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Homiletical Studies

Gospel Series C

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Planning the series of studies which follows was one of the last tasks of Dr. Gerhard Aho, homiletical editor of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* for many years. Even on his deathbed Gerhard was planning to do those studies which he had assigned to himself. Dr. Douglas Judisch completed that work and graciously finished the bulk of the correspondence which his colleague had entrusted to him.

“And his works do follow him.” *Requiescat in pace*, Gerhard.

Donald L. Deffner,
Homiletical Editor

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Luke 21:25-36

November 27, 1988

Luke 21:8-36 constitutes the Lucan version of the “Olivet Discourse” (cf. v. 37), also denominated the “Gospel Apocalypse” or “Little Apocalypse” (to distinguish it from the Book of Revelation, traditionally called *the* Apocalypse without modification). The parallels in the prior gospels occur in Matthew 24:4-25:46 and Mark 13:5-37. In the first section of the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:8-24) Jesus speaks purely of developments preceding the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (vv. 20-24). This description, nevertheless, remains relevant to us of the post-apostolic period in a perspicuous manner: since all the things which Jesus assigned to the apostolic generation actually happened (21:9, 12, 32), we can, therefore, be quite sure that the rest of world history will also unfold in exact accord with His predictions here and elsewhere.

Verse 24 implies that a considerable period will intervene between the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the parousia of Jesus: “the times of the Gentiles.” In this phrase the plural form *kairoi* (“times”) emphasizes the long duration of this period, which is described as *ethnōn* (“of Gentiles”) because dur-

ing this era God would gather His people mainly from the Gentiles rather than concentrating His attention upon the Jews as He had during the previous two millennia. (This statement, of course, in no way excludes the conversion and salvation of individual Jews, something for which the church works and prays; but Jews now have no different relationship with God than do Gentiles.) From the subsequent verses, as well as prior predictions of the prophets (assumed by the use of *plēroō*, "fulfil"), we see that this Gentile age comprehends the whole remaining course of earthly history. (It follows that the Israelis currently ruling Jerusalem God regards as Gentiles in general rather than Jews; because of the lapse of reliable records during the turbulent millennia now expired, none but God knows the degree to which those who today think themselves Jewish actually descend from the Jews of 70 A.D.)

Verses 25-27 speak exclusively of the parousia. The *tote* ("then") of verse 27 means, not "sometime thereafter," but "thereupon" (in closer approximation to the classical usage, "at that time"). For the "signs" of verses 25-26, which Luke describes less specifically than Matthew (24:29) or Mark (13:24-25), accompany the appearance of Christ to all men rather than preceding it. So all those passages demand which speak of His return occurring suddenly and unexpectedly (e.g., Luke 17:24, 26-36). These natural phenomena are *sēmeia* ("signs") in the sense that they symbolize the spiritual reality of the situation, the return of Christ to condemn unbelievers (the *anthrōpoi* of verse 26), which makes the reaction of verse 25 completely appropriate (to such people). (In Matthew 24:30, indeed, the appearance of Jesus itself is called a *sēmeion*.) Nor do these signs represent a dissolution of nature, but rather the termination of its blessings. God, that is to say, will deprive the faithless of all those boons of divine providence which also unbelievers enjoy until death or judgment day. Nature itself is to experience a purification from the effects of sin in connection with the parousia (Romans 8:19-21). When Jesus, then, says that heaven and earth will "pass away," He refers (as does 2 Peter 3:10, using the same word) to the passage of the present sin-infected form of things (1 Corinthians 7:31; 2 Peter 3:10-13, *stoicheia* denoting, not "elements" in the modern chemical sense, but rather "the elemental spirits which the syncretistic religious tendencies of later antiquity associated with the physical elements" [BAG, p. 776]; cf. Galatians 4:3, Colossians 2:8, 20).

Verses 28-32 form a distinct paragraph with the same point being enunciated in slightly different ways before (v. 28) and after (vv. 31-32) a parable designed to illustrate it (vv. 29-30). That "these things" (*toutōn*) in verse 28 refer not to events involved in the parousia itself (vv. 25-27), but rather to its historical precedents (vv. 8-24a), appears from the parallel phraseology in verses 9 and 12, as well as from the Lord's use of aorist imperatives ("straighten up," "lift up your heads") which He was clearly addressing to the apostles before Him. (To be sure, this exhortation applies equally to all us Christians of later generations now that the events predicted in verses 8-24a have already taken place

and our "redemption" has drawn even nearer—"redemption" being used here, as in Romans 8:23, in a sense wider than usual to mean a release from sin and all its results.) Likewise, in the parable the disciples see the leaves of the tree, but not necessarily the summer itself. In the parable's explanation too, therefore, "these things" (*tauta*) refer specifically to the events of verses 8-24a. Thus, since the *panta* ("all things") of verse 32 are equivalent to the *tauta* of the previous verse, Jesus is assuring the apostolic generation of seeing, not the parousia, but rather the destruction of Jerusalem and all its precedents (vv. 8-24b). This point has, of course, great practical importance: although the parousia has not yet come, all the events which Luke 21 places before it already occurred in apostolic times, and the phenomena accompanying the Lord's return as judge will occur so suddenly that there will then be no time left to repent (vv. 34-36; cf. 2 Peter 3:10). The word *genea* does not mean a "race" (and so does not denote the Jewish people, as dispensational authors desire); in the New Testament the ordinary meaning is a "generation," the sum of "all those living at a given time" (BAG, p. 153).

The "kingdom of God" in verse 31 refers specifically to the Lord's kingdom of glory, the "glory" mentioned in verse 27 (cf. my study on the passage from Luke 17 assigned to the Third Last Sunday in the Church Year). The language of this latter verse Jesus borrows from Daniel 7:13, identifying Himself as the divine "Son of Man" who there receives glory and eternal kingship. The title recurs at the end of verse 36 in the same context of divine dominion. There, although the *panta tauta* ("all these things") are specifically the events of verses 8-24a, the exhortation, we know from other scriptures, applies to us as well in the midst of whatever tribulations may come upon us, whether similar or dissimilar to those of the first century.

Introduction: Today we cross the threshold of a new church year, and specifically we step into its month-long vestibule — the season of Advent. The special emphasis of Advent is the coming of Christ, His threefold coming—in the past, in the present, in the future. In other words, Advent describes Christ as

THE COMING ONE

- I. He Who Was to Come.
 - A. God inspired the prophets to proclaim that the Messiah would come to redeem us (e.g., Genesis 49:10; Psalm 40:7; 118:26; Zechariah 9:9).
 - B. Jesus (the speaker of the text) fulfilled all the prophecies of the Messiah's first coming (Luke 7:18-23; 19:38; 24:25-27, 44-46).
 - C. God inspired the apostles (the audience of the text) to proclaim that the Messiah did come to redeem us (Luke 24:47-49).
- II. He Who Keeps Coming.
 - A. Through His Word (v. 33), such as the present text and the sermon based upon it.

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1. To warn through the Law (vv. 25-26, 34, 36).
 2. To strengthen through the Gospel (vv. 28, 36).
 - B. Through the sacraments which He instituted (Luke 22:19-20; Matthew 28:19).
- III. He Who Is to Come.
- A. In accord with His own description.
 1. Without doubt (since all His other predictions have proven true, vv. 28-32).
 2. With the power and glory of God (vv. 27, 25-26, 31).
 3. Without warning (v. 34).
 - B. In accord with His own purpose.
 1. To complete the condemnation of the faithless (vv. 25-26, 34-35).
 2. To complete the deliverance of the faithful (vv. 28, 36).

Douglas MacCallum Lindsay Judisch

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Luke 3:1-6

December 4, 1988

Many thousands of dollars will be spent this Christmas season on gifts that people neither want nor need. God's Christmas gift, however, is one that the entire world needs desperately. It was John's mission (and the pastor's today, too) to show people their need for God's gift and to prepare them to receive it eagerly and happily.

This text is included in all four gospels. Luke's account is unique in two ways. First, he alone (in typical fashion) carefully ties John's ministry and the advent of God's kingdom into history by mentioning the ruling civil and religious authorities of the time (vv. 1-2; see Arndt who, among others, answers the questions of those who have criticized Luke's accuracy). St. Luke wants us to know that a real Jesus came to a real world which had (and still has) real problems and needs. A. Edersheim in his *Life and Times* details the times and lives of these rulers (see pp. 255-264), showing how great the need was for salvation at the time (Lanski disagrees with such an approach, p. 172).

Secondly, Luke alone includes several additional lines from Isaiah's prophecy (see vv. 5-6). He undoubtedly does this because these additional lines clearly announce the universal aspect of God's advent and kingdom. (The word "all" occurs three times.) Verse 6 is noteworthy: "All flesh will see God's salvation!" The universality of God's grace in Christ is, of course, a key theme in Luke's gospel and one of the beautiful themes of the Christmas message.

Luke quotes Isaiah's prophecy (vv. 4-6) from the LXX. According to the LXX (and Luke) the voice would be crying from the wilderness (as John, in fact, did, v. 2). The Hebrew text, however, does not put the "voice" in the wilderness but makes the wilderness the goal of the Lord's advent; for the accents indicate that the words "in the desert" should be taken with the words "prepare the way of the Lord." But since these accents are not original and were devised, in fact, after the LXX, there is no reason to change the point Luke seems to be emphasizing, that John preached in the wilderness (v.2) as Isaiah had predicted he would do, thereby forcing people to come to the wilderness to hear his message. Luke also follows the LXX in verse 6, which renders the Hebrew "all flesh shall see it together" with "all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Introduction: Have you ever received a gift you did not need or want? How much money do you think will be wasted this Christmas on useless presents? In the text God tears open a little corner of His Christmas gift to give us a peek. This "peek" causes us to cry out:

NOW HERE IS A GIFT OUR WORLD CAN USE!

- I. Because of sin, our world will always have unsatisfied needs.
 - A. Our world has problems and needs it has never satisfied nor ever will satisfy by its own resources.
 1. The world to which God first sent the gift of His love was in desperate need of help—the leaders in the secular state were weak and corrupt and the religious leaders were no better (vv. 1-2; see Edersheim and Josephus for details).
 2. Have our own secular and religious leaders fared any better in making our world a safer and happier place, in satisfying people's needs?
 3. Perhaps we can see ourselves mirrored in these men who ruled the world at the time of John—self-centered, selfish, petty.
 - B. Our world cannot satisfy itself because we are all sinners.
 1. John preached in the wilderness (v. 2), thus forcing the crowds to come to this place of death to hear the word of life; with this backdrop people were reminded of sin's curse (see Genesis 3:17-18; also Romans 8:20-21).
 2. Isaiah had called all people "flesh" (v. 6), a word which reminds us also of decay and death.
 3. We are all sinners, cursed to die if left to ourselves; spiritually we are a "wasteland," rotting flesh which merely decays more when left alone (John 3:6; Romans 7:18).
- II. God urges us to clear the way for His Christmas gift of salvation.
 - A. God offers mankind a gift in the Christmas gospel which can give us life and save us from this decay and certain death.
 1. God gives us the gift of Himself; "prepare the way of the Lord!" (v.

- 4). The baby in the manger is the mighty Lord God Himself (see Isaiah 9:6; Colossians 2:9).
2. God comes to our world not to condemn and destroy us (as we certainly deserve) but to save and deliver us from sin's curse ("salvation," v.6).
3. God accomplished this "salvation" on a cross; He sealed the world's salvation and restored life when He rose from the dead.
- B. God wraps His gift of salvation in the Means of Grace.
 1. John was giving people the gift of God's forgiveness through the Word and Sacrament (v. 3, "preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins").
 2. Today God still "wraps" the gift of His forgiveness in His Word and Sacrament; in His Supper we receive the true body and true blood of the baby in the manger for the forgiveness of all our sins.
- C. God urges us today to clear the way for our Lord's gift.
 1. John urged the people to clear the way for the Lord (vv. 4-5).
 2. Just as our living rooms often get so cluttered with gifts there is little room for anything else, so also our lives can get so cluttered that there is little time for Word and Sacrament and the gift of forgiveness God wants us to have through these Means of Grace.
 3. "Repent!" God urges us today; we must turn from all this "clutter" to that gift more precious than everything this world could ever give us; we must turn to the God who came at Christmas for our salvation; we must turn to the God who still comes to us today in His Word and Sacrament.

Conclusion: It is God's Spirit who enables us to repent, to turn from sin to God. Let us all then pray as we did in the Introit, "Restore [literally, "turn"] us, O God; make Thy face shine upon us, that we may be saved." Then we too will celebrate Christmas properly, realizing, "Now here is a gift the world can use!"

Steven C. Briel
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THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Luke 3:7-18

December 11, 1988

Luke's summary of John's preaching is the most complete of the synoptic gospels (cf. Matthew 3:7-12; Mark 1:7-8). Even so, it is tempting to concentrate on the text's report of John's vivid and incisive use of the Law and only treat his preaching of the Gospel in quick, uneven fashion. Yet Luke makes it clear that John was

first and foremost a preacher of the Gospel (v. 18). John was, next to our Lord, the greatest of prophets and a master of distinguishing between Law and Gospel. He always used the Law in a proper relationship with the Gospel. The text tells of John's use of the Law to prepare his hearers for the Gospel (the second use of the Law, vv. 7,8,9,17b) and to guide believers in proper living (the third use, vv. 10-14). Thus, even in his preaching of the Law, John used it in the service of the Gospel. John was consistent in his preaching (note the imperfect *elegen*, "he repeatedly said") and emphatic in pointing to Jesus as the hope of his hearers (vv. 16-17). John pointed to Jesus' work of baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire. The "fire" is most certainly the Holy Spirit and His work on the hearts of people (both Holy Spirit and fire are governed by one preposition, *en*), as Luther correctly observed (*LW* 13:3-4).

Introduction: Those people who are unusual and unique in comparison with the rest of society often leave lasting impressions. Liberace's dazzling clothes often seemed more important than his performance on the piano. Some stars' bizarre makeup and dress are more memorable than their performances. John the Baptist was, to be sure, unusual—he lived in the wilderness, wore sackcloth and ate locusts and wild honey. Perhaps we think of him as a religious hermit. Perhaps we see him as a baptizer of great crowds in the Jordan River. Perhaps we view him as a popular preacher. But Luke reminds us that the most important thing about John was his preaching of the Gospel. When we read John's words which he spoke, we should ask ourselves:

DO WE HEAR JOHN'S GOSPEL MESSAGE?

- I. A message which did not ignore God's Law.
 - A. John's condemnation of those who tried to earn God's favor (v.7).
 1. Who went through the motions of baptism.
 2. But whose deeds were evil ("children of vipers").
 - B. John's condemnation of those who thought they deserved God's favor (v. 8a).
 1. Though they had no repentance in their hearts.
 2. Though their outward acts showed no repentance.
 - C. John pointed to God's power to keep His promises (v. 8b).
 1. To raise up a holy people (Abraham's children).
 2. Wherever He chooses.

Transition: God continues to raise up children to Abraham. He has chosen to make us those children, though we have neither earned nor deserved it. We also can trust God to keep His promises.

- II. A message which brought forth good works.

- A. Done willingly by those who received the forgiveness of God offered in John's preaching and baptism (v. 10).
- B. Done for others' benefit.
 - 1. In general (v. 11).
 - 2. In each believer's specific situation (vv. 12-14).

Transition: We, like John's hearers, wish to do God's will since we have received His promises. In each of our lives God provides us with ways to do good works which serve our neighbor.

- III. A message which pointed to Christ.
 - A. Who graciously grants the Holy Spirit (v. 16).
 - B. Who will gather His own safely into His kingdom (v. 17a).
 - C. Who will destroy all evil.
 - 1. Of those who do not bring forth good fruit (v.9).
 - 2. With unquenchable fire (v. 17b).

Conclusion: John points us to Jesus who gives us faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, grants us eternal life, and rescues us from the everlasting fire of hell.

Andrew E. Steinmann
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THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Luke 1:39-45

December 18, 1988

It is apparent that, very soon after being visited by the angel Gabriel, Mary set out on her journey to visit her relative Elizabeth, with whom she would remain for some three months (v. 56). And this sojourn would only be natural since they both had the common bond—besides being relatives—that they had received a special blessing from God. Mary was anxious to share her excitement with someone who could really understand and appreciate the joy she felt. Upon Mary's arrival, and at her first utterance of salutation to Elizabeth, two remarkable things occurred: the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. That John was filled with the Holy Spirit, even in his mother's womb, had, of course, been foretold (v. 15). And here in his prenatal state, being empowered by the Spirit, he reacts to the presence of his Maker. The baby's movement in his mother's womb is nothing extraordinary in itself after six months of growth, and some may say that it was merely brought on by the agitation of the mother or that John paid "involuntary homage" to his Lord, but Elizabeth exclaims that

the child "leaped for joy" (literally, "in exultation," v. 44).

