



# **THE SPRINGFIELDER**

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# HOMILETICAL STUDIES

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (TRINITY SUNDAY):  
JOHN 3:1-17

The third chapter of John's Gospel is indeed one of the more familiar pericopes in the Scriptures. Few chapters capture so concisely and clearly the action of the total Godhead in the redemption of mankind. As familiar as this pericope is, there are insights that constantly keep it fresh and alive.

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin (*archon*), comes to Jesus by night (v 1). This may well have been a sign of caution. It may also have been a part of his "official duties." It was the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to deal with anyone suspected of being a false prophet, and it was a common tenet of the rabbis that the best time to study the law was at night when there was little or no interruption. Nicodemus makes the concession that Jesus "had God with him." For no one could do the signs (*sēmeia*) that he did, except by the power of God (v 2). The word "signs" indicates miracles and wonders by which Christ's person and ministry were authenticated.

Jesus responds with the cryptic "unless one is born anew (*anōthen*) he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (v 3). The term "anew" can mean any one of three things: 1) "from the beginning"; 2) "again" in the sense of "for the second time"; 3) "from above" and therefore "from God." Evidently Jesus meant this in the third sense. To be "born anew" is to undergo such a radical change that it is like a new birth. It is to have something happen to the soul which can only be described as being born all over again, not as a human achievement, but only by the grace and power of God. This idea of rebirth runs throughout the New Testament, although various words are employed. Peter speaks of being "born anew to a living hope" (1 Pe 1:23); "you have been born anew, not of perishable seed." Paul writing to Titus refers to "the washing of regeneration" (Tt 3:5). Confronted with this assertion by Jesus, Nicodemus shows that he does not understand the difference between a second beginning and a different beginning (v 4).

Nicodemus is summoned to the new birth. He must be "born of water and the Spirit" (v 5). Water is the symbol of cleansing. The sins of the past are forgiven. The Spirit is the enabler and means of power. The water and the Spirit taken together are the cleansing and strengthening power of Christ which wipes out the past and which gives us victory partially now and perfectly in the hereafter. Christ is here pointing forward to baptism wherein the Holy Spirit accomplishes this in the hearts and lives of God's redeemed.

There was on the part of Nicodemus a failure to understand. The natural man born of the flesh is incapable of grasping the truth and is unable and unwilling to understand. Because he is of the flesh, he cannot by himself or of himself understand spiritual things (v9). Nicodemus could not perceive how the new birth could come about. Jesus tries to bring him along and employs a play on words. The same word is used in Greek for "spirit" and "wind" (*pneuma*). The same is true in Hebrew (*ruach*) (v 8). One may not be able to see it, but one can see what it does. One may not be able to understand how the Spirit works, but one can see the effect of the Spirit in human lives (v 8). Nicodemus is not reproved for want of previous knowledge, but for want of perception or understanding when these truths are expounded to him (v 10).

Jesus links the perception of "born anew" (v 7), his "testimony" (v 11), and the revealing of the heart of God (v 13) to the necessity of being "lifted up" (v 14). "Lifted up" means "lifted up into glory"—the ascension. The two senses are inextricably connected. The one would not have happened without the other. For Jesus, the cross was the way to glory. If Christ had evaded the cross, there would be no glory for him and no salvation for us (v 14, 15). Jesus himself casts the serpent of Exodus 21: 4-9 as a "type" of Christ. If the uplifted serpent brought life to the believing look which was fixed upon the pardoning love of God, then most assuredly shall the uplifted Son of Man give true life to everyone who believes. The believer looks up in him to the forgiving love of God, which his Son came to bring, to declare, and to manifest. In this figure Jesus explained to Nicodemus everything he needed to know as to the how of the New Birth as well as its source.

This eternal life originates and has its initiative with God, springing out of His love that encompasses all mankind (v 16). If when man is confronted by that love of God in Christ and rejects that life and salvation, Jesus becomes his judge. This man stands self-condemned (v 16, 17).

Introduction: In the contemplation of the Trinity, we get in over our heads. God's judgments are "unsearchable" and "His ways past finding out." Yet, one thing that we have come to know is the intimacy of faith, the love of God and the blessing of His redeeming act. We recall on this Trinity Sunday, that the total Godhead was and is active in the salvation of mankind. In the light of this, the Holy Trinity is more to be adored and praised than understood: "Praise the God of Our Salvation."

