

## SERMON COURSES FOR THE ADVENT SEASON.

As in the Lenten, so in the Advent season we have special week day evening services in the Lutheran church. When, owing to circumstances, these services cannot be held on an evening during the week, they are held on Sunday evenings of these seasons. In the Reformed churches—and with the Reformed we class all Protestants that do not follow Luther in their religious tenets—Lent and Advent are not observed. In these churches the preacher is justified in ignoring these seasons altogether, no texts are prescribed, and, if he chooses to do so, he may preach on the birth of Jesus Christ on the day of His resurrection. But in the Lutheran church we not only have our prescribed texts in the pericopes of each Sunday in the year, but we also observe the Lenten and the Advent seasons. How is this to be accounted for? Why do the different denominations of a Reformed type ignore these seasons, while we Lutherans observe them? The reason is this. When Luther seceded from the papacy and instituted the order of service for the Church of the Reformation, he was not as hasty and inconsiderate as were Zwingli, Calvin, and other Reformed leaders when they severed their connection with the Roman pontiff. The Reformed leaders were actuated by the principle to do away with everything that might in the remotest way remind them of the Church of Rome. Hence it is that we see no altar, no crucifix, no candles, no pictures, no statues, no cross, no clerical robes in these Reformed churches that have strictly followed their Reformed leaders. Some of them are so radical as not even to tolerate a musical instrument within the sacred precincts of the sanctuary. No embellishment whatever is permitted in the place of worship which is not even called a church, but simply a meeting house.<sup>1)</sup> But Luther was very careful not to go to extremes.

1) The Anglican or Episcopal church is an exception. Calvinistic in doctrine, it does not follow the Reformed leaders in their radical measures to do away with old established customs against which no objection can

How vigorously did he oppose those rioters in Wittenberg who thought that they were helping the good cause of the Reformation by demolishing the images of the saints in the churches during his involuntary retirement at the Wartburg. He came to Wittenberg in defiance of the Elector's command that he should remain secreted at the Wartburg, and preached against these fanatics every day for a whole week until order was restored. Luther's principle was to retain in the Church all those things which are conducive to edification and do not conflict with the Word of God. Hence it is that in the Lutheran church we not only have altars, pictures, candles, etc., but have also retained the pericopes and the observance of the different seasons to which the people had become accustomed since olden times.

Now what is the great subject to be discoursed upon in the Advent season? The four weeks of Advent are intended for preparation in view of the great festival of our Lord's nativity. The hearts are to be prepared for the reception of the good tidings to be proclaimed on Christmas Day that the Savior is born. This cannot be done in a better way than by setting forth the promises of God in the Old Testament in which He has predicted the coming of the Deliverer of the fallen race and by calling attention to the longing and desire of God's children in the time of the Old Dispensation for the Promised One to come into the flesh. There is a threefold advent of Christ: His coming into the flesh, His coming on the last day, and His coming into our hearts. Any of these three advents may be discoursed upon in the Advent season. The Gospel of the First Sunday in Advent suggests to us to speak of His advent in our hearts, and that of the Second Sunday in Advent directs us to dwell upon His advent in the clouds. But the proper subject to be treated in the Advent evening services

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be raised on Scriptural grounds. Seasons and festivals are observed in this church. But it is not free from the residues of Romanism. (See THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY, vol. IV, p. 280.)

is His advent in the flesh as promised, prefigured, foreshadowed, or touched upon in the writings of the Old Testament. The fact should be impressed on the minds that Christ, who is Alpha and Omega in the Scriptures, is to be found everywhere in the Old Testament.

As to sermon courses for the evening services in Advent the following arrangements are submitted.

I. PROMISES AND INDICATIONS.

- a. GEN. 3, 15. *The first promise concerning the Savior.*
  - 1. That He shall be the Seed of the woman.
  - 2. That He shall bruise the serpent's head.
- b. GEN. 22, 15—18. *The second promise concerning the Savior, that in Abraham's Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*
  - 1. Who is Abraham's Seed?
  - 2. What is meant by the blessing?
  - 3. How or by what means did Abraham's blessing come upon the nations?
  - 4. Who are they that are blessed by Abraham's Seed?
- c. GEN. 49, 16—18. *The words of the dying patriarch Jacob, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!"*
  - 1. The meaning of these words in Jacob's mouth.
  - 2. In what sense a Christian can and shall say these words.
- d. PS. 2, 12. *The words of David, "Kiss the Son."*
  - 1. The meaning of these words.
  - 2. What the kissing of the Son implies.