Elizabeth, being filled with the Spirit, also was in a state of great joy, signified by her exclamation in "a great voice." What follows is the first "magnificat" in the New Testament, which together with those of Mary and Zechariah formed the basis for early church hymnody. The expression, "blessed are you among women," has the force of the superlative in the original: "You are most blessed among women." Elizabeth then speaks of the child which Mary is carrying. After recognizing the blessedness of that child, she expressed, in complete humility, her unworthiness to be visited by the mother of "my Lord." This statement is of extreme christological importance, for it is the first time that Jesus, the God-man, is referred to as "Lord." The humiliation of Christ is due not to the fact that He became man, but to the manner; that is, He lived a human life of humility even from conception. This entire process — His whole substitutionary life, without sin from the very beginning — belongs to the work of redemption.

Elizabeth terminates her discourse speaking of faith and the fruit of faith, happiness. Mary is blessed because she believes. In verse 45 "what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished" refers not simply to the impending birth of a son, but to the entire promise communicated to her by the angel Gabriel in verses 31-33. The *hoti* of verse 45 is best translated "for." Elizabeth could only have known all this by the revelation of the Spirit with whom she was filled. Therefore the underlying motifs of this text are the humility of Mary and Elizabeth along with the joy which proceeds from faith (*pisteuo*).

Introduction: You can almost feel the anticipation growing this morning. Only one more week until Christmas, that joyous celebration of God's love, "peace on earth, and good will toward men." Many of the children are eagerly waiting for the day when they will be able to open the gifts that have shown up around the base of the Christmas tree. And as we poke around and examine the beautifully wrapped packages, wondering what is inside, we may be reminded of the old proverb: "Good things come in small packages." It is true that almost everything that we might consider great has its humble beginnings. Whether it be the large corporation that started out in someone's garage, or a little seed that grows into a mighty cedar tree, we see that many big things start out very small. In the gospel we are told about two seemingly ordinary women. But something very special is happening to them, because God is using them to change the history of the world. Here we see

THE SMALL BEGINNINGS OF SOMETHING BIG

- I. God, too, planned a humble beginning for the birth of a King.
 - A. We would expect something greater for the birth of God's Son.
 - B. But it had been anticipated for many years.
 1. The Old Testament lesson speaks of Bethlehem, Jesus' birthplace, being the smallest of clans (Micah 5:2).

2. God had used many other people who were poor or unesteemed in the world's eyes for great things (Noah, Rahab, David, many prophets, etc.).
- C. Mary and Elizabeth were very humble women.
 1. God chose Elizabeth, who had been despised (v. 25), to bear the son who would prepare the way for the Lord.
 2. God chose Mary, a nondescript young girl, to bear His Son.
- II. The results would be the greatest event that could ever happen to mankind.
 - A. When we think of the Christmas events, many times we focus merely on the concept of a child's birth.
 1. Mary visited Elizabeth because she could hardly contain the joy she felt.
 2. But it was joy, not merely because she was going to give birth, but mainly because she knew the consequences of what was happening.
 - a. She had been given a promise regarding her Son (vv. 31-33).
 - b. She believed (trusted) God to fulfill that promise.
 - B. We are all made holy through the Son's sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10).
 - C. Salvation brings joy to all who believe (v. 45).
 1. Mary and Elizabeth react accordingly.
 2. They do so by the power of the Holy Spirit (vv. 15, 41).
 - D. We, too, are partakers of the joy that these women felt.

Conclusion: We again marvel, then, at how God brought from such a small, humble beginning something so big, that would have such tremendous implications for us. It truly does bring us joy to trust in Him and His promises, as Mary and Elizabeth did, as we anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth.

D.L. Rutt
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THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

December 25, 1988

Luke 2:1-20

The three chronological references of verses 1-2 (the imperium of Augustus, the governorship of Quirinius, the first census) underline the distinctive historicity of biblical religion (cf. Luke 3:1-2) as opposed to the essentially non-historical (whether mainly mythological or mostly moralistic) nature of all other religions. The same integral historicity of Christianity appears likewise from all the geographical specifications of verses 1-4: the "inhabited world" (*oikoumenē*, clearly referring to the Roman Empire), Syria, Galilee, Nazareth, Judea, Bethlehem. The same significance attaches to the genealogical references

to Mary as the mother of Jesus, Joseph as His stepfather, and “the house and family of David.” This last point pertains, in a closely related way, to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy of the incarnation, the hinge of biblical historicity—the hypostatic intersection of deity with humanity. God the Son, in order to redeem mankind, was to assume a human nature in the womb of a virgin descended from the politician David (2 Samuel 7:10-29; Isaiah 7:10-25; 11:1; etc.; Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 3:31).

There are a multitude of other points of importance in the Lucan nativity, but this study will restrict itself to the song of the heavenly host in verse 14, “*doxa en hupusistois theōi kai epi gēs eirēnē en anthrōpois eudokia*.” These words constitute the first line, and so form the basis, of the Gloria in Excelsis. 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 phrases (“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. Isaiah 6:1-4; Matthew 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,” v. 11) to save men from His wrath (as the second half of this hymn will assert; cf. also “for you a Saviour,” v. 11) and (2) His faithfulness in fulfilling His previous promises to do this very thing (in addition to the comments above cf. “in the city of David” with Micah 5:2; cf. “Messiah” with my studies of Isaiah 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 (vv. 7, 12, 16; cf. J.T. Pless, “Martin Luther: Preacher of the Cross,” *CTQ*, LI, pp. 83-101), it is quite visible in heaven (literally, “in the highest places”), that is, to the angels and those who have died in 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 (vv. 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" (*eirēnē*) toward the whole world ("on earth") or, in other words, "good will among men" (*anthrōpois*, "human beings" without qualification). (On this concept cf. my studies of 1 John 1-2 and Ephesians 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. Ephesians 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. Isaiah 9:6 with Luke 2:11) the "Prince of Peace," of whose peace there would be no end (Isaiah 9:7; cf. Isaiah 26:3, 12; 54:10; 57:19; 66:12). Unfortunately most of the world's people have not heard of God's declaration of peace upon them or have rejected it when they heard; in this way they continue to 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 His 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. Psalms 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 *anthrōpoi* (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, prevailing 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"). (Thus, the NASB, like the TEV, speaks of "peace among men with whom He is pleased," while the NIV errs in the same direction: "peace to men on whom his favor rests.") If *eudokias* is accepted as the reading, the best course is to connect it with *eirēnē* as a genitive of source: "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 singing Christmas carols. There are many of them, and most we sing only at this 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. Evincing 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 MacCallum Lindsay Judisch

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

Luke 2:21

January 1, 1989

The brevity of the text does not leave us wanting for themes. To focus one's thoughts a review of the hymn, "The Ancient Law Departs" (*Lutheran Hymnal*, 115), may be useful. "On the eighth day" follows the Jewish method of counting. As we count, it is a week after birth. The purpose of Jesus' coming was celebrated in the song of the angels and now is enacted by the newborn babe. Here is active obedience to the Law in our behalf. Here is passive obedience in suffering in our behalf. Luke's grammar stresses naming over circumcision. Verse 21 does not even say that Jesus was circumcised; verse 39

does. The infinitive with *tou* is genitive of time, not of purpose. The phrase *to klēthen* reminds us of Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:31. When Joseph and Mary give the name "Jesus," they are not only obedient to the Lord's command through the angel, but express faith and hope. We too use His name through faith (Acts 4:12). Through His name we receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43). The name of the Lord is made great through proclamation and pure service of the heart (Malachi 1:11).

Introduction: "On the eighth day of Christmas" our heavenly Father gave to us the blood of Jesus that we may be forgiven, the life of Jesus that we may live, the name of Jesus for us to proclaim.

BECAUSE A BABY BOY BLED

- I. We celebrate forgiveness in Jesus' name.
 - A. Jesus shed a few drops of blood to fulfill the mandate God gave to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 17:9-14) and Moses (Leviticus 12:3).
 - B. At just the right time (Galatians 4:4) Jesus lived and died and lives again, obedient to the Law.
 - C. We need not pay with eternal death for the sins of 1988 nor for the sins of 1989.
 - D. We drink His blood and eat His body with the assurance of forgiveness.
- II. We live in the name of Jesus.
 - A. We bring our children to the Lord's house, not for circumcision, but for baptism. Just as God took the initiative with Abraham and Moses, so too God is the primary actor in baptism today.
 - B. We joyfully begin the year in spite of frightening circumstances.
 - C. We regularly invoke the blessing God gave to Aaron to reassure one another (Numbers 6:22-27).
 - D. We offer pure service (Malachi 1:11).
- III. We proclaim the name of Jesus.
 - A. By bringing Jesus to be circumcised and by giving Him the name the angel had commanded, Mary and Joseph made a statement of hope and faith.
 - B. We proclaim Him boldly (2 Timothy 4:2).
 - C. Jesus' blood calls us to belong to Him (Romans 1:1-7).
 - D. We exalt His name (Malachi 1:11; Ephesians 1:21).

Conclusion: The world around us celebrates today as the first day of a secular new year. The church has much more to celebrate. Today we celebrate Sunday as the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. And today in particular we rejoice that a baby boy shed His blood for us and was given the name "Jesus," that is, Savior, that at the "name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Warren E. Messmann
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THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

January 8, 1989

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

The baptism of our Lord reveals the eternal mystery of the Trinity by relating an event in the life of Jesus which has direct bearing upon us as baptized children of God. This text displays the favor of God the Father toward His beloved Son and, through the relation of Christ's baptism to ours, God's favor toward us. The contrast between John's baptism with water and Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire is not a derogation of "water baptism," but the humble confession of John that Jesus is the divine Christ from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds. The NIV renders the last words of verse 16, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The second preposition in this sentence does not occur in the Greek and should probably be omitted. A recommended sermon hymn is "To Jordan Came the Christ, our Lord" (*Lutheran Worship*, 223). Stanza four of this hymn is especially applicable to the chosen theme of this text.

Introduction: When we consider the joy we receive from people who are well pleased with us, we might also think that they would not favor us so if they *really* knew us as we are. Surely the One to whom nothing is hidden is offended by what we succeed in hiding from others. But here is a word from God which assures us that our omniscient Lord is well pleased with us. He shows us His gracious favor. He does so by declaring to the world His approval of Christ, His Son and our substitute.

GOD'S FAVOR REVEALED FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH

- I. God is pleased with His Son.
 - A. Because of who He is.
 1. He is the eternal God.
 - a. John is not worthy to untie His sandals (v. 16).
 - b. He baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son (v. 16; cf. the Nicene Creed).
 - c. He has the authority to judge the world (v. 17).
 - d. He is publicly presented as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity (v. 22).
 2. He is the perfect man.
 - a. The Father has from eternity been "well pleased" with His eternally begotten Son. Here He announces that He is well pleased with the Word made flesh.
 - b. God had promised that a *man* would be the Savior (Christ).

- c. John was *not* the man; Jesus *was*.
- B. Because of what He did.
 - 1. Christ's perfect obedience to His Father throughout His life.
 - a. Loving God.
 - b. Living a life of humble service.
 - 2. Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross.
 - 3. Christ's baptism.
 - a. It announces that He has come to be prophet, priest, and king.
 - b. It announces His willingness to "fulfill all righteousness."
 - c. It announces divine approval of His saving work.
- II. God is pleased with His baptized children.
 - A. Because He is pleased with His Son.
 - 1. Whose life was given the ransom of mankind (Matthew 20:28).
 - 2. As we consider God's verdict of approval upon our substitute, we hear God's favorable verdict upon us.
 - B. We find God's gracious favor in our baptism.
 - 1. Christ placed in baptism the merits of His blood (1 John 5:6).
 - 2. We receive in baptism the merits of Christ's blood.
 - a. The effects of His death and resurrection (Romans 6).
 - b. The quickening Spirit (v. 16; Titus 3:5).
 - c. The innocence which brings the favor of God (Ephesians 5:26-27).

Conclusion: How we crave the fickle favor of sinners such as we are! Listen to the word from heaven, a word of favor toward God the Son, who has become our brother. In your baptism you stand there with Him, receiving the favor of the One who knows your every sin but has buried them all in the waters of the Jordan. As the sermon hymn (*Lutheran Worship*, 223:7) puts it:

All that the mortal eye beholds
 Is water as we pour it.
 Before the eye of faith unfolds
 The pow'r of Jesus' merit.
 For here it sees the crimson flood
 To all our ills bring healing;
 The wonders of His precious blood
 The love of God revealing,
 Assuring His own pardon.

Rolf Preus
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THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

John 2:1-11

January 15, 1989

“Without wine,” the rabbis had said, “there is no joy.” Thus, a situation of considerable embarrassment if not disgrace had arisen for the married couple and for Mary the mother of our Lord, who apparently had considerable responsibility for the wedding feast arrangements. In verse 3 “they have no wine” is a request for help, not necessarily the expectation of a miracle. In verse 4 “woman” implies no rebuke or disrespect, but is rather a highly respectful and affectionate term (cf. John 20:13, 15, “What is that to me and to you?”). Jesus implies misunderstanding rather than reproach. His “hour” is usually a reference to a period of crisis associated with the passion of our Lord. Here, however, it is the time of His messianic manifestation (cf. v. 11).

Introduction: “Our Father who art in heaven.” To this invocation Luther attaches this meaning: “God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father.” At the very heart of this boldness and confidence is the Gospel, through which the Holy Spirit has worked faith in our hearts and whereby God claims us to be His sons and daughters and names us to be His heirs. Because God has answered our most basic need, we confidently turn to Him in every need. Yet how often, as the disciples before us, we come to Jesus with the request, “Lord teach us to pray.” In the narrative before us of the wedding at Cana, our Lord uses the example of His mother Mary to teach us to pray.

MARY’S EXAMPLE IN PRAYER

- I. The Lord teaches us to pray with understanding hearts.
 - A. There is frequent ignorance in our prayers.
 1. Mary turns instinctively to Jesus in her time of need.
 2. Jesus’ response, rather than being a reproach, implies that Mary’s petition was the result of misunderstanding and ignorance.
 3. Frequently we do not know what to pray for.
 4. The Spirit helps us (Romans 8:26ff.).
 - B. We do not realize the implications of our prayers.
- II. The Lord teaches us to pray so as to cope with His silence and seeming rejection.
 - A. There was apparent rejection by Jesus.
 1. “Woman” is a term of respect not of rebuke (cf. John 20:13, 15).
 2. Jesus was not subject to human manipulation.

3. Nor can Mary or anyone else peddle influence.
4. Nor is there such need for manipulation and influence-peddling for the believer.
- B. We fail to cope because we fail to accept the answer.
 1. So often for us a prayer is only considered answered if it results in the satisfaction of our desires.
 2. We are reluctant to leave everything in the hands of the Lord.
 3. We can learn from Mary to "do whatever he tells you."
- III. The Lord teaches us to pray in faith.
 - A. We pray in the certainty that our faith will be vindicated.
 1. Jesus turns the water into wine.
 2. God in His own good time and in His own good way will answer our prayers.
 3. He who knows our infirmities and weaknesses will not withhold from us any good thing (Romans 8:32).
 - B. For us, God's people, God answers all our prayers with His own emphatic "yes."
 1. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him and cry out to Him in trouble.
 2. This answer comes even though it is the "wrong" trouble about which we are crying out.
 3. Such confidence is born of the cross.

Norbert H. Mueller

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Luke 4:14-21

January 22, 1989

The dramatic setting for this text is Jesus' return to His hometown of Nazareth. He had become well-known in Galilee because of His preaching and teaching, and those in Nazareth who had watched Jesus grow up from a little boy to a man of about thirty must have been eager to hear Him (cf. v. 20—"the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him"). Important elements in the text include these: (a) that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, and (b) in verses 18-19 the passage from Isaiah. Concerning (a) Luke mentions Jesus returning "in the power of the Spirit" (v. 14), which ties in the prophecy of Isaiah in verse 18a (cf. Luke 3:22; 4:1). With regard to (b) these verses allow the preacher to talk about sin, but also to bring Gospel comfort to the hearers. A careful exposition is needed for the various nuances of the poetic language.