#### PRAISE THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION

- I. The Father's Sending Love.
  - A. Originates with God's initiative before the foundation of the world.
  - B. Springs from God's love.
  - C. Actuated in (set in motion with) the Incarnation.
- II. The Obedient and Saving Son.
  - A. He is lifted up upon the cross.
    1. The Exodus incident (Exodus 21:4-9).
    2. The necessity of His being lifted up.
      - a. Our sin and rebellion.
      - b. God's proclamation for forgiveness and deliverance.
  - B. He is lifted up to glory.
    1. He is the risen and ascended Lord.
    2. He draws all men to himself.
  - C. Whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life.
- III. The life-creating Spirit.
  - A. The necessity of new birth.
    1. "Except the man be born anew."
    2. "That which is born of flesh is flesh."
  - B. The means of new birth.
    1. Water and the Spirit—in Christ.
    2. The self-judgment of rejection.
  - C. The Blessings of the New Birth.
    1. Truly to know God.
    2. Eternal life now and throughout eternity.
    3. Fulfilling God's purposes.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 2:23-28

It is clear from the Sabbath Commandment, that it was the day hallowed and set apart by God. On that day, "you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant or your maidservant or the sojourner who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:8-11). Over the centuries, under the elaboration of scribal interpreters, the simple commandment became encumbered with a multitude of obligations so that in one edition of the Jerusalem *Talmud*, the section explaining the sabbath law runs to sixty-four and a half columns. Over the years, the sabbath day observance became a burdensome obligation rather than a joyful response.

The question of the sabbath day observance became one of the touchstones of Christ's orthodoxy as he was confronted by the Pharisees (*cf.* Lk 13:11-15). On the occasion recorded in our text, Jesus and his disciples were walking alongside a standing field of grain (v 23). The disciples plucked some of the grain, rubbed the kernels in their hands, and by this act gave offense to the Pharisees (v 24). In their view of things, what the disciples had done was a gross desecration of the Sabbath. Yet Moses, without distinction to days, had made lawful what the disciples did. Theirs was not a breaking of the biblical, but rather of the rabbinic law. Jesus, by his use of the incident from the life of David, uses Scripture itself to supply an instance in which human need took precedence over human and even divine law (v 25). Indeed, the conduct of the disciples was vindicated according to Jewish tradition itself on the grounds that "danger to life surpassed the sabbath law." Jesus sites that occasion when David had eaten the *shewbread*—"the loaves of the presence of God" (v 26)—twelve loaves in all according to the number of tribes, each made of about five pints of the finest wheat flour sifted through eleven sieves. The loaves were arranged in two piles of six each and were anointed in the middle with oil in the form of a cross. They were replaced weekly, at the beginning of the Sabbath. The old loaves were distributed among the incoming and the outgoing priests. The bread was eaten during the sabbath in the temple itself, but only by priests who were levitically pure. The old bread, removed on the Sabbath morning, was that which David ate (v 26). Jesus predicates the act of the disciples on the claim of David that he "had need" and "was hungry" (v 25). The analogy lay in the necessity; the "had need" is generic; the "was hungry" is specific describing the peculiar character of the need. Furthermore, Jesus contends the Sabbath was made "for the sake of man," not man for the Sabbath (v 27). This is self-evident, for man was created before the Sabbath law came into existence; and above and beyond this, the Son of Man is "Lord, even on the Sabbath" (vv 27-28). As Lord of the Sabbath, he possessed the power to determine what is suitable to the Sabbath and of releasing Himself and others from its obligations.

The Sabbath was created for man. The purpose of Christ's reply was, on the one hand, to show the error of the Pharisees and Scribes and, on the other hand, to lay down principles which would for ever apply to this question. Unlike the other ten commandments, the Sabbath law has in it, two elements: the moral and the ceremonial, the eternal and that which is subject to time and space. In the first of these elements, the eternal, the commandment embraced the two thoughts of rest for worship and worship which pointed to rest. The Sabbath was made for man so that it might serve man's eternal and temporal welfare. The Sabbath law was not one merely of rest,



but of rest for worship. The service of the Lord is the object in view. We are free to do anything needful or helpful while we are doing any service to Christ. He is the Lord of the Sabbath whom His people serve in and through the Sabbath. The "Day of the Lord" points God's people to the time of Christ's coming again. The Sabbath "rest" enjoyed now is a foretaste of the Sabbath "rest" in fulfillment, when by God's grace in Christ His people will enter into His presence where they shall serve Him day and night (Re 7:15).

Introduction: A strange paradox confronts us; with the increase in leisure time, fewer people are led to worship and to serve—this at great peril to their faith and to the detriment of living out what it means to be a member of the "caring" community of Christ. We are reminded that Christ is also "Lord even of the Sabbath." We are concerned about the proper use of the Sabbath in our life.

#### THE PROPER USE OF THE SABBATH

- I. The Sabbath Commandment of our God.
  - A. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."
  - B. Rest for Worship.
    1. Experience anew, the joy of communing with God.
    2. Praise God for all His great acts especially of deliverance and salvation.
    3. Worship also by serving.
- II. The Sabbath Commandment manipulated in the hands of men.
  - A. "Teaching for doctrine, the commandments of men," the Jews encumbered the Sabbath with a multitude of man-made traditions and laws.
  - B. Rather than the day of rest, the Sabbath became a day of "toil."
    1. In which the object of worship was obscured.
    2. In which the opportunity to serve was lost.
    3. In which the joy associated with the Sabbath was forfeited.
  - C. Today's temptation to misuse the Sabbath.
    1. "Despising preaching and His word."
    2. Exploiting the Sabbath for purely selfish purposes.
- III. God's people celebrate a "new Sabbath" today and in eternity.
  - A. We celebrate a new relationship with God.
  - B. We manifest Christ's lordship of life by our use of the Sabbath.
  - C. We anticipate the eternal Sabbath "rest."