II. MEN THAT WERE TYPES OF CHRIST.

- a. DEUT. 18, 15. *Jesus Christ the Prophet like unto MOSES.*—Christ and Moses are alike:
  - 1. As founders of dispensations.
  - 2. As mediating between God and the people.
- b. NUM. 13, 16. *JOSHUA a type of the Lord Jesus.*
  - 1. In his obedience.
  - 2. In his deeds for God's people.
- c. JUDGES 13, 24. 25. *SAMSON a type of the Lord Jesus.*
  - 1. In his birth, name, and title.
  - 2. In his superhuman strength.
- d. 2 SAM. 23, 1—3. *DAVID a type of the Lord Jesus.*
  - 1. In historical resemblance to Jesus.
  - 2. In special personal characteristics.

III. PREFIGURATIONS.

- a. GEN. 28, 10—14. *Jesus the LADDER reaching to heaven.*
  - 1. Proof that the ladder which Jacob beheld in his dream was to prefigure Jesus the Messiah.
  - 2. Points of comparison between that ladder and the Messiah.
- b. NUM. 24, 17—19. *Jesus the Messiah promised as a STAR AND SCEPTER.*
  - 1. As a Star to illustrate His glory.
  - 2. As a Scepter to illustrate His dominion.
- c. JUDGES 6, 36—40. *The Messiah prefigured in the story of GIDEON'S FLEECE.* He is prefigured:
  - 1. In His coming into the world.
  - 2. In His reception by the world.
- d. IS. 11, 1. 2. *The Messiah pictured as a BRANCH and a ROD.*
  - 1. As a Branch in respect of His person.
  - 2. As a Rod in respect of His office.

IV. DESIDERATUS GENTIUM.

- a. PS. 14, 7. *How the believers in the time of the Old Testament wished for the Messiah to come.*
  - 1. Upon what they based this wish.
  - 2. Why they so fervently wished for Him to come.
- b. PS. 119, 174. *The salvation for which they longed in the time of the Old Testament.*
  - 1. What the salvation was for which they longed.
  - 2. Who longed for this salvation.
- c. IS. 64, 1. 2. *How they craved for the Messiah in the Old Testament.*
  - 1. For a Messiah from heaven.
  - 2. For a Messiah for all people.
- d. GEN. 49, 16—18. See I, c.

V. PREDICTION, PRAISE, AND PROMISE.

- a. PS. 40, 7. *Christ's coming in the flesh predicted in the volume of the book.*
  - 1. Which is the volume of the book.
  - 2. How Christ's coming in the flesh is predicted therein.
- b. PS. 118, 25. 26. *Hosanna and praise to the Son of David in the Old Testament.*
  - 1. The hosanna with which His faithful people addressed Him.
  - 2. The praise with which they blessed Him.
- c. IS. 59, 20. *The Redeemer promised to Zion.*
  - 1. Who the Redeemer is.
  - 2. What His redemption is.

VI. THE MESSIAH IN SOLOMON'S SONG.

- a. SOL. SONG 2, 8—13. *Christ's coming into the world and His address to the believing soul.*
  1. His coming into the world.
  2. His address to the believing soul.
- b. SOL. SONG 5, 9—13. *The personal excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ who came into this world to save us.*
  1. He is true God and therefore mighty to save.
  2. He is also true man and was thereby enabled to perform the work of our redemption.
- c. SOL. SONG 5, 15. 16. *The loveliness of the Messiah as to mind and speech.*
  1. His loveliness as to His mind.
  2. His loveliness as to His speech.
- d. SOL. SONG 8, 14. *The desire for the Messiah to come.*
  1. As expressed in the Old Testament by the saints.
  2. As expressed in the New Testament by the true believers.

VII. PROMISES AT DIFFERENT PLACES.

- a. In paradise (Adam and Eve).
- b. On the plains (Abraham, Sarah, and the three angels).
- c. In the desert (Moses and Miriam).
- d. In the palace (David).

VIII. THE MESSIAH LIKENED TO FLOWERS AND TREES.

- a. The rose of Sharon. Sol. Song 2, 1.
- b. The lily of the valley. Ibid.
- c. The olive tree. Hos. 14, 6.
- d. The fir tree and the myrtle. Is. 55, 13.

IX. GRADUAL REVELATION.

The Savior was promised:—

- a. to the whole human family, Gen. 3, 15;
- b. to a single race, Gen. 9, 26;
- c. to a particular nation, Gen. 12, 3;
- d. to a special family, 2 Sam. 7, 12.

“Very gradual was the revelation of redemptive truth to man. God’s first communication was like the evening star, serene and solitary; the fuller communications of the patriarchal age were like the starry hosts at night; the revela-