Introduction: We enjoy hearing good, but not bad, news. Nobody likes to hear that his favorite team lost a crucial game, or that the candidate for whom he voted was not elected, or that he has a serious illness. Our text tells us that

THE MESSIAH PREACHES GOOD NEWS

- I. The good news had been foretold.
 - A. Isaiah, under inspiration, wrote about the coming Deliverer, the Messiah (the Anointed One).
 - B. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be anointed with the Spirit of the Lord, who would empower the Messiah for His work.
 - C. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would preach to helpless sinners.
 1. He would preach to the "poor."
 2. He would preach to the "prisoners."
 3. He would preach to the "blind."
 4. He would preach to the "oppressed."
 - D. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would preach "good news."
 1. He would proclaim "freedom."
 2. He would proclaim "recovery of sight."
 3. He would proclaim "release."
 4. He would proclaim "the year of the Lord's favor."
- II. The good news happened during Jesus' earthly ministry.
 - A. Jesus was the promised Messiah (v. 21).
 - B. Jesus, according to His human nature, was anointed with the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14).
 - C. Jesus preached good news to sinners throughout His earthly ministry.
 1. He had been preaching and teaching throughout Galilee (vv. 14-15).
 2. He was preaching now in His hometown Nazareth (vv. 16, 20-21).
 - D. This good news was possible because of the work of the Messiah.
 1. He lived a perfect life for every human being.
 2. He took all the sins of every human being on Himself, paid completely for those sins with His suffering and death, and arose from the dead.
- III. The good news continues to happen.
 - A. The Messiah continues to preach good news to helpless sinners, in His Gospel (and through His Gospel messengers).
 - B. The Messiah has caused us to believe His good news.
 1. He has bestowed on us "freedom."
 2. He has bestowed on us "recovery of sight."
 3. He has given us "release."
 - C. Let us keep on hearing and believing the good news of the Messiah.
 1. Let us continue to hear, read, and study His Gospel and partake of the Gospel visualized (the Lord's Supper).
 2. Through this Gospel our faith will be strengthened and we will continue to receive power to live God-glorifying lives.

D. Let us continue to support the spreading of the good news of the Messiah and share it with others.

Conclusion: How wonderful that the Messiah preaches good news! It had been foretold, it happened during Jesus' earthly ministry, and it continues to happen today. His news is the best news; it has made all the difference in our lives. May we always cling to His good news and share it with others. Amen.

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THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Luke 4:21-32

January 29, 1989

Early in His earthly ministry, our Lord's own proclamation of His Messiahship was rejected by the people in His hometown of Nazareth. The precipitating event behind this shameful scene was Jesus' reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth (vv.16-21). He shocked His hearers by announcing that the prophecies of Isaiah 61 were fulfilled, and that He Himself was the source of that fulfillment. Their familiarity with Jesus' humble origins fueled their doubts. When Jesus rebuked their skepticism, His remarks offended the ethnic pride of His hearers, and their reaction foreshadowed the blind fanaticism that later characterized the scenes of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. Their contempt flared into violence and consequently an attempt was made on Jesus' life. With an amazing escape from the grasp of the mob, Jesus left to go to the town of Capernaum where the authority (*exousia*) of His teaching was greeted with greater appreciation.

Introduction: In the midst of changing times, many people feel skeptical whenever anything is described as "the ultimate." How many new things have you and I bought recently that were advertised as "the ultimate..." only to be outmoded within a year? Not only is the imagery overused in commercial marketing; the philosophy which dominates modern times categorically denies the possibility of something being "the ultimate." Bound by their own prejudices, the people of Nazareth gave a similarly skeptical reception to Jesus as the Messiah, not willing to believe that they were

CONFRONTED BY THE ULTIMATE

- I. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.
 - A. Jesus identified Himself as the One foretold by the prophets (v. 21; Luke 24:25-26).

1. Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy is one of the most astonishing proofs of His divinity.
2. No interpretation of Messianic prophecy is legitimate which fails to see how clearly Jesus is its fulfillment.
- B. Jesus Christ is identified as the One who was revealed to Moses and the prophets (Acts 3:22; 7:37).
 1. All disciples of Moses and the prophets must honor Jesus as the Christ or forfeit their position as God's people (John 5).
 2. John the Baptizer, as the last prophet to herald the Messiah, required all to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ if they wished to have eternal life (John 2:36).

Transition: As the One who came to earth in fulfillment of the ancient Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus did not merely impress people with His power or glory. He came to sacrifice His prestige and glory — indeed, His very life — for the salvation of sinful humanity by substituting Himself for us under the judgment of God.

II. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice of atonement.

- A. As Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son sacrificed His outward glory to the extent that He was mistaken for an ordinary carpenter's son (v. 22).
- B. The paradox of Christ's humiliation was that the Great Physician willingly submitted Himself to human scorn for sacrificing His own life (v. 23; Isaiah 53:4; Luke 23:35).
 1. Christ's work on our behalf is our ultimate basis for any and all approaches to God (John 14:6).
 2. So ultimate was the price that Jesus paid for our salvation that nothing can equal its value before God (1 Peter 1:18-19).
 3. Those who would approach God apart from faith in Jesus insult His sacrifice and are doomed to be rejected (Acts 4:12; John 3:18; 1 John 5:12).

Transition: Reverent and faithful regard for the divinity of the Son of God and the value of the enormous sacrifice that He has made requires that the authority of Jesus Christ be unquestioned. Furthermore, against the trends of modern religious thought, the authority of Christ must be placed above anyone else's.

III. Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority.

- A. We are told that one of the foremost of Jesus' qualities, discerned by the believers in Capernaum, was His authority (v. 32).
- B. The authority of Jesus is more than a human authority.
 1. The authority of Jesus was contrasted with that of "the scribes" and other religious leaders (Matthew 7:29).
 2. The authority of Jesus was manifest in His exorcisms and miracles (v. 36).

C. The authority of Christ compels us to respond in faith and obedience.

1. St. Peter had the divine truth when he admitted that only Christ has the words of eternal life (John 6:68).
2. In the religious world today only those who hold Jesus Christ as the only object of religious faith really understand His authority.

Conclusion: It is true that in our changing world most claims to be "the ultimate" have a hollow ring. But when we are confronted with Jesus of Nazareth as revealed in the Word of God, then we truly meet the "Ultimate," the Messiah of God foretold by the prophets. Only His is the sacrifice which ultimately reconciles God and man. By His authority as the Living Word of almighty God, Christ alone offers the answers for the greatest questions that challenge us today.

Jonathan Naumann
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THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Luke 9:28-36

February 5, 1989

All three synoptists record the transfiguration of Jesus. It is obviously an important occasion in the life of Jesus. The Last Sunday after the Epiphany is known as Transfiguration Sunday. This Sunday is a bridge between the Epiphany season, the period in which we consider the appearances of Jesus, and the Lenten season, at which time we concentrate on the suffering and death of our Lord. A well-known contemporary scholar has written: "It is not easy to see exactly what happened at the transfiguration or why it occurred." We cannot agree with this sentence. We do not underestimate the difficulties but we know what happened and why it happened. What causes the main difficulty is the fact that the transfiguration, like many other things in Scripture, is paradoxical. We are dealing with what seems to be a contradiction, but it only *seems* to be so. Christians constantly deal with paradoxes. For example, as Luther said: "The Christian is at one and the same time a saint and a sinner." How paradoxical! Again, we rightly say that Christ gained life through death. Again, we correctly say that in the person of Christ God was born, God died, God rose from the dead. In the present text, too, we are dealing with a paradox. This paradox is also the theme of the sermon suggested below: the Changeless One is transfigured.

In a well-known hymn we address Christ thus: "Oh Thou who changest not." That statement is Biblical. Hebrews 13:8 tells us: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (NKJV). And yet our text tells us that while Jesus was praying on this occasion "the form of His face became different and His clothing was

gleaming white" (v. 29). This paradox is caused by the nature of Jesus' person. He has two natures, indivisibly united (but not mingled) ever since His conception. They will continue as such into all eternity and in heaven we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2.)

Introduction: We know from Scripture that Jesus Christ is true God and true man in one indivisible person. He was true God in Mary's womb. He was true God when He died. He is still true man today. While visible on earth, His human nature did not always make full use of the qualities of the divine nature. But on this occasion, the Transfiguration, the glory of His divinity shone through His humanity. His humanity was suffused with His brilliant divinity, so much so that the disciples could not bear to look at Him.

THE CHANGELESS ONE IS TRANSFIGURED

- I. The occasion and setting of this paradox.
 - A. It happened eight days after an important occasion (v. 28).
 1. It was an occasion of confession and prophecy. In verses 18-22 we are told that the disciples gave various answers as to who people thought Christ was. Then Peter gave a good confession, which was followed by the first of three prophecies by Christ concerning His suffering, death, and resurrection (cf. Luke 17:25 and 18:32). These were words hard to hear from the mouth of the Master.
 2. It was an occasion of sober reflection. In verses 23-27 follow some more hard words, words which are not easy for flesh and blood to hear. To bear the cross, to deny oneself, to lose one's life for Jesus' sake, who is equal to such tasks?
 - B. It was a day of glory.
 1. As to Jesus' nature. Verse 32 tells us that the three disciples "saw His glory." John wrote of it later (John 1:14). Peter too spoke of it (2 Peter 1:16). His divinity suffused His humanity. Matthew and Mark give further information. Jesus shone like the sun.
 2. As to those with Jesus. Verse 31 informs us that Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets respectively, appeared in the bestowed glory of heaven. These two "glories," the inherent glory of Jesus' person and the bestowed glory of redeemed Old Testament saints, fill us with wonder as to the person and work of Jesus. Jesus redeemed all men, also those under the Old Testament (see Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 11; and Revelation 13:8). But Moses and Elijah could not bring sin to an end. Only Jesus could and did do that.

Transition: But what follows strengthens Christ, His disciples, and us. In this world of sin and sorrow the eyes of all, even those of Jesus, must be lifted heavenwards. That is what this text does for us.

II. The purpose of this paradox.

A. The purpose for Jesus.

1. He is strengthened by Old Testament saints. Luke 22:43 informs us that an angel from heaven strengthened Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Similarly, verse 31 of our text tells us that Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about His impending suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The only possible explanation is that they strengthened Him for what lay ahead.
2. He is approved by the Father. Verse 35 reminds us of Isaiah 42:1 and Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22). At Luke 3:22 the Father addressed Jesus personally. Here the Father speaks of Jesus in the third person. But in both cases we know that the Father approved of Jesus' person and work.

B. The purpose for us.

1. Like the disciples, we are strengthened for what lies ahead. Like Peter, very often we do not know what we are saying (v. 33). Like all of the disciples, very often we are afraid (v. 34). In later years both John and Peter spoke of this occasion. What they wrote about this occasion is in a context of comfort and strengthening.
2. We are given direction, as were the disciples, in verse 35. The Father says to them and us: "Be constantly hearing Him [Jesus]." This statement is plainly a fulfillment of what was prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15. Today we hear Jesus' voice through His Word and His ministers (Luke 10:16).

Conclusion: The person, work, and word of Jesus must constantly be at the center of our attention. Antichristian forces are constantly producing all kinds of false teachings about Jesus. This text contains much material to strengthen the Christian who comes to church burdened by his own sins, by the things which he is suffering, and by the false things which he is hearing. This text strengthens him and lifts his eyes heavenward.

Harold H. Buls

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Luke 4:1-13

February 12, 1989

Luke's report of the temptations of our Lord differs from Matthew's report in three respects: the order of the second and third temptations are reversed, there is no mention of the ministry of the angels to our Lord at the close of

the temptations, and the conclusion notes that the devil left Jesus "until an opportune time" (NIV) (*ap' autou achri kairou*). Satan would return, to enter Judas, at the Passover, on the night of betrayal of Christ.

THE CONFESSING CHRIST AND THE CONFESSING CHURCH

- I. A confession of faith stands at the center of our Lord's temptation.
 - A. His threefold confession is the surrender of His will to the will of His Father.
 - B. His threefold confession epitomizes the work of Christ for our salvation.
 1. "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone' " (v. 4).
 2. "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only' " (v. 8).
 3. "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test' " (v. 12).
 - C. His threefold confession of faith lays the foundation of His public ministry.
 1. His confession of faith is faith's response to temptation.
 2. His confession of faith is formed and nurtured by the Word of the Father.
 3. His confession of faith expresses great confidence in the faithfulness of the Father's Word, against all contrary evidence.
- II. A confession of faith must stand at the center of our own temptations.
 - A. Our confession is like our Lord's, because His temptation was like ours (Hebrews 4:14-16).
 1. His words reveal what is in His heart.
 2. His confession of faith is the Word of the Son expressing confidence in His Father.
 - B. Our words reveal what is in our hearts, as a confession of faith or a confession of unbelief.
 1. Our confession of faith is faith's response to temptation.
 2. Our confession of faith is formed and nurtured by the Word of the Father.
 3. Our confession of faith expresses great confidence in the faithfulness of the Father's Word, against all contrary evidence.

Charles J. Evanson

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Luke 13:31-35

February 19, 1989

The scene before us is a potent one. Jesus' words about Herod are reminiscent of His response to Pilate in John 19:11 or again the words that He shared

with the Pharisees in John 10: 17-18. Jesus, the Son of God, is in control. He is not swayed by any earthly power. He publicly labels Herod a fox and then, as He so often does, He proves the right He has to make such a pronouncement. He is the King of Kings who cast out demons (cf. Matthew 12:25-28) and performs cures (cf. John 5:36; 14:10). He even sets down His time-schedule—today, tomorrow, and the next day—and He will not be swayed. On the third day He will continue His trip to Jerusalem and not before (cf. Luke 13:22; 17:11). Jesus' time-schedule was the Father's time-schedule. For this reason He told Mary, "My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4).

It is likewise a pointed observation which the Lord makes about Jerusalem, the city that God loved, the capital city of the people He had called to be His own, and the site of so much bloodshed. The Lord would speak the very same words about Jerusalem a few short days later to the Pharisees in the temple during the week of the Lord's passion (cf. Matthew 23:29-39). Still, cradled in all this law, the heart of a loving Savior is clearly displayed in the beautiful picture of love expressed in the words, "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!" The consequence of this persistent, stubborn rebellion is summed up in verse 35. "Your house is left to you" by God. Jerusalem is now left to her own devices and her own disaster. Jesus would comment on this point on the way to the cross (cf. Luke 23:28-34).

One can clearly see here the love and personal compassion of God, who cradles us in hands of infinite power and authority. What a blessing to know that such a God cares for us. He is great enough to handle all our needs in this life and in that to come. He is more personal and compassionate than anyone we have ever met here in this life. Isaiah captured this thought in chapter 40:6-11 and Jesus expressed it in those matchless words recorded in Matthew 10:29-31. Surely He is, as the hymnist Johann Franck expressed, a "priceless treasure."

AN OPPORTUNITY WE DARE NOT MISS

- I. Tomorrow Christ may come in judgment.
 - A. Jerusalem provides an important lesson to us all.
 1. She rejected the Saviour (vv. 31, 34).
 2. She was condemned to destruction (v. 35).
 - B. Few people today, however, heed the lesson of Jerusalem.
 1. Most people still reject the Savior.
 2. Most people will, therefore, be condemned to eternal damnation.
- II. Today Christ still comes in mercy.
 - A. He came in visible flesh to save all men (vv. 32-34).
 - B. He comes now through the Gospel.

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THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Luke 13:1-9

February 26, 1989

The thirteenth chapter of Luke is pivotal to his gospel as many pastors discovered last week by preaching on Luke 13:31-35. Jesus clearly announces here to His religious opponents that Jerusalem is the city of His inexorable destiny of death and resurrection. Luke 13:1-9 follows closely upon last week's gospel by confronting the problem of suffering. Is there a direct link between one's sin and one's suffering? During this Lenten season of instruction and penance our Lord's suffering looms as a major theme for contemplation that assists us in addressing this pastoral problem. Last week gave us an opportunity to look closely at Jesus' suffering in Jerusalem. This week, by means of a pericope that anticipates Jesus' discussion of His death in Jerusalem, the preacher has an opportunity to explore the causes of human suffering and draw a correspondence between Christ's suffering and our suffering. The placement of lessons in this Lenten Series C (Luke 13:31-35 preceding Luke 13:1-9) reflects good homiletics—the Gospel of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection precedes the application of that Gospel.