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#### THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 3:20-35

In the text before us, both kinsman and enemy took exception to the way Jesus was acting. His mother and brothers thought Him "beside Himself" (v 21). According to their standards, Jesus had begun to act not at all like an ideal citizen should. The Pharisees attributed His power to heal and to exorcise demons to Beelzebul, the prince of devils. Indeed, they accused Christ of demonic possession (v 22). By this, they revealed a supreme contempt for Jesus.

What had happened the Pharisees could not deny. Indeed, they had to make some accounting for it. They could, on the one hand, recognize that the citadel of Satan had been breached, which gave promise of Satan's ultimate

demise. Or, on the other hand, they could attribute Christ's power to the demonic; that is, He was given this power by Satan. This later point is what Christ's enemies chose to believe, even though it was contrary to all logic and wisdom, as Jesus pointed out in the story of the "strong man's house" (vv 24-27).

Peculiar to Mark is the phrase, as it applies to Satan's kingdom, "but hath an end" (v 26). Christ, by divine power, had broken through and by his redemptive act would, as the "stronger man," obtain the victory over Satan and take for his spoils a redeemed mankind who in Him would be free from sin, death, and the power of Satan (v 27). Yet the scribes "kept on saying" he had an unclean spirit (v 30). With this persistent attitude, they blasphemed the Holy Ghost and were guilty of "eternal sin" (v 29). Its net effect was the forfeiture of eternal life and bliss.

In Jewish thought the Holy Ghost had two great functions: (1) He revealed God's truth to man, and (2) He enabled man to recognize that truth when he saw and heard it. If the Holy Ghost revealed truth and gave ability to believe, understand, and act upon that revelation, then a rejection of that revelation is a rejection of the Holy Ghost, resulting in all the dire consequences of such a rejection. At the heart of it all was the Pharisees' essential stubbornness over against the Gospel of Christ that foreshadowed His crucifixion and their ultimate rejection of that Christ. Their guilt lay in teaching as of Satanic agency that which was of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, that person who is led by the Holy Ghost to receive the power of God to break the bonds of Satan and know the power of salvation knows and does the will of God and stands in a new and glorious relationship with God as His child and as a true kinsman of Jesus, the Christ of God.

Introduction: The occult and various other manifestations of the demonic in our world are evident. How does one discern, distinguish, and respond so that life is lived under the lordship of Christ?

#### THE TRUE KINSMAN OF JESUS

#### I. Discerns and distinguishes between what is of God and Satan.

##### A. Recognizes the marks of the Satanic in our world.

1. The strange fact is that men consider what is good evil and what is evil good.
2. The tragic consequences of the demonic include despair and death.
3. He wrestles not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and recognizes his own inability to cope.

##### B. Remembers God's purposes and promises for His world.

1. God's good creation.
2. God's plans upset.
3. God's determination to restore, to redeem, to save through the promised Messiah.

##### C. Perceives God at work in Jesus Christ.

1. Breaching the walls of Satan's kingdom, Jesus heals, raises the dead, drives out demons.
2. Breaking Satan's power, Jesus achieves victory over sin, death, and the devil, through His death and victorious resurrection.

#### II. Partakes with Jesus in the spoils of his victory.

##### A. By the Spirit is lead to a new relationship with God in Christ.

- B. Empowered by the Holy Spirit to unite with Christ in doing the will of the Father.
  - 1. By the word of truth "overcoming evil."
  - 2. Doing that which the Lord "requires."
  - 3. Leading others to share in the victory over sin and death and Satan.
- C. Will partake by grace in the eternal bliss of the Father's house.

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#### FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 4:26-34

These parables, like windows shedding light on an object in the room, help us to see more clearly what Christ's Kingdom is like. From explicit statements in Scripture, not from parables, we learn of Christ's gracious rule in the hearts of people. He extends His gracious rule through the preaching of His Word; He wards off enemies; He leads His own on a sure way to heaven. In parables, one or another phase of kingdom work is illustrated, the truth seen more clearly in the light of the parable.

Guard against pressing portions of a parable. The earth bringing forth fruit of herself does not rule out the life that is in the seed, which must be placed into the earth. We can preach His Word. We cannot get it to grow in the hearts of men. Hearts do not contribute either; God does it. When man is brought to faith He is completely saved. But he needs to grow in knowledge, in understanding, in works that please God.

Be patient as you look for and work for growth. Some hearers remain in the blade stage a long, long time. Others mature rapidly. No thought is present that Christians must reach full maturity before the Lord puts in the sickle. Thank God for growth that can be seen, but do not dig too deeply to see if growth has begun. Plants do not grow well under such treatment; neither do Christians. Growth sometimes is phenomenal, unbelievably great. This is true of Christians, of congregations, and of the whole visible church.

