special warnings received in a dream that very day.
  - D. Pilate himself gave clear indications of His innocence.
    1. "I find no fault in Him," he said after lengthy examination.

2. He knew that the Jews had delivered Him to him because of envy.

All the evidence required the acquittal of Jesus. Pilate should have acquitted Him, but amazingly he did not. He was afraid of Jesus, but also of the people. Neither Pilate nor the people knew that they were unwittingly playing a role in the process of a higher plan, the justification of all mankind (Is 53:4-6; 2 Cor 5:21).

**II. Amazingly Pilate sought to circumvent justice and a clear decision.**

**A. Pilate remembered the amnesty arrangement associated with the Festival of the Passover.**

1. A political prisoner was to be released.
2. The people had the privilege of choice.

**B. Pilate set up a choice between Jesus, a good and innocent man and Barabbas, a revolutionary murderer.**

Pilate thought that he could escape a decision and make the people responsible through their choice. He felt that they would choose Jesus, not the evil Barabbas. But no one, not even Pilate, can escape a clear decision for or against Jesus.

**III. The amazing verdict and sentence was unjust, yet just!**

**A. The people decided against Jesus (Jn 1:11).**

1. They chose Barabbas, the murderer.
2. They rejected Jesus, demanding His crucifixion.

**B. Pilate differed in his verdict.**

1. He found Jesus innocent: "What evil has He done?"
2. He tried to place the guilt on the people by washing his hands.

**C. The amazing sentence was, however, strange justice.**

1. On the part of Pilate, who freed Barabbas and sentenced Jesus to death.
2. On the part of the people who accepted the guilt of this injustice.
3. On the part of God, who willingly gave His Son for the sinful world.

Amazing justice, indeed—but more amazing is the fact that this whole trial occurred according to God's eternal plan, combining divine justice and divine love. Jesus had chosen to take the place of Barabbas and all of sinful mankind. God punished his Son for the sins of the world. God made Him to be sin for us so that His blood may cleanse us from all sin. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Thus, the most amazing trial of all time was and is the most blessed for all who believe in the one accused in it. The blood is for those who believe a cleansing from all sin, but for those who do not believe a judgment.

Edwin A. Nerger  
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**MAUNDY THURSDAY****John 13:1-17, 34****April 19, 1984**

*Introduction:* Maundy Thursday, the night in which Jesus was betrayed, the night in which He established a new sacrament and gave the commandment, "Remember Me," is also the night in which He gave His own the pattern of service. Through the holy sacrament of His body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus established a bond and a communion with His own. Jesus loved them to the end and loves them to the moment of His final coming into the world that they might be His own and live as He lived for them and serve as He served them. We are His people and the sheep of His flock purchased by His blood. In a troubled and perverse world we need to be strengthened in this relationship which we have with Him. Through the Sacrament of Holy Communion we receive power and life so that we may follow Jesus in service and love. He gives us Himself that we may live as He has given us an example. Thus, we see Him both in the sacrament which He has established and in the pattern of service clearly set forth in

**The Master's Service to His Servants****I. To fulfill His mission.****A. He knew the hour had come.**

1. Which His Father had appointed in the plan of redemption.
2. Which would accomplish a full atonement for the sin of the world.

**B. He loved with the pure love of God.**

1. Which motivated Him to complete self-sacrifice.
2. That all who believe might be saved.

His mission was clear; His purpose was unswerving. He knew what He had come to do, and He was determinedly moving that very night to do it. But He wanted His disciples to know and to benefit. Therefore, He demonstrated clearly the purpose of His service, which was

**II. To cleanse His servants.****A. By His humiliation, indicated by His willingness to be a servant.**

1. Shown by washing the disciples' feet, as slaves would do.
2. Shown, above all, by His dreadful and shameful death on the cross.

**B. By His cleansing of the whole person through His blood.**

1. Peter naively wanted to be washed all over.
2. Jesus has, in fact, cleansed us from all sin by means of His atoning blood.
3. This cleansing is offered to all; unfortunately many reject it (v10).

Simply and beautifully Jesus uses this occasion to set forth the true cleansing of His servants, a cleansing from sin by the merits of His suffering, humiliation, and death. His service for the forgiveness of sins is sealed to us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. But also in the service that He, the Lord and Master, renders His servants, then and now, He gives the example of a life of service which flows from cleansing. Thus, His service was

III. To give an example of the new life to His servants.

A. That they might humbly serve one another.

B. That they might be bound together in holy love.

1. Through His self-sacrifice, sealed by the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

2. Through oneness with Him and each other.

3. With love manifested in peace and service.

In remembrance of all that Jesus has done for us and given us, we can summarize in prayer: Come then, Lord Jesus, and seal us to Yourself through Your greatest service, the shedding of Your blood and the sacrifice of Your body for us; and grant that we may have the same mind which was in You, that cleansed from our sin we may love and serve one another and so fulfil Your commandment of love and service, until, by Your grace, we come to share in Your exaltation forever.

Edwin A. Nerger

## GOOD FRIDAY

John 19:17-24

April 20, 1984

*Introduction:* The text is a portion of John's report of a most awesome event. It is his account of a creature (man) putting to death the only true God, who had created him. It is the account of the almighty King, whose power was infinite, being unjustly put to death by those who were His subjects. It is the account of the only human being who has ever kept the law of God perfectly being put to death in a most shameful way, as a hideous criminal. With few adjectives and no superlatives John reports the event in keeping with the dignity and the majesty of the King who is the subject. I am irresistably drawn into the picture as I discover again today that it was

### My King Crucified

I. He was crucified in my stead.

A. Jesus, a true human being, is crucified.

1. It was the termination of a life lived under God's law. In contrast to Adam and Eve, He, our King, kept the law perfectly, even under adverse circumstances (Mt 4:1-11). Our King, under the law, was fully human (Php 2:7, 8) and He was fully obedient. What a King!

2. In His crucifixion He endured God's wrath and the punishment of hell. He paid the wages of all sin. He suffered God's judgment upon the sins of all humanity. What a load! What a King!

B. Jesus, true God, is crucified.

1. His perfect life was of infinite value. From Him I receive my righteousness. God's word to me is, "Not guilty!" What God says I believe. I act on this conviction. Thus, I am free of guilt, free to serve God in gratitude and joy. There is righteousness aplenty for every person in the world. "The Lord laid on Him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). What a message for a sin-sick world! What a King!

2. His suffering and death counts for me and all. As we see in Him our Savior there is no more need to live in fear of God's wrath and His just punishment of sin. His life and death took away the sin of the world. What a King!

II. Though crucified, He is my King.

A. He was the King of those who crucified Him (v19). They did not put Him to death as a helpless victim. As King He chose to give up His life to redeem them. Although they rejected Him as their King, He was their King nonetheless. Their every move was a fulfilment of Scripture and of God's plan (vs 23, 24). He was majestically in control.

B. He rules His church now. He rules by grace through His word. His people serve Him because they love Him. They know Him as King and Redeemer and are grateful. In their offerings of money and service they respond to His offering of Himself. What a King!

C. He rules all the world with His omnipotent power. Though crucified, He is not dead but lives and reigns to all eternity. As then, so today most people fail to recognize Him as their King. They continue to gamble and scramble after material things (vs 23, 24). But He continues to reach out to them in forgiving love. What a King!

My King was crucified. But my King lives, victorious over sin, death, and the devil. His victory is mine as I accept Him with a grateful heart as my Redeemer and King.

Audolph Haak  
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