Every pastor knows that suffering is one of the major problems in his congregation. If people are not asking *why* there is suffering, they are asking the pastor *how* to deal with it. The temptation to question God's merciful presence is sometimes overwhelming, even for the most faithful of the saints. The answer lies in the Gospel of a suffering Christ who has fully identified with us in every way. We now identify with Him through our incorporation into His suffering, death, and resurrection through baptism and our continuing proclamation of His death until He comes in the Lord's Supper. Jesus knows our afflictions and our suffering; He has heard our cries for mercy; and through His death He leads us to the promised land (Exodus 3:7-8). Just as God was present to Moses in the burning bush and revealed His name to him (Exodus 3), so also is God present to us through His Word and Sacrament. Paul in the epistle (1 Corinthians 10:1-13) seems to be commenting upon God's presence among His people in Exodus and His presence in His church today. But the holy presence that delivers us from sin and death will also create a distance of fear and trembling if we are tempted to take God's mercy for granted and reject His offer to live a life of repentance and forgiveness, as both Moses and Paul attest. But Paul comforts us by saying, "God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus Christ in His suffering flesh is always the way of escape.

Jesus seems very sensitive to the problem of suffering in Luke 13:1-9, where the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices and the eighteen

upon whom the tower of Siloam fell serve as examples of those who were not punished by death because they were such great sinners. Jesus forcefully rejects a correspondence between sin and punishment and tells the parable of the fig tree to explain the proper way to understand the world in which we live. Instead of calling for judgment, Jesus calls for repentance and reveals God's merciful patience toward those who do not bear fruits of repentance. Anyone who does not repent will perish (13:5). The Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ remains hidden in a world of sin, suffering, and death. One must be ready "to interpret the present time" (12:56)—to see that the end of the ages has come (1 Corinthians 10:11) through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of God's Son, although suffering and death continue in a fallen world of sin. For the forgiveness of sins is present in the Risen One who remains present in His church through the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. It is here that the suffering Christian meets the suffering Christ and sees in those sufferings His comfort, His peace, His redemption. The words of Jesus in Luke 13:1-9, not only apply the message of last week, but are words appropriate to the season of Lent.

The preacher may want to begin his sermon by raising the questions that are constantly being asked in his congregation: "Why is this happening to me? Why does God allow me to suffer like this? What did I do to deserve this punishment?" The sermon itself may then address these questions with the Gospel of Him who has suffered on our behalf, because we are those who "share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that if possible we may attain the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:10).

THE SUFFERING MESSIAH

- I. He offers Himself up on a Jerusalem cross in suffering and death (13:31-35).
 - A. To reveal that He is "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3).
 - B. To redeem a suffering humanity from eternal suffering and death.
 - C. To provide a way of escape in our suffering and temptation (1 Corinthians).
- II. He offers an answer to the problem of our suffering (13:1-9).
 - A. To reveal the need to repent of our fallenness (13:5)—our Lenten task.
 1. The example of the Galileans and the eighteen at Siloam (13:1-4).
 2. The parable of the fig tree (13:6-9).
 - B. To reveal the solution in Christ's redemption of suffering.
 1. In His suffering we see the way of escape in our suffering.
 - a. We identify with His suffering in baptism.
 - b. We benefit from His suffering in the Lord's Supper.
 - c. We rejoice in our sufferings for it strengthens faith (Hebrews 12).
 2. In His resurrection we have the promise of the end of the suffering.

- a. We identify with His resurrection in baptism.
- b. We will rise with Him one day to feast at His eternal table.
 - (1) We rejoice in the celebration of the resurrection with all the saints in the Lord's Supper.
 - (2) We look forward to the celebration of the resurrection on Easter day.

Arthur Just

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

March 5, 1989

This parable is the story of two lost sons. At the center of the story is the compassionate father. It invites us to rejoice in the grace of our God. Verses 1-3 provide the setting. Verse 1 relates what follows closely to 14:35; the tax collectors and sinners were the sort who did have ears to listen to Jesus. In verses 2-3 the issue is Jesus' welcome and acceptance of sinners. The parables which follow are a defense and vindication of the Gospel. In particular, verses 11-32 have something to say both to "the tax collectors and sinners" and to "the Pharisees and scribes."

Verses 11-32 set forth the parable itself. Verse 11 makes reference to "two sons"; the older brother is in the story from the start. In verses 12-19 the sin of the younger son is his desire to live independently from his father. In effect he says, "Father, I cannot wait for you to die." He wants to be his own god (*contra* the First Commandment). Such freedom results in the ultimate degradation. Noteworthy is the prodigal's use of *apollumai* (v. 17). The term has definite overtones in this chapter of a fate worse than starvation (verses 4, 6, 8, 9, 24 and 32). There is rabbinic evidence that the phrase *eis heauton erchesthai* means "repent"; at least he realized that he had sinned against God (*eis ton ouranon*) and offers no excuses for himself. However, in seeking to become a "hired hand" he may still feel that he can do something to make up for what he has done; he will earn his way from this point on.

In verse 20 *esplagchnisthē* expresses the heart of the story. The father takes the initiative and runs down the road; his compassion precedes any confession of repentance by the son and corresponds to the seeking and searching in the two preceding parables. The kiss is a sign of forgiveness and of the restoration of the broken relationship. The story shows God's compassion toward sinners. Says Miller, "But this attitude was depicted in Jesus' behaviour as He was on the way to Jerusalem. Forgiveness finally meant the Cross! It could not be meted out with a gracious word alone. It must be given by a costly deed." In verses 21-24 there is no more talk about becoming a "hired hand," simply an

acknowledgement of total worthlessness and the father's compassion in restoring the rebel to sonship.

In verses 25-32 we see the break in the relationship between the older son and his father. The older son in effect declares that he does not want to be a part of his father's family. He has lived in the house in the spirit of a slave (*douleuō*) and is seeking or claiming merit and reward. He publicly insults his father by refusing to participate in the celebration. His actions are a clear violation of the Fourth Commandment. Once again the father demonstrates his compassion. For the second time in one day he goes out of the house; he comes to entreat, not scold or rebuke. He leaves the ninety-nine who need no repentance and seeks the lost. His address is tender, *teknon*; they are both sons and he loves them both. The father's statement concludes the parable, but it leaves this question for the listener to answer: Will the older son go in? Each hearer is invited to respond.

YOUR FATHER'S PARTY—WILL YOU JOIN IN?

- I. Look at your Father running down the road to welcome you.
 - A. You were determined to live life on your own terms.
 - B. You ended up lost and alone.
- II. Look at your Father trudging across the field to entreat you.
 - A. You thought religion was a matter of rules and obedience.
 - B. You thereby excluded yourself from home.
- III. Look at the compassion of your Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - A. He freely offered His obedient life into death.
 - B. He therefore welcomes back the rebel and entreats the self-righteous.

Conclusion: It's your Father's party—will you join in?

Roger J. Humann
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THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Luke 20:9-19

March 12, 1989

At this point in Jesus' ministry, although He had gained a popularity with the people, the scribes and chief priests had been questioning His authority and even had begun to look for ways to kill Him (19:47). He spoke this parable, depicting God's relationship with His people (especially with the leadership of the Jews), *pros ton laon* — to the people — for the benefit of all within hearing range, but

He was fully aware of the presence of those leaders who wanted so much to be rid of Him. It, of course, uses much the same imagery as Isaiah 5, the parallels of Matthew and Mark following even closer by elaborating on the preparation and care of the vineyard. The great patience of God is shown by the landowner's repeated attempts to collect what is due. In verse 12 *prosetheto heteron pempsaí* (literally, "he added to send another") is a Hebraism found also in 19:11. The servants represent the prophets of the Old Testament, many of whom had been treated shamefully (2 Kings 17:13, 14; 2 Chronicles 36:15-16). Finally the landowner asks: "What shall I do?" He decides to send his own son. It is striking that *ton huíon mou ton agapēton* is the exact expression used in 3:22, only the case being changed. The tenants reacted in the most atrocious manner, throwing the son out of the vineyard and killing him. In verse 14 *dielogidzonto pros allēlous* implies a deliberate, premeditated action, having as its goal the wresting of the vineyard from the owner, just as the Jewish leadership sought to reject the authority of God and set itself up as supreme. When Jesus concluded the parable by pointing out the just retribution that the owner would deal out to the wicked tenants, those hearing said: "God forbid!" This reaction was not directed toward only the last part of the parable, that the vineyard would be taken from the wicked tenants and given to others, but was caused by the thought that the horrible events of the entire parable would come to pass.

The point of the parable having been made, Jesus switches the analogy, drawing upon Psalm 118:22. The first part, "a stone which the builders rejected," is a recapitulation of the previous parable. But He continues to express the final victory that would take place; the rejected stone would become the head cornerstone. In verse 17 *apodokimadzō* expresses the rejection of something after scrutiny. The scribes and chief priests had the opportunity to observe and test Jesus, and yet they rejected Him. However, the results of such rejection are complete destruction. To some there is an apparent difference in the punishments *sunthlasthēsetai* and *likmēsei*, the latter being the final and complete destruction to be experienced on judgment day. In any case, they both indicate the consequences of unbelief. The scribes and chief priests were so enraged at these words that, but for the fear of the crowd, they would have laid hands on Jesus immediately. They understood full well what He was saying.

Taken in its Lenten context, this pericope speaks of the sufferings and death of Christ, but also reminds us that He is the final victor. He ushers in a new order, with Himself as Head. This same idea occurs in the Old Testament lesson, "See, I am doing a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19), and in Paul when he speaks of "the power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

Introduction: I would imagine that there are members of this congregation who have had some experience in the management of properties. One of the most difficult aspects of renting real estate is how to deal with the various tenants that occupy those properties. We soon find out that there are some tenants who are very good, who never cause any problems, who take very good care of the property,

who always pay their rent on time. And then, of course, there are those who are not such good tenants. They are the ones who never seem to be able to pay their rent and who many times damage the property. Christ spoke very graphically in this parable when He compared His relationship with His people to that of a landowner with his tenants. Most landowners never need deal with such vicious and wretched renters as those described in this text, but let us see

HOW GOD DEALS WITH HIS TENANTS

- I. What kind of tenants were the Israelites?
 - A. God gave them everything they needed.
 1. He brought them out of Egypt (Isaiah 43:16) and made them a powerful nation.
 2. He sent them many prophets to teach them.
 3. He let them rebuild the temple after the Babylonian captivity.
 - B. Their response was repeated rejection (Isaiah 43:26ff.).
 1. Many times they even rejected Moses.
 2. They served other gods.
 3. They committed violence and injustice.
 - C. God sent His Son, whom they rejected also.
 1. When Christ preached they did not repent.
 2. Finally they killed Him, like the son of the owner of the vineyard (v. 15).
- II. What kind of tenants are we now?
 - A. God gives us everything we need.
 1. As citizens of the United States we cannot deny that God has blessed this country.
 2. Materially we have more than most people on this planet.
 - a. In comparison with the third world nations.
 - b. In individual rights and freedoms.
 - B. But do we reject Him as did the Jews?
 1. Is the god of America the dollar on which "In God We Trust" is printed?
 2. Atrocities are committed in our own land (e.g., abortion).
 3. Even more subtly, we are tempted into complacency by the prosperity we enjoy.
- III. How does God deal with us?
 - A. Rejection is dealt with severely (v. 17).
 - B. But "a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19) is established for those who trust in Him.
 1. Jerusalem was destroyed some thirty years after Christ's death — no more Jewish temple.
 2. Even though rejected by many, Christ became the chief cornerstone (v. 17).
 - a. A structure depends on having a good cornerstone. If it is weak or improperly laid, it throws off the entire construction.
 - b. Our faith is founded on that cornerstone (Philippians 3:9).
 3. By repentance and faith His resurrection victory is for us also (Philippians 3:10).

Conclusion: We build our life, all of our hopes and dreams, our whole future, our relationships with one another, then, not upon an interior beginning, but upon Christ, the stone that has been rejected by so many, but whom God has made the principle stone, so that we may, as Paul said, "win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

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PALM SUNDAY

Luke 23:1-49

March 19, 1989

In the three-year lectionary this day is the Sunday of the Passion and it is suggested that the Palm Sunday Gospel (Luke 19:24-28) be read during a procession at the beginning of the worship service with appropriate Palm Sunday hymns sung. The reading of the Passion at the usual place of the Gospel, then, emphasizes the suffering, death, and burial of our Lord, which is the center of all of Holy Week, and the music after the reading of the Passion continues that emphasis. The lectionary lists both a long and a short Passion reading, this text being the short one. But even 49 verses can be a ponderous text and it might be simpler to select only a few verses with a more narrow theme. This outline, however, is an attempt to place before the congregation the broad theme of God's saving actions during Holy Week, using the various participants in Good Friday as illustrations.

Introduction: This week we tell and retell the wondrous act of God's salvation which culminated in Jesus' death for us. We saw many people involved as we heard it read to us again. But how does it all relate to our own lives? How can it all be summed up by someone? Who would it take to do it? How about, of all people, a thief? A thief on a cross, himself about to die, getting what he deserved. He believed, as we should, that Jesus in

INNOCENCE BORE WHAT WE DESERVE

- I. This man did nothing wrong.
 - A. Some accused Jesus of wrongdoing.
 1. The ruling assembly accused Him of being opposed to the Roman rule (vv. 2, 10).
 2. The people shouted for His crucifixion (vv. 18-23).
 - B. Others knew that Jesus was innocent.
 1. Pilate declared Him innocent (vv. 4, 13-15, 22).

2. The women wept for Him (v. 27).
 3. The penitent thief recognized the injustice (v. 41).
 4. The centurion declared His righteousness (v.47).
- C. How do we regard Him? Our salvation rests on our answer.
- II. For He endured what we deserve.
- A. We sin.
1. We resent Jesus calling for change in our lives, much as the ruling assembly did (Luke 22: 1-2), so that they falsely accused Him to be rid of Him (v. 2).
 2. We regard Him superficially as Herod did (v. 8).
 3. We want to rid ourselves of His presence as the people did (v. 21).
 4. We make light of His saving power as those about the cross did (vv. 35, 37, 39).
- B. We deserve God's condemnation (vv. 40-41).
- C. Yet God put our sin and condemnation on Jesus.
1. For Jesus' sake God forgives us (v. 34).
 2. In Him God gives us eternal life (v. 43).
 3. His sacrificial death accomplished it as God has placed on Him what we deserve (v. 46).

Conclusion: This Holy Week we can simply walk away from it all (v. 48) or we can just observe (v. 49). Or in the Spirit's power we can daily repent and believe and live anew. The "Hosannas" of this day turned into "Crucify Him" on Good Friday. And yet the death of Good Friday was overcome with new life on Easter. This week we worship the God-man whose innocence covers our sins so that we can have life with God always.

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EASTER SUNDAY

Luke 24:1-11

March 26, 1989

Before Easter morning the world thought that it understood death. Its truth could be summed up by the simple axiom, "Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin. And death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). The resurrection of Jesus awakened the disciples and Christians everywhere to God's truth about death—namely, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). This revelation was not immediately assimilated

even early that Easter morning. The women were convinced only by angels who reminded them of Jesus' own promises. The disciples' skepticism caused them first to receive the report as nonsense. (It did, however, stir them to investigate the report.) Many skeptics today still need awakening.

The following illustration and application may prove useful in the sermon suggested below: A little boy living in East London made his first trip to the country. There were so many new sights and smells that he could hardly take it all in. As he lay on his back in an orchard stringing a chain of daisies he was suddenly taken by the sight of swallows swooping through the open sky. "Poor birds," he said, "They don't even have cages in which to roost." Those who face death without the comfort of Easter are also limited in their perspective. They do not know the freedom which the Gospel brings and cannot begin to understand Christian peace in the midst of death. Easter changes everything! Death quickly loses its sting and becomes a release from the travails of life. No one would wish the Christian who has died in faith to be again "caged" by the troubles of life.

THE DAY THE WORLD WAS CHANGED

- I. Easter began as a day of mourning.
 - A. The Sabbath and a hasty crucifixion had not allowed time for a proper burial.
 - B. It must have been a solemn group of women who so early walked to the tomb.
 - C. Still reeling from their loss, the disciples were in seclusion.
- II. The resurrection of Jesus changed everything.
 - A. The women were taken from sorrow, to fear, to exuberation.
 - B. The disciples' fear and confusion were replaced with joy, conviction, and courage.
 - C. God used such as these to establish the Christian church.
- III. So many people still need to hear the truth of Easter.
 - A. Death for too many brings only fear, sorrow, and confusion.
 - B. Like the angels, then the women, and later the disciples, we can use the Gospel to turn their mourning into joy.
 - C. We need only witness to the truth; the Spirit through the Word will answer their searching hearts.

Conclusion: Two young boys were having a conversation about how to know when your shoes were on the right feet. The older said it was very simple: "If it hurts, you've done it wrong!" Christians might offer the same counsel about death: "If it hurts, you don't truly understand." Easter morning does not mean

death is now without sorrow. (Where many joys have been shared much loss will be felt.) It does mean that death need not cause lasting sorrow! The Gospel chases sadness, fear, and confusion away, and in its place brings peace and joy that surpasses the understanding of those who know nothing about Easter.