The mustard seed produces a bush up to twelve feet tall with branches strong enough to support birds. Do not make Jews branches of the bush and Gentiles birds. In the Kingdom there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Just see the phenomenal growth: The Holy Spirit at work through means of grace produces it. All who come to Christ will understand these things spiritually as Christ expounds them, if we are content with His explanation.

Introduction: Make reference to Independence Day. The growth of our nation under God is dependent upon the growth of His kingdom in our midst.

#### WE ARE WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD IN HIS KINGDOM

- I. He gives us the means to extend His Kingdom.
  - A. A means we must use.
  - B. A means we can trust.
- II. He bids us be content with His means.
  - A. The Word *does* produce growth of itself.
  - B. But the growth is gradual.
    - 1. He who is saved is wholly saved.
    - 2. Though saved, he needs time to mature.

3. In patience we use God's means and look to Him for growth.
  - a. Internal growth of each person in Christ.
  - b. External growth of the church as God adds people to His Church.

#### SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS GOD'S WONDERFUL GIFT

- I. Such growth is as little understood as the growth of a seed.
  - A. God is at work.
  - B. God works in His own wonderful way.
- II. Such growth only gradually seen.
  - A. In ourselves.
    1. Some remain too long in the blade stage.
    2. Some seem to grow from day to day.
  - B. In our congregation.
    1. Some congregations must wait patiently for God's open door.
    2. Some grow as rapidly as the early church.
    3. Such growth may well depend upon earlier preparation of the soil.
- III. Such growth depends on the Lord, not on us.
  - A. He created the life in us.
  - B. He alone can nourish and sustain it.
  - C. Look to Him in patience and trust.

MJS

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#### FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 4:35-41

In the Epiphany season, a text like this would direct us especially to Christ, manifested in His power, in His glory, in His concern for men. After Pentecost we still see all of this. But we ought to focus more on people. Many are still in the blade stage (see last Sunday's text). Do not talk to them about the ship of the church. Would Christ ever be asleep in his ship, the church? People, even Christians, are deeply concerned about real weather problems. With all of our expert equipment, we are still overtaken by sudden storms on land, on sea, and in the air. Even the most trusting Christians cannot match the trust of the Man Christ Jesus, calmly resting in a boat on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee. He needed no faith in God. He had all knowledge of the Father. But He did trust. The disciples, on this occasion, did not. They first applied their knowledge and skill. (Some had grown up near and on the sea.) Only when they had done all that they felt they could, did they come to Christ. They forgot that they could do nothing properly without Him, not even on a sea as smooth as glass.

Encourage hearers to believe that trusting in Christ they can weather every storm. Do not lose yourself with the storms of adversity, the winds of doctrine, and the waves of doubt. Encourage them with the fact that God makes wind and weather and is always in full control. His children will never perish. They may die in a storm, if that is His will; they may lose their crops in hail and tempest; they may lose their homes, their possessions in a hurricane, a cyclone, a tornado, a tidal wave. But, trusting in God, they will see that it was for their good. They will know He has the power to calm the sea and the wind. Planes land safely, ships reach the harbor, because of God's blessings day by day. He does not need miracles, although, of course, He can perform them.



He wonderfully controls the wind and the sea and the air because He loves us, body and soul. He tests us at times, afflicts us at times, that we will look to Him, not only in stormy days, but on calm days too. That is part of the growth He looks for in us, as we spoke of it last Sunday.

#### GOD TESTS US AT TIMES THROUGH THE FORCES OF NATURE

- I. He sends the storms, the floods, the winds, the waves.
  - A. See Him in every storm.
  - B. Listen carefully to what He is saying.
    1. Possibly chiding us for our lack of trust.
    2. Possibly showing us how unprepared we are for the unexpected.
- II. He shows us our helplessness in the face of the elements.
  - A. Showing us how small we are in His great world.
  - B. How easy it is for us to lose control.
- III. In love He shows His power and purpose.
  - A. Power, which proves Him to be God.
  - B. Purpose, to strengthen our faith in Him.
    1. He cares for our bodily needs.
    2. He does so especially because we are His children in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

#### CHRIST IS THE HELP OF THE HELPLESS

- I. He forces us at times to admit our helplessness.
  - A. Robbing us of the ability to cope which we think we have.
  - B. Reminding us that even our ability to cope comes from Him.
- II. He helps us to admit our lack of trust.
  - A. As another evidence of our helplessness.
  - B. As proof of our need of His care.
- III. He helps us to look to Him.
  - A. As one in full control of the world He has made.
  - B. As one with a saving love for us all.

*MJS*

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#### SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 5:24b-34

This text seems preferable in this season of the church year to the pericope of the raising of Jairus' daughter. The latter, in Matthew's parallel account, is often used with little or no reference to the woman healed on the way to Jairus' home. The text chosen provides another opportunity for the consideration of Christian growth.

Health is an area of real concern for many Christians. Many, having lost confidence in government, in business, commerce, have begun to wonder whether they can even trust their family physician. Others, however, point to great strides made in the field of medicine and surgery. What gynaecologist today would allow the trouble of this woman to continue for twelve years? An operation would take care of her problem. Specialists are achieving wonderful results with many and varied operations.