Stephen D. Hower
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THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 20: 19-31

April 2, 1989

"The Sunday following Easter Day presents a liturgical challenge. Inevitably there is a sense of descent from the heights of the Sunday of the Resurrection" (H. Boone Porter, *Keeping The Church Year*, p. 76). Preachers are urged to emphasize the connection between this Sunday and Easter. Notice how the collect maintains this relationship: "Grant. . .that we who have celebrated the mystery of the Lord's resurrection may by the help of your grace bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conduct" (*Lutheran Worship*, p. 50). The Hymn of the Day ("O Sons and Daughters of the King," *Lutheran Worship*, 130) provides us with the Holy Gospel in hymnic form and as such provides the congregation with a bridge which links the reading of the Holy Gospel with the preaching of the same. (For a fuller treatment of the liturgical context of the Second Sunday of Easter, see Adrian Nocent's *The Liturgical Year*, III, pp. 176-188).

The pericope itself is composed of two parts. Verses 19-23 record the Risen Lord's appearance to the disciples on Easter evening while verses 24-30 record the Savior's encounter with Thomas on the following Sunday. Several elements of the text call for special attention. Note the Lord's greeting, "Peace be with you," in verses 19, 21, and 26. The Lord Christ loads an ordinary greeting among Jews (see Judges 6:23; Daniel 10:19) with the fruit of His suffering, death, and resurrection (see Ephesians 2: 14-17; Acts 10:36; Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:7-9; Colossians 1:20; 3:15; also note the essay by P. Stuhlmacher, "He is Our Peace," in *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*, pp. 182-200). Our Lord promises peace to His disciples on Maundy Thursday (see John 14:27; 16:33). This peace, "which the world cannot give," is established by the Savior's sacrificial death in our place. In His resurrection our Lord distributes and bestows His peace to His disciples—even Thomas! The Lord's wounds (verses 20 and 27) are the visible tokens of His peace! Peace between God and man is now a reality (see Luke 2:14; 19:38). The preacher would do well to review Luther's sermons on this text (in *Sermons of Martin Luther*, II [Lenker Edition], pp. 352-412).

Introduction: Peace—how do we get it? We know how fragile and uncertain political peace can be. Such peace is easily dissolved by human greed or the desire for revenge. Some search for “peace of mind,” but we know how tenuous and fleeting is that “peace” which is manufactured by our frantic and feeble attempts to put life together on our own terms. Our Lord is not one who merely teaches us about peace as if, once we could define peace, it would be ours. Rather, our Lord is the Prince of Peace. He is the giver of peace. Peace is His gift for you.

THE GIFT OF EASTER

- I. The giver of the gift of peace is the Risen Savior.
 - A. He was crucified in order to make peace between God and man.
 1. Our sin is a declaration of war against God.
 2. Jesus brings the hostility to an end by dying in our place (see Ephesians 2:14-17).
 - B. Easter is God’s declaration of victory.
 1. It brings victory over sin.
 2. It brings victory over Satan.
 3. It brings victory over the last enemy, death.
- II. Peace is His gift.
 - A. Our Risen Lord bestows the gift.
 1. Peace was won at Calvary; it is distributed in the Gospel and Sacraments.
 2. Angels sang of peace over Bethlehem’s plains; now that peace is to be distributed throughout the world.
 - B. Thomas had made himself absent from the gathering of the disciples on Easter evening. He was locked in doubt.
 1. Our Lord comes to Thomas. He does not wait for Thomas to find Him!
 2. Our Lord bestows His peace on Thomas as He shows him His wounds.
 3. With His gift of peace, our Lord dispels Thomas’ doubt. The gift brings about Thomas’ confession: “My Lord and my God” (v. 28).
 - C. Our Lord sends His apostles into the world with the gift of peace.
 1. Where the gift is received, there is life and salvation through the forgiveness of sins.
 2. Where the gift is rejected, sins are retained.

Conclusion: The Lord Jesus continues to bestow the gift of His peace on His people by Word and Sacrament. Peace is the fruit of Good Friday and Easter. It is the Lord’s Easter gift to you. His peace is indeed the gift that will keep and guard your hearts and minds unto life everlasting.

John T. Pless
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THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 21: 1-14

April 9, 1989

The text tells of the Lord's appearance to seven of the disciples at the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The whole scene has a sense of *déjà vu*, bringing to mind the episode recorded in Luke 5. On that occasion Jesus Christ also appeared to the disciples after they had fished unsuccessfully all night and granted them a huge catch of fish. The similarities and differences of the two passages should be considered. In the following verses of John 21 we have Christ's thrice-repeated question and command to Peter. A sermon on that passage might take the tone of demand, but a sermon on the present text will take a more encouraging and assuring approach. The presence of the Lord at the seashore results in success, success in fishing, but also a promise of future success in coming labors. The theme of the sermon suggested below is, therefore, that the presence of the Risen Lord assures us of success in our labors for His kingdom.

Exegetical Comments: With respect to *hypagō halieuein* (v. 3), it is as though Peter says, "Well, I have nothing to do. I might as well go fishing." The verb *piadsein* (v.3) is used several times by John of "arresting" or "taking" Jesus. The fact that it is used here implies the future labors of the disciples as fishers of men. As to *apebēsan* (v. 9, "they disembarked"), the only other place in the Greek Bible where this word is found in the sense of "disembark" is Luke 5:2. As to *opsarion kai arton* (vv. 9, 13, "fish and bread"), this word for fish is used also in John's record of the feeding of the five thousand. The fact that here in John 21 the two words are in the singular does not imply a kind of sacrament. The singular forms can both be used in a general, plural sense.

Homiletical Comments: The disciples are waiting together. They know that something is soon to happen, but what should they be doing in the meantime? Peter's idea, going fishing, is natural and is well accepted. We Christians are in a position of waiting, waiting for the Lord to return in glory and to end our worries and trials on earth and to take us to our true home in heaven. But what to do in the meantime? We can come up with our own ideas to try to fill our lives, and we can convince ourselves that they are good and acceptable ideas. But how successful can they be if the Lord Jesus Christ is not included? How can we keep from letting our selfish, sinful nature control our lives and stop or at least hinder our labors in God's kingdom, if Jesus Christ is not present? We will have just as much success in our spiritual labors as Peter and the others had in fishing.

But the Risen Savior appeared and directed the activity of the disciples. By His almighty power they were given success. The powerful presence did not this time instill fear in Peter, but rather gave him great joy and energy. We need not fear His presence, for He has cleansed us from sin and guilt. He has risen victorious

from the grave. His living presence inspires us and equips us for our labors. With Him in our lives we will have a great catch.

Introduction: Once before Jesus Christ had revealed His great power in a miraculous catch of fish. At that time when Peter saw it, he recognized his own unworthiness and sin. This second instance was more welcome. The Lord was present to bless his labors in the kingdom of God.

OUR LABORS FIND FRUIT ONLY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE RISEN LORD

- I. Our labors are fruitless without His presence.
 - A. There is little hope without His presence.
 1. The disciples were simply passing the time.
 2. Our lives must not degenerate into merely passing the time.
 - B. There is no accomplishment outside of His presence.
 1. The disciples caught no fish on their own.
 2. Our labors in the Gospel will have no success if we do not recognize the Lord's presence and power behind our efforts.
- II. The fruit of our labors multiply in His presence.
 - A. The grace of the Almighty God blesses our lives.
 1. Jesus Christ showed His almighty power in the catch of fish.
 2. Jesus Christ showed His grace in the resurrection from the dead.
 - B. The Risen Lord calls us into His presence and blesses our labors.
 1. He calls us to believe, as He called the disciples to the meal.
 2. He unites us in fellowship with Himself and works through us.

Conclusion: If we know that we are going through our labors in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, that will give us all the confidence we need. He will never fail us, but instead will bless us with His almighty power for the success of our labors and the spreading of the Gospel of life.

Thomas G. Bartels
Elgin, Nebraska

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 10:22-30

April 16, 1989

Most Americans are ignorant of sheep. We need plain talk to understand the overtones of what transpired at the Feast of Dedication two months after

John 10:1-21. See *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* and *A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd and His Sheep* by Phillip Keller. When the Jews pick up stones, they show how well they understood, although with hardened hearts. The variant on verse 29 shifts the antecedent. The translations by Weymouth and Knox use this variant. They "tickle our ears" because they try to explain the Trinity. The very existence of a variant suggests that the church has long struggled with this verse. We had best use the accepted text as KJV and NIV do, even if it is beyond our understanding in this world.

The point of comparison is the *continuous* relationship necessary between shepherd and sheep and between the Good Shepherd and us. We are precious because of what He has invested in us and continues to invest in us. We, like sheep, can escape His loving arms and bolt to disease, cliff, poison, wolves, and death. Or we can bask and live, truly *live* now and eternally. The Shepherd's great joy is to preserve us. In John miracles are signs that enlighten and preserve people of faith. We are not special because of *who* we are, but because of *whose* we are. We who had strayed are now safe and precious in the flock of the Shepherd.

Introduction: The Jews demanded, "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." From John, from Jesus, and from the Holy Spirit, we learn this:

JESUS' IDENTITY IS PLAIN

I. Jesus is the Christ.

A. His words identify Him (v. 25a).

1. Jesus spoke many "I Am" passages (John 8:58).
2. Jesus spoke often of His Source (John 7:28-29).

B. His miracles identify Him (v. 25b).

1. Jesus healed the blind (John 9:7).
2. Jesus walked on water (John 6:19).
3. Jesus fed five thousand people (John 6:11).
4. Jesus did many other miracles (John 20:30).

C. His followers identify Him (v. 27).

1. Jesus' sheep listen to His voice (v. 27a).
2. Jesus' sheep follow Him (v. 27b).

II. Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6).

A. Absolute truth polarizes people.

1. Either we embrace truth,
2. Or we reject truth.

B. Jesus spoke the truth plainly (vv. 25-30).

1. Some rejected His words.
2. Some embraced Him.
3. No one can straddle the fence (1 Kings 18:21).

C. We do not always react in the same way to Jesus.

1. Sweet are the moments when we embrace Him.

2. Tragic are the times when we reject Him.

3. But there is no half-way point.

III. Jesus is our Preserver (cf. the explanations to the First and Third Articles).

A. Without nourishment, we die (the reverse of v. 29b).

1. Without daily use of the Bible.

2. Without daily renewal of our baptismal vows.

3. Without regular sharing of His body and blood.

4. Without regular fellowship in the flock.

5. Without continual living in Him.

6. Without His continual living in us.

B. Life requires continual sustenance.

1. Jesus provides the protecting hand (v. 28).

2. Jesus provides green pastures (Psalm 23:2).

3. Jesus gently leads and carries us (Isaiah 40:9-11).

C. Life in this hostile world requires constant protection.

1. Jesus fought this world, sin, death and the devil for us on the cross.

2. Jesus is our strong Guardian (v. 28).

3. Easter shows His strength over death and the grave.

4. Nothing can snatch us out of His, nor His Father's, hand (Romans 8:35-39).

D. Jesus preserves us by treating us as precious.

1. In a certain society where the price of a wife varied from two to five cows, one man paid eight cows; and his wife lived with him as though she were worth eight cows.

2. A sheep's identity and value are in its *owner*.

3. The identity and value of us all are in Jesus.

4. A spouse is as precious as we treat her or him.

5. A child is as precious as we treat him or her.

6. A pastor is as precious as we treat him.

Conclusion: Jesus is your Christ, your Truth, and your Preserver. Jesus is precious to some and rejected by others (1 Peter 2:7). We pray: Lord Jesus, continue to make plain to us who Thou art so that we may rejoice in whose we are.

Warren E. Messmann
Plain City, Ohio

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 13:31-35

April 23, 1989

At Baptism, sinners are called by God into a religious order, the Order of Christian Love. The Christian is to live in a manner befitting a religious order—set apart from the world—exhibiting a Christ-like life. This life-style is one of love. By a life of love, the Christian is to reflect the glory of Christ and His salvation. As a member of the Order of Christian Love, the Christian, having been justified freely by God's loving grace, is to live a life of loving service which is directed towards Christ and toward other human beings.

Life in the Order of Christian Love is exemplified by the wife caring for her gravely ill husband. As he once awoke, he asked, "What are you doing?" "Just loving you!" was her reply. It is also exemplified by the father who in love disciplines his children. It is seen as Christians witness about their faith in Christ to others who have no faith. What are we doing? "Just loving you!" should be the reply.

The self-sacrificing love of Christ for lost sinners is the pattern for the Christian to emulate. Christ's love for sinners prompted Him to suffer and die on the cross. This passion was the crowning glory of Christ and of His Father's plan of salvation. The outline below is based on the word "love."

THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

- I. L-ove. "All men shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (v. 35).
 - A. Christ commands Christians to love one another.
 1. He commands loving acts toward our fellow-men (Matthew 22:39).
 2. He commands loving acts toward God (Matthew 22:37).
 3. These loving acts identify the doers as disciples of Christ.
 4. Even the loving acts of Christians are imperfect because of sin.
 - B. Christ's love for sinners. "I have loved you" (v. 34).
 1. Christ's love is perfect love. It kept God's law perfectly and showed perfect love to sinners by dying for them.
 2. Christ is love personified—incarnated (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-9).
 3. Christ is love in action—loving miracles; loving death and resurrection for our benefit; loving forgiveness for our sins.
 4. Christ's love is for everyone (Acts 13:44-52, the epistle; note also the references to love in the propers).
- II. O-bedience. "Where I am going, you cannot come" (v. 33).
 - A. Where was Christ going? To the death on the cross. "Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

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- B. Why could Christ's disciples not go? They were sinners who could not give perfect obedience. They could not save themselves from sin. That would detract from God's glory.
- C. The Christian's loving obedience is imperfect.
1. At times it is exemplary—a loving, faithful spouse; a devoted parent or child; an honest laborer; a diligent confirmation student; a loving, harmonious congregation; a forgiving Christian. These are Christ's loving disciples.
 2. At times it is bad—marital infidelity; fighting; quarrels; disrespect for teachers and parents; dishonesty; neglect of worship, Bible study and the sacraments; a lack of forgiveness.
- D. Christ's loving obedience was perfect.
1. There was His active obedience—His incarnation, humility, loving service to others, and His perfect keeping of the Law.
 2. There was His passive obedience—His suffering and death for our sins.
 3. Christ's perfect love and obedience gained for sinners what we do not possess by nature and could not earn by our works—holiness.
- III. V-ictory. "God [the Father] will glorify Him [Christ] immediately" (v. 32).
- A. How can death be glory?
1. To natural eyes, it cannot. Christ died and "lost."
 2. To the eyes of faith, it is glory—Christ's death was an act of love enabling lost sinners to love more than self and sin.
- B. Christ's death on the cross is His glorious victory over sin, death, and hell.
1. Sin condemns sinners—all human beings—to be losers through broken relationships, hopelessness, despair, sorrow and sadness. Without faith, sinners lose eternally in hell. This loss is disgrace and shame. It is not glory.
 2. In Christ, sin's power is broken. Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell becomes ours. We receive this victory in Word and Sacrament. It gives us hope, joy, and peace. Christ's perfect love received in faith casts out the fear of damnation, for He forgives sin. This salvation is God's glorious work in Christ. Its effects are eternal.
- IV. E-ternity. "You shall follow me afterward" (v. 36).
- A. The disciples could not go to the cross, but they can follow Christ into heaven (note Revelation 21:1-5, the other epistle).
- B. God's love in Christ is eternal. Christ's loving forgiveness brings eternal benefit—the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation—heaven's glory.
- C. Even our loving deeds are eternal.
1. Our good deeds done by Christ in us (Matthew 25:34-40; Revelation 14:13).
 2. Our words of witness which God uses to save souls for eternity.

Conclusion: In perfect love Christ has gone to the cross to pay for our sins. His loving obedience has gained forgiveness for our sins—our unloving deeds. Christ has gained the victory we could not gain, for we are sinners. Christ's loving deeds last to eternity, for their effects are received by faith in Word and Sacrament that, being forgiven, we might experience the glory of heaven and serve eternally in the Order of Christian Love.

Armand J. Boehme
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THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 14: 23-29

April 30, 1989

Introduction: We yearn for peace every day. Brothers and sisters seek peace with one another. Husbands and wives often long for it. The nations of the world find it to be very elusive (Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Soviet Union, Central America, Libya, South Africa). If only we could really be at peace in the midst of all the turmoil in this world. As Jesus was with His disciples for the last time before He would be arrested and crucified, He knew the fears and dissolution that they would face, and so He comforted them with words that speak of peace: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. Do not let your hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid." What a beautiful thought—if it could only be! It not only can be, but already is! In Jesus we have complete and full peace.

MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU

- I. "Peace, not as the world gives, do I give to you" (v. 27).
 - A. The very reason why Jesus came was to make peace, peace with God.
 1. He resolved to go to the cross (Matthew 16:21).
 - a. He went to take the punishment for the sin of the world and appease the wrath of a righteous God.
 - b. He removed the barrier between God and man that created the hostility—our sin (Romans 5:1, 10).
 2. His peace is objective.
 - a. Even when we do not feel forgiven or at peace, we are.
 - b. It is God's gift to us and the world (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:19).
 - B. Jesus does not give such peace as the world gives (v. 27).
 1. This peace is not temporary or mere outward peace.

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- a. The world's peace only glosses over the real problem—sin.
 - b. The world's peace only leads one to despair even more.
 - 2. The peace which Christ gives is lasting and complete peace with God.
 - a. The problem of sin is dealt with once and for all.
 - b. Our salvation is assured because of this peace.

Transition: This peace with God exists whether we realize it or not, because it is God's gift to us. Therefore Jesus can say to us:

- II. "Do not let your hearts be troubled; neither let them be afraid" (v. 27).
 - A. This peace becomes meaningful to us when we come by faith to know the love of God in Christ.
 - 1. We know that nothing can rob us of the joy that this peace brings.
 - a. The burden of our guilt and the weight of sin is forever gone (Isaiah 1:18).
 - b. The broken relationships, the threats of war, the effects of sin cannot rob us of this peace because we know our true home is in heaven and not in this world (vv. 2-3, 27).
 - 2. As we know this peace by faith we respond with a life of love (v. 23).
 - a. We show love toward God by keeping His Word (v. 23).
 - b. We show love toward God by loving one another (3:34).
 - B. The life of faith is blessed with the continuing presence of God (v. 23).
 - 1. Christ dwells within our hearts and confirms us in this peace (Philippians 4:7).
 - 2. We have inner peace when we understand the great things that God has done and continues to do for us.

Conclusion: There have been many "peace plans" in the history of the world, but there is only one that really has meaning for our lives and that one is God's eternal peace plan in Jesus Christ.

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THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

John 17:20-26

May 7, 1989

This prayer of Jesus for all believers builds on His prayer for sanctification in the preceding verses. This sanctification is in the truth of God's Word (v. 17). We do not have a call in this pericope for the church to manifest an external unity

at the expense of truth. Nor do we have an ineffective prayer of Christ. The unity of the Christian Church is very real, even in this world. This unity is achieved by God revealing Himself (vv. 25, 26) and the glorious future in store for all believers (v. 24). A common sanctification and faith exist in all who believe in Christ through the word of His disciples (v. 20). Believers today are confused and discouraged by the apparent disunity in Christendom with its hundreds of denominations. The temptation is to assume that Christ's church is not united, or to strive for external unity by weakening our confession. The text tells us that we need not yield to either temptation. Real unity exists in Christ's church, and Christian unity effectively achieves God's purpose of witnessing to the world (v. 23).

Introduction: Sayings such as "all for one, and one for all," "united we stand, divided we fall," and "there is strength in numbers" all make sense. Unity is a good thing to have if one is trying to get something done. When we look at the hundreds of denominations in our country alone, there is the temptation to think that the church is so hopelessly divided that it is impossible to be effective in the world. Jesus, in His farewell prayer for the church, tells us how the church, in spite of appearances, has real unity, and how this unity plays an important part in witnessing to the world. It is a

UNITY WITH PURPOSE

- I. Jesus asks that all believers may be one (v. 21).
 - A. The unity that exists within the Godhead is the type of unity for which Christ prays (vv. 21, 22).
 1. This unity is a perfect unity (John 8:58; 10:30; 14:7ff.).
 2. Because of this unity, Jesus was able to reveal God the Father to the disciples (v. 26).
 - B. All believers are united through the word of the apostles (v. 20).
 1. There is a perfect unity of all who believe (in all times and from every race [Eph 4:4-5]) the Word, by virtue of God's indwelling (vv. 21, 23; John 14:23). These form the invisible church.
 2. Believers desire to make God's name known (v. 26) by showing unity through their confession of the truth of the apostolic teaching and through living it in their lives (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1).
 - C. Jesus gives believers His glory that they may be one (v. 22).
 1. This glory is the glory that Jesus, according to His human nature, has from the Father (v. 22).
 2. This glory is the glory of Christ's divine nature which Christ had before the world was (John 17:5).
 3. Because of our faith, Christ dwells in us, making us partakers of His divine nature and glory (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:2-4).
- II. Christian unity serves the purpose of giving a witness to the world.
 - A. United in Christ we are different from the world (vv. 14, 16).
 1. The world, wrapped in sin and unbelief, has not known about God

- (v. 25), about His love or great salvation.
2. Christians are sent out into the world as Christ was sent out (v. 18).
 3. Because we are united with Christ, we believe and act differently from those who are of the world among whom we live (Romans 6:4ff.; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
 4. People are to see this difference (Matthew 5: 15-16).
- B. Our unity witnesses to the world:
1. That Christ was sent by God (vv. 21, 23). This is an important witness, because Jesus Christ is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6).
 2. That God loves us as He loved Jesus (vv. 23, 26), who was obedient in His saving mission (John 10:17). The proof of God's love is demonstrated in the sacrifice of the Christ, God's Son (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8).
 3. That God has made a holy people (1 Peter 2:9) to be with Jesus Christ for eternity and see Him in all His resurrection glory (v. 24).

Conclusion: Though the church may look divided, we have a great oneness in Christ. Hence, we should not become discouraged by the divisions we see, nor should we sacrifice any of the truth of God's Word in our quest for an external show of unity. The true unity of Christ's church is a unity given to all who believe the message of the apostles with which Jesus sent them into the world. This is the saving message with which we too are sent into the world for the purpose of witnessing to the world by word and deed—that we are united in Christ, that Jesus was sent by God, and that Jesus is the only way to God. Our unity is a witness to the hope we have that heaven awaits the church, where we will see our Savior in all His glory.

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PENTECOST

John 15: 26-27; 16: 4b-11

May 14, 1989

This pericope is most instructive as it relates to the celebration of Pentecost in our churches. Although there is much confusion in Christendom today concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit—and for that reason many of us fear tackling this subject forthrightly—here is an excellent opportunity to present Christ's teaching regarding that great event. The text is of extreme importance, not only concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but also christologically.

Christ here calls the Spirit *ho paraklētos*, which Luther translates “the Comforter.” The term is passive in its origin and has the literal meaning “one who is called to the side (of another).” Though “Comforter” brings out one aspect of this term, the translation is inadequate. A *paraklētos* is one who is called to the side of another, as a friend, to help in coming to a decision or establishing a defense. Therefore modern translations favor terms such as Advocate, Counselor, Helper, or even Friend. Christ is here also ascribing personhood to the Spirit.

There is much difference of opinion as to how verse 26 should be interpreted in relation to the *filioque* controversy. Here Jesus says, on the one hand, that the Spirit *para tou patros ekporeuetai* but, on the other hand, *hon egō pempsō humin*. When He uses the future He is obviously referring to an economic, temporal activity and, when He uses the present, to the eternal procession. The text, of course, does not disprove the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son, since there are many other texts which point to that truth (cf. Galatians 4:6; John 20:22; Romans 8:9). The work of the Holy Spirit is also indicated here. He is to bear witness concerning (*peri*) Christ, as the disciples would do also; *martureite* in verse 27 could be either indicative or imperative, but in any case the fact remains the same.

Jesus did not at first relate to them the sufferings which they will experience because He was with them and was the target of the attacks. Now it is necessary for Him to go back to the Father in spite of the pain that this fact at first causes His followers. But Christ emphatically says: “I tell you the truth.” It is better that He go to complete the work for which He was sent. He can do more for them by His departure than by staying.

Now Christ unfolds the threefold work of the Holy Spirit. He will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. All three of these have to be understood in their relationship with Christ. The first work, concerning sin, is *opus alienum* to God, but it is done that God may do His *opus proprium*. Sin is not defined by Christ in terms of legal or moralistic rules—the devil too can convict of those sins—but He speaks of man’s unwillingness to surrender his fate to God, that is, unbelief. By righteousness Christ here means righteousness in its highest sense: that which comes only through His work as the Son of God. And the devil and all his works are already judged and condemned. Though Christ had not yet died, in the light of His impending death and resurrection, He spoke of it as already taken place, as sure as done. When confronted with this testimony of the Spirit, the sinner goes one of two ways—to damnation with the “prince of this world” or to belief and eternal life with God. This reaction is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit according to Luther, who says: “Sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain ourselves.”

Introduction: Perhaps you have heard about the man who was charged with a crime for which he had to appear in court. He was so convinced of his innocence that he did not seek legal counsel, nor did he desire the services of a lawyer. When

he first appeared before the judge and informed him that he would be defending himself, the judge replied: "May I warn you, sir, that the man who defends himself has a fool for a lawyer." Today this saying is more true than ever, for we know that, due to the complexities of our legal system and the ways in which the truth can sometimes be bent or distorted or even totally disregarded, one must seek out the counsel of an expert in order to defend and protect oneself properly.

Christ knew that we would confront difficulties and trials of our faith in this life as His disciples, and so He has sent the Holy Spirit, because we are not capable of defending ourselves. This Sunday we celebrate the great event of Pentecost when the Spirit was given to the church, and the epistle relates how by the power of that Spirit many people came to faith in Jesus Christ. Today there is much confusion about the Holy Spirit, and we hear much about speaking in tongues and gifts of healing, but Christ tells us very plainly how the Spirit from God works something in fact much more marvelous and of greater and more lasting significance for us and, indeed, the entire world. In the Spirit God provides

THE DEFENDER OF TRUTH

- I. He tells the truth concerning sin.
 - A. Many times we judge ourselves by the world's standards.
 1. The world asks simple adherence to simple rules.
 2. We can look rather good.
 - B. The Holy Spirit sees and convicts the world for what it really is.
 1. We fall short (miss the mark).
 2. At the heart of sin is unwillingness to submit to God (v. 9).
 - C. By the Holy Spirit alone do we come to this knowledge (He comes to us through Word and Sacrament).
- II. He shows what is true righteousness.
 - A. Christ's ascension to the Father was an assurance that His work was acceptable (v. 10).
 1. His perfect obedience and righteousness we could never have attained.
 2. God accepted His sacrifice.
 - B. True obedience to God is self-surrender to Him.
 1. Self-surrender offends natural man. We do not want something done for us; we want to do it ourselves.
 2. But through the Holy Spirit we come to know that true righteousness can come to us only by faith and trust in Christ.
- III. He condemns the prince of this world, who is a liar.
 - A. Christ's apostles would face much persecution.
 1. He had been bearing the brunt of the attacks.
 2. Now, as His representatives, the apostles, who were entrusted with spreading the Gospel, would come under attack.
 - B. The devil assaults us also.
 1. We must endure the jeering of those who despise Christ.

2. The devil also uses more subtle ways to lure us away from the faith.
- C. The Holy Spirit fortifies us in this battle.
 1. The devil has been condemned through the work of Christ.
 2. He has no power over us.

Conclusion: We are not alone, then, to defend ourselves in this world. For if we were, we would certainly have "a fool for a lawyer." And though we may be frightened and tempted to give up our faith when faced with the onslaughts of Satan, the ruler of this world, we can thank God that He has provided for us His Spirit, who brings us to faith and defends and strengthens us.

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TRINITY SUNDAY

John 16:12-15

May 21, 1989

Introduction: Relationships are an important part of human life. No man is an island unto himself. Each of us needs others. In fact, a defining quality of humanness may be our need for other people. There is no humanity without community. In the text Jesus tells us about a divine community. That community is a Tri-unity of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. He focuses on telling His disciples about His relationship with the Holy Spirit and how that relationship affects them. Jesus tell us the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, will glorify Him. Jesus says,

HE WILL GLORIFY ME

- I. He will speak the things of Christ (v. 13b).
 - A. He will speak on Christ's authority (v. 14).
 1. The Holy Trinity was and remains active in the plan of salvation for many (John 14:31; 10:30).
 2. Each person of the Holy Trinity has His own place in the plan of salvation ("opera ad extra indivisa sunt").
 - B. He will speak of Christ's forgiveness (v. 15a).
 1. He speaks only what He hears from Christ (v. 13).
 2. He speaks the Gospel, not a list of rules and regulations (John 1:16-17).
- II. He will speak with certainty.
 - A. He will speak of an unchanging Christ for a changing world (Hebrews 13:8).

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1. Scripture gives answers to the problems of our modern world (vv. 13c-14).
 2. Christ gives healing to the brokenness of our relationships caused by sin and guilt, just as there is perfect harmony among the persons of the Trinity (v. 15).
- B. He will speak the truth (v. 13).
1. Christ Himself stands behind the Word (v. 14).
 2. The Word can neither lie nor err (v. 13b).

Conclusion: This is the real glory of Christ—that we accept the truth of His Word sent by the Holy Spirit and given to the apostles. If you abide in the Word of His grace then He on the last day will say to you: “You have glorified Me.”

Scott Murray
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THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 7: 1-10

May 28, 1989

This Sunday we move from the “Sunday” half of the church year to the “weekday” half. Festivals are mostly behind us. Now we move to daily Christian living. During the non-festival half-year we shall focus on examples of the believer’s life in Christ and of the Holy Spirit building faith. We begin with an example of faith so commendable that even the Lord praised it. The minor differences in the parallel account in Matthew 8: 5-13 reinforce our trust in the evangelists as independent witnesses. Worthy of note is Jesus’ commendation of another foreigner in Matthew 15: 21-28. In verse 3 *erôtōn* shows the urgency of the request. The implication of *autos* in verse 5 is that the centurion paid for the synagogue out of his own pocket. Concerning the centurion’s reluctance to have Jesus in his house, Dr. Lenski’s suggestion is possible. Better is the direct statement of our text that the centurion did not consider himself worthy. Best of all is the faith underlying his statement: “But say the word.” If Jesus says it, it is as good as done. In verse 6 *eporeueto* shows Jesus going out of His way to help. The text comes near the end of His Galilean ministry; He has seen thousands of Jews, but never such faith as in this foreigner. The strength of *ethaumasen* in verse 9 is noteworthy.

Introduction: Just say the word! What word? In our time we hear: Just say no to drugs. Just say no to sex outside marriage. What a joy that we are here today to say yes!

GREAT FAITH SAYS, "JUST SAY THE WORD"

- I. Great faith says yes to others (vv. 2, 4).
 - A. Solomon's prayer in the Old Testament reading (1 Kings 8:41-43) is a yes for foreigners, for outsiders, for *us*.
 - B. To the Roman centurion, Jews were foreigners. Yet he
 1. Said yes to their nation (v. 5a).
 2. Said yes to a synagogue (v. 5b).
 3. Said yes to approaching the Jew Jesus (v. 3).
 - C. To the Roman centurion, a servant was property. Yet he said yes to seeking help for him (v. 2).
- II. Great faith says yes to God's authority (vv. 2, 7, 8).
 - A. Great faith knows we are all weak before illness (v. 2).
 - B. Great faith leads a man of considerable authority (v. 8) to acknowledge Jesus' greater authority (v. 7b).
- III. Great faith says yes to Jesus (vv. 3, 7b).
 - A. The great faith of the Roman knew Jesus as his own Messiah.
 - B. Great faith knows Jesus is God's yes (2 Corinthians 1:20).
- IV. Great faith says yes to God's grace (vv. 6, 7).
 - A. Great faith knows we are unworthy (v. 6).
 - B. Great faith believes that Jesus is the Christ sent by the Father to live, die, rise, ascend, and reign all for us.
 - C. Great faith knows its soul is healed whether the body is well or suffering (v. 7b).

Conclusion: We live in a world full of negatives warning us: Just say "no!" Great faith shouts another word. Just say yes to others, to God's authority, to Jesus, to God's grace. Great faith says, "Just say yes!"

Warren E. Messmann
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THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 7:11-17

June 4, 1989

In a world of seemingly endless confusion, change, and uncertainty the Pentecost theme is a treasury of divine guidance and certainty, even unto death. The lessons of the day move us to declare with Paul that the Gospel that we preach is not something that man has invented. We traverse the history of mankind in this pericope in order that we may see God's hand over His people, in our lives and into eternity. Much could be said about the surrounding

events and the response by the people and the disciples of John the Baptist. Rather than allowing ourselves, however, to be dragged off in other directions, we follow along with the crowd in the company of Jesus.