That, however, can add to our problems. We are tempted to look for the best physicians and surgeons. Too many are still spending all they have on physicians and come to the Lord for help only when all else has failed, as did the woman. Yet a change had taken place in her. She had heard of Jesus, of His

power to heal, and believed that He could and would heal her. In her day she had no right to be in the crowd that followed Jesus. She certainly did not want to speak of her problem in the hearing of others. But in faith she reached out and touched His garment and immediately she was made whole. The omniscient Christ had healed her. She knew that, too. She had faith, as Jesus said. But He wanted her to confess her faith and the help that she had received. This she did with fear and trembling. She told Him all the truth. The disciples also had problems. They felt they had to reason with Jesus. They had to argue with Him. Why should He ask who touched Him? With all the people around Him, naturally somebody would touch Him. It was just one of many times that they forgot for the moment who He really was. Would He say something like this without reason? They still had a lot of growing to do in knowledge of Christ, in understanding of His ways. We also need to grow in understanding of God's ways. In our day He normally does not work miracles. He has given wonderful power to physicians and surgeons. But how many of them and of their patients think of this power as God's gift? Too many forget the Lord in their search for healing. Others look to Him only for healing of the body. They forget that every miracle text in the Gospels is a proof that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Christ whom God sent into the world to be the Savior of the world. Every one of His miracles points to Him as Savior. But it also helps us to understand that Savior's love and compassion for people, His desire to help us also in our physical infirmities. The sermon ought to deal with both.

#### HAVE YOU CALLED YOUR DOCTOR?

- I. God blesses doctors in much that they do.
  - A. We need no miracles of healing.
  - B. For God heals in natural ways.
- II. He has given us bodies that respond to their efforts.
  - A. We are wonderfully made by God.
  - B. Health is a blessing He often gives.
- III. He just wants us to commit ourselves into His loving care.
  - A. He shows us the evil of trusting in people.
  - B. He proves Himself worthy of our trust.
  - C. He helps us in our bodily needs when our health seems important to Him.
    1. For us
    2. For others
  - D. His purpose is always to draw us closer to Him.

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#### SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 6:1-6

Jesus spent very little time in Nazareth after He entered His public ministry. The evangelists tell us why. On His first return He clearly pointed to Himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. But they took Him out to the brow of a hill and would have put Him to death had He not prevented it by simply passing through the midst of them and going His way (Lk 4:16-30).

Now, at least a half year later, He returns, goes to the synagogue, and seeks to teach the people. His message causes astonishment, perplexity. No one seems to have difficulty understanding what He is saying. They just cannot

understand how He can say it. That has been the problem in the church all along. Isaiah complained about it. Even Eve had difficulty believing that God meant what He said. Scholars today have no difficulty comprehending the words of the holy writers. They just have difficulty accepting the evangelists as historians. They see them as people with a message, as people very sincere in proclaiming the message. They just fail to see them as inspired messengers of God, as people empowered by the Spirit to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. They are caught up with what they consider the humanness of these writers just as the people of Nazareth were caught up with the humanness of Christ. Where did He get His message? How could His message possibly be true? By using their own reason they shut themselves out from the truth of God. Christ on another occasion thanked the Lord that He had hid the truths of God from those who tried with their own reason and wisdom to grasp the message and to judge it. Paul states it very simply that natural man just does not understand the things of God. They can be grasped only with the help of the Holy Spirit. Most people resist this help. They remain unbelievers. We are naturally troubled about the unbelief in the world. Texts like these help us to see that God is, too.

#### GOD, TOO, IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE UNBELIEF IN THE WORLD

- I. God certainly wants no one to remain in unbelief.
  - A. He sent Christ, the Master Teacher, to free the Jews of their unbelief.
    1. Christ during His earthly life caused people to marvel at His teaching.
    2. He authenticated His message with mighty works.
    3. He himself marvelled at the unbelief of so many.
  - B. God caused the story of Christ's life to be written for our learning.
    1. Through these words Christ still speaks to us.
    2. He points to His works as proof of His person and work.
    3. But how few share our faith in Christ. If only . . .
- II. Yet in His wisdom He forces no one to believe.
  - A. Christ never used His power to force people to listen to His Gospel.
  - B. He never answered people's questions in ways that would seem reasonable to them.
  - C. He simply went from place to place gaining disciples with His Word.
  - D. He wants us to trust His way as right and good for our day, too.

#### GOD'S EARNEST CALL: BELIEVE IN CHRIST

- I. Knowing about Christ is not yet believing.
  - A. The Jews of Jesus' day knew about Jesus.
    1. They knew His relatives and friends.
    2. They knew about His early life in Nazareth.
    3. They knew of the miracles He had performed elsewhere.
    4. They just could not believe.
  - B. Bible scholars today know all that mere man can know about Christ.
    1. They have carefully researched His personal relationships.
    2. They have carefully researched His teachings.
    3. They know exactly what the evangelists have said of Him.
    4. They just do not believe what the Scriptures say of Christ.