Introduction: No one likes pain or the loss of life, yet it is inevitable. Although unwanted, suffering and death stalk us and taunt us, and they can crush us. The text relays a message of great pain, yet it also proclaims a message of greatest comfort, comfort available only in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

GREAT PAIN AND GREAT COMFORT

- I. The pain of this world is great.
 - A. The power of pain in this world is apparent in this grief-stricken widow (v. 12).
 - B. Pain is an offspring of sin, the separation of man from his Creator-God (Genesis 3).
 - C. Pain produces its own offspring: doubt, suffering, grief, fear, unbelief, etc.
 - D. The final pain resulting from sin is hell, an eternal death of separation from the Heavenly Father (1 Corinthians 15:56a).

Transition: We easily become well acquainted with the pain of this world. Jesus, however, introduces us to the greatest comfort, the only relief from such eternal pain.

- II. The greatest comfort is Jesus Christ.
 - A. He comes into a world of grief and pain (v. 12).
 - B. His heart goes out to pain-stricken mankind (v. 13) (Matthew 23:37).
 - C. His ministry is a ministry of comfort (vv. 13b-14).
 - D. His purpose is to heal and bring new life (vv. 14-15).

Transition: This dramatic account demonstrates the uniqueness of Jesus. He was more than a prophet of comfort. He meets death and takes away its power. But this is more than an historical account; it demands a response.

- III. The comfort of Christ is greater than the pain of this world (vv. 16-17).
 - A. We are filled with awe and praise God for what Christ has done for us on the cross of Calvary.
 - B. We see the hand of God in our daily lives (v. 16).
 - C. We spread the news throughout the land (v. 17).

Conclusion: In a sin-filled world of daily sorrow the grief of the widow of Nain is just another sad event that would not even make the evening news. Yet it is more than just a story (Galatians 1:11). It is a real-life drama in which

God plays the leading role as Jesus Christ the Savior. He assures a frightened and cynical world that death no longer has dominion over us; we have been freed to live in thankful awe of the grace which He has bestowed upon us.

Daniel J. Vogel
Miami, Florida

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 7:36-50

June 11, 1989

This gospel comes in a series of pericopes from Luke in which Jesus reveals aspects of His unique theanthropic person and power. It is put with an Old Testament lesson and epistle that depict people making judgments in regard to other people. As the text compares and contrasts different approaches to the subject of judging, the expositor should help the listener compare and contrast the responses of the people in the text to their own in a good Law-Gospel fashion.

Introduction: Have you ever been misjudged by someone? Have you ever judged someone else too hastily? Have you ever been bold enough to risk ridicule by publicly seeking the total acceptance of a loved one and chancing rejection? All of these elements are found in today's text where three individuals especially stand out:

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

- I. Simon the Pharisee—the Ugly.
 - A. Simon appears to have had bad motives.
 1. Jesus was not welcomed with basic courtesies extended to guests.
 2. Simon was evidently more eager to see Jesus fail than succeed.
 - a. He did not “put the best construction on everything.”
 - b. His attitude reflects Satan rather than God (John 8:44, etc.).
 - B. Simon was smugly self-righteous.
 1. He was evidently engaging in the game of spiritual one-up-manship.
 - a. Most of us know of people who have tried to play this game.
 - b. At times this quality of Simon is one we display too.
 2. Simon was presumptuously judgmental (Matthew 7:1).
 - a. He judged the sinful woman harshly.
 - b. He attempted to judge Jesus.
- II. The Sinful Woman—the “Bad.”
 - A. There is much we do not know about her.

-
1. Her name (one commentator suggests: "put your own name there").
 2. The exact nature of her sin.
 - B. We know of her soiled reputation.
 1. Her sin was "public knowledge."
 2. We all have our sins, whether public or private.
 - C. She was a woman of good judgment.
 1. Unlike Simon she was aware of her own sinfulness.
 2. She judged that Jesus cared about her plight and would deliver her.
 - a. She had because she asked (Matthew 7:7; James 4:2).
 - b. She loved because she had been loved first (1 John 4:19).
- III. Jesus—the Good.
- A. Jesus was criticized for His forgiving spirit.
 1. He sought to please God rather than man (Galatians 1:10; Acts 4:19; Acts 10:34).
 - a. God is the ultimate judge.
 - b. God is the best judge.
 2. We can expect the same in our lives when we imitate Christ (John 15:17ff.).
 - B. Jesus loves us (1 John 4:16).
 1. He accepts us in spite of our sin when we approach Him in faith.
 2. He sends us out in peace.

Conclusion: God's peace, health, and wholeness are enjoyed and appreciated by those who know the emptiness and futility of self-righteousness and stand humbly before the Lord in grateful acceptance of His love, forgiveness, and empowerment.

Robert A. Dargatz
Irvine, California

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 9: 18-24

June 18, 1989

Jesus Christ is the center of all God's dealings with man. Jesus reveals to us God Himself (1 John 1:18). Jesus' life, death, and resurrection reveal to us God's love for the world (1 John 4:9, 10). The text, therefore, wants us to attain a correct understanding of who Jesus is and to lay aside all false views. It is imperative to see Jesus not just as another man, but as God's own Son. Furthermore, the text wants us to understand that the Christ of God lays aside all ideas of earthly royalty in favor of a theology of the cross and the empty tomb. The key, as it

were, to understanding Jesus is His suffering, death, and resurrection. This is the Christ we follow. He calls us to turn from our sinful selves, to struggle against sin and temptation, and to follow Him through this life into eternal life.

Introduction: There are all kinds of ideas floating around in our world today about who Jesus is and what He means for our lives. Some people describe Jesus as a great teacher of moral values. Others consider Him a defender of the civil rights of the poor and the underprivileged. The Muslims contend that Jesus was an important man, but not nearly as important as Mohammed. The Jews consider Jesus to be the biggest fake the world has ever seen. They teach that He deceived millions upon millions of people into believing that He was something that He really was not. But things were not all that different in Jesus' day. The crowds who followed Jesus could not agree as to who Jesus was. The text clears up all the confusion and sets aside all false views. It shows clearly how to

UNDERSTAND WHO JESUS IS

- I. Understand that Jesus is God (vv. 18-20).
 - A. The crowds who followed Jesus were confused about Him. They, like so many today, thought of Him only as a man.
 - B. But to Peter and the disciples it had been revealed (Matthew 16:17) that Jesus was more than a man. He is the Christ of God. He is God become flesh.
 1. God has done many great things in the history of the world, but sending His only Son is the greatest.
 2. Even historians have recognized the significance of Jesus by dividing history into "B.C." and "A.D."
 3. Jesus is quite different than every other person who has ever lived. His words and actions are the words and actions of God Himself.
- II. Understand that Jesus came to suffer, die, and rise again (vv. 21-22).
 - A. The text gives us a big surprise: "Tell this to no one."
 1. That God sent His Son into the world is Good News for us today and it was Good News for the people of Jesus' day. Why should anyone keep it a secret?
 2. At that time Jesus knew the people would misunderstand His purpose and mission.
 - B. But there would come a time when Jesus could be understood by all—after His suffering, death, and resurrection.
 1. The cross reveals to us the love of God (1 John 4:10; 2 Corinthians 5:20).
 2. The empty tomb reveals to us the victory Christ won for us (1 Corinthians 15: 14, 17).
- III. Understand that Jesus gives direction to your life (vv. 23, 24).
 - A. "Deny yourself." When we look at the cross and see the seriousness of

our sin, we should cry out, "I do not want to be this sinful person anymore."

- B. "Take up your cross daily." The Christian life is not easy. It is a struggle against sin.
- C. "Follow Me." He will lead us through this life to our heavenly home.

Mark Boxman
Concordia, Missouri

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 9:51-62

June 25, 1989

It was the early autumn of 29 A.D. Jesus had just completed His approximately two-year great Galilean ministry. The opening verse of the text tells us that the time was drawing nearer when the Savior, after finishing His earthly mission, was to be received into heaven via the ascension. Having in mind both His coming suffering and subsequent glorification, He determined after some further Palestinian travel to make His way to Jerusalem, where the passion was to occur; Holy Week was six months away.

The immediate occasion of the earlier trip of Jesus and His disciples to Jerusalem mentioned in Luke 9:52-53 was doubtless their intention to attend the Feast of the Tabernacles there (the one mentioned in John 5:2; see William Arndt's commentary on Luke, pp. 272-273) beginning in early October of 29. Proceeding from Galilee to Judea, Jesus took the shortest route south, through Samaria. It was thus that He and His party—probably a larger group than the Twelve—sought food and lodging in this territory. Proceeding onward Jesus encountered the individuals, two of whom offered, and one of whom Jesus invited, to follow Him, that is, become His disciples.

Introduction: By the grace of God we who believe have come to be Jesus' disciples. The text provides us with important information as to

THE DISCIPLESHIP TO WHICH JESUS HAS CALLED US

- I. It is one like that to which He called His first disciples.
 - A. The Twelve and others with Jesus were people who knew that, though they were sinners, they had in Jesus the Messianic Lamb of God who was—even as He lived among them—bearing the sin of the world for which He would make complete atonement. Trusting in His forgiving grace they knew they had pardon, peace with God, and eternal life.

- B. The Twelve and other followers looked to Jesus as their Lord and Master, accompanied Him throughout His three-and-a-third-year ministry, listened daily to His words of instruction, and sought in His strength to believe and do what He taught.
 - C. Just so, Jesus has called us out of the world and its darkness to be His followers, His twentieth-century disciples, planting saving faith in our hearts. Though we cannot visibly behold Him, we are directed continually to set our minds on His inscripturated Law-and-Gospel instruction, believe the truth of His Word, and endeavor to carry out its directives in our behavior (cf. Matthew 28: 19-20).
 - D. Like James and John, we disciples shall also encounter those who are bitterly opposed to Christ and His entire saving mission and reject the Savior.
 - 1. Because of their fierce loyalty to Jesus, these two disciples reacted to the villagers' refusal to accommodate Christ, the Son of God, with hot indignation and proposed to Jesus infliction of a fitting penalty.
 - 2. For this proposal the Lord, to their surprise, rebuked them. They should have had compassion on those hostile Samaritans. Neither of the two had responded with forgiving love or sought to dispel the opponents' unbelief by proclaiming to them the Gospel of the Christ who would redeem all men from their sins.
 - 3. We ought to feel sorrow over the plight of all those who are lost, pray for them, and seek to bring them the light of life.
- II. It is one which meets the requirements He specifically indicates in the text.
- A. Christ's preaching and ministry powerfully impressed many of His hearers. He invited individuals to follow Him and continue receiving instruction as His disciples, but fully informed those interested of the fundamental requirements of discipleship. A sampling of specific points the Savior made in this connection is given in the text.
 - B. One man by virtue of his association with Jesus volunteered to become his permanent pupil. From Christ's reply we see that this would-be follower was too ready; his was a superficial enthusiasm—somewhat like Peter's in John 13:36-37. There would be hardships to bear. Jesus counsels the man realistically to reckon with the cost of discipleship before committing himself to Him (cf. Matthew 13:20-21).
 - C. When Jesus called another to be His follower and this man procrastinated (he may have wanted to stay with his ailing father until the latter died and was buried), Christ urged him immediately to accept discipleship responsibilities. No other duties were to interfere with the work of prime importance on earth—the proclaiming of the Gospel—of which the spiritually dead are incapable. Let these dead render physical services to relatives and also bury such as die physically.

- D. Another man stated a willingness to follow Christ but asked first to return home and bid farewell to family and friends. Jesus in His response did not forbid this action. Rather he warned against the tug on the heart the home folks and retrospection upon his past way of living would exert to keep him from returning to Christ and following Him. Jesus informs this man that only constant attention and resolute, zealous, single-hearted, undistracted devotion to discipleship duties are acceptable in the kingdom.
- E. The text speaks about men who were standing at the threshold of becoming Christ's disciples. We, who by grace have already come to be such, will do well to review all discipleship requirements, daily seek with the Spirit's help to meet them, and thus under God maintain our blessed discipleship status.

Walter A. Maier

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 10:1-12,16-20

July 2, 1989

God had worked through His prophetic word time and time again to bring His people to repentance throughout the history of the Old Testament. Put into the imagery of the text, the seed of the Word had been painstakingly sown and cultivated for centuries. Now the very Lamb of God was in the midst of this people and the time for a harvest had come. Despite this good news, the laborers for this harvest were few. As the narrative unfolds, one can draw parallels between that mission and the mission of today.

However, in view of popular "harvest theologies" (which, among other concerns, teach that the harvest is somehow ripe prior to the Gospel being proclaimed), one must be careful to understand both the contrasts and similarities between this mission and the Great Commission of Matthew 28. One *contrast* would be in the scope of mission. Whether one considers this text parallel to the Matthew 10 account or yet another mission, in either case Jesus is concerned primarily with a mission of proclaiming the Gospel to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6) for a limited period of time. In contrast the Great Commission extends to "all the nations...to the end of the age" (vv.19-20). One *similarity* between the two missions is found in Word and Sacrament as God's only means of producing harvests for all time. This vital point will be an important emphasis below.

Introduction: The harvest of a crop occurs only after a time-consuming process of sowing and cultivation. Each aspect of the farming task is hard work. Yet a farmer who desires a bountiful harvest will not take shortcuts, but will use the

right tools and invest the hours necessary to produce his crop. Jesus uses this imagery to teach us something about missions.

JESUS SENDS OUT HIS DISCIPLES INTO HIS MISSION FIELD

- I. The harvest was plentiful (v. 2a).
 - A. This “spiritual harvest” was ready.
 1. God’s Word had been sown among His people for centuries.
 2. God’s Word had been sown persistently and cultivated sacrificially (an example is provided by Elijah).
 - B. Before we can expect a “spiritual harvest” to be reaped anywhere in the world today, we must first sow the Word.
 1. It must be sown persistently.
 2. It must be sown sacrificially.

Transition: The hard work and sacrifice required for God’s mission had an effect on God’s work-force. We feel the same effects today.

- II. The laborers for the harvest were few (v. 2b).
 - A. Very few had embraced the pure Gospel.
 1. Many rejected Christ.
 2. Many followed Him for the wrong reasons.
 - B. Christ’s true followers had obstacles to overcome.
 1. Doubts.
 2. Fear of the unknown.
 - C. We have obstacles to overcome.
 1. Living in an affluent society, we shy away from hard work.
 - a. Physical sowing, cultivating, and harvesting are hard work.
 - b. Spiritual sowing, cultivating, and harvesting are hard work.
 2. While the disciples feared the unknown within their own culture, our fears include those around the globe.

Transition: The mission of Christ can seem almost impossible to accomplish. God has entrusted sinful, fearful people with the most important task on earth. God provided—and does provide—the way for the Gospel to be spread with confidence.

- III. The power for the harvest came from God alone.
 - A. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray (v. 2c).
 1. In prayer we acknowledge our helplessness.
 2. In prayer we call upon God’s powerful help.
 - B. The words humans speak are God’s very own words (v. 16).
 1. God’s message is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).
 - a. Christ died for all sin.

- b. Christ rose from the dead.
- 2. Those who reject the message ultimately reject God, not man.
- C. God blessed the preaching of His Word with success (v. 17).
 - 1. Among other positive results, the disciples report that even the demons were subject to them in Christ's name.
 - 2. The disciples seem to think this result is the most important consideration.
- D. Jesus reminds them that possessing salvation, not success, must be the primary focus of the Christian's joy (vv. 18-20).
 - 1. Jesus saw the chief demon cast out of heaven (v. 18).
 - 2. Yet Jesus' greatest joy is found in that our names are written in heaven (see Zephaniah 3:17).

Conclusion: The harvest was plentiful only because the Word of God had been sown for centuries persistently and sacrificially. Our human flesh seeks the "quick fix," but God has given us His means of grace with which to accomplish His work. We are to pray for more laborers and motivate them with these same means of grace. Those that reject us are really rejecting God Himself. No matter what the results of our witness may be, we rejoice because our "names are recorded in heaven" (v. 20).

Steven O. Scheiderer
Paris, Texas

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 10: 25-37

July 9, 1989

The "senior pastor" of the ancient Hebrew congregation at Jerusalem, the Apostle James, advised his people to remember, "Faith without works is dead." While Luther may have called James' letter to the young church one of "straw," I believe our Lord would place it in the realm of the third use of the Law. The speaking of this parable is precipitated by a serious, if not somewhat arrogant, question by "a certain scribe who wanted to justify himself." "Good master," he says, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In response, the Lord asks, "How does the Law read?" The first table is obvious; God should always be number one. The second table is equally plain; "Love your neighbor as yourself." One who can accept himself, in spite of all sins and failures, as one whom God has loved and forgiven, must also extend such loving forgiveness and acceptance to those who are also loved of God, namely, our neighbors, our fellow-men. "Who is my neighbor?" asks the scribe in response. In Phillips' translation the answer

is given succinctly: "He who shows practical sympathy."

As in all the parables of our Lord, the key to understanding is the point of comparison. What exactly does the Lord Jesus want to convey to His audience? They should not merely have a "head knowledge" of faith; they should really give up on the idea of "seeking to justify themselves." For salvation is impossible to men; it is possible only with God. But if a person knows that the justified child of God in Christ is to live that faith, how does he do it? By loving the Lord God and by extending practical help to others in the world.

Introduction: It may be easy to love other people if it only means writing a check to Lutheran World Relief, to comment on the tragedy of children with swollen bellies in Africa, or to listen to or read about inspiring missionaries who give their all for those who are destitute and in need in our land and abroad. How well do we do in showing love to those who are our neighbors, the neighbors right in our path in life? Are we willing to say:

MAY I HELP YOU?

- I. Whom should we help? Our neighbors!
 - A. A neighbor is one in our path of life who needs our practical love and sympathy.
 - B. In the parable it is the man who is the victim of the robber's thievery and violence.
 - C. In our day it may be someone halfway around the world who is starving, a member of the church who has suffered loss, or the family next door who lost everything in a fire or violent storm.
- II. But do we always help? No!
 - A. In the case of the parable, there were two men of God, a Levite (a special temple servant) and a priest. Both men knew the will of God. Both men knew that love should be extended to others as God has loved us. They offered no help. One pretends not to see; the other sees but deliberately walks away. Such religion, Scripture teaches, is a sham.
 - B. How often do we not see examples of such an uncaring attitude in our world, in the church, and even in our own lives? How many in our world are hurting, crying, wounded in the ditch half dead? Yet how often people just do not see, cannot be bothered, are too busy, etc. "May we help you?" To many, even in the church, this question seems to be a foreign language.
- III. Shall we help? Yes!
 - A. Someone in the parable helped. Surprisingly it was a Samaritan, one despised and rejected by the Jews, but one who showed the image of the compassionate Christ; he helped. He showed practical sympathy.
 - B. Christ helped and still helps. He extends to each of us the practical love of a Heavenly Father by giving Himself for us, that we should not live

unto ourselves but unto Him. Shall we love God? Yes! Shall we love Christ the Savior? Yes! Shall we love our neighbor? Yes! In Christ there is no alternative.

- C. We need not search for someone lying in a ditch by the side of the road, beaten, robbed, and in need of help, before we think that a neighbor needs us. There are many in our world, nation, city, and church who need us. As one who has been loved in Christ and knows what it means to love others in Him, each of us can go to his neighbor and extend practical sympathy, asking "May I help you?"

Conclusion: Some years ago, in New York City, a young woman named Kitty Genovese was brutally attacked, raped, and murdered outside her apartment building. Many people heard her screams for help. Many watched for a moment but turned aside, closed their blinds, and pretended that it was none of their business. Practically every day the news includes accounts of man's uncaring attitude toward his neighbor. They are horror stories and sometimes they come close to home, even into our lives. "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, but especially to the children of God." Go, and do as Scripture admonishes. Show practical sympathy and love to your neighbors. As one who has been loved by God in Christ, let each of us live that love in his life and say to his neighbor, "May I help you?"

Edmond E. Aho
Chula Vista, California

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 10:38-42

July 16, 1989

Especially worthy of study are the following: "listening (attentively)" in verse 39, "distracted" in verse 40, and "only thing needed" in verse 42. In the commentaries there is much debate about what is meant by the one thing needful, but this one thing is clearly the Word. We have heard sermons, and perhaps preached our share, comparing Mary and Martha. In the context of all that Luke wrote in his gospel and in Acts, this approach is too narrow.

Introduction: When we read the five verses of the text by themselves, it is tempting to make a comparison of sisters. When we consider the story within the context of the whole gospel, we focus on the other person at Bethany. The Holy Spirit, through Luke, teaches that

JESUS COMES AS OUR HOST

- I. Jesus comes as guest.
 - A. The Lord came to Abraham as guest (Genesis 18:1-8, the Old Testament reading).
 - B. The Lord came to Bethany as guest (v. 38).
 - C. The Lord comes to you as guest (Revelation 3:20).

Transition: Yet Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

- II. Jesus comes to be the host (Luke 22:27b).
 - A. The Lord becomes the host.
 - 1. For Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18:9-10a).
 - 2. For Mary and Martha (vv. 39-42).
 - 3. For you.
 - a. Jesus the host voluntarily laid down His life on the cross and took it up again (John 10:17-18).
 - b. Jesus the host serves you forgiveness of sins in Holy Communion (Matthew 26:28).
 - c. Jesus the host even now prepares a great banquet for you (Mark 14:25; John 14:2b; Revelation 3:20).
 - B. The only thing we really need is the Word (vv. 39b, 42a).
 - 1. The body of Christ needs the Word (Colossians 1:23, the epistle).
 - 2. Wise people listen to the host (Proverbs 8:34, the alternate Old Testament reading).

- III. We serve Jesus the host in response.
 - A. Listening is also service.
 - 1. Mary served by sitting and listening (v. 39).
 - 2. We quite correctly speak of a worship *service*.
 - B. Service is a burden when it causes fretting.
 - 1. Martha focused more on serving than on the host.
 - 2. We too easily forget to focus on the host.
 - C. Service is a joy when it is response to the Word.
 - 1. What could be better than hearing the word of forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation?
 - 2. Mary later had the joy of anointing Jesus' body (John 12:3).
 - 3. Martha later had the joy of faith (John 11:27, 43).

Conclusion: The Lord does want us to serve Him. But He wants us to serve in such a manner as to benefit *us*. We pray to better know Jesus as host through His Word. Your host is anxious to serve you the blessings of strength, light, and peace.

Warren E. Messmann
Plain City, Ohio

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 11:1-13

July 23, 1989

Many people in the pews (and some at the altar) are uncomfortable with prayer. Part of the problem is lack of practice. Jesus prayed not only at "prayer time" but also at other times, as verse 1 shows. The scope of *legete* in verse 2 is broader than rote recitation. Another part of the problem is teaching which emphasizes form above content. Variants of the text meant to conform it with Matthew 6 show how concern with form above content has dogged us New Testament people just as it did the Old Testament prophets who warned against empty rites. The most serious problem is asking the wrong questions about prayer. Sometimes posture, position, purpose, or petition come ahead of person. Jesus focuses on the addressee with a simple "Father" and verses 11-13. Remembering our Heavenly Father encourages us to persistence (vv. 5-10).

The goal of the sermon suggested below is an attitude of persistent prayer that is continually aware of the Father and His good gifts. As a means to this end the text offers both the words and example of Jesus. The first *kai* of verse 5 bridges ideas as surely as does the *gar* in Matthew 6:14.

Introduction: A sign bore these words: "Prayer begins with asking and ends in listening." Such a statement is man's religion which does not recognize that our loving Father has taken the initiative. Prayer begins with listening, continues in adoring, and never ends. Jesus speaks in the text of prayer which leads to the best gift our Father has to offer. We learn today

HOW TO RECEIVE THE BEST GIFT

- I. The best gift our Father gives is the Holy Spirit (vv. 11-13).
 - A. The world seeks worldly gifts (vv. 11-12).
 1. "If you have your health, you have everything."
 2. "All you need is love..." (song title).
 3. "When I win the lottery, I'll..."

Transition: All these things are good, but the best gift is not on man's lists.

- B. The Father in heaven offers a gift for eternity (v. 13).
 1. To have the Spirit is to know the "Father" (v. 2b).
 2. To have the Spirit is to hallow His name (v. 2c).
 3. To have the Spirit is to see Him in action (kingdom) (v. 2d).
 - a. In baptizing.
 - b. In proclaiming.
 - c. In forgiving.
 - d. In fellowship.

4. To have the Spirit is to be a steward of all "possessions" (v. 3).
5. To have the Spirit is to share the forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross (passive) and in prayerful living (active) (v. 4a).
6. To have the Spirit is to recognize the reality and threat of the temptations which surround us (v. 4b).

Transition: To ask for the best gift we first have to know what it is. Then we want to learn how to ask for the Spirit.

- II. To receive the Father's best, we ask persistently (vv. 5-10).
 - A. The invitation is to make "pests" of ourselves (v. 8).
 1. True friends are people who know they can "bother" us (vv. 5-8).
 2. We surely were ultimate "pests" to our Friend Jesus when He more than tolerated our sinfulness on the cross (John 15:13).
 3. Persistence is not necessary to persuade the Father, but to dent us of dull wit and slow mind.

Transition: Persistent prayer is more than oft-repeated prayer.

- B. Persistent prayer is *continual* prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
 1. To ask is to seek and knock (vv. 9-10).
 2. Prayer, like all stewardship, is response. The Christian tithe is one hundred percent.
 3. Jesus teaches us by word and example that prayer is the continuing adoration of our Father, not only when formally and consciously addressing Him, but in all of our living.

Conclusion: Some people seem to regard prayer as a sacrament. Prayer is actually a response. Prayer is Christian stewardship. Prayer does not begin with asking. Prayer begins with adoring the Father who gives the best gift. The best gift is the Holy Spirit. Ask for it persistently, continually.

Warren E. Messmann
Plain City, Ohio

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 12:13-21

July 30, 1989

At 9:51 and 19:28 Luke reminds us that Jesus' ministry was a journey to Jerusalem and the cross. As He went, however, our Lord revealed Himself and His messiahship by mighty deeds of mercy and, especially in this section of the gospel, by teaching. Although it is difficult to determine the exact

geographical and chronological contexts of the various episodes in this section of Luke, each of them exemplifies an aspect of Christ's ministry as first defined in 4:18, "to preach the Gospel to the poor." In this particular pericope Jesus teaches us that the Gospel is not a message about earthly possessions.

As is common in Luke, Jesus' teaching here is prompted by a comment from someone close by, in this case a man from the crowd who asks Jesus for help in obtaining his inheritance. There would have been nothing strange or untoward about this request had Jesus been simply a Jewish rabbi or even another Moses commissioned to reestablish a Jewish theocracy (cf. Exodus 18:13-26); nor does the text suggest that the requester's claim was unjustified. Yet Jesus reacts with amazement and displeasure (*anthrōpe*, "man," not "friend" or something similar, v. 14). For the question implies first a misunderstanding of Jesus' role (cf. the previous pericope where the Son of Man either acknowledges or denies men before the angels of God) and, secondly, an over-emphasis in the man's life upon the things of this world. The result is the parable which follows and, indeed, the entire section down to verse 34.

On the one hand, the Parable of the Rich Fool is certainly a statement regarding the folly of *pleonexia* ("covetousness," "greed," and "inordinate grasping for more," v. 15), especially in view of death (cf. the Old Testament lesson, Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:18-26). On the other hand, the parable also implies that true life consists of a right relationship to God, for the statement of verse 15 (what life is *not*) is rendered more positively in verse 21 as "rich toward God," an idea that the epistle (Colossians 3:1-11) helps to amplify. Therefore, the preacher must make sure that his sermon is not simply a diatribe against materialism but clearly presents the more abundant life of Christ's kingdom.

Introduction: A perennial temptation is to reduce life to what we see, experience, and enjoy right here and now. Even the institutional church of today too often leaves the impression that the Gospel of Christ is primarily a message about restructuring society so as to remove all inequities or about enjoying health and prosperity from God as rewards for prayer, faith, and piety. Although Christians must not be indifferent to the material condition of their fellow-men nor ungrateful for the material prosperity of a free economy, they must never forget that the Gospel is essentially the proclamation of everlasting life with God in Christ.

LIFE IN CHRIST—MORE THAN MATERIALISM

- I. The Folly of Materialism.
 - A. Money is good but not good enough.
 1. It cannot guarantee happiness and contentment.
 2. As many contemporary Americans can attest, anxiety, marital instability, vice, even suicide all occur within the wealthiest families.

B. Great prosperity can be the occasion for great wickedness.

1. In his prosperity the rich fool displayed indifference to his fellow-man; he thinks of his own pleasure only (v. 19).
2. The rich fool also displayed indifference to the Giver: the *earth* brought forth its abundance (v. 16), but the rich fool persisted in speaking of "my" crops and goods.

C. Death makes *everything* in this life "vanity of vanities."

1. The text speaks particularly of material things.
2. But the lesson applies also to fame, success, prestige, friends, family; whatever we value in this life is gone at the moment of death.
3. And nothing of this world can make us fit for eternity, that is, remove sin, put us right with God, or obtain heaven.

II. Abundant Life in Christ.

A. Jesus experienced no temporal prosperity but instead poverty, shame, suffering, and death.

B. But Jesus' meekness is our strength.

1. God became man to assume our burdens and to render death harmless; sin is forgiven, righteousness imputed, and eternity guaranteed.
2. What we could not do for ourselves Christ did in our place and so provided blessings that cannot fade away.
3. The blessings of Christ are signalled and sealed by His resurrection.

Conclusion: When we realize that real and eternal life is ours by faith in Christ, we have a new perspective on money and all the things of this world. Instead of foolishly enslaving ourselves to them, we can use them to help our fellow-men and especially to propagate the Gospel, for we know that whatever our circumstances now, Christ has guaranteed an eternity of heaven.

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THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Luke 12:32-40

August 6, 1989

In the gospels and, in fact, the entire New Testament a persistent shadow of urgency overhangs the inspired words. The message is clear that time is not unlimited. This world will someday cease to exist and its citizens will in the meantime individually find that their days in this life are also limited. For the Christian there can be but one reaction to this truth: by God's grace we must get ready and remain ready to meet the Lord at any moment. A fervent trust in Him is the most urgent of qualities.

The text before us builds on this truth as Jesus offers two short parables to underscore the value of readiness. Seeking to order the priorities of His people ("little flock," v. 32), He advises an understanding of what truly counts and a perception of the difference between the temporal and the eternal (vv. 32-34). The urgency of this understanding is supported by the brief parables of the prepared servants (vv. 35-38) and vigilant householder (v. 39). The objective of this sermon is to instill in the hearts of the hearers a realization of what it means to be ready to meet Jesus as the "one thing needful." The problem is that the "live-for-the-moment" mentality of our age has a powerful tendency to blind even people of God to the urgent need for an eternal perspective. The means to the objective is an emphasis on God's overwhelming grace ("your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," v. 32) and its ability to motivate people to be prepared for what truly endures.

Introduction: Most people know the piercing feeling of being caught unprepared. A project at work or school which was completely forgotten or a house-guest who arrived too early can cause that sickening sensation that announces to us that we simply were not ready. We will recover quickly from this kind of anxiety; however, a lack of spiritual readiness will be eternally fatal. For this reason Jesus wants us to remember well that this is

NO TIME TO BE SLEEPING

- I. We are to awake to perceive eternal values.
 - A. Material treasures have a fleeting existence.
 1. "Purses" grow old and fail (v. 33).
 2. Worldly goods can be destroyed or pilfered (v. 33).
 - B. Heavenly treasures have an eternal future.
 1. Our eternal Father wants to give them to His little flock (gift of grace).
 2. He knows that to focus on them now helps to put one's heart in the proper place.
- II. We are to be alert to meet the Master.
 - A. The Lord's coming will be unannounced but should not be unexpected.
 1. Faithful servants faithfully await a Master (v. 36) who may come at any time.
 2. Faithful servants will be rewarded for their alertness (v. 37).
 - B. The Lord's coming will be sure and certain.
 1. Preparation must be constant ("second or third watch," v. 38).
 2. Preparation must be thorough ("loins girded and lamps burning," v. 35).
- III. We are to be attentive to watch for the Lord.
 - A. The Son of Man will come with the swiftness of a thief.
 1. No one expects to be robbed and accordingly plans for it.
 2. Proper preparation must include constant attention to what truly counts.

B. The Son of Man desires that His people not be surprised when He comes.

1. He has given a multitude of warnings to be ready (v. 40).
2. He has provided a variety of gifts of grace to strengthen His people in vigilance.

Conclusion: The return of the Lord to this world for the final judgment is a certainty. Because its timing is uncertain, however, constant vigilance is required. This vigilance includes the grace-given ability to perceive the eternal value of heavenly treasures and to focus on them. Prepared people are those who are awake, alert, and attentive and whose heart is on and in what truly counts.

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