- II. Yet God wants people to believe.
  - A. When people rejected the prophets He sent Christ Himself with the message of truth.
  - B. Christ was never deterred by the unbelief of some from turning to others with His message of Grace.
  - C. He has given us the privilege to carry on His work.
    1. With His truth.
    2. With the patience He provides.

MJS

#### EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 6:7-13

Christ had been combatting the unbelief of His day with patient, persistent proclamation of the truth. He was very concerned that all of Galilee should hear the message of the kingdom and be called to repent of their sins and to receive Christ as their Savior. The particular instructions given to the twelve are certainly not mandatory for all times, inasmuch as some of them are based on customs of that land. The text nevertheless offers clear guidelines to those who go out to do the work of the Lord.

Many groups in our church and others are inviting likeminded people to offer their services. The ambassadors for Christ, the Lutheran Bible Translators, the medical mission groups, the many young people organized for action in one way or another are certainly being urged by Christ to be unashamed to ask for and accept hospitality of those who seem interested in their work. No need exists to provide in advance for all of their needs. These can be supplied *en route*. Christ also prepares them in advance to expect rejection from many. Not all are interested in the life in Christ. If people would not accept Christ the Master Teacher, the great Lover of men, why should they reach out to His servants? But in rejecting the servants they are rejecting the Master and that ought to be made very clear to people. Despising the servant is despising Christ and the Father, as well. Lot was the only one speaking in Sodom in his day and was rejected. The Lord's servants today are backed by a mighty throng of believers. That Christ wanted every town and hamlet to be reached with the message gives good argument for mass media and for personal mission work as well. There is good support for the mission efforts of the Mormons when we consider their dedication; what they lack is a message that we have.

#### BE READY TO SERVE YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR

- I. Be ready for the opportunities that are given you.
  - A. At any time.
  - B. In every place.
- II. Be ready to take No for an answer.
  - A. Not all will receive the message of grace.
  - B. Let them know of the judgment that awaits them.
- III. Be ready to offer people all of the blessings of the Lord.
  - A. Show concern for their bodily needs.
  - B. Remember that the spiritual blessings are the greatest you can give.

#### THE LORD MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR ALL OF US TO SERVE HIM

- I. Some are made ready and able to proclaim His Word.
  - A. A message of repentance.
  - B. A message of deliverance.



- II. Some are especially touched with the earthly needs that they can supply.
  - A. This, too, is the work of the Lord.
  - B. But do it as servants of Christ.
- III. Many are enabled to offer encouragement and support to those whom Christ sends out with His message.
  - A. Let no one despise such work.
  - B. Christ does not.

*MJS*

### NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: MARK 6:30-34

Our Lord found time and place for many things during His earthly ministry. He was never too tired to serve, took advantage of every opportunity given to Him to do the work He had come to do. While He looked for the same dedication in those who followed Him, He always recognized their limitations. He showed a deep concern for everyone.

One of the things which every servant of Christ needs at times is rest. Rest is not necessarily complete relaxation, though that is also important at times: rest can also be found in retreat. Retreats seems to be a going thing and a growing thing in the church. In this the business world has been wiser than those who are in the business of the Lord. The business world is willing to invest money in the interest of a better working staff.

#### RETREATS THAT HAVE THE BLESSING OF CHRIST

- I. They are retreats for those who have served.
  - A. They provide opportunity for a well deserved rest.
  - B. They provide opportunity for discussion of work already done for the Lord.
- II. They are not retreats from those to be served.
  - A. The servants of the Lord are always His servants.
    - 1. They may get away from people.
    - 2. Christ will never let them get away from Him.
  - B. Wherever they go with the Lord they will be close to those who need Him.
    - 1. Who need His loving care.
    - 2. Who need His saving Word.

*MJS*

### TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: JOHN 6:1-15

The feeding of the five thousand is related in all four of the Gospels. This miracle is well adapted to further the purpose of John, which is to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. The creative power of Jesus is demonstrated when five barley loaves and two small fish are so multiplied that they satisfy the hunger of a multitude. Here is also an act of compassion and love. Although Jesus had gone across the sea for rest, He feels no resentment at the crowd thronging around Him, but only pity. He amply provides not only for the multitude but also for the needs of the disciples for days to come. The effect on the crowd is so great that they are ready to crown Him king. Their desire did not spring from genuine faith, however. They were expecting Jesus to relieve physical

and social distress and to secure for them political independence. Jesus is not deceived. He dismisses the excited crowd, sends the disciples away from their dangerous influence, and departs alone to the mountain to pray.

The central thought of the text is that Jesus is a Lord who graciously provides for all our needs. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would let Jesus be their Lord.

Introduction: Even though there are not many kings left in the world, and our nation is not a monarchy, we Christians are in a kingdom whose head is Jesus Christ. Jesus is our King. In what sense? The question the text confronts us with is:

#### WHAT KIND OF KING IS JESUS FOR YOU?

##### I. Is He only a bread king?

###### A. One who will remove all your troubles?

1. The crowd wanted Jesus as a king who would remove physical, social, and political misery (v15).
2. We sometimes act as though allegiance to Christ guarantees freedom from trouble.
  - a. We are offended when tragedy strikes. Have we not tried to serve Him?
  - b. We think that if we are loyal to Christ we will have no trouble.
3. Jesus did not come to establish an earthly utopia (Jn 18:36). Membership in Christ's kingdom is never separated from trouble (Mt 10:38; Ac 14:22). Failure to reckon with this fact makes Jesus nothing more than a bread king.

###### B. Do you see Him as One who is available just when it suits you?

1. The crowd wanted Jesus as their king so He could be at their beck and call, filling their stomachs when they were hungry.
2. For some, Jesus is merely good to have around. Use Him as a "glorified aspirin tablet" when there is no other cure for their headaches, as a "cosmic electric fan" to be turned on when life becomes hot, or as a "cosmic bellboy" to cater to their wants, making Jesus a bread king.

Jesus will not be used (v 15b). He quiets us down and reminds us what kind of King He really is. What kind of king is Jesus for you?

##### II. Is He Lord in your heart and life?

###### A. He knows what to do for you in every situation (v 6b).

1. Because He knows the need.
  - a. The need of the multitude at this time was for food (v 5).
  - b. Jesus knows our need of physical sustenance (Mt 6:32b), and is compassionate in our struggle to support ourselves and our families.
  - c. Jesus knows also our need for peace when we are anxious and depressed, knows us and our need better than we ourselves (Ps 103:14; 139:1-5).
2. We do not always know what to do, anymore than did Philip.
  - a. The Lord was testing Philip. Would Philip say: "Lord, all things are possible for you"?
  - b. Let Jesus handle our situation. A man who was in an accident in which his car was totaled ended up in the hospital, came to when no one was in the room, crawled out of bed, saw a sign

on his bed which said that he was on the critical list, and experienced a momentary panic, but then thought: "I can't do anything about it. Lord, I leave myself in your hands. You do what seems best." We need to let go. Jesus knows what to do.

B. He will do it well.

1. Jesus did very well what needed to be done for the crowd (vs 9, 12-13).
2. Jesus still does very well what needs to be done for us.
  - a. Providing for our physical needs.
  - b. Providing for our spiritual needs: forgiveness, peace, strength to cope, power to persevere.

What kind of king is Jesus for you? Let Him be Lord in your heart and life.

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### ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: JOHN 6:24-35

In the evening of the day on which Jesus fed the five thousand, the crowd noticed that there was only one boat lying on the beach and that the disciples had gone away in it and had not taken Jesus with them. In the morning, having presumably spent the night in the open air, they found neither Jesus nor His disciples. Disappointed because they apparently had expected to see Jesus, they entered the boats from Tiberias which had been driven ashore by the gale the previous night (vs 16-21) and crossed to Capernaum. What portion of the crowd went back to Capernaum is not indicated. They came seeking Jesus, but were surprised to find Him. To their question (v 25) Jesus makes no direct reply. The ensuing conversation reveals the deeper import of the feeding miracle. They must seek the food which abides which would be given by Him on whom the Father had "set His seal." Through the feeding of the five thousand and other signs God was authenticating Jesus as the Giver of that which nourishes to life everlasting. Some of the crowd are impressed and ask Him (v 28) what precisely they must do to be so satisfied. Jesus answers (v 29) that the "work" which God would have men do is to believe in Him whom God has sent. But the people want a further sign; the miraculous feeding was not enough. Jesus ought to do what their forefather Moses had done. Jesus reminds them (v 32) that the manna was a gift of God, not of Moses. Furthermore, there is a richer, more nourishing food that alone deserves to be called bread from heaven. This heavenly bread is Jesus Himself. But they do not fully realize the kind of food Jesus is offering them (v 36).

The central thought of the text is that Jesus is the true bread from heaven. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would find their spiritual hunger satisfied in Jesus Christ.

Introduction: It is hard for us to imagine what it would be like never to get enough food. We are in a minority for whom culinary delights are realities. Sometimes we live to eat rather than eat to live. We forget that we do not live by bread alone, that we need spiritual food. Jesus gives that food.

### THE FINEST FOOD POSSIBLE

- I. The finest food possible is Jesus Himself (v 35a).
  - A. Jesus is far superior to the Old Testament manna.

1. Though marvelously bestowed, good-tasting, and needing no further preparation, manna was perishable food for the body only.
2. Jesus is the true bread to which His miracles attest (v 27b).
3. Jesus nourishes the world (v 33).
  - a. Kept God's law for us, suffered sin's punishment for us.
  - b. Thereby provided salvation.
- B. Jesus is a gift food.
  1. Christ's hearers thought they had to do something to get the true bread (v 28). It is natural to think thus since men have to work to earn bodily food.
  2. But no further preparation is needed. Christ is ready to be received in Word and Sacrament. Just come and eat, that is, believe (v 35b).
  3. Even the believing is a gift, "work of God." (v 29).

There has never been food like Jesus.

## II. Yet the finest food is often refused.

- A. People want more proof before they will believe in Jesus (v 30).
  1. Christ's miracles and Christ Himself were not enough.
  2. People today demand proof: logical arguments, certain feelings, special revelations. The means of Grace not enough.
- B. People prefer to labor for perishable food (v 27a).
  1. By using the Bread of Life for selfish ends (v 26; Ro 16:18).
    - a. Using piety for personal gain.
    - b. Making the great cause serve themselves.
  2. By despising Means of Grace.
    - b. By preoccupying themselves in toiling for earthly necessities.

Conclusion: Where do we stand? Let us labor for the food that endures to eternal life. Jesus is that food. He satisfies our yearning for peace and purpose. He gives life, abundant, rich, and full. We have the finest food possible. Why be satisfied with less?

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## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: JOHN 6:41-51

The Jews who first heard Christ's stupendous claim (vs 33, 35) refused to accept it. They thought they had evidence to the contrary (v 42). The road from heaven could not be through human birth. They were waiting for the Messiah to come suddenly in the clouds, yet Jesus had quietly grown up among them. This was a real difficulty for the Jews. Jesus does not remove the stumbling block of His birth but simply reminds them that no one can apprehend the significance of Christ without the action of God (v 44). The drawing of a person to Christ, the need of a man to be inwardly disposed to Christ, is supported by a reference to Is 54:13. Jesus elucidates further in v 45b where hearing and learning refer to an inward spiritual process. Divine illumination is needed. Lest His hearers suppose that in Messianic times men will learn about God directly and immediately, He adds (v 46) that men will not learn by direct vision. Only He whose origin is divine, whose being is directly derived from God, has direct perception of the Father. Then (v 47) He returns to the affirmation of v 40. Not only does He give more than Moses, more than God gave to their forefathers, but He is the Father's gift of which, if they partake, they will hunger no more, need no more, die no more (vs 48-50). He is not only the



Bread; He is "the Living Bread." Not even death could hold Him. In giving His life in the flesh He would atone for the world's sins, and by rising again would guarantee eternal life for all believers.

The central thought of the text is that knowing God for eternal life requires spiritual illumination. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would appreciate the importance of spiritual over against mere intellectual knowledge.

Introduction: There is much stress today on education, liberal arts and especially vocational. It is regarded as important for individual's successful functioning in the world. Jesus in the text speaks of education that is more important than that gained from books, from working with machines, or even from observing life. He stresses:

#### THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF BEING TAUGHT BY GOD

##### I. Not all understanding is done with the mind.

##### A. Many regard intellect as the sole means of understanding.

1. The Jews assumed that because Jesus' parents were Mary and Joseph, He could not have come from heaven (v 42).
2. When people today say that nothing can be accepted which cannot be empirically verified or logically demonstrated, they are saying that nothing else matters but the mind.
  - a. Such people tend to approach Jesus from an intellectual perspective, to say that since He was obviously a man He cannot be God.
  - b. They overlook the fact that atheism requires as much non-rational acceptance as belief in God.
  - c. No philosophy of life is accepted on wholly rational grounds.

##### B. In religion particularly there is another means of understanding.

1. It does not follow that religion is anti-intellectual or that one should not be prepared to give reasons for his belief.
2. Spiritual enlightenment is necessary to grasp spiritual things (v 44).
  - a. No one can be argued into accepting Christianity.
  - b. No one can know God by reasoning (Jn 6:65; I Cor 2:14; 12:3; Mt 16:17).
3. It is God who enlightens us regarding Himself (v 45a; Jn 12:32; 14:26). We must not make God conform to our ideas, but rather submit to what God would teach us about himself, taking every thought captive (2 Cor 10:5). God makes himself known to us through Jesus Christ.

##### II. To be taught by God is to believe in Jesus.

##### A. Jesus alone can reveal God to us.

1. We cannot know God directly or immediately (v 46a; Jn 1:18a).
2. Jesus alone came directly from God (v 41b; Jn 1:1, 14).
3. Jesus alone has truly perceived God (v 46b; Jn 1:18b).

##### B. Through Jesus God has provided life for the world (v 51c).

1. All must die as did the Israelites (v 49).
2. But everyone who believes in Jesus will live forever (v 47; 51b).

##### C. If we want to find out from Jesus what God is like, our only recourse is the Scriptural Word. God has promised to enlighten us and bring us to faith through the Word (Jn 5:39; 1 Pe 1:23).

We have seen churches with windows of stained glass depicting Bible stories. From the outside the windows seem dull and drab and do not concern

us at all. But from the inside they speak to us in all their richness of color. Perhaps everything you learned about God and Jesus in Sunday School and in confirmation looks dull and gray and says nothing to you. You are still on the outside. By means of His Word God leads us inside where the windows shine. It becomes clear to us that it was not just anybody who gave His life on the cross. It was Jesus who gave Himself for me so that I could live forever. Now I am not just a spectator but a participant. That is what it means to be taught by God.

Conclusion: It does not matter in God's scheme of things whether you have had an eighth grade, high school, or university education. What does matter now and forever is that you have been taught by God